

## David Penwill – Salcombe boatbuilder

A STORE along Island Street with yard and slipway diagonally opposite comprise the working premises of self-employed boatbuilder David Penwill.

Born in one of the coastguard cottages at East Soar, educated at Malborough primary and Kingsbridge secondary schools, then at Ivybridge when his father was moved to coastguard service on the Yealm, he gained experience with cabinet-makers in Modbury. A further move to Loddiswell then led to him working at the Edgar Cove boatyard in Salcombe during the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was here he acquired skills as a shipwright – building and repairing numerous timber vessels and fitting out GRP hulls – that later established him as a noted boatbuilder in the town.

When Edward Cove died and the yard was sold for development of the apartments now occupying this waterside site, Dave began work with Winters Marine in the other Cove boatyard at the opposite end of Island Street, and at that time owned by John Cove of Chesford Marine, Frogmore.

Dave was given, among other assignments, the task of building four 12ft rowing boats for use on a film set in the Caribbean. In turn Chesford Marine was sold for the inevitable development and Dave's self-employed career began at the Island Street properties he gradually acquired.

Repairs and jobbing work were routine beginnings but he was keen to expand, and a certain flair and recognised

expertise soon led to larger projects, including the restoration of Fife schooner *Elise*, built in 1911 but then in a poor state. She required a railway and cradle on the slipway, which Dave built and capable of bearing 70ft long vessels of up to 30 tons.

Her restoration was prestigious with much new planking, totally new interior, decks and deck housing. Resurrection of this graceful craft caught the daily attention of local residents, attracted feature writers from *Classic Boat* magazine, and won accolades and an award during the first Salcombe Festival for being superbly kitted, fitted and shipshape.

Since then Dave has built mainly in wood of clinker and carvel construction, and repaired and maintained many types of craft. It was a joy and privilege to see none other than *Foam*, yawl No 1, resting in the boat store awaiting professional attention. She was Dornom-built in 1906, showing true working origins and so different from modern racing designs.

Dave also runs diesel agencies for Beta Marine and HMI Sole, formerly raced International Redwings, is chairman of the Salcombe Estuary Rowing Club, so heavily involved with Cornish Pilot Gig racing, and is a keen motorcyclist.

Although fortunately well blessed with on-going work, Dave is also looking out for interesting projects and is currently seeking a client for the renovation of a 20ft motorboat with classic hull. Anyone interested can call him on 07971 952187.

Jenny Brown



Boatbuilder David Penwill in his Salcombe store

### NCI Prawle Point: 2009 Incidents to date

**14.6.09** p.m. Prawle Point Watchkeepers spotted divers from two RIBs diving on the protected historic wreck site. They notified Brixham Coastguard and wreck licensee Neville Oldham who confirmed that the diving was not authorized. The Coastguard tasked the Prawle Point CG Rescue Team to observe the divers and later in the afternoon police helicopter 099 was seen circling over the dive site. On returning to Salcombe the divers were interviewed by the police.

**1.6.09.** Brixham Coastguard contacted NCI Prawle Point after receiving a call from fishing vessel *Tunny* reporting an engine failure 4 miles SSW of Prawle Point. Watchkeepers confirmed that they had the vessel in sight and gave regular position updates. Salcombe Inshore Lifeboat (ILB) was tasked but FV *Tunny* was able to restart her engine and made her own way into Salcombe accompanied by the ILB.

**26.5.09.** At 1019 Prawle Point watchkeepers spotted a yacht with a tender fouled under its bow and reported to Brixham Coastguard. Nine minutes later yacht *Graceful Lady* reported the loss of its tender to the coastguard who then issued a radio security alert. Watchkeepers gave position updates to Brixham until 1128 when it was no longer visible from Prawle Point. At 1530 the skipper of fishing vessel BM30 reported to the Coastguard that he had recovered the tender off Bolt Tail.

**25.4.09.** Prawle Point watchkeepers spotted and reported an object on the shoreline which appeared to be a deflated, small, black and orange

inflatable. Brixham Coastguard tasked the Prawle Point Coastguard Rescue Team to investigate. In just under half an hour the Rescue Team arrived at the Lookout for a visual position check and then deployed to recover the object. This turned out to be an empty commercial buoyancy suit. It had no names or identifying marks and had been in the water for some time.

**14.4.09.** Brixham Coastguard heard the word Mayday on Channel 16. Nothing had been heard at Prawle Point. A short while later yacht *Serendipity* reported to the Coastguard that a flat bottomed craft identified as the *Isles of Scilly Doctor/Nurse Support vessel* was testing equipment in Start Bay. Brixham Coastguard made several attempts to contact the support vessel with no success. Soon afterwards the Watchkeepers advised the Coastguard that they had observed a slow moving radar target in the Start Bay area moving SSW at approximately 6 knots. Brixham Coastguard tasked Helicopter Rescue 106 but the search was later abandoned.

**20.3.09.** A Mayday was received from a dismasted yacht *Katy Laura*, 3.5 miles west of Prawle Point and off Bolt Head. Two people were on board. Visibility was down to 2 miles and the NCI duty watchkeepers advised Brixham Coastguard that they were unable to see the casualty. The Coastguard subsequently requested a weather report. Wind was ENE force 5, sea slight. FV *Anglo Dawn* went to assistance and took the yacht in tow, with Salcombe Lifeboat in attendance.

Please help us to maintain this valuable service by making a donation and becoming a supporter of NCI Prawle Point or becoming a watchkeeper.

Please contact: The Secretary, NCI Prawle Point, Kingsbridge, PO BOX 58 TQ7 2QZ

Station tel. no. 01548 511259 www.nci-prawlepoint.org Cheques to NCI Prawle Point



No: 33

NATIONAL COASTWATCH INSTITUTION

# Prawle Point

'eyes along the coast'

Summer 2009

## Estuary Boat Club members share a common interest

**THE notable success and popularity of the Kingsbridge Estuary Boat Club appear to be due to the high motivation and enthusiasm of members sharing a common interest.**

A self-help group of boating friends wondered whether others may share their interests, so organised an inaugural meeting at the Crabshell Inn in 2006 which, to their surprise and delight, attracted 60 people. From this the KEBC was formed and grew to a current membership of 140 family members, keen to represent the interests and needs of all boat-owners at the Kingsbridge end of the estuary, including Bowcombe and Frogmore.

Security soon emerged as a key issue and, within the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary-initiated 'Boatwatch' scheme, a group of 12 watch leaders and their teams of eight routinely arrange a week each of responsibility for random patrols day and night throughout the season.

Police issue a weekly log number to be quoted in the event of an incident or suspicion, all of which are entered in the team's logbook and, as the intention is to deter, not tackle, crime, police are kept closely informed.

High profile and visibility may well account for the local reduction in marine crime. Highly visible 'Boatwatch' jackets are worn and the teams are equipped with powerful torches, radios and mobile phones, while night vision scopes and infra-red torches aid covert investigation.

Items poorly secured, especially outboard engines, are noted and reported, with helpful advice to owners. A further deterrent is the systematic marking of boats and equipment with invisible adhesive containing 'DNA' microdots, coded specifically to the club, and stickers informing of this unique identity. A stolen fish-finder was soon found



Ian Drinkwater, vice-chairman and Boatwatch co-ordinator; George Howard, committee member, and PCSO Ashley Hawkes at a security marking day on Kingsbridge Quay

abandoned by thieves who probably spotted the label, making the article too hot to handle. Serial numbers of all equipment are also recorded.

The club allocates two Saturdays in May as public awareness occasions when it stages displays on the Quay, marks many pieces of equipment free of charge and often recruits new members. The annual membership fee of £10, and several generous discounts from insurance firms and local companies, represents real value. These events are supported by the Harbour Master, Ian Gibson, and partially funded by the police. Wills Marine exhibited a range of outboard locking devices at the recent open day, while Burfords displayed cable, chain and padlocks.

While surveillance and security assume primary importance, the club is informal and friendly, so socialising and enjoyment are high on the agenda, too. An attractive social calendar throughout the year includes barbecues, beach picnics, a buffet lunch on Egremont, guest speakers from local organisations, including Salcombe Lifeboat, Brixham Coastguard and NCI Prawle Point, informal pub evenings and a River Maid cruise accompanied by musician members. A superb magazine is produced twice yearly.

The club is a recognised forum on the Harbour Board – one of only three – with direct representation, ensuring members have an effective voice on issues of concern.

The declared aim of KEBC is 'to bring together the local boating community whose interests may vary from simple day boating, coastal cruising or fishing in anything from canoes to dories, small cruisers to ribs, and to raise any concerns and issues arising from members' use of the estuary with Salcombe Harbour Authority, local authorities and Devon and Cornwall Constabulary'. The club's website address is [www.kebc.co.uk](http://www.kebc.co.uk)

Jenny Brown

## Visit by the Bishop of Exeter



*The Bishop of Exeter, the Rt Rev Michael Langrish, visited NCI Prawle Point on Friday, April 24, as part of his 10-week pilgrimage to 'every corner of Devon' in commemoration of the 1100th anniversary of the Diocese of Exeter. He was welcomed by station manager Roger Barrett and several watchkeepers, who showed him around the lookout and gave him an insight into the purposes, work and history of the station. Having sailed past the Point last year in the Island Trust vessel Pegasus, the bishop was interested to see the corresponding log entry.*

## Antique Six Jazz Band

**FOUNDED in 1994 by trombonist and antique dealer, Keith Hockin, the Antique Six Jazz Band first played fortnightly gigs in Lechlade but soon progressed to the present successful touring and festival status.**

Nine years ago, as guests of ex-watchkeeper, Joan Gross, they gave their first performance free for NCI Prawle Point raising over £800. Since stunning the South Hams jazz scene, they have returned every year by request, drawing profits for the station of £300 to £400 on each occasion.

The current line up of Chris Pearce on reeds, Chris Mercer, trumpet, Richard Leach, trombone, Clinton Sedgley, banjo and guitar, Ian Parry, double bass and Graham Smith on percussion play an eclectic mix of music influenced by Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, King Oliver and the Revivalist bands of the forties. Strong New Orleans influence as well as more modern numbers and party jazz are also important parts of the repertoire.

Prawle Point is privileged to host this top quality band and is immensely grateful for their valuable support through superb entertainment.



## Friends Of Prawle Point



**FRIENDS of Prawle Point visited the station on March 25 to inspect and observe in use vital equipment their donations had purchased. They were welcomed by station manager Roger Barrett and were able to see duty watchkeepers in action, browse through the visitors' centre and enjoy refreshments with other visiting watchkeepers.**

The fund-raising activities organised by the FOPP group were recently applauded by NCI chairman Jon Gifford, who is most impressed by their commitment and generosity. On this occasion attention focussed on recently purchased new high-tech binoculars, two heaters, a new flag, a reprinting of watchkeepers' handbooks and a handsome contribution towards a new telescope and improved telescope mountings.

'Eyes and ears along the coast' is what it's all about at Prawle, so we are indebted to this industrious group of ladies for aiding the all-year visual lookout. 'We would really struggle without them, they do a wonderful job for us,' said Roger.

*On the steps of the Lookout: FOPP committee members, from left, Frances Leer, Esme Heath, Jane Payne, Angie Cook, Jeanne James and Sarah Taylor*

## A tribute to Alan Shearer

**WHEN Alan Shearer resigned on May 21 after eleven and a half years of watchkeeping, he left a remarkable legacy at the Prawle Point station in the form of hand-made, purpose-built equipment and, indeed, the very design of the extended lookout.**

Where a need became manifest, Alan designed and made to his own meticulous standard and presented the finished artefacts which are in daily use. Noting that watchkeepers come in varied statures, he recognised the need for telescope stands to be of a two-tier structure for easy transition from one height to another, and light enough to be transferred between different vantage points. The result was two superb constructions in pine and mahogany finished to the satisfaction of a perfectionist. Storage boxes for the telescopes were also designed and made in strong cardboard.

The main pelorus, plus a duplicate for Froward Point, and the two small ones for the console and the west window, as well as the range finder, are all valuable aids to watchkeeping, while the outdoor collecting box with binocular motif catches the eyes of passers-by and prompts those vital contributions.

Many watchkeepers may be unaware that Alan, a qualified member of the RIBA, pursued a career in architecture and later devoted his skills to designing the modern lookout and arranging its construction. The console was then designed and fitted by his careful hand.



*Alan Shearer in his workshop*

His maternal grandfather, an engineer, introduced him to metalwork, while ancestors on his father's side were furniture and piano-makers. He recalls spending long periods from the age of seven working with wood and metal in his father's workshop. After he married Enid numerous items were made in wood for home and children, and two boats were constructed and fitted for family use.

*Jenny Brown*

## M V River Maid



**The River Maid, newly painted and looking very splendid, is a familiar sight from Kingsbridge to Salcombe and, in good weather with a calm sea, may be seen off Prawle Point on some of her longer trips. She is the third successive boat to run the ferry and estuary cruises with Peter Moule, the current owner and skipper.**

Designed largely to Peter's specification, her keel was laid in 1994 on the banks of the Cattewater by Bob Bailey. Her wide, V-shaped hull is constructed of 6mm steel plating with shallow draught well suited to drying out on estuary mud between tides, her seven watertight compartments comply with buoyancy and damage control requirements and her weight lies deep for maximum stability. The bare hull was then towed to Voyager Yachts in Millbrook Creek, Cornwall for fitting out with aluminium superstructure chosen for lightness of weight. The Maritime and Safety Agency was involved throughout construction ensuring her build satisfied official criteria and that a pumping system assigned to each of the compartments could deal with flooding in the event of any damage. Freeboard of one metre was required and adequate stowage space for life-saving appliances and life rafts.

Stability was systematically measured and recorded during inclining tests which took into account possible passenger movements should interesting wildlife be spotted to port or starboard. She is powered by a six cylinder, 180 hp Perkins diesel engine. Her length is 52 feet and beam 15 feet. She can accommodate 103 passengers and 3 crew, giving a laden weight of 35 tons.

Her predecessor, *Lady Elizabeth* left the estuary in 1997 but will be well remembered by many local people for her many celebratory and festive trips. She is listed in the Little Ships Register of historic vessels at Greenwich Maritime Museum and now operates from Falmouth.

Knowing the estuary so intimately, Peter's commentary misses nothing of interest en route as he points out local features, describes the history of Kingsbridge and Salcombe from their heydays as flourishing shipping ports to the present day, tells of the lifeboat disaster in 1916 and the wrecks of *Herzogin Cecile*, *Dimitrios*, *Heye P* and others and draws attention to unusual birds such as spoonbills and avocets as well as those more commonly found in the area. Reference is made to *Egremont*, the Island Cruising Club base, the present day lifeboats and any notable visiting craft, while, on the occasional longer coastal cruises, passengers are told about NCI and the Prawle Point Lookout to the east and Starehole with its rocks well favoured by flocks of cormorants to the west. When the *River Maid* is chartered by local organisations, commentaries are often made by local naturalists or historians.

The ferry service between Kingsbridge and Salcombe takes approximately 35 minutes and may run up to four or five times during the day as tides permit, while cruises over the bar are generally of two hours duration. If tides allow, evening trips around the creeks are popular with visitors. The season runs from May to the end of September.

Peter remarks "It's nice to know there are people in Prawle Point Lookout" so perhaps a wave or signal may be appreciated.

*Jenny Brown*