



Prawle Point

No: 31

'eyes along the coast'

Autumn 2008

The Funchal 500 tall ships regatta



WHEN scanning through telescopes the ever-changing panorama from Prawle Point, just occasionally watchkeepers are rewarded with the heart-lifting sight of a tall ship, ghostly on the horizon.

There then follows the challenge of correctly identifying the rig. On Saturday, September 13, a fine range of tall ships sailed in all their glorious variety past an estimated 130,000 spectators. The four-day celebration culminated in a parade of sail out past Pendennis and St Mawes castles, built by Henry VIII to guard the entrance to Falmouth's vast natural harbour, towards St Anthony Head, where several vessels had already gathered. The sheer scale of the larger craft against this stretch of coastline could be appreciated with amazement – all else seemed dwarfed, and, as the fleet turned to head west, the full parade passed close enough for each vessel to be admired, photographed and enthused over by the hundreds enjoying sunshine and picnics on Rosemullion Head, our chosen vantage point.

Class A lead boat was the Russian *Mir*, Falmouth's most regular tall ship visitor, with three mighty masts all carrying square sails interspersed with 10 or more 'kites' or triangular jibs and staysails. Known by the surprisingly unprepossessing term 'ship', albeit a 'fully rigged ship', she was a hugely impressive sight with all canvas set due to prevailing light airs. A barquentine followed – the Polish *Pogoria*, built of steel in Gdansk, also three-masted but carrying square sails only on the foremast, main and mizzen

being fore and aft rigged. *Astrid* sailed next past the headland – a brig from the Netherlands sporting five square sails from her two masts, plus jibs and staysails. Another barquentine, the *Kaliakra* from Bulgaria, produced a ripple of recognition from the crowd keen to identify with help from the very informative programme, then yet another, the distinctive *Shabab Oman*, built of wood and bearing the national symbol of red dagger and crossed swords on her larger sails, although originating from Scotland as the *Captain Scot*.

A fine, three-masted schooner with clipper bow from Uruguay, the *Capitan Miranda* presented the next test for rig cognoscenti. By way of a change, *Challengers 3* and *4* from Class D sneaked in here – Bermudian cutters of 22m built in 2000 to a design developed for racing round the world against prevailing winds and currents with state-of-the-art navigation suites, yet looking tiny and insignificant in such tall, majestic company.

Two-masted gaff schooner *Far Barcelona* from Class B followed. She was originally a Norwegian jaegt or jakt now under Spanish commission, a descendent of the Viking longship with high stern and stem. The *Alexander von Humboldt*, of chequered history, next paraded past, her unique bilious green sails having caught the eye hours before. She was built as a trading vessel, became a lightship, was acquired by the STA of Germany under the name of *Kiel*, rammed by a 20,000-ton bulk carrier, repaired and converted to a three-masted barque, a rig differing from the barquentine by being square-rigged on both fore and main masts, fore and aft rigged

on the mizzen. Bringing up the rear with great panache was the Mexican *Cuauhtemoc*, another three-masted barque, dressed overall, loud music playing, gun fire and smoke issuing from her stern quarter – a windjammer from Bilbao now in the care of the Mexican navy, twice winner of the Cutty Sark Trophy and current winner of the award given to the ship contributing most to the local community. Whether it was due to her exuberant noise, her gaily fluttering flags or the fact she was last ship past we knew not, but she attracted a great retinue of supporting craft and huge applause from ashore.

Not all competitors joined the parade but by 5pm all were assembled three miles off on the starting line, flanked by *HMS Cattistock* and the coastguard salvage tug *Anglian Princess*, amid hundreds of wellwishers afloat. So many young people of differing nationalities, cultures, religions and social backgrounds set out for a life-changing experience with a stop at Ilhavo in Portugal and finishing with more festivities in Funchal, Madeira, celebrating the 500th anniversary of the first settlement there.

Although it took over an hour to leave the parking fields on account of previous wet conditions, the organisation was impressive at Rosemullion. There were stewards aplenty, ambulances in readiness with emergency access gateways marked, first aid facilities and staff, as well as cordoned areas for helicopter landing. Casualties occurred at other venues and the Falmouth lifeboat was called to cruise ship *Saga Ruby* on scene to transfer a Filipino crewman to hospital, while a crew member on *Pelican* was treated on land for a head injury before being allowed to continue in the race.

Jenny Brown

Ten-year medal as Gordon Mandy retires

GORDON Mandy was thanked by national chairman Jon Gifford on September 11 for his many years of dedicated service to NCI Prawle Point, and presented with a retirement certificate.

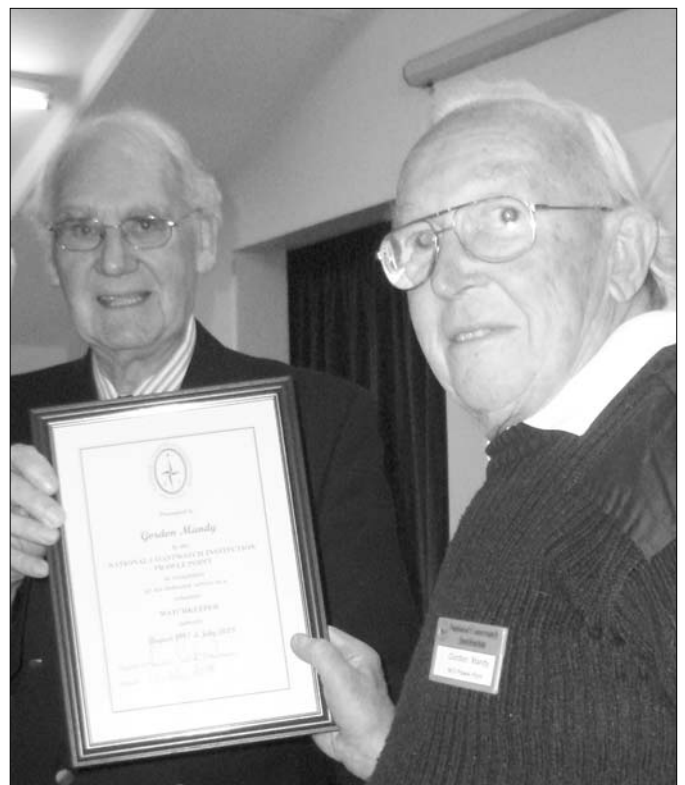
He also received the 10-year medal as he was one of our inaugural watchkeepers, having trained through the winter from 1997, keeping a single-handed first watch on Good Friday in 1998.

He has enjoyed very many duties in the lookout, even when logging 130 entries during a lone watch, though incidents were few. He recalls being asked by Brixham coastguard if he would mind watching a casualty's lights as night fell. Gordon willingly remained on duty until 11pm when the trimaran, becalmed and with engine failure, was eventually rescued.

On another occasion he became the go-between for Salcombe lifeboat and a 35ft motor cruiser, whose February venture out past the Point shook up residual winter dirt in the fuel tank with inevitable consequence.

The passing by of a two-thirds emerged submarine was another remembered sight.

As a civil engineer, Gordon worked in the Middle East and South Africa before retiring in Kingsbridge. His four-berth catamaran gave him many happy, often single-handed, cruises along the south coast and across to the Isles of Scilly, but now gardening and stewarding at the Reel Cinema have become his chosen pursuits and, of course, social connections with Prawle Point as auxiliary watchkeeper still willing to fill in a gap or two if asked. Gordon earns the thanks and congratulations of the station.



Friends Of Prawle Point

THE friends organised an open day on August 20 for visitors and locals to become acquainted with the work of NCI Prawle Point.

With the relentless rain that ruined many summer events and visibility down to about 10 yards, only the hardiest made it to the lookout. At Chivelstone Community Hall, however, many enjoyed delicious cream teas, met up with friends and examined display boards depicting past and present activities at Prawle Point, while watchkeepers explained the policy of eyes and ears along the coast. The FOPP team was kept on the run all afternoon and managed to raise £350.

A musical evening on Friday, October 17, is FOPP's next event, to be held in Charleton Village Hall at 7.30pm, when keyboard artiste Tony Henderson plays popular favourites, and light refreshments will be served -- bring your own alcoholic drinks if desired. Jennifer Ashby and her friend Jason will perform during the two intervals. Tickets, price £7.50, are available now.

The 41,000-tonne cruise liner **Regent Seven Seas Voyager** was an impressive sight when it visited Dartmouth in September. And its size created more than just a stir. It was scheduled to be visiting the Royal Portbury dock in Bristol at the time it eased into the River Dart.

The Dartmouth Chronicle reported that Dartmouth Harbour Authority denied it 'stole' the liner from Bristol, which had pulled out all the stops for the visit, with a number of special events and receptions for its passengers, one on board the SS Great Britain.

But, the Chronicle understood that a number of difficulties with the provided berth for the large ship meant that Regent Seven Seas, which owns the vessel, decided to visit Dartmouth instead.

The area benefited from more than 700 passengers who were invited into the town and helped to boost its economy after one of the wettest summers in living memory - and on a day when the sun shone most of the time.

Julian Distin, a member of the Dart Harbour Navigation Authority and local cruise boat operator, said the DHNA had not acted in a 'predatory' way, and had simply 'benefited from circumstance'.

'This is exactly the type of high profile ship visit we want to encourage,' he said.



The Seven Seas Voyager tied up in the River Dart

Picture: Kevin Pyne

Incidents log

Nine incidents, none major but all responded to well by watchkeepers and all proving value of service provided.

4.7.08 YBS *Mikara* on Ch 16, fouled on pot line 1.5nm SE of Start Point. Geoff Howell gave details to BxCG including cloud base height for helicopter that took off a crew member.

20.7.08 Dinghy *Impulse* with three anglers reported engine failure 100yds S of PQ. Aldis lamp used by Geoff Howell to attract attention. ML *Wahoo* responded and took *Impulse* in tow.

21.7.08 BxCG requested PQ to scan for empty open FV in Lannacombe Bay reported by member of public. David Stone identified FV as SE158 and later confirmed that two people on board. No apparent distress.

26.7.08 YBC *Double Vision* on Ch16, engine failure near Salcombe. Terry Martins reported casualty visible and gave details of vessels in vicinity. Two yachts offered assistance but *Double Vision* started engine and made own way.

12.8.08 Dog chased sheep over cliff. Derek Venables informed farmer and BxCG. PPCG rescue team recovered dog but not sheep.

30.8.08 Geoff Howell/David Anderson sighted RIB off PQ with engine failure. Informed BxCG and gave updates. Casualty taken in tow by Salcombe ILB.

13.9.08 Motor cruiser/sports boat *Serenity* on Ch 67, BxCG broadcast for assistance, yacht *Isla Marada* responded and towed casualty to Salcombe bar, where taken in tow by harbour launch. PQ kept visual watch and advised BxCG of progress.

29.9.08 member of public reported clothing, or wet suit, on rocks to PQ. BxCG informed, and Salcombe ILB and PQ CG team alerted. Rescue team identified 'clothing' as old and deflated inflatable named *Amanda*.

29.9.08 NCI PQ reported sailing dinghy capsizing frequently, and crewman on hull waving both arms. BxCG informed by hotline, emergency declared. Salcombe ILB and Hope Cove CG rescue team alerted, and ILB recovered dinghy and two occupants. BxCG advised ILB crew to inform casualty that their actions were of a reckless nature.



Marathon runner David aids NCI

Although new to the sport, David Raeburn, of Sherford, trained and ran in the 2007 London Marathon, raising more than £3,500 for the RNLI. This year he tackled the Edinburgh Marathon and finished the 26.2 miles in three hours and 52 minutes, this time in support of Devon Air Ambulance, Christian Aid and NCI Prawle Point. May 25 dawned cool with an ideal breeze as the runners set off from Princes Street, past Holyrood Palace to the coast, then to the finish at Musselburgh Racecourse. Collecting from his many sponsors was no less a feat and the £700 passed to Prawle Point was received by the station with many grateful thanks.

'Spirit of the Dart' proves its worth already

DARTMOUTH has been without a lifeboat since 1896. Now an attractive new timber building, on the edge of Coronation Park, houses the Dartmouth D 702 Inshore Lifeboat 'Spirit of the Dart' and a smart, blue, appropriately marinised New Holland launching tractor. With nine airtight chambers, a length of 4.95m, beam 2m and displacement of 338kg, the boat normally carries three crew and an impressive range of equipment cunningly stowed in forward pod and sponson pouches.

The Mariner 50hp engine enables 25 knots to be maintained for three hours and with, spare fuel contained in soft tubes lying inboard, port and starboard along the deck, fuel reserve can thus be gauged by eye. In addition to the customary chandlery, they carry VHF radio, navigation and night vision equipment, chart plotter with pin-point accuracy, oxygen cylinder, smoke and flare type illuminators, first aid kit, neck collars, an ambulance pouch for ready transfer of casualties, fracture straps, neoprene hoods, silver foil blankets and spare lifejackets. If crew need to land ashore at night, a grab bag of essentials is taken, and any crewman swimming to a casualty first slips an arm through a rubber quoit with safety line attached.

Pagers are normally used to alert the crew for a shout although maroons are retained as back-up. They were a popular means of call-out as they also reassure the casualty and attract the public who may be inspired to donate the vital voluntary contributions as they witness the procession around the park to the public slipway by the Higher Ferry, with both ferry and vehicles giving way. From first arrivals, helm and crew are selected to include a paramedic if required. They don thermal 'woolly bear' suits followed by full sets of waterproofs, boots, lifejackets and helmets, all readily accessible from hanging lockers. One helmet is specific to the helmsman, another has

integral camera equipment and all incorporate intercom facility.

Once on board, however, the crew have nowhere to sit. They kneel and use handholds robustly fitted along the sponsons. One can only imagine the discomfort in a turbulent sea yet 'Spirit of the Dart' has attracted 35 recruits, including eight launch crew and Deputy Launch Authorities.

Sea survival training began in June 2007 with day and night exercises, capsizing and righting drill and experience in shallows and surf before the boat became fully operational that November. They meet every Tuesday evening, either socially over coffee or for training, in the crew room equipped with computer, laptop, photocopier, pager box and a VHF radio scanning Channels 0 and 67. Sunday mornings are often devoted to training afloat; two exercises have already taken place with Salcombe Lifeboat, others with the Torbay Station and



Crew members with Dartmouth's new inshore lifeboat, from left, Kevin John (training co-ordinator), Chris Tracey (helm), Jamie Mathys and Terry Gilby (shore worker)

Picture : John Fenton

helicopters.

The operational area is from Start Point to Scabbacombe with a five to six-mile range from shore, plus the inland reaches of the River Dart. Seventeen incidents to date make remarkable reading. One occurred near Brutus Bridge in Totnes, another was the very dramatic, widely reported, incident at Landcombe Cove where a 2cwt rock fell during a beach party trapping two teenagers. The ILB was launched within six minutes of call-out at 2am. Also involved were Torbay ALB, the coastguard team from Stoke Fleming and a RNAS helicopter from Culdrose, which transferred the injured to Torbay Hospital, while a third casualty was taken by 'Spirit of the Dart' to an ambulance at Blackpool Sands.

More than one million people use the River Dart each year. There are over 3,000 berths with much fishing and leisure activity besides naval and cruise ship use. Salcombe Lifeboat, 13 miles to the west, and Torbay Lifeboat, 10 miles to the east, were called to the area 70 times in 2004-05, rescuing 112 people, with an inevitable 45 minute delay. 'Spirit of the Dart' was called out twice on the day of her naming ceremony - a significant confirmation of her vital importance in the search and rescue network along the Devon coast.

Jenny Brown

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

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Cheques to NCI Prawle Point