

Salcombe Estuary Rowing Club

Four matched replicas of Yealm rowing skiffs from one fibre glass mould of clinker style, painted in four different colours and named after four sponsors, were acquired when the Salcombe Estuary Rowing Club was launched in 1992 by Aileen Mitchell and Michael and Janice Fice for people of any age or experience. The annual Salcombe regatta was hitherto the only opportunity for local enthusiasts to participate in competitive rowing and the desire to practise these skills required more than annual appeasement.

Members were keen and, as Cornish Pilot Gigs became popular in the West Country, acquiring one for Salcombe became top priority in 1997 and Wolf, named after the local rock,

was built by Andrew Nancarrow on the Lizard. Success at the World Gig Championships on the Isles of Scilly gave further impetus to club development with the ladies team becoming the top mainland crew and third in their class. With success came increased competition which only a second gig could satisfy but funding was essential. Among other fund raising events, the girls' team came up with the novel idea of producing a 'nude' calendar in WI style and, with Lorna Yabsley's photographic expertise, twelve discreet and very artistic, rowing themed images of themselves graced many a wall in 2003. So, when Brian Pomeroy of Blackawton, produced the next gig she was painted in the club livery of dark and light blue with yellow stripe and named Cadmus after the rock in Starehole Bay where the Royal Naval vessel of this name came to grief.

By 2006, Maurice Hunkin of Fowey was commissioned to build yet a third gig to satisfy the needs of this ever-expanding, committed and progressively successful club. She was named Bolt after local landmark headlands. All three are housed in the purpose built gig shed, kept in immaculate condition, given thorough maintenance during the winter and recently gaining an award from the Cornish Pilot Gig

Association for best kept boats. Planking is traditionally of elm and oars are spruce worked through thole pins by the six crew.

With a membership of over sixty, SERC runs a busy programme throughout the season. Children start by rowing the four original small boats, adult beginners row gigs on Wednesday evenings and team training is held on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays for ladies, men, veterans (over 40) and super-vets (over 50) although flexibility between the teams ensures those who turn up will find a place. Coxswains receive training too, not only in racing tactics but also essential awareness of tides, currents, wind and local knowledge. A Salcombe gig regatta is held in June, teams also attend many Devon and Cornwall fixtures during the year. Four ladies' and

three men's teams competed on the Isles of Scilly this year achieving good results. The club also enjoys a strong social bond with regular trips to the Crabshell and Millbrook pubs, a monthly meeting at the yacht club and,

of course, sessions there after training, an annual dance at Cliff House, themed parties plus several barbecues and fund-raising events.

All boats must carry specified safety kit to include fog signal, flares, throw-bag, first aid kit and radio, while juniors under sixteen must wear lifejackets. With a length of 32' and 4'10 beam, gigs present a most pleasing sight with the finest of bows, minute, shapely transom and classical, sea-kindly lines. Their area of operation is within the Blackstone if white water persists beyond the Bar, although in calmer conditions they may be spotted from Prawle Point Lookout between Gara Rock and Starehole Bay.

The club welcomes newcomers allowing them four free sessions before deciding to join and there is plenty of opportunity for anyone who feels rowing is a step too far but would like to cox. Just call 07968800524 and speak to Chairman, Justin Harmer who will arrange for you to attend a training session at Batson boat-park and meet the members.

Jenny Brown



Salcombe Men's 'A' 2010

Photo: Nikki Wadey



No: 36

NATIONAL COASTWATCH INSTITUTION

Prawle Point

'eyes along the coast'

Summer 2010

Admiralty Pilots of Plymouth

The Admiralty Pilot Service for Plymouth has its Longroom base at the Royal Marine Barracks in Stonehouse.

From Longroom House, high on a hill within strict security perimeters, the view encompasses the whole of Plymouth Sound and looks down upon the Brittany Ferry Port, Millbay Docks and Drake's Island, while from the adjacent tower, even more extensive watch may be kept over the Hamoaze, Lynher and areas of Edgecombe and Rame. Once part of the Maritime Auxiliary Service, in 1996 the Admiralty Pilotage and Harbour Control Service came into existence to fulfil a requirement by the Royal Navy for pilotage services unique to their naval bases.

The Dockyard Port Order of 1999, an Act of Parliament, gave full authority for the Queen's Harbour Master to maintain supremacy for the Naval Base. The aim is to work in harmony with other users but, if warships need to be moved, priority over movements of commercial vessels is maintained. Specifically, when nuclear submarines are being manoeuvred, a safety zone is created around them.

So, while movements to commercial berths are largely controlled by a commercial pilotage service operating from the Cattewater, there are logistical links between the two services. Strong planning regimes are necessary for all movements to and from MOD berths and buoys and, although notice of incoming vessels is usually received well in advance, programmes can be interchanged and complex. A list of warship movements for the week contains many names frequently heard by radio reception at Prawle Point. Total movements, which include those of surface and submarine vessels and Brittany Ferries, average 25,000 per year.

From their well fitted out boats, pilots board vessels in the time-honoured tradition by pilot ladder and take control until berthing is completed. Entering and manoeuvring are exacting procedures in confined waters with narrow channels, rocks, shoals and currents, so the local knowledge and expertise of pilots is vital. They are also fully aware of the forces exerted by tide and weather on the huge hulls under their control and know the likely progress of other craft in the vicinity. Recruits, drawn from Royal Naval and merchant personnel, must have command qualifications and experience, then undergo three years of training.

Plymouth Dockyard and Port is covered by legislation regarding all operations afloat for which the Queen's Harbour Master is responsible. The port limit runs 1.25 miles south-east from Rame Head on a line to Shag Stone Rock to the east-north-east and all navigable tidal waters to the north. Periodic dredging maintains depths in the side channels although the main channel is self-scouring.

Tugs are needed to assist larger ships and submarines for tight turns into Devonport Docks and for 'cold moves' tugs are secured to warships when moving from berth to berth; two or three are required for a frigate, a Royal Fleet Auxiliary tanker requires three or four while HMS Ocean requires six or seven. Up to 40% of movements are 'cold.' Pilots operating from the vessel's bridge have previously received intensive training in tug management and gained tug masters' tickets so that they are sufficiently versed in techniques and expertise to give very precise orders by VHF. Preparation and advance planning are finely honed to achieve lowest possible risks, accordingly large ships and nuclear submarines are moved only within one hour of high or low water at minimum current. Strict criteria are adhered to as protection of vessels and port facilities is paramount.

Joe Lovelady, Chief Admiralty Pilot, begins his day with a morning brief attended by the Queen's Harbour Master and staff for

an update on the main challenges they will be facing. Further meetings may be held during the day for planning programmes, special movements, resources and general liaison with the Naval Base Commander of Devonport. As Chief Pilot, Joe Lovelady maintains his level of expertise on a daily basis by regular handling and use of tugs, assessing vessels new to the port and by performing the most important manoeuvres. These may amount to 150 operations during the year. He manages a staff of six qualified pilots and two trainees. A Port Surveyor is responsible

for chart updates and all hydrographic data. Commanders, navigators and bridge staff joining Devon based vessels are given advisory courses in pilotage and guided right through their training until taking full control

Flag Office Sea Training (FOST), conducted over four or five intensive weekdays at sea, covers training in navigation, warfare, pilotage and damage control and, as we are fully aware from listening to sub-facts and gun-facts issued after the shipping forecast, Thursday is "weekly wars day" involving both foreign and RN warships and all operating from the base and controlled from the Longroom.

On the top floor of the adjacent Longroom Port Control Tower, accessed by spiral staircases, is the spectacular observation room manned 24 hours, 365 days of the year. Only when Drake's Island becomes invisible are movements halted for routine traffic although movements of a more pressing nature may be made one at a time. A Harbour Control Officer with two assistants monitor two sets of three information screens with radar displays, charts and daily list of vessels under way, while above are four CCTV displays linked to the cameras located in many strategic positions around this vast waterway. Radio communication is constant. It was interesting to note that, although an enormous pair of binoculars was available on a tripod, "mark one eyeball" was referred to as of prime importance.

Jenny Brown



HMS Ocean passing the Longroom Admiralty Pilots website

SOME COMMON SAYINGS OF A NAUTICAL ORIGIN

Copper bottomed	Hulls were clad in copper against the ravages of the Teredo worm.
There'll be the devil to pay	Derives from caulking, or paying, between planks with oakum, a job often meted out as punishment. The outermost plank, where the deck met the hull, being the most difficult to caulk was termed the devil.
Between the devil and the deep blue sea	Caulking the devil, being a difficult job, sometimes necessitated hanging over the side.
Money for old rope	A crafty sailor might take accumulated, disused rope to sell ashore.
Skyscraper	Originally the highest sail that could be set. Triangular in shape and used only in very light winds.
Hard to fathom & Get to the bottom of	A fathom is one thousandth of a nautical mile or 6.08ft and derives from an Anglo-Saxon word meaning to embrace. It equates to the width of outstretched arms preparing to embrace. Certain types of seabed would make accurate sounding difficult.

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

More watchkeepers receive 10 year awards



L to R: Peter Tozer, Terry Martins, Colin Small, Hugh Stanley, Rob Roberts received certificates and medals for 10 years of service at the Prawle Point Station.

They are pictured with Jon Gifford, National Chairman, (third from L) and Roger Barrett, Station Manager (far R).

Prawle Point's Live Exercise with Salcombe Lifeboat

FROM THE LOOKOUT

'It should be fun', the man said. Our Station Manager had in mind an early awakening on a Sunday morning as a prelude to conning the Salcombe Lifeboat on to a 'casualty', in this case its companion ship the ILB, which was in dire straits ('for exercise') off Prawle Point.

Under the eagle eye of the NCI and MCA High Command, four of us took turns to guide the ALB onto its target. Two of our number even performed a duet in conning both vessels simultaneously onto an exhausted white fender.

The lifeboat crews were extremely supportive of our attempts to communicate in little used personal transmitter speak and the exercise provided a practical appreciation of conning a real rescue craft. For me, it was interesting to note that, even from the heights of Prawle Point, it is not easy to assess the direction of a vessel moving across one's line of vision until it is near to the casualty. Hence a confident 'dead ahead' followed by some Port wheels.

Our thanks go to the Salcombe lifeboat crews and MCA colleagues in Brixham for giving us this opportunity to gain some real life conning experience.

Roger Hardiman

FROM THE LIFEBOAT

With the Baltic Exchange III away at Poole for service we embarked on the relief Tamar, the "Frank and Anne Wilkinson" 16-06.

The weather was perfect, flat sea, good visibility, gentle breeze. Ideal for the spotters at Prawle Point but I would have liked a bit of a sea to experience the ability of the Tamar in rough weather!

I was given the forward starboard seat so was able to watch the instruments on a repeater screen plus listen in on all the communications over the headphones.

Friends Of Prawle Point

The Antique 6 Jazz Evening at Charleton Village Hall on June 19th was greatly enjoyed; some proclaimed it the best so far. £800 was raised and the band generously donated 10% of their CD sales that evening.

FOPP has kindly donated £2000 towards the purchase of a telescope for the newly refurbished Visitor Centre, soon to be officially opened.

On August 25th FOPP will be organising cream teas in the Parish Hall at East Prawle where there will be a display depicting the work of NCI Prawle Point. Watchkeepers will be on hand to meet and inform interested visitors who will also be able to visit the Lookout to observe duty officers in action.

There was slight confusion at the start of the exercise. The ALB thought the exercise was under way and were told that they would be given the casualty's position in two minutes. The immediate reaction was "Why don't they give us a rough direction to steer and then follow up with the detail?"

PQ was, I assume, preparing for the formal initiation of the exercise but it underlined the point that giving the essential information quickly is vital to getting a rescue underway after which detailed updates can be given.

The conning on to the ILB casualty went well but from the comfort of the ALB I was aware of how difficult it is for the spotter to judge the direction to the casualty when there is a wide angle between casualty and ALB.

The exercise using a floating can as the casualty with both ILB and ALB being conned simultaneously went very well. As they closed in on the casualty the course corrections came thick and fast and brought the exercise to a very satisfactory conclusion..

The ALB crew were clearly happy with PQ's performance and had no criticisms.

Photo: David Stone

David Stone



Visit to Brixham

It was a long time since I had been to Brixham and a visit to the Coastguard had great appeal, especially as I had just qualified as a watchkeeper!

It really was a beautiful day and a group of us found that we had enough time to look around the harbour before the formal session started. We found ourselves admiring some of the old fishing vessels that used to ply their trade out of the harbour.

Roger looked into the hiring of one of them so a trip one summer is in the pipeline.

We entered the coastguard building to a warm welcome from the staff and were ushered into the meeting room where, after a brief introduction from Jeremy Linn (our liaison Coastguard), we watched an excellent video telling us about the functions of the Coastguards. After a question time, we progressed to the Operations Room



Photo: Roger Barrett

where Jeremy took us through the everyday workings and emergency procedures. Meanwhile the rest of the staff carried on with their work.

One of the highlights was Jeremy showing us the varying communications connections he had at his fingertips on computer. It takes three months training to learn how to operate these effectively.

By the time we had finished it became clear where we fitted into the scheme of things. It was obvious to a 'greenhorn' like me, why our training is so rigorous and I came away feeling very proud to be a small cog in these services. We are indeed the 'eyes' of the coastguards and it was really good to meet some of the people at the end of the telephone in Brixham.

Vivien Plews

NCI PRAWLE POINT : INCIDENTS TO DATE



DOG WATCH

I'm sure I can find these missing dogs on this radar screen

Photo: Neville Higgins

26.06.10 When the duty watchkeepers heard a yacht reporting seeing distressed dogs on Moor Sands they had 'a hunch' that the landlord at the Pig's Nose Inn in East Prawle might know something about them and so advised the Coastguard to phone him. Sure enough a customer in the bar stepped forward saying his dogs had been missing for 24 hours. They were

soon recovered (see adjoining photo).

16.06.10 After yacht Mistral sent a PanPan urgency message reporting engine failure and jammed sails, the Prawle Point watchkeepers located her off Bolt Head and passed details to Brixham Coastguard. Later they advised the Coastguard that the Salcombe Harbour launch was alongside the casualty. Mistral was then towed into Salcombe.

03.06.10 The duty watchkeepers overheard a

yacht named Raven calling Brixham Coastguard on VHF Channel 16 to report that its saildrive (similar to the bottom part of an outboard motor) had fouled a pot line in Elender Cove. No reply was heard from the Coastguard and so the watchkeepers relayed the message by phone. They also relayed further messages to the Coastguard from the casualty and from the Inshore Lifeboat which later towed Raven into Salcombe Harbour for repair.

01.06.10 Divers from a RIB dive boat were observed diving on the Salcombe Cannon site, a Protected Historic Wreck off Moor Sands one mile to the west of the Lookout. The wreck site licensees and the relevant authorities were informed by the duty watchkeepers in accordance with agreed procedures. It is understood that the divers were met on their return to Salcombe and could face action for carrying out unauthorised diving.

27.03.10 On the morning of 27th March Prawle Point watchkeepers heard Brixham Coastguard calling Hope Cove Coastguard Rescue Team about an overturned RIB on Salcombe Bar. The watchkeepers quickly located the RIB and were able to report to Brixham that three people were in the water nearby and a fourth person was swimming ashore towards South Sands. Salcombe ILB was soon on scene and recovered the three people in the water. All four were unharmed.