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MY Fastflow, Berth B36, Mayflower Marina, Plymouth.

FROM THE COMMODORE

I'm sitting here in Easter Sunday after enjoying a few nice days of sunshine. The horrendous winter gales caused a lot of damage in the marina both to boats and the marina itself. We were fortunate and avoided the worst by tying the boat up with a cat's cradle of heavy lines. We do catch some bad weather here in the South West and one day the weather was so bad it was far too dangerous to go onto the pontoons and we simply had to stay on shore and hope the boats survived.

Fastflow is having her annual 2 weeks holiday ashore. There doesn't seem to be too much to do this year, I've changed the anodes and checked the continuity throughout the boat. Cutlass bearings are holding out well (it's important to get shaft alignment perfect to avoid wear to the cutlass bearings). I've had some canvass damage repaired and once the antifouling and polishing is complete we should be ready for another season. I hope the same is the case for you.

Bob and Norma Thomas (Roma) are off to Croatia on Roma. We hope to publish an account of their adventures in a future newsletter.

I hear from Nigel and Susan Gee that they are off to Paris on Flight in early May. Nigel wanted a burgee so that he can fly it on the Seine.



On a trip with my flying club around Europe in March I came across the beautiful 57 (Canta Libre) owned by John and Caroline Hodge in Mahon (Menorca). I had the privilege of helping John and his son William get the boat there a couple of years ago. I gather from John that she is for sale and will soon be back in the UK.

Scavaig to Scotland



Scavaig is the well specified Aquastar 430 aft cabin launched in March for Elisabeth and Robert Aldam. She is fitted with a pair of Yanmar 370hp engines in a well organised engine room with a Kohler generator and Wesmar hydraulic stabilisers. She has been superbly fitted out by the yard with fabulous joinery, excellent accommodation and a breathtaking aft cabin.

Roo Redwood (Water Bear) and I helped deliver her to her new home in Portavadie Marina on Loch Fyne. This is not the first of these boats that I have skippered and this one came well up to standard with superb visibility, outstanding and dry seakeeping with excellent manoeuvrability. The owners provisioned the boat well for us including a bottle of our favourite nightcap (Jamiesons) which must have pained Elisabeth, being a Scot!

We departed St Peter Port on the morning tide on the 3rd of April in misty conditions and took the southerly route around the island, dodging the inevitable lobster pots before passing Les Hanois and setting a course across the channel for Penzance. With winds of F3-4 we reached the Lizard after a six and a half hour passage. A short run across Mounts Bay saw us into Penzance Dock which is like a step back in time with fishing boats, coasters and leisure vessels all crammed in. We tied up against the wall where an obviously new boat drew plenty of interest from the locals. I explained that there was no ice or fish hold!

The following morning, with all checks done we set off for Milford Haven on the tide. Winds were fresh from the south and we took the inshore traffic zone around Lands End (around Longships). We were soon able to set a course in reasonably calm conditions for Milford Haven some 95 miles away and apart from a lonely dolphin we had the Bristol Channel to ourselves. We tied up in Neyland marina having first topped up the tanks. The marina has a restaurant but it seemed overrun with hen parties so we made our way to the sailing club nearby and enjoyed steaks and a bottle of good Rioja that the steward had been holding on to.

Next day we awoke to thick advection fog and strong southerly winds. We set off cautiously down the Haven with Roo on the lower radar and me on the upper plotter carefully picking our way between buoys and super tankers. It took an hour and a half before we reached the entrance where the winds had funnelled causing a big sea. We pushed on to the south until we were well clear of the mid channel rocks before gradually turning west with the seas on our beam. Here the stabilisers really came into their own and we had a largely untroubled time despite measuring true winds of 42 knots. Once we could lay a course clear of the Bishop's Rock we headed for Dun Laoghaire with poor visibility all the way, only seeing the many ships and fishing boats with radar and plotting their closest point of approach (CPA) to see which ones might be a problem to us. We reached Dun Laoghaire in the early evening, tying up in the excellent marina and dined in a popular restaurant and bar in the town which was so busy we shared a table with some local sailors who were amazed at the distance we covered in 3 days.

The southerly winds were forecast stronger on the Sunday. We took the boat into Dublin bay to assess conditions for a run to Bangor Marina and decided that the following day would give us better weather. So we spent the afternoon in Dublin and retired early having sampled one or two of the excellent bars and music....

The weather was much improved the following day and we set off at first light for Belfast, rounding Portavogie and passing through Donaghadee sound. Last time I went to Donaghadee was during a Lifeboat delivery trip some 10 years ago and remembering the warm welcome there last time I was tempted to put in again. But we had a schedule to keep so we pressed on to Bangor arriving in the early afternoon. Elisabeth and Robert were waiting for us on the fuel berth where we topped up the tanks (cheaper than Scotland!).

We were due to overnight in Bangor but, very sensibly, Elisabeth and Robert suggested that we might press on for Portavogie, given the following day's forecast. So we rather unceremoniously dumped Roo and his kit on the fuel berth, the owners climbed on and we made straight off on the last leg of about 75NM, passing Whitehead light on our port side before crossing the Irish sea in calm conditions. These are home waters for Robert and he navigated us between the Kintyre Peninsula and the Isle of Arran through the Kilbrannan sound and north to Loch Fyne. Even a philistine like me had to agree that the scenery was breathtaking which shows why cruising the west coast of Scotland is such a popular pastime (never mind all the distilleries and salmon smokehouses you can visit). We arrived in Portavogie Marina at about 7 that night having covered around 175NM in the day and eaten all the sandwiches Elisabeth had brought aboard.

Overall we covered around 550NM with the only issue on the boat being a faulty oil pressure sender which E P Barrus dealt with at Portavogie. The boat managed some conditions which would have been testing for many larger boats and instilled complete confidence. When dealing with a large head sea we were able to keep the speed up which both reduced the time we were in it and gave us good directional control. Low speeds in such conditions increase the risk of broaching but never once (even downwind) were we in danger of doing so and not once did I need to take control from the Raymarine autopilot.

Comfort was greatly improved by the Wesmar stabilisers which reduced roll dramatically. Despite these being an expensive option the improvement they provide is so good I would recommend them to anyone. The installation is very compact and well suited to a vessel of this size.

The 2014 Aquastar Rally

Quite a number of you have indicated that you would like to join us on the rally this year and most have favoured the shorter itinerary. Thanks to those of you who have made suggestions so far.

Have a look at both the list of attendees and the itinerary attached and let me know;

- If you are on the list and have decided not to come;

- If you are not on the list but would like to join us; and
- Whether you have any further suggestions for the itinerary.

Those of you who have not joined us on a rally before will find that we are a very informal and easy crowd to get on with. 6 of the boats have been on previous rallies and members have individual strengths including organising pontoon parties and other events (often including moderate consumption of wine or beer). There is no hurry up attitude and we are quite happy to cruise at lower speeds.

We plan to get Fastflow into Guernsey fairly early so we can pick the weather and be there to greet you. I would hope to reproduce the excellent lunch we had at 'Le Petit Bistro' a couple of years ago with those who come early.

Most of the places I have in mind are capable of accepting 10 or 12 boats without notice. So, with the vagaries of the weather, I do not plan to organise any shoreside functions in advance until we know we are going to be at a particular location. This way we can continue to tailor the cruise whilst we are on it.

News from the Yard

The new 570 for is progressing well. This hull should be easily driven and has a number of features including hydraulic beaching legs and a hydraulic bathing platform able to serve both as a tender launching platform and a set of steps to reach a quay when stern to which will set this vessel apart.

Scavaig, the new 430 aft cabin was launched on the 18th of March. A number of enquirers have expressed interest in an aft cockpit version of this hull and we have had some drawings prepared. There is a significant cost saving against the aft cabin version.

With the increased popularity of stabilisers we have been retrofitting these to quite a number of boats. Owners have been very well pleased with the improvements to comfort these bring.

Membership News

We are pleased to welcome the following new members to the club:

Ewa & Jo Le Marquand – AS27, L'Orfinne;
 Elisabeth & Robert Aldam – AS 430, Scavaig;
 Mike Norton – AS 38, Taras;
 Nigel & Susan Gee – AS38, Flight.

As usual I have attached an up to date membership list. Please check your own entry and let me have any amendments or corrections.

Regalia

Burgees £15 for the small ones and £20 for the larger ones. They are well made, sewn and come with the toggle and braid for attachment to your boat.

Your Say

In the last newsletter I mentioned using Polyglow to keep GRP shiny. I got a note from Peter Taylor (Diomed):



Dear Tony,

Well, I bought the Poliglow kit and some additional Poliox heavy cleaner. Luckily we have just had about ten days of dry weather so I obeyed the instructions to the letter and must say the result is very good.

I have attached a photo for you and wish now that I had taken the "before" picture. The hull was quite badly chalked to the extent that I thought the only solution would be a complete re-gel.

Now I hope it will stay like this for the season !

Thank you very much for the tip.

Peter.

Nick Hamilton also wrote:

Dear Tony

I have just sold my Aquastar Oceanranger 33 to a very pleasant chap who will have it taken to Ripon, Yorkshire. I have given him the club burgee and will give your contact details.

The boat is of 1996 origin and I looked after it as carefully as anyone could but a problem found on survey could affect other 33 and 38 Aft Cabin types as the engine configuration must be similar. Club members may be interested:

Over a year ago an alarm sounded after a passage when I slowed to manoeuvre into a berth. My engineer investigated and reckoned it was a problem with an alternator as the amps dropped on one engine in neutral after running. Sure enough, the bushes were worn on the regulator and replaced and I had to buy a new battery. The alarm sounded intermittently thereafter and two other engineers' opinions was that there must be a problem with the alarm or its wiring.

My buyer's surveyor found the reason for the alarm and it really shook me as I would never have discovered it had I not sold the boat.

The Perkins Sabre 225 engines are brilliant. The starboard exhaust runs under the locker by the steps down to the aft cabin through a hole in the bulkhead then along under the heads. There is a little trap in the locker, which I had never opened in seven years but the surveyor did and found the exhaust had vibrated against the hole cut and damaged it to the point where it could fracture. In that event the engine compartment would surely have flooded and I dread to think of the consequence of an engine sucking in seawater.

I am grateful to the surveyor (and not many sellers can say that) and happy to have the repair made but it will be a difficult job in cramped conditions. I'll have the hole enlarged as well and trust the next man will enjoy years of safe and happy sailing.

I have more time to spend afloat now and six or seven knots will be ample, so I have bought a smaller sailing boat but like the Aquastar it has two helms; one inside for inclement weather.

All best wishes

Nick Hamilton

I wrote to Rob Peake the new editor of Motor Boats Monthly, welcoming him and introducing the club. He responded:

Dear Tony

Thank you very much I'm enjoying being back here!

We'll publish your letter in the magazine, but meanwhile I was delighted to receive it as I'd be very keen to forge a close link with the Aquastar Club, with a view to featuring club members in MBM.

I'm keen to publish cruising accounts by Aquastar owners. If interested, people can put finger to keyboard and type up their own accounts, or simply give me a ring and I can put something together from a phone call, before showing them a draft to approve. We'd only need a few high resolution photos of them and their boat, to set the scene. Anything from a few hundred to 1,200 words is good.

These can be very simple articles about non-adventurous trips or incidents, the kind of weekend hops we all do, in home waters. They can be entertaining and useful if details of pilotage and advice about things like anchorages, or things to do ashore, is included.

Do let me know if you'd be tempted yourself or if you have members who might be interested. I can explain more if necessary over the phone or email, so do feel free to pass my contact details around the club.

Rob's email is rob_peake@ipcmedia.com

Do keep writing, I'm sure we have members who are able to help with all manner of questions.

ARE WE ADDRESSING YOU CORRECTLY?

Email is our preferred means of contacting you, it significantly reduces our costs and minimises the work required of your lazy Commodore to put the newsletter together and to provide attachments and it saves trees! So if you've received this newsletter through the post it means that **we don't have your up to date email address**. If that is the case we would be grateful if you would kindly let us have it (send it by email!).

Yours Aye

Tony

Data Protection Act 1998

We hold information on our members in electronic form in compliance with the Data Protection Act for the purpose of running the club. To help us comply please check your details and let us know of any errors or changes required (including if you wish to be deleted from the register of members). Information we hold is shared with other members of the club but will not be disclosed to parties outside the club except with the express permission of members affected.

Aquastar Rally August 9th to 17th 2014.					
The following members are planning to join the Aquastar Club North Brittany Rally					
Names	Boat Name	LOA (M)	Draft (M)	Number on board	Comments
Tony & Helen Giblett	Fastflow	12	1.1	2	
Gavin, Caroline & Alice Crick & Jos Holmes	Patience	15	1.2	4	
Roo & Kath Redwood	Water Bear	10	1	2	Provisional
Ingvar and Anna Svenson	Perroquet	10	1	2	Provisional
Ray & Maureen Grimwood	Gallant Lady	12	1.1	4	
Mike Godwin & Dave Thomas	Niblet	8	1	2	The odd couple are back!
Stuart & Jane Le Maitre	Les Trois Mousses	12	1.1	5	
Peter & Rosemary Taylor	Diomed	12	1.1	2	Provisional
John Langdon	Aconit	12	1.1	2	
David & Gaynor Wheeldon	Alegria	13	1.2	2	
Please also let us have any comments or suggestions for the Rally Peter Cumberlidge's 'North Brittany and Channel Islands Cruising Companion' is a mine of useful advice.					

When completed please Email this form back to tony@giblett.co.uk

Aquastar Rally 2014 programme. Usual caveats over weather apply!

Date	Local HW time (UT)	Notes	Distance
8 Aug Friday	16.25	Boats arrive in Guernsey from various home ports. Fuelling at St Sampson's (may travel direct to St Quay).	
9 Aug Sat.	16.43	St Peter Port to St Quay Portrieux Marina (access all states of tide). Supper in Bistrot de la Marine.	50NM
10 Aug Sun.	17.37	Day in St Quay, known for its three fine beaches. Seafood lovers are drawn here by the Coquille St-Jacques. Rich in history with Chapels, the typically Breton old port and the Isle de Compesse (accessible at low tide).	
11 Aug Mon.	18.36	St Quay Portrieux to St Cast. A promenade connects this new marina to the town where there are all manner of restaurants and bars. A pontoon party or barbecue in the evening is a possibility.	25NM
12 Aug Tues.	19.22	Day in St Cast. Possible excursion to Fort de la Latte. From the marina you can walk around the headland on the Sentier des Douaniers and see the monument to the Frigate <i>La Place</i> that is the isolated danger buoy about a mile east of Fort de la Latte which sank in the 1950's when it set off a WW11 mine with heavy loss of life. Concert in the port in the evening.	
13 Aug Wed.	07.46 20.06	St Cast to St Malo (Bassin Vaubin) by 09.00 (locks open -21/2 to +2). Elegant walled town rebuilt after its virtual total destruction in WW2.	10NM
14 Aug Thurs.	08.28 20.47	Day in St Malo. Plenty to do in this honey pot. The tourist office offers many ideas (http://www.saint-malo-tourisme.co.uk/visit-saint-malo/sightseeing-st-malo) You might also download the app for iphone. Search on SAINT-MALO tour	
15 Aug Fri.	09.27 21.47	09:00 leave for St Helier in Jersey. Jersey tourist board has published a series of ' <i>Walking Routes to Build a Thirst</i> ' which include a number of pubs. Probably of little interest to Club members.	35NM
16 Aug Sat.	10.05	Day in St Helier. This year there will be no award for the best kept boat but there will be one for the most interesting cruise. Other awards will be made at the sole discretion of the Commodore whose decision may be influenced by the number of rounds paid for during the previous day's walk.	
17 Aug Sun.	10:59	St Helier to St Peter Port. Final supper with presentations at Guernsey Yacht Club.	25NM
18 Aug Mon.	11:50	Fuelling at St Sampson's prior to depart for home.	
		Total round trip from Guernsey	145NM