

## The Official Newsletter for the Conwy Marina Berth Holders Association

**W**elcome to the second edition of the CMBHA newsletter. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide a forum for you the members to voice your opinions, share your sailing stories and experiences and keep up-to-date on the work and issues that the CMBHA officers and committee undertake on your behalf.

**T**he success of the newsletter is in the hands of the association membership. If you've got something to say or something to share then your contributions will be more than welcome in any form from a scribbled note to an electronic document.

**A**rticles are published as received apart from a touch of formatting. Spelling and grammatical errors are not corrected by the editor.

**D**on't forget to visit the fab new web site [www.cmbha.org](http://www.cmbha.org). Lewin has done a great job and the site now includes a private members area – nice job Lewin.



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### QUEEN'S JUBILEE WEEKEND

1<sup>st</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> June 2002

#### ***Circumnavigation of Anglesey.***

Why not join us on a relaxed circumnavigation of Anglesey (Weather permitting)

Gentle sailing

Family Friendly

Bring your own beach BBQ

More details on the notice board later or

Contact [dsmith@cmbha.org](mailto:dsmith@cmbha.org)

### Des Owen

"Carpe Diem"

*The Older Knackered One*

*Skipper & Boat*

## **"Ice Cold In Caernarfon"**

### **A Tale of Two Christmas Crack(POT)ers. By Eric Sheppard**

19th November, Club night.  
"Anyone fancy a Christmas Cruise?" I queried, "See Peter (Heather), he's going to Fleetwood next weekend" was the reply. "We're pretty full," said Peter when I enquired.  
"Who's going?" I asked, "Colin (Zuma), Paul (Manzanilla), and Neil (Kada) he replied.  
"You can certainly come if someone drops out", which left it a bit up in the air.

I lobbied a couple of other likely lads, got a couple of maybe`s, went home feeling glum at the thought of spending my holiday day sailing on the river.

26th November, Club Night.  
"Hi Peter, cruise still on?" I queried, "no, I'm too busy, and I'm starting with a cold," he replied. Sure to be someone available now, I thought.  
One by one the original "Christmas Cruisers" declined my offer of substituting "Eclipse" for "Heather", maybe an open cockpit in December was not as inviting as "Heather's" wheel house. I was down to two possibles, Chris Formby, and Neil.

Neil arrived, I played it cool, "What are you drinking Neil ?", "Southern Comfort please" he cheerily replied. I was halfway there. "Peter's cruise is cancelled" I informed him, "but if you fancy going in "Eclipse", I'm game".

We chatted for a few minutes about possible destinations, then Chris joined us.  
"Neil and I are going to "Caernarfon" next week, how do you fancy joining us?", I asked. "I think I've got Osmosis" Chris replied, "I've got some ointment for that," quipped Neil.

A discussion on the detection and cure of Osmosis then developed, with no further mention of the cruise. 10.30pm arrived and it was time for Margaret and I to leave.  
"Are you sure you want to go, it could be bloody cold you know!," said Neil, "Don't worry, "Eclipse" has central heating, the weather reports good, and Margaret will bring us back if we get stuck," I promised. We left, with Chris saying he would let me know, and Neil as a definite. Things were looking up.

Saturday 29th November.  
Chris had left a message on my answer phone, saying he was sorry, but his affliction prevented him coming with us.

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Sunday 30th November, went down to the Marina early to try to bum a ride on one of the racers, approached Colin, who, in his usual "Diplomatic" manner informed me that after the incident with "Myth of Minto" "I'm not having any F.....g amateurs on my F.....g boat again," then spent the next ten minutes telling me how he wasn't to blame for his crushed pushpit.

Colin left for the lock, then Neil arrived, "fancy coming out with me," I asked, "sure, we'll see what "Eclipse" can do, we'll follow the fleet.

We made our way to the pound, on the way Neil gave me his version of the crushed pushpit incident. We arrived in the pound, "Zuma" was circling like a vulture waiting for the gates to open. "Stand to Colin" shouted Neil as we approached. No response. "Stand to, Starboard tack," called Neil. "Stand f.....g to, starboard f.....g tack, what the f..k do you mean," said Colin. I could practically see the steam coming out of his ears.

In deference to the, religious or faint hearted readers, I will draw a veil over what was said next, suffice it to say, Colin was not amused.

Neil and I went out on the next lock, and apart from getting our-selves in irons in front of the fleet in full cry, had a reasonable sail. We parted with arrangements made to meet just before high tide next day.

Monday 1st December.  
The drive down from Oldham was far from promising, the weather was dull wet and cold. I arrived about ten intending to fill up with gas and diesel. I went over to Robbins Marine and found it had shut down. I then went to the barge, which was in a state of turmoil as they were still moving in. Luckily, they had a bottle of butane, so I was fixed up.

I dipped the fuel tank and was pleasantly surprised to find it 3/4 full, about 15 gallons, with two five gallon plastic containers, we should have more than enough.  
"Eclipse" has two water tanks, with change-over valves to allow one to empty before changing over to the full one. As I had filled up recently, I was happy we would have enough.

I stowed my gear, switched on the "Eberspacher" and waited for Neil.  
The weather looked worse than ever, I could have sworn there was snow in the air, I was almost wishing Neil wouldn't turn up.  
High tide was about 12.30, at 20 minutes past, Neil pulled into the car park. He came down the ramp with his bag in hand, I new we were on!

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Neil jumped onto "Kada" and got his gear together, stowed it on "Eclipse" and off we set. Jeremy was on the lock and wished us a good trip. It seemed strange coming out of the lock and turning right instead of left.

I waited until we were on the river before showing Neil the weather fax I had got the night before, it was less than ideal. Neil shrugged, and said "kettle on, auto helm on in that order". We were off.

The weather was dry, dull and the river reasonably smooth. On the way to Brazil, we dodged the ferry, then had tea and shortbread biscuits shortly after passing the Rock lighthouse, Neil pressed three red 10's on the autohelm and we headed into the Rock Channel.

"Eclipse" is fitted with a Magellan Nav 600 GPS/Chart Plotter, I'd previously entered the route through the channel from the last edition of Grapevine, and activated it as we entered the channel. Neil was very sceptical using the plotter, and preferred to use his own instincts, however, as the visibility was only about 1/2 mile, we compromised, and used both. Neil's route was about 250 yards to port of the plotter, and didn't pass over a wreck which the plotter route did.

Eventually, we sighted the marker buoy the club had put down, it was still firmly fixed, and well weeded up below the waterline. Our next waypoint was the sewer buoy, this came into view, we were safely through the channel.

Neil's scepticism with the plotter was declining, I entered a route for the West Constable, spliced the mainbrace (got the whisky out) and we settled down for a three hour trip to the Orme. The wind, what little there was, was astern about 5 knots, just enough to fill the main, the Lister chugged away, dulling our senses.

About 1500hrs I went below to prepare our first meal, it consisted of tins raided from Neil's galley, chunky stewed steak, new potatoes and peas, I also had a tin of soup. The steak, potatoes and peas went into one pan, the soup into the other. By gum, it tasted good.

Dusk was fast approaching as we sighted the lights of Llandudno, it was also getting colder, Neil went below to wash up, which set the pattern for the rest of the trip, I cooked, he washed up, which suited me.

We sighted "The Constable" we were dead on course. It was now low water, so we set course for Puffin, Neil was by this time fully confident with the plotter. We lowered the main as the light went completely and motored on making about 5 knots over the ground.

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About 1900 hrs Puffin was on our port beam and we could see the light flashing on Anglesey marking the channel. It was now pitch black, no moon, with a few stars showing between the clouds. We carried on the same course, the black outline of Anglesey looming large dead ahead.

Puffin was about 500 yards on our port beam, I could tell by Neil's silence, he was concentrating on negotiating the channel. We were still on autohelm, Neil was using his pocket torch to set the buttons. The atmosphere was tense to say the least.

We were now heading directly for the light on Anglesey, I had plugged in the searchlight and was lighting up the rocks and breakers on Puffin. I had done this trip in July after leaving Conway in a thunderstorm, so I thought I knew the route.

"There's the next light" I called to Neil, "turn now." Silence, no response from Neil. I repeated my request for a coarse alteration to port. Still no response from Neil, I could now see the stripes on the light on Anglesey, we were in the middle of the channel, rocks and breakers on both sides, despite the cold I started to sweat.

I swung the searchlight onto the Puffin shore, "just swing that back again" said Neil cool as a cucumber, the beam highlighted the jagged rocks and crashing surf. "Just go to the right again," said Neil. "There" said Neil triumphantly, "can you see it?". "See what?, I asked, "the red can" Neil said, somewhat exasperated that I couldn't see what he wanted me to see. I panned the beam in the general direction he was pointing, there on the end of a line of rocks was a pole with a red can on top.

We turned towards the next red flashing channel buoy, and I heaved a sigh of relief, we shot through the channel with only 50 yards to spare on either side. I slapped Neil on the back, if he'd listened to me we'd have been on the rocks.

Once through the channel, the water calmed off dramatically, we now had a confusion of lights, making the channel lights difficult to pick out. Neil closed the throttle to 1000rpm and we made our way cautiously to the next red buoy.

Our mood had quickly changed from apprehension to complacency, the next buoy winked invitingly.

We were off Gallows Point, the echo sounder alarm came on reading 1.5 mtrs, we couldn't see the next light, "Neil" I said quietly, "we're not moving," "You're right, we're aground, put the kettle on," was his answer.

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I went below to check the chart, Neil engaged reverse, set the throttle to 1500 rpm, and sat back. I got out the large scale chart of the straits and got Neil to give me the lat` and long from the GPS. The plotter was showing us pointing in the opposite direction because we were stopped. I drew the lines with the Breton plotter, and fixed our position.

According to the chart, there should have been a buoy close by, there wasn't. I checked the almanac, turned to the page for the straits, "DO NOT ATTEMPT THIS PASSAGE IN DARKNESS AS SOME BUOYS ARE UNLIT OR MISSING".

Great, I thought.

I sensed the hull was afloat again, I rushed into the cockpit, we were now going forward again and off the sand.

The chart plotter was still showing us on the sandbank, we could see uncovered sand in the light from the searchlight astern of us, "You know where we're going now?," I asked Neil, "sure I do," was his jaunty reply, KEEERUNCH, we were aground good and proper this time. "Get out of that," I said. We drank our tea, allowing our eyes to get used to our surroundings, luckily we were on a rising tide in a bilge keeler, all we needed to do was wait.

We finished the tea, and I took the helm, I increased the revs and swung the rudder, "Eclipse" responded and I headed for the shore, where I thought the channel should be. Luckily I was right. We had 3mtrs under us and increasing. Neil said he could see the next light, so I headed for it. It was now 20.00hrs, I'd missed Coronation Street. Who needs it though, when you can get your jollies like we were.

We could now see Bangor Pier, Neil took over the helm while I got out my best boathook. If you have ever struggled picking up a mooring, take my advice, get one of these, Telesonic call it a "Maxi Moor GrabIt". Basically, it's a conventional pole, with a stainless steel bracket on the end. The hook is a large snaplink that slides into the bracket, in an open position. a length of warp with a loop at one end is fixed to the snaplink.

Thread the warp under the pulpit, place the loop over the forward mooring cleat.

Slide the snaplink onto the pole and hold the pole and warp together as you would a conventional pole. One word of warning, if you get one of these, drill the pole and fit a lanyard to the end and over your wrist. The first time I used mine, I dropped the pole into the water and lost it.

Next, simply place the snaplink over the pick up on the buoy and release the warp, the snaplink slides off the pole and locks onto the buoy, the warp is already over your cleat, allowing you plenty of time to store the pole, shift position and haul in the mooring. Trust me, it works.

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20.30 hrs 1/12/97

Bangor Pier.

We battened down for the night, the water was calm, outside temperature -6 degrees Centigrade, inside + 20, thank god for Eberspacher.

Distance logged 52nm.

Time. including time aground 8hrs.

**End of part one. ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ.**

## Part Two

The Swellies.

Time 06.30hrs 2/12/97

Place. Somewhere off Bangor Pier.

Tweet Tweet, Tweet Tweet, Tweet Tweet, the sound of my mobile broke through the layers of unconsciousness, I leaped out of the forward bunk to take the wake up call from Margaret. I'd spent a fairly peaceful night, apart from having to get up four times for a pee, must have been the cold.

Neil shot into consciousness, the spectre of me naked, apart from my boxers, talking to a mobile phone, was enough to wake the dead. "I think I've got hypothermia of the legs" he moaned. I'd switched off the heating to conserve the batteries before we settled down for the night. My breath was forming a fog in the cabin, it was pretty cool.

Neil started to uncoil from the foetal position he'd spent the night in. "My snoring didn't disturb you did it?," I asked, "Eric, you could snore for England", he replied.

"You didn't have such a good night then?" I asked.

"Didn't you hear the banging in the night?," he countered. "what banging" I queried.

Neil had been awake listening to my snores, when something started banging the back of the boat. He had got dressed, gone into the cockpit thinking we had lost the mooring, only to find the rudder banging against the transom as the boat turned on the tide. Instead of fitting the purpose made shock cord loops, he'd untied the main sheet and strapped the tiller with about ten turns around the pushpit, he certainly wasn't going to let that disturb him again.

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I switched on the heating and cooker, the temperature started to rise. "Bacon and eggs OK Neil?," "Must have my Weetabix first" he replied.

Neil staggered to the heads, I finished setting the table. Weetabix, Cornflakes, bacon and fried egg, swilled down with a pot of Typhoo, we were ready to tackle the Atlantic, well, at least the Swellies.

We cast off about 0830 hrs and motored on at about 3 knots. Neil pointed out all the interesting features as we made our way to the Swellies, the morning was cold, with the occasional hail shower to keep us awake. We rounded a bend, there in front of us was the famous Menai Bridge, we argued whether it was Telford, Brunell or Stevenson who had designed it.

This was my first time through the Swellies, I'd heard and read lots of tales of people coming to grief there, so I was a little apprehensive. Neil was his usual unflappable self, a ready quipped reply, to every question. I felt in safe hands, then I remembered the previous night, and going aground.

We made for the centre arch and the bridge passed high overhead. Neil altered course to pass to port of the perch marking the Swellies Rock, the far bridge was now in view. This was easy I thought. "See those leading lights" said Neil, "what lights" I replied. "Are you b...y blind" he chuckled. "Remember, this is my first time," I answered in my best Virginal voice.

My eyes had been on the bridge, Neil told me to look at water level, and I spotted what he wanted me to see, two small pylons with pink looking lights on top. "Get those in line" he said, handing me the tiller. I lined up the leading lights, we chugged on. "Now, see the white triangle on that rock to port," he said, I nodded in the affirmative. "When it's a beam, head for the centre arch."

Five minutes later, we were through, easy peasy, lemon squeezy, I couldn't see what all

the fuss was about. "On the way back, we'll go the exciting route," said Neil. He then related a story of how he deliberately went the wrong side of the Swellies Rock and caused the crew of an approaching yacht to have a seizure trying to tell him he was going the wrong way.

The sun was starting to break through, we could see snow on the mountains, we saluted Lord Nelson and lowered the ensign in respect. Neil pointed out Port Dinorwic on the port beam, I went below to call the Marina at Caernarfon, without success. I then tried the mobile, again, no success. "What are we going to do if they're shut?," I asked Neil, "don't worry" he replied, unflappable as ever.

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Plas Menai came and went, we were very close now. I went below once more and tried the radio and phone, no success. I went topsides, just in time to see the lights on the Marina entrance, three greens, I heaved a sigh of relief.

I took over the helm, turned to port, closed the throttle and glided in through the entrance. We were just in time to see the marina manager running down the pier to meet us. Apparently, the marina had gone over to channel 80 since Neil's last visit.

We paid £6 for an out of season 24 hours, got the hosepipe and washed off the weed from our mooring at Bangor, I also took the opportunity to fill the water tanks with Welsh water. Neil went to the porta cabin to use the facilities. I had suggested a light lunch at the nearby Safeways, Neil agreed, so we made ourselves respectable and set off. We detoured round the fishing harbour, through the town and finally arrived at Safeways.

We both settled for filled jacket potatoes and salad, with a cup of tea and a cake for afters. As this was the last chance to get some food for the following day, we scoured the shelves for something quick and easy to prepare. Neil got a Fray Bentos tinned savoury mince pie, I got Chicken Korma and rice.

On the way back we called at the Black Boy for a sample of the promised delights of the evening. I was a little disappointed, it didn't match Neil's description. We ended up listening to an eighty year old Irishman's life history, we made our excuses and left at twenty years into his story.

We returned to the boat for an afternoon zizz. I decided to go to the porta cabin for the three esses, ready for the swinging delights of a night at the Black Boy. Neil had built it up, so I expected a good old rave up.

On my return, Neil was fiddling with his pocket torch, "The bulb's knackered," Neil complained. "I'll have to get one from town." "I'll come with you," I said.

So began the search for The Holy (Bulb) Graille. We hadn't gone 50 yards when the hail came down once more.

I hadn't thought Neil obsessive up to now, I soon changed my mind.

If we went in one shop, we went in ten. the further we went, the wetter we got. Apparently, Neil's torch was obsolete just after they phased out gas mantles. Finally, out of despair, we went in Caernarfon's version of B&Q, which looked more Arkwright's open all hours. Hallelujah, they had one. Or to be correct, in packets of two. Neil made an offer for one, I hid round the corner with embarrassment. Neil finally agreed to buy two, he reluctantly handed over the 80p and we left. We hadn't gone 10 yards when Neil said "hang on, I want to try it." Luckily it worked. We returned to the boat.

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7 o'clock came, dressed in our finery, clean shirt and knickers, we set out for the Black Boy. To say it was throbbing, would be an overstatement. about six or seven locals were rabbiting away in Gaelic, the highlight of the day being Farming Today on the telly.

We both ordered gammon, chips and peas, Neil's with pineapple, mine with egg.

The meals arrived, both swamped with unwanted salad and raw onions. We picked our way through the vegetation, down to the gammon and chips. It wasn't bad for the money. We finished our meal, Neil had a Southern Comfort, I had a Glen Fiddich. The open fire warmed us through. This was the life!

It got to 21.00 hrs, the promised night life hadn't arrived, we bid the landlord goodnight, and made our way back to "Eclipse". after a night-cap and a call to our wives. We settled down for the night. I'd lent Neil one of my sleeping bags to prevent a repeat of the previous nights hypothermia. Tomorrow's plan was to make our way to the back of the Orm, anchor there, and set off back to Liverpool early Thursday.

### **Part Three the Return.**

Captain's Log  
Star Date 3/12/97  
Place Caernarfon Marina  
Time 06.30hrs  
Cabin Temperature 10c

Outside Temperature -4c

Tweet Tweet, Tweet Tweet, Tweet Tweet, Margaret's alarm call on the mobile. I was already up, switching on the heating and lighting the cooker. Neil was giving his impersonation of a bear waking from hibernation. "Morning Neil" "Morning Eric", "sleep well?" I enquired. "If there's ever an Olympic event for snoring Eric, enter, you'll get a gold for sure," he replied.

Neil decided to go for the three esses while I got breakfast, he slid out the washboards with difficulty, they were jammed with ice. He climbed on deck, to find it was covered with 1/2 inch of ice. With a warning to be careful, Neil set off to climb the Matterhorn (the ramp to the Quay). 10 minutes later, he was back looking shaken, "I've forgotten my clean knickers" was the excuse.

Apparently, the whole of the quay and ramp was a sheet of ice, the ramp was at an angle of about 35 degrees. He collected his clean drawers and set off once

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more for the porta cabin. "Hang on, let me get the video camera, I can see one for You've Been Framed" I said.

Neil gingerly made his way onto the pontoon, and commenced climbing the ramp. Unfortunately, the camera lens steamed up and I didn't get the shot.

I learned later why Neil was shaken, on my trip to the porta cabin, I struggled to the top of the ramp, there at the top was a large hand print in the frost. Neil must have gone flying at the top, which must have rattled his old bones.

I checked the fuel etc. while Neil washed up, it took 20 litres to bring the level back to where we started, oil was fine, three turns on the stern greaser, we were ready for off.

The plan was to anchor at the back of the Orme, Neil cast off and we said farewell to Caernarfon, slipped through the entrance and out into the Straits.

It was bright and sunny, with a mist at water level and bloody cold. We could see snow on the Welsh mountains. I suggested we call at Port Dinorwic to re-fill the empty spare diesel can. Neil said we would miss the tidal gate in the Swellies if we dallied, we pressed on.

I called Holyhead Coastguard on the VHF, and told them of our intention, we were gliding along with the tide at about 2 knots. "I'd better check the anchor" I said to Neil.

Since buying "Eclipse" in June, I hadn't had the opportunity to anchor, as far as I knew there should be 30 mtrs of chain and 10 mtrs of warp, if the inventory was correct.

I made my way to the bow, released the hawse pipe cover and started to pull out the chain.

I soon had a substantial pile of chain and warp on the fore deck. I couldn't fathom (no pun intended) the previous owners markings, but from past experience, we weren't short.

I made sure the warp was securely fixed in the locker, then proceeded to try to feed it back down the hawse pipe. The locker isn't very deep on the Griffon, I had to take my gloves off to make any progress, this also meant kneeling down, with my nose about 6 inches from the hawse pipe. It was like threading wet string through a needle.

The glassy smooth water was sliding past about three feet below my face as I concentrated on the task in hand. Suddenly, I sensed a large green mass on the starboard side, my head shot up, we were heading straight for one of the channel buoys. I jumped to my feet, "Neil, Neil what the bl...g hell are you doing". No sign of him. I turned back, ready to fend off the approaching menace, to my relief, it slipped by on the starboard side, with about six inches to spare.

"Neil, where the hell are you?", I shouted. 10 seconds passed. Slowly, his little bob hatted head appeared above the sprayhood, a mischievous grin on his face. "Bet that woke you up", he smirked. He'd obviously been feeling lonely in the cockpit, and thought he'd have some fun. I could have strangled him, somehow, I had to get my own back.

I'd persuaded Neil we should go back through the Swellies by the conventional route, I took the helm as we passed under the first bridge. I lined the boat up with the leading lights and headed for the perch. It was quite awkward trying to steer ahead while keeping the lights in line astern.

We passed the perch and made for the second bridge, 20 minutes, it was all over. I videoed the route, any one contemplating a visit and wanting to see the route we took, let me know. The club has video facilities and I can bring the tape down if needed.

The trip back through the straits was much less traumatic in daylight, we passed the pier at Bangor and the spot where we went aground. Neil suggested we give Puffin sound a miss, and make straight for the Orm. We needed to get to, I think, buoy number five before changing course for the Orm. This can only be

done at the correct state of tide, or you'll end up on the sand.

I watched the echo sounder like a hawk, as we motor sailed across Conway bay. We met our first yacht of the trip as we crossed the bay, they had come out of Conway and around Puffin. They eyed us sceptically as we took the shorter route.

We were within a mile of the Orm, the area of sea below the cliffs was far from smooth, "how do you fancy going back to Liverpool in one leg?", I asked Neil. "What, pickup a mooring at Tranmere, you mean", he replied. "I don't see us having a quiet night there", I said, pointing to the swell. "OK, your the skipper, lets make for Liverpool.

We were both surprised how much the sea had got up in the 36 hours since we passed the Orm on the way out. The wind was blowing Nor` Nor` West, gusting from 12 to 25 knots. It was lumpy to say the least.

Because the tide wouldn't be right for the Rock Channel, I set the course on the plotter for Q5, with the wind and tide against we were going to have to motor sail.

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The plotter gave us an ETA at Q5 of between eight and ten hours 21.00hrs, this was due to the fluctuating speed over the ground of between 3 and 5 knots. The tide was due to turn at about 19.00hrs, which would push us down the Queens channel.

We were sailing as close as possible to the wind, keeping as straight a line as possible to ensure the shortest distance. The miles crawled by, Llandudno lights were coming on as we passed the Constable, the clouds were building and the temperature dropped rapidly as the sun set. We were both huddled in the front corners of the cockpit, trying to keep out of the wind. I was wishing I'd put my thermals on.

We were level with Rhyl, Neil had been unusually quiet, maybe he was wishing we were anchored off the Orm, better still at home in bed. I know I would have preferred a nice warm bed.

Rhyl took ages to pass. On the plotter the ETA to Q5 had gone up to 23.00hrs. "Fancy your tea Neil?", I enquired, breaking about a 20 minute silence. "To tell you the truth, I feel nauseous" he replied. He looked cold and dejected, "go and have an hour in your bunk" I suggested, no reply.

It was pitch black now, the clouds were scudding across the starry sky, this must have been what it was like on the Murmansk Run, during the war. I almost expected a periscope to come up alongside us. 18.00hrs, Rhyl was still abeam. A coaster out of the Dee estuary passed on the starboard side, lightening the monotony slightly. I cast my mind back a few weeks to the Sunday afternoon film on the box, The Cruel Sea. Brrrrr. it was bloody freezing.

Neil must have pondering my suggestion to go below, "I'm going for forty winks, give me a call if you get a problem" he said as he climbed down into the main cabin. I was on my own. He hadn't been gone 10 minutes when the genny started to flap, we were off the wind. I checked the course, we were dead on line for Q5, the wind had swung 25 degrees to the east, and was practically on the nose. Bollocks.

Peep peep peep, the GPS plotter had lost signal, what would happen next?, I wondered. I tightened the genny, this had some effect, but it was still flapping. I was loath to alter course to port to get back on the wind for two reasons, 1. it would put us in the shipping lane, 2. it would increase the distance to travel.

Both sails were flapping now, that was the bad news, the good news, the GPS plotter had found some satellites. I uncleated the headsail furling line, wishing

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I'd fitted the new one before we'd set out, braced myself in the pitching cockpit and pulled for all I was worth.

No problem, the sail furled. I tightened the main sheet and centralised the boom. So far so good.

Peep, peep, peep, the bloody satellites had disappeared again. To cap it all, there was a fender over the side. I edged down the side deck, and flipped the flying fender over the guard rail, and staggered back to the safety of the cockpit.

Suddenly, out of the corner of my eye, I saw a blaze of lights, was it The Love Boat?, was it the Britannia? no it was only a gas rig. The plotter was back on line, I settled back as North Hoyle drifted by. ETA at Q5 was back to 21.00hrs.

"Everything all right Eric" came a voice from the blackness of the cabin, I nearly shot out of my skin. Neil climbed the steps into the cockpit. It had only been a couple of hours, but it had seemed like a lifetime.

"Feeling better" I enquired, "not much" he replied checking the plotter. "Where are we?"

"I think that's the Bar over there", pointing off the port bow. I enlarged the scale on the plotter, the Bar light popped up at 5 miles screen width, making it about 3 miles away.

We both stared ahead, Q5 couldn't be far away, I'd deliberately kept to port of the track on the plotter, not wanting to drift onto the training wall. The confusion of lights ahead made it difficult to pick up Q5, I didn't want to go down to check the chart and spoil my night vision.

"We're in the channel", Neil said, he'd spotted a mid channel buoy, so we turned to starboard, making our way towards the Pool. "Fancy your tea now?", I enquired, "aye, go on then, I think I can eat something now," he grudgingly admitted. I shot down into the cabin and made my way to the heads, I was bursting.

Both meals had a cooking time of 20 minutes, I was glad we had something simple to prepare, I took the tin opener to Neil's pie, popped it in the oven, and filled a pan to cook my boil in the bag Korma. My body started to unfreeze. I went topsides again, it was club night, I suggested we might get Paul to open the lock for us. It was now 20.30hrs, Neil suggested ringing Colin, to get him to ask Paul if we could get a lock in. Neil rang and Colin agreed to oblige.

My Korma was ready, Neil's pie still looked anaemic, I tucked in and woofed it down in very short order, it scored 5 out of 10 on the Egon Shepherd scale. I didn't care, it was hot and I felt it go all the way down. I put the kettle on and

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checked Neil's pie, the crust was just beginning to brown. I served it up, and took over the helm.

Neil had spotted three ships coming down the channel from Liverpool, to say he's seven years older than me, his eyes are certainly better, must be all that clean living! We followed the channel, keeping close to the starboard side in case anything was following us in.

We finished our meal and tidied away, we were flying up river. I got the Scotch out for the last time as we passed Brazil. "There's a ship across the channel ahead", said Neil, "I'll call Mersey Radio," I replied, I wished I hadn't. They answered my call immediately, the ship ahead, they told us was waiting for the Ro Ro ferry to exit the dock, then proceeded to give us a bollocking for not advising them we were in the channel. I blamed Neil, him being the senior man.

The waterfront was ablaze with lights, I took some last video and still shots, and packed the cameras away. The Liver Building passed slowly by, we were an hour early. I rang the Marina and spoke to Paul to make sure the message had got through. He said he would be down at 23.30hrs. Neil was at the helm as we passed the lock gates. He swung "Eclipse" through 180 degrees and shut down to a tickover as we stemmed the tide opposite the lock gates.

We sat there for 3/4hr discussing the trip, how good our beds would feel, and tidying ship. We heard shouting from the side of the lock, would you believe it, two anglers were warning us their lines were out. And people say we're mad!

The Lock lights came on, the bridge opened, "Eclipse" Marina calling Eclipse", Paul's voice came over the VHF, "Marina this is "Eclipse" over," I replied. The lock gates opened, we slid through and tied up, ten minutes later, we were in Coburg dock tied up along side "Kada". I checked the log, 70nm 15 hrs run, not bad for a near twenty year old Griffon.

I got my revenge on Neil for his trick on the Straits, as he struggled out of "Eclipse`s" cabin, with his bag ,duvet and wet weather gear, he slipped and went head first into the cockpit, he must have been knackered. Luckily I caught him saving him from any injury, apart from his pride. We struggled to our respective cars, shook hands, and headed for home. Would I do it again at this time of year.????????? of course I would!. Roll on 1998.

Post script, one week later, club night, Neil and I were giving our versions of the trip, on his way home from the Marina, he was stopped by the Police and breathalysed, luckily, it was negative!.

***Eric Shepherd, late of "Eclipse" Now residing in Corsica on a Moody 40 named "Fox Hunt" shortly to be re-named.***

### **Pictures from Eric**



***Calvi Marina & Citadel***



***Only kidding it's this one!***



***Snow capped mountains***

## **"So what kind of summer did you have?"**

**From Doreen & Andrew Smith of Red Dawn**

Too much wind, not enough wind, wind in the wrong direction!

How did you find this season and what did you think of the weather forecasts?

We had great plans that came to nought. This year was to be Ireland and/or the Isle of Man. We got as far as Porth Dinllaen but still managed 600miles in the season.

The first notable weekend was the early May Bank holiday when four boats set off from Conwy for Cemaes Bay. It was a beautiful day with light winds. The beach BBQ was great. Brian now has a BBQ fleece - having been alight once it won't matter much if it goes up again! A bit of a swell on the way back to the boats could have been put down to one glass too many, however in the morning things were no better so when Nyamadzi lifted anchor to return to Conwy we decided to follow. The swell should have told us something the forecast had not. Then came the radio message, 'there are bloody big waves out here.' Next minute we were examining the sky and the bow of the boat above the spray hood! Things settled down a bit after Middle Mouse. Anyone who wonders what six hours of sea-sickness feels like – look no further.

Never daunted for long we set off again at the end of May for the Straits and Caernarfon. How have you found the forecasts this year? One of F5 to F6 turned into F10 returning across the Lavan Sands. Follow me said our good neighbour. The problem was we had no idea which way he was trying to point. Thanks Murray, it was good to see you out there.

The beginning of July saw our first attempt at Ireland. We shared our plans, and waved goodbye to 'E' leg. Embarrassingly, an hour later we were back. Too much wind and big waves. Next day we got to Holyhead and the following morning after two days of changing forecasts we set off. Three hours later we were nearer the Isle of Man than Ireland, but with no plans to go there, sanity prevailed and we turned back inspecting, en-route, a sea-cat ferry closer than I ever want to see one again!

The end of July was our chance at a second attempt. The forecasts were as usual, too

much wind, not enough wind, wind in the wrong direction and never settled enough to make a decision.

We set off with Nyamadzi with a plan to go up the Straits and make a decision then. The first day we set off and did 3 x 360 degree turns before making the decision to return to Conwy – far too much wind! Next day we made the Straits and tied up at Menai Pier. The forecast

wasn't settled, but we set off for Pwllheli. Dark skies, strong winds and wind over tide in the Bar caused a few 360 degree turns while we



pondered the delights of Caernarfon versus the Bar. Well you can guess which one we chose! Please visit the Royal Welsh you will be made most welcome.

Blue skies - now for Pwllheli. Not enough wind! However, a beach BBQ followed by a dinghy race at Porth Dinllaen made for a great day. Another poor forecast, so back to Port Dinorwic where there is always a warm welcome and a couple of good places to eat. Then back to Conwy a day early because of a bad forecast that turned into a beautiful day!

What made us think the August bank holiday would be different? A circumnavigation of Anglesey ended up as another trip up the Straits, due to the forecast. Never the less we ended up with a good sail and when the sun came out three boats headed for a beach BBQ at Abermenai. It's a beautiful spot and ideal for a BBQ and games on the beach. The hospitality on Diablo rounded off another great day, but as low water approached Nyamadzi and Red Dawn were inspected as this was a new anchorage. Imagine then the horror when we returned to Red Dawn an hour later to find her listing peacefully to starboard. How quickly one sobers up! Thanks to all for getting us afloat again.



Picnic at [Cemaes Bay](#)

As for the winter lift out trip to Dinas – I don't even want to think about it! The F5 or F6 forecast was top of F8. Too much wind and big waves. Two very big waves! A cup of tea seemed a good idea until the wind caught the flame and we almost had a small fire in the galley! We lost the boat hook but managed to retrieve it first time. It's all in a days sail!

Are we looking forward to next season. What do you think?

Watch out on the notice board if you dare to join us.

Red Dawn. Out.

## Pictures from Red Dawn





# Annual Dinner Dance



To be held at the  
**Mill Hotel**  
**Chester**

**Saturday 2nd February 2002**

Why not come along and enjoy an informal evening with fellow berth holders and friends.

Dinner Bed and Breakfast Saturday evening only

	<u>Single</u>	<u>Double/Twin</u>
Standard Room	£72.00	£106.00
Triple/Family/Suite		
Business Class	£80.00	£115.00
Premier Class	£85.00	£120.00
Club Class	£90.00	£125.00
Dinner Dance only	£22.50	

To book please contact the hotel direct and say you are from the Conwy Berth holders Association.

Telephone No. 01244 350035 (01244 345635) Internet:  
[www.millhotel.com](http://www.millhotel.com)

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