

Baloo to Boulogne

The Marcon Trophy for 2011 has been awarded to David Warner and Linda, his enthusiastic crew, for this account of a cruise in company from Manningtree on the Stour across the Thames Estuary to France.

It was a trip with everything you'd wish for – from dolphins playing under the bows to delicious fresh French bread.

But *Baloo's* engine troubles also meant it was a matter of inboard outbound and outboard inbound - with a bit of towing support from their fellow Stour Sailing Club members in between.

It was decided that this year's cruise would go 'foreign' and Boulogne was a popular choice which particularly excited my crew as Linda has been wanting to cross the channel by sail for some time now.

A couple of planning meetings were arranged (which required liquid sustenance) and Gerry Brown and Kelvin Howlett came up with the sailing plan which I immediately agreed to.

The 3 boats were *Solaks*, *Sonic* and *Baloo*. Departure from Manningtree was on Friday 29 July at 1200 with Shotley Marina as our first port of call. The weather was good and after a meal aboard our own vessels we strolled along to the Shotley sailing club where we were made very welcome and enjoyed a drink and chat with members.

Departure from Harwich Saturday 30 July was 0415 which would give us enough time to make Ramsgate before the ebb set in. Sunrise was disappointing and the wind was NE 3-4. Our route was Sunk Head Tower, Black Deep, Fishermans Gat, East Margate and Ramsgate. It was cold with a choppy sea. We were all motorsailing to ensure we made good passage.

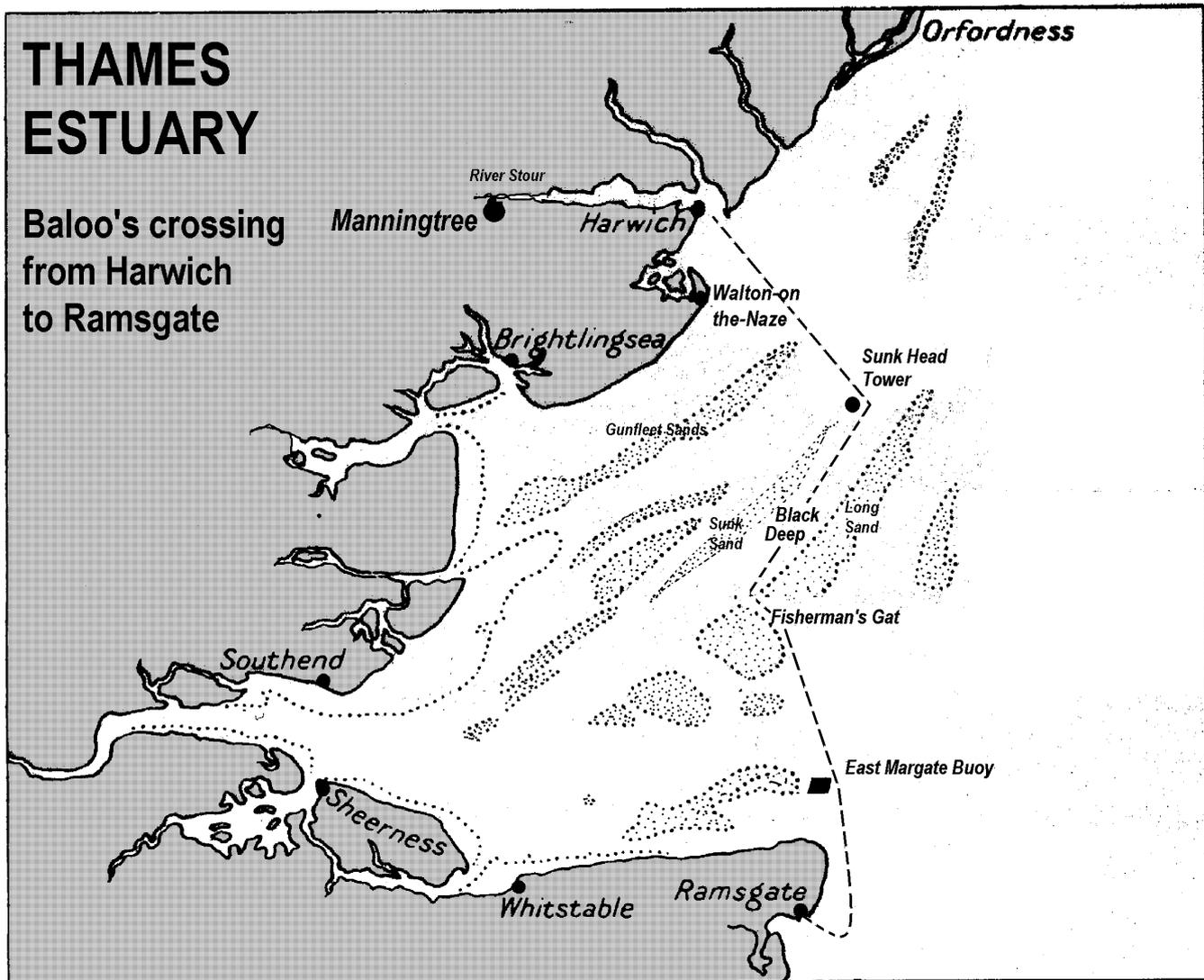
On approach to North Foreland *Solaks* was a mile ahead but *Sonic* was close by *Baloo* and I was informed my exhaust was very blue and smoky. I immediately went below and checked the engine and found that I was low on sump oil. This was topped up and the smoke appeared to clear and everything sounded normal. We all called up for permission to enter Ramsgate harbour and after mooring up enjoyed a good meal of fish and chips at a local shop.

Departure from Ramsgate was scheduled for 0530 on Sunday 31 July and we found SE force 2 wind with a gentle swell. Our route took us down the coast inside the Goodwin Sands and we planned to cross the ferry routes out of Dover as quickly as possible heading for Cap Gris Nez. As we were approaching the French coast we were entertained by dolphins swimming under the bow.



THAMES ESTUARY

Baloo's crossing from Harwich to Ramsgate



After that excitement we could see our destination about 10 miles away, but more trouble was about to hit us. The engine alarm and warning light came on and I found that the oil had all gone again. I refilled the sump but the smoke continued and we now had a considerable loss of power. Fortunately *Sonic* was close by and I called on the VHF and accepted Kelvin's offer of a tow. The tide was starting to ebb and with the light wind I would not have made Boulogne on my own. The weather was sunny and warm with just a slight swell.

Being towed into a marina berth is not easy but Kelvin and Sarah did a very good job and we tied up in one of the few double spaces available. It seemed obvious that I had a serious problem either with piston rings or valves and this could not be fixed quickly. I texted our son Matthew who came up with Yanmar dealers both in Boulogne and Dover. Gerry Brown skipper

'The engine alarm and light came on... all the oil from the sump had gone...'

of *Solaks* confirmed that the forecast for the next couple of days was good and he was prepared to tow *Baloo* back to Dover where it would be much more convenient to consult the Yanmar dealer and perhaps have to leave the boat for a while. We all stayed, as planned for two nights and enjoyed the old town of Boulogne with visits to restaurants and bars.

Tuesday 2 August found us shopping for lovely fresh french bread and fillings for the crossing to Dover. Departure at lunch time found a smooth sea wind SW 2 but misty visibility. Being on a long tow rope was easy and we both had main sails up and the line was never taught. At Dover we had to wait outside the Western entrance until a cruise ship departed which kept being put back by 10 minutes but we were safely moored up by 1630. After a meal aboard all seven of us enjoyed the hospitality of Dover Sailing Club.



Linda finally gets her wish and sails across the Channel. Below, *Baloo* at Ramsgate with new bracket

Next morning Linda and I were waiting for the Yanmar dealer to open and we were advised that it was probably not worth the labour costs of stripping down to find the problem and then the parts but have a new engine (£3,500) but they could not do it for at least 10 days. We could have left the boat on their free berth and hitched a lift on the other vessels back to Manningtree.

However I know that some Trident 24 craft operate with outboard motors so I decided to fit a bracket and buy a good used outboard motor. This would get us home and then serve as a back up when the original IGM10 engine is either repaired or replaced.

A local chandlery sold me a top of the range bracket suitable for up to 20 hp but they did not deal in engines . The nearest was at Sandwich and they let me use their phone where I made deal to purchase a 8 hp Mariner outboard and have it delivered on Thursday morning at Ramsgate marina. We

chose this action as it is a better voyage to Harwich from rather than from Dover and Gerry wanted another go at towing.

Wednesday 3 August gave us good conditions for the trip to Ramsgate with SW 2 wind. On arrival at the harbour entrance we had a strong





David Warner takes the helm under tow

very windy so no departure for Harwich today. The first mate of *Solaks*, Dave Waters had to leave the cruise as he had a wedding to attend on Saturday which required travelling North on Friday. In the afternoon Kelvin, Sarah, Linda and I took the bus to Broadstairs . After a meal aboard our vessels , the four of us went to

tide running and *Solaks* skipper seemed to forget momentarily the long tow and nearly wrapped us around a green buoy. After safe arrival drinks the inflatable dinghy was commissioned and with the help of Mel I set about fixing the new outboard bracket. This is not easy with a moving platform, small electric drill and 40 year old thick GRP. All the crews enjoyed a meal in the Pizza Express situated in an old bank close to the harbour.

We had learnt that the forecast for Thursday was not good and our planned departure for Harwich at lunchtime was probably not going to happen. When the Mariner engine was delivered by Paul Cattle of Highway Marine Service Ltd the weather was certainly very rough and even the pontoons within Ramsgate marina were heaving about. I was disappointed to find that the engine was a 2 stroke and Paul quickly picked up on this and made a suggestion which turned out better for both of us.

He suggested that I hired the engine to get us home and then return it by road. He had someone returning on Wednesday afternoon who had previously looked at it and now wanted to buy it. It was agreed I would pay £100 for the hire and return it on Monday 8 August. The fuel tank was full of petrol but I wanted a little extra so Paul took me to a local garage where I picked up another 15 Ltrs. By now it was raining and

the pictures. Whilst walking to the cinema on the cliff top at Ramsgate we passed Paul Heiney the television presenter who said “good evening” to us. At the cinema, the last Harry Potter left us all a bit bemused as we had not seen the forerunners.

Friday 5 August gave us a good weather forecast for our return to Harwich and we planned to depart at noon. On the opposite pontoon berth to *Solaks* was a large fishing boat and Paul Heiney and a film crew were working with the skipper of the fishing boat on a programme about missing millions.

We were preparing to leave, having made an engine test, when during a break from filming and with a mug of tea in hand Paul Heiney came over and admired the Trident 24 saying that a friend of his had one. He was interested in my tale and the reason why we had an outboard . He actually let go our stern line and wished us a good trip back to Manningtree.

The engine performed well and we had a strong flood tide for 2.5 hours until we reached East Margate buoy. The wind was SE 3-4 so with all sails working and the engine running at half power we made good passage. It was a long trip with *Sonic* keeping close by and we approached Walton on the Naze as the sun was setting. All 3 boats locked into Shotley marina at 2200 for the night.

Breakfast was taken by all the crews at Halfpenny Pier cafe Harwich having crossed over on *Sonic*. Linda and Sarah travelled to Manningtree by train whilst the rest of us returned to Shotley marina and Kelvin dropped us off on the outside pontoon to lock out *Baloo* and *Solaks* an hour later.

All boats were safely back at Manningtree by 1600 and I put *Baloo* on the the quay so that I could remove the Mariner outboard engine more easily than from a dinghy. The wind was slight so I was able to side tow *Baloo* with my large dinghy using a 2 hp Honda outboard back to the mooring.

Monday 8 August found me driving to Sandwich with the Marina outboard engine safely returned after 12 hrs running. I estimated that I had used about £40 pounds worth of petrol for this so I will not be replacing the Yanmar 1 GM10 with a 2 stroke, although a 4 stroke would probably give a better MPG.

In fact my main engine is now running having had a new cylinder head, exhaust bend, filters, thermostat, engine anode, fan belt and oil

change. Total cost just over £1,000 including £210 labour.

The outboard bracket remains on the stern and I have secured a 5 hp long shaft Seagull with clutch and this has been stowed in a locker with fuel. A test voyage showed that it will push *Baloo* along at 4 knots so I will have a second alternative to sails which I hope will not be required in the future.

David Warner

David and Linda purchased triple keeler *Baloo* (no.135) in 2004 having looked at 2 other examples of the class. She was laying on a mooring in Mylor Creek, near Falmouth and 4 Davids were involved in getting her to Essex: the vendor, the purchaser, the boatyard owner who craned her out at Devoran and transported her by road and the boatyard owner who lifted *Baloo* off the trailer at Mistle. David has taken part in club regatta races and won some pots over the last few years including the Bob Coles Vintage Trophy for best performance by a cruiser built over 25 years ago. *Baloo* was equipped with new sails in June 2006 and she has sailed around the Essex and Suffolk coasts a lot. This was the second channel crossing made with *Baloo*; she went to Calais in 2008.

