

KierLink

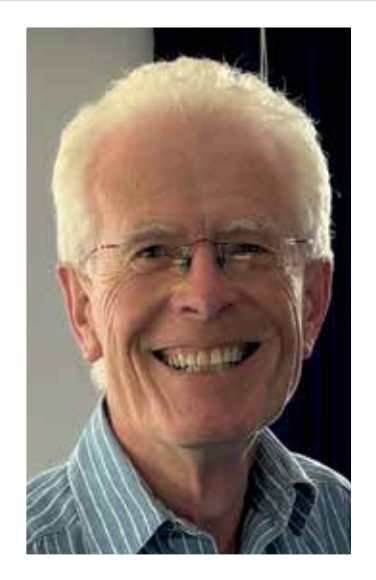
The magazine for the Kier Fellowship | Issue 46 | Autumn/Winter 2024



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Neil Meixner



Brendan O'Boyle

Chairman’s matters and Administrator’s report

We were delighted to welcome Louisa Finlay to the Fellowship annual garden party held at Pavenham Golf Club, where she delivered a positive view on both Kier Group and the Fellowship.

Louisa has recently reaffirmed Kier’s support by increasing our funding. The Fellowship thank Louisa and Kier Group very much. This should ease financial pressures on all the areas and allow even better value events to be organised! Please have a look at the website using the direct link at: www.kier.co.uk/fellowship

As we further develop the content of the website, we welcome members articles and photographs for incorporation in the future.

We have continued to reinforce links with the former regional business units and while good progress has been made in the period there is still a bit to do!

We are delighted to announce that Ron Gulliver has taken on the role of area organiser for the Rushden area and we welcome him to the organising team.

An appeal now on behalf of all the area organisers – **THEY NEED YOU!** Please help in any way you can, however small, to ensure the continued prosperity of your area. Positions on organising committees and event organisation are constantly becoming available. Contact your area organiser or one of us if you’d like to help. We particularly need an organiser and helpers for the Liverpool/Manchester area.

We reiterate that if you’d like to help, for example with mock professional interview, one-to-one mentoring or indeed providing particular work-winning expertise, do contact either of us.

We are sure you’ll enjoy this edition of KierLink. We are always seeking interesting items for inclusion in future editions. If you have been on a memorable holiday, have celebrated a special event, or indeed want to share work experiences, please contact any of us noted at the end and we will be pleased to assist you.

Interest in the Fellowship remains high with new members joining seven of our 12 areas since the last KierLink. We currently have 1,351 members compared with 1,344 in May 2024.

We need to encourage a new crop of retirees/leavers so if you know of any why not see if they’d like to join the Fellowship. The application form is available on the website or you can get one by contacting Brendan O’Boyle as below.

Please also make sure that you notify us of any change of address either to your area organiser or Brendan O’Boyle so that our records can be updated. It is helpful to have any new telephone numbers & email addresses also to ensure that you continue to receive invitations to events plus copies of the KierLink magazine.

READER’S FEEDBACK
We would like to ask members to write in with any suggestions for future editions. You may fancy, for example, gardening tips on flora or vegetable growing, recipes or anything that matters to you. Please send your ideas to Brendan.

- Contact emails:
- brendan.o'boyle.ext@kier.co.uk
 - neilmeixner@gmail.com
 - andrea.mcdaid@outlook.com

Neil Meixner & Brendan O’Boyle

Editor’s note

Dear members,
Since the last issue, here are three of my highlights:

Beginning August: two-week nephew visit at Nana G’s (my mum)

Stephen was eight at the time he stayed and it’s hard to keep that ‘little man’ entertained constantly. He’s a joy to be with, extremely intelligent for his age and once he’s played a new game twice he wins every time. Just as well we have a lot of games and creative activities for him to choose from!

Most days, Stephen and I would have a kick-about down the local park. He taught me a few skills but I declined learning how to tackle. I’m too old for torn ligaments or worse!

One Friday I took him to the Oasis pool, Bedford, for 1.5hrs. He’s not a strong swimmer but he did learn how to swim breaststroke arms. As a reward, we had a MacDonald lunch afterwards.

One Saturday, Nana G (mum), Auntie Lisa (sis), Stephen and I drove to Milton Keynes for a ‘Treetop Extreme’ experience at Willen Lake. Mum and Lisa were on camera/video duties while Stephen and I had the hour testing our strength, balance and having fun. We both did the ‘treetop drop’ which was great fun!



Stephen leading the way



Leaving on a ‘high’



Treetop zip drop

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“Keep warm and have a great Christmas and New Year!”

COPY DEADLINE FOR ISSUE 47 2025:

Monday 14 April

Middle August: fancy dress (FD) birthday party (BD)

Our close friend, Lisa (hubby Jono), has a fancy-dress themed BD every year since I can remember. This year was ‘Cops n Robber’s’. She decorates the ‘party garage’ in the theme months before and does a marvellous job!



I-r: Fraz, me, BD girl Lisa, Susie and Laura – ALL COPS!

Friends always make a huge effort for each FD theme. One in particular makes his own outfits – in fact usually two! Great night and fab company as always!

Beginning September: Beginner’s archery lesson for four people

Hubby and I had a Red Letter Day beginners archery lesson gift voucher from mum and sis for our birthdays’ We invited Lisa and Jono to come with us to make four.



We arrived at Sporting Targets, Riseley, had a 15-minute safety briefing from our hilarious instructor, John, and our one-hour lesson began at 10.15am.

I had no expectations hitting anything other than the floor or a tree. John individually guided us every time we took a turn. He advised how just by changing our positions and stances, we had a better chance of hitting the bullseye area. Lisa, Jono and hubby managed – I just managed the far edge of it.

I asked John: “Who was the best?” Lisa, he said but: “You’re the ‘most improved.’ I’ll take that!

I would thoroughly recommend giving archery a go with John at Sporting Targets – great fun!

Andrea McDaid

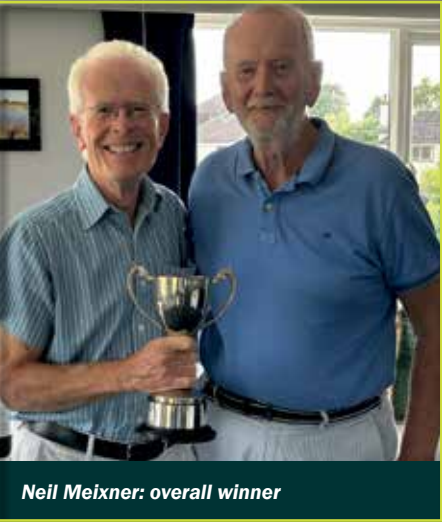
A warm welcome to the following new members

NAME	CITY/TOWN	AREA	WORKED FOR	SERVICE
Gary Buxton	Colchester, Essex	Loughton	Kier Eastern	9
Ben Duffy	Birmingham	Central	Kier Eastern	5
Joe Erwood	Ashford, Kent	Maidstone	Kier Southern	12
Paul Hardy	Sheffield	Leeds	Kier Places	40
Lynn Hartwig	St. Neots, Cambridgeshire	Tempsford	Kier Group	39
Susan Lowe	Wisbech, Cambridgeshire	Waterbeach	Kier Eastern	13
Charlie Nicholas	Saffron Walden, Essex	Loughton	Kier Eastern	25
Ian Simpole	Kings Lynn, Norfolk	Waterbeach	Kier Eastern	23
Paul Staniland	Fowey, Cornwall	Tempsford	Kier Limited	30
Stephen Symonds	Bristol	Bristol	Kier Western	38
Blaithin Turley	Wolverhampton	Central	Kier Places	1

NATIONAL GOLF DAY

St. Neots Golf Course
Friday 30 September 2024

WE ALL HAD A GREAT DAY OUT AT THE KIER FELLOWSHIP NATIONAL GOLF DAY WITH FINE WEATHER AND GOOD COMPANY.



Neil Meixner: overall winner

The day started with the traditional bacon roll and tea/coffee prior to a morning tee. The golf course was in magnificent condition. All enjoyed the play and banter arriving back at the clubhouse for a well-earned drink!



Jeff Kercher



Derek Adams

We all enjoyed the two-course late lunch provided by the club in our own private room.



Mike Palmer



Malcolm Burton

Many thanks to Colin Busby who totted up the scores and established the winners and to Ian Tidey who once again organised a magnificent day.

Ian Tidey and Neil Meixner presented the prizes as follows:



Charlie Nicholas

- **Jeff Kercher:** nearest the pin on the 16th
- **Derek Adams:** nearest the pin on the 8th
- **Mike Palmer:** least shots nearest the pin on 14th
- **Malcolm Burton:** longest drive on the 18th
- **Charlie Nicholas:** best front 9
- **Barry Sadler:** best back 9
- **Neil Meixner:** overall winner – 38 points



Barry Sadler

Message from the Chief Executive



Hello everyone, and welcome to the latest edition of KierLink.

Once again, I'm pleased to be able to write to you with positive updates on the Group's performance, both financially and operationally, and would like to take this chance to reflect on what has been a memorable financial year for us.

In September, we released our full-year results for the year ending 30 June 2024 and have delivered another year of significant growth. Our order book rose again, to £10.8bn, while revenue was up 17% on the end of FY23. Our adjusted operating profit also rose to just over £150m and our net cash more than doubled to over £167m.

The results marked the end of a year which has seen us reach some incredibly important milestones. Our re-entry to the FTSE 250 and the restoration of a dividend were particular highlights, both of which were aspirations we have held since 2019 and which we are proud to have reached.

Our performance is a reflection of the skill and dedication of people across Kier, who continue to do remarkable work to help us deliver on our purpose – to sustainably deliver infrastructure which is vital to the UK.

The strength of this performance has been driven by significant contract awards, which have continued into this financial year. To pick out just a few highlights, our justice and borders work continues to go from strength to strength, with two appointments by the Ministry of Justice totalling over £300m at HMPs Bullingdon and Channings Wood.

We have also recently announced long-term framework appointments with United Utilities, Southern Water and South West Water, showing the strong position we are in to deliver water infrastructure upgrades planned across the country during the next five years. Our Kier Places business has also been appointed to an eight-year programme of works in the neighbourhoods around Heathrow Airport to reduce the impact of aircraft noise.

Our achievements have brought us towards the end of our medium-term value creation plan, which we announced in FY21 and set out the goals we targeted to achieve over the following 3-5 years. We have stuck to this plan and consistently done what we said we were going to

do, restoring confidence in the business and bringing us financial and operational stability.

We have now announced a new sustainable growth plan to keep Kier going from strength to strength in the coming years. Much of this strategy will focus on the formula that has been working for us and what we know will continue to work for us, such as strong relationships with the UK government and blue-chip clients, winning work through long-term frameworks and the exploration of opportunities in our key markets.

It's important to remember that our plans for the future are not just about financial growth, but also focus on our commitment to operate as a responsible business which we do through our Building for a Sustainable World Framework. This involves both addressing the impact of climate change and ensuring we deliver positive and lasting improvements in the communities in which we operate. We continue to make progress in both of these areas, and will always put this at the heart of our work.

We have also recently announced board changes, which took effect from the start of October. Our senior independent non-executive director, Justin Atkinson, has retired from the Board after nine years with us. Chris Browne OBE, who has served on the Kier board since 2022 will assume the position of senior independent non-executive director. Chris has experience of the construction sector through her current role as non-executive director of Vistry Group plc and also has considerable commercial and operational experience in the aviation industry so is well-equipped to take on the additional responsibilities of the role.

Justin brought a considerable amount of construction experience and it was important we maintain this knowledge and expertise. I am delighted to confirm that Stuart Togwell, our group managing director of Kier Construction, who has been in the sector for over 37 years and brings with him significant strategic and operational delivery experience will join the board as an executive director.

Before I finish, I would also like to thank you for your continued support, and the role the Fellowship plays in providing a valuable link between Kier's past and present.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a safe and enjoyable Christmas and best wishes for the new year.

Andrew Davies

Obituaries

Our thoughts are with the loved ones of those who have passed away.

Edwina Basson	08/04/2024
Eileen Blowes	21/05/2024
Eileen Bowyer	04/03/2024
Valerie Brookes	06/03/2024
M.B. Calvert	05/09/2024
Joy Cryer	24/04/2024
Pamela Dalison	04/06/2024
Peter Davies	23/03/2024
K.H.F. Flemons	30/07/2024
Susan Flemons	23/04/2024
A.G. Fordham	17/07/2024
Francis Gant	30/05/2024
E.G. Gould	17/07/2024
B.A. Greenwood	12/09/2024
Nicholas Hammond	14/03/2024
D.R. Hawkes	28/07/2024
Donald Hewitt	16/05/2024
Paul Hewson	03/06/2024
Chris Higham	09/10/2024
John Hicks	08/01/2024
I.E. Hunt	17/07/2024

J.H. Hurst	04/08/2024
Janet Jones	18/02/2024
D.C. Lesser	26/08/2024
Malcolm McColl	27/01/2024
T. Maguire	12/09/2024
G.A. Marriott	02/08/2024
F.G.N. Millar	17/07/2024
Grahame Mole	19/04/2024
C.N. Monk	06/09/2024
Doreen Oliver	28/05/2024
Noel Page	11/04/2024
Marsha Palmann	04/05/2024
C. Powell	04/08/2024
P.J. Revell	23/09/2024
Anita Royall	24/03/2024
Alan Rust	17/09/2023
M.L. Sharp	03/08/2024
H.B. Snook	18/07/2024
H.S. Williams	19/09/2024
Irene Wilson	15/03/2024

Their spiritual journey has just begun: based on "His journey's just begun" by Ellen Brenneman but adapted

**Don't think of them as gone away
their journey's have just begun,
life holds so many facets
this earth is only one.**

**Just think of them as resting
from the sorrows and the tears
in a place of warmth and comfort
where there are no days and years.**

**Think how they must be wishing
that we could know today
how nothing but our sadness
can really pass away.**

**And think of them as living
in the hearts of those they touched...
for nothing loved is ever lost
and they were loved so much.**

Around the regions

Bristol/Newport

On 20 June, 13 members visited the National Trust's (NT) 18th Century Croome House, the former home of the Earls of Coventry, Worcestershire, close to the Malvern Hills.



Our area organiser managed to pick one of the warmest and sunniest days of this year. Members, including one who had only recently recovered from a major heart attack and whose husband had a newly replaced knee, were able to enjoy all Capability Brown's parkland. Much of it now is kept as wildflower meadows rich in ox-eye daisies and orchids.



While the mansion was lacking most of the original furniture, the Robert Adam plasterwork and fireplaces were worth the walk or shuttle ride.



During WWII, Croome House was the home of RAF Defford where many important radar initiatives were developed and trialled.



A local group, in conjunction with the NT, has created a most interesting museum which, apart from detailing the radar story, housed a Spitfire EN915's Rolls Royce Merlin engine recovered from a local crash site.

In August, a number of members and former colleagues were able to say their farewells in Cardiff at the funeral of John Hurst, one of our founder members who had been a

most regular attendee at functions. Our thoughts and sympathy go to Ann and family.

We have recently had several new members join our area and we look forward to welcoming them at our late autumn lunch in November.

David Priddis



Central

It may have been a record wet summer but in the central region we managed to pick three sunny days to enjoy a varied mix of events.

In June, Sheila Heath hosted a garden party at her lovely home deep in the Forest of Dean. The photographs show the fitter ones of us being led on a forest walk from her house through the forest to the site of an old gold mine. Gold in small amounts has long been known in the area and the Old Red Sandstone rocks resembling the Auriferous Blanket of South Africa led to formation of a Syndicate in 1906. The exploratory Bailey Level was driven but only six grains of gold per ton of rock were found. The mine entrance was closed in 1921.

Recently a group of enthusiasts have been working on restoration of the light railway leading into the redundant mine and a narrow-gauge engine is stored behind the closed door.

As well as taking time over a glass of wine and an excellent lunch, there was some very competitive croquet played on the lawn.

On a beautiful sunny July day we visited the National Trust property at Coughton Court, near Alcester, Warwickshire. Prior to our visit we enjoyed an excellent al fresco lunch at the Throckmorton Arms which is located just across the road from Coughton Court.

Coughton Court is a 15th Century country house which is currently undergoing a significant restoration programme involving a large amount of scaffolding and a temporary roof. Visitors are able to view the work being undertaken via



the scaffolding which almost felt like going back to work for some of us! In addition, Coughton Court has strong links to the infamous Gunpowder Plot when Guy Fawkes, amongst others, attempted to blow up the Houses of Parliament and an excellent, very detailed talk was given to us by a member of staff. All in all an excellent visit.



Yet again our luck was in with good weather when we met for a third year at Oaksey Park Golf Club for 9 holes of very friendly golf, followed



by a long lunch that gave everyone plenty of time to brag about fairways 'hit n putts' holed and a great chance to catch up with some old friends that we hadn't seen for a while.

Our year of events will finish as usual with the ever-popular Christmas lunch at Lilleybrook Golf Club in Cheltenham on 11 December.

Robin Butler

Devon and Cornwall

We enjoyed another lunch in September, again at The Marsh Mill Beefeater, which was attended by 16 of our loyal members and some partners. Although invitations were sent out to many more of our members, unfortunately for one reason or another it seems our numbers are not what they were.

The date of our Christmas lunch was discussed and the venue is again to be The Boringdon Golf Club. They looked after us very well last year so we are looking forward to another enjoyable time on Tuesday 17 December when I hope our numbers will swell.

Our spring lunch will be held in March 2025, the date of which is yet to be confirmed.

Shirley Riddle



Leeds

A small number of us attended the first lunch that I organised at the Bridge Hotel & Spa, Walshford, since taking over as area organiser from Anne Leslie.

Unfortunately, the date chosen for the lunch, 16 May 2024, proved to be popular with several members who would have liked to attend but were either on holiday or had other commitments. Otherwise we would have had a healthier attendance. That said, while we were a small group, all agreed it was a super gathering. Conversation flowed easily – stories were exchanged about different events and experiences at Kier, & life in general, and time went by quickly.

Due to the small number of attendees Anne, who is still responsible for organising the raffle and quizzes, took an executive decision (fully endorsed by all) to postpone the raffle until our next lunch when hopefully we will have more attendees.

This is a ‘shout-out’ to anyone who has any unwanted gifts to bring them along to our next lunch to boost the prize offering – they will be gratefully received.

Before moving on to details of our next event, I must apologise for the lack of photographs of our gathering. I took my Ipad with the full intention of taking photographs but became so engrossed in the conversation that I forgot to take any! Mistake noted and happy for reminders during the next lunch.

It would also be remiss of me not to pay thanks to Marisa at the Bridge Hotel for helping with the

organisation of the event and also to Tyler, our server, who looked after us very well on the day.

Our next planned lunch will be our Christmas lunch which will also take place at the Bridge Hotel & Spa and will provisionally be held on Sunday 15 December 2024. I recognise that December is a particular busy time for some so I have issued a letter asking for an early indication of availability for this date.

Due to the distance involved, we had no attendees from our region at the Pavenham garden party but the invite was, nonetheless, appreciated.

As mentioned in the previous KierLink magazine, I have continued to look at ensuring my contact list is up-to-date. I took the decision to issue correspondence to those members I had not heard from to ascertain what communication they wanted from their local group since it is a waste of my time, efforts and money to issue correspondence if it is no longer appropriate.

This exercise proved extremely useful and I received some lovely responses explaining the reasons why members had not replied. I am now confident that correspondence will be issued appropriately and as requested.

Since the last report, we have welcomed four new members which is great news and hopefully they will be able to attend an event or two.

The lunch at the Bridge Hotel & Spa on the 16 May was incidentally my first attendance at a Kier event having

been invited by Anne a few times since I took early retirement in December 2019.

I can honestly say that any concerns I had of attending were swiftly erased due to the friendliness of fellow members. There was obviously conversation about Kier, but not solely, so I would urge members who, like me, have not attended before to have a rethink – you will not be disappointed.

I had suggested that we try to organise a pub lunch in or around the Darlington area to try to attract those members in the north east who may feel that the Bridge Hotel & Spa is too far away for them to attend and offer other members a different venue/location. This suggestion was taken up by a handful of members. This idea has not yet been ruled out nor the offer of other venues/locations to accommodate wider members. This will be discussed at our next lunch which will hopefully be on 15 December.

Birthday cards have started to be issued to members and they have been well-received.

Hopefully, in a future edition of KierLink, we may have an article or two from our members about their time at Kier – certainly given our combined years of service and varying roles I am sure there is a story or two to tell that can be shared. It may also be that our members can share stories of their hobbies/interests or how they have filled in their time since leaving Kier.

Finally, I would like to record my thanks once again for all the kindness shown to me since I took over from Anne. It is a pleasure to continue Anne’s hard work and efforts.

Glenda Hamilton

Loughton and Witham

Bowls at Writtle

On 22 May 2024, 26 of us met at Writtle Bowling Club for the day. The club once again welcomed us warmly and we were greeted by the club president, Gill Ellis and refreshments.

It has to be said that the weather did not look particularly favourable but nonetheless club members set out all of the equipment and we started to bowl. The weather cleared and by the time we were called into lunch we had managed to work up an appetite. Lunch was, as always, excellent and served with great humour by the ladies in the catering team.

As the weather improved, the ‘green’ called once again and we all enjoyed another few ends bowling before it was time for tea accompanied by a selection of cakes & biscuits.

Having enjoyed our tea and the opportunity to chat & catch up with friends/colleagues, it was time to make our way home.

We all agreed that it was a splendid day and our thanks go to Writtle Bowling Club, its members for their hospitality, expert coaching and for showing us that Lawn Bowls can be a game for everyone.

John Abbott



Golf day

Once again members and guests had an enjoyable day at Abridge Golf Club on Monday 8 July 2024. The course is in excellent condition and has many challenging holes. The Essex countryside looks its best and the weather behaved albeit for a minor shower.



Barry Sadler: winner of the front nine

The day concluded with a steak pie meal and drinks at the 19th hole. Prizes were awarded as follows:

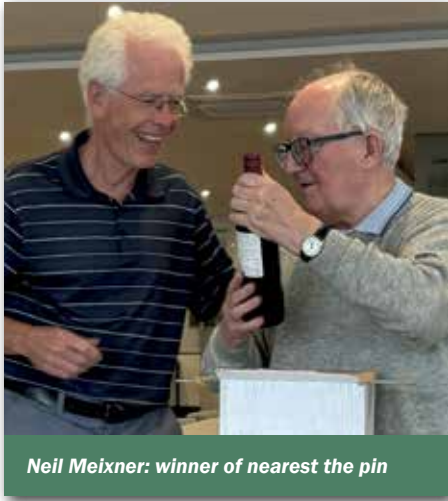


Gary Prin: winner of the back nine

- Front nine: Barry Sadler
- Back nine: Gary Prin
- Nearest pin: Neil Meixner
- Longest drive: Toby Oliver
- Overall winner: Paul Goddard.

John Spray

In addition, I presented John Spray, on behalf of the Kier Fellowship, with a special bottle of wine in recognition of the many years of



Neil Meixner: winner of nearest the pin



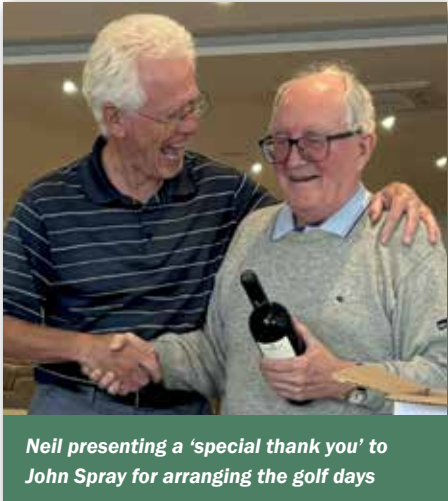
Toby Oliver: winner of the longest drive



Paul Goddard: overall winner

organisational service and support John has given to the Loughton and Witham section. In particular for organising lots of regional golf days, the last of which he was doing this year. John assured all he'd come along and support the event in future years.

Neil Meixner



Neil presenting a 'special thank you' to John Spray for arranging the golf days

Maidstone

Forty people attended the summer BBQ on Thursday 27 June 2024. The weather was lovely and sunny. Everyone enjoyed themselves and it was good to catch up and chat over past times.



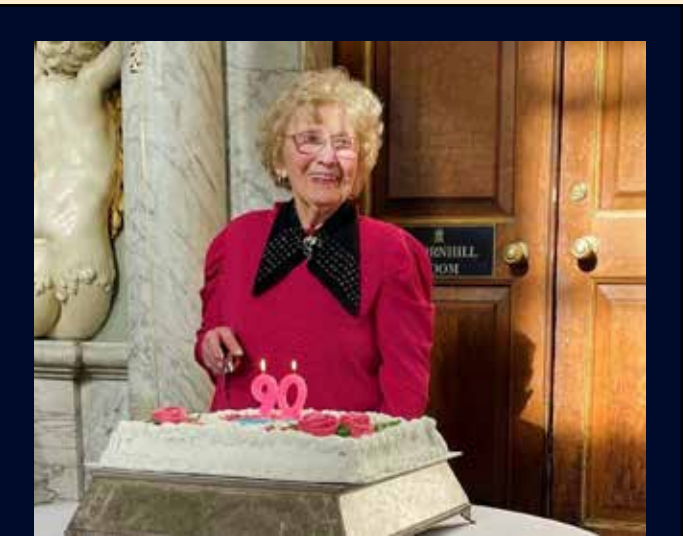
We will be holding our annual Christmas lunch at the same venue on Wednesday 18 December 2024.



This event is very well supported.

Anne Ransley

Maple Cross



Congratulations to Beryl Davis who celebrated her 90th birthday this year!



"Photos include Sarah (nee Cook), Graham Smith, Sam Baker, Gill Ball, Andy Rodway, Linda Palmer and me. Everyone had a good time and it was a really lovely celebration in such a lovely place as Moor Park, with some ex-colleagues, family and friends, about 40 of us all together. It made my day!"

Beryl

Valentine's Day lunch

A new venue for us – The Blue Check Restaurant & Bar in Bushey which came highly recommended. It had a large car park opposite although crossing the road was difficult.



On entering the restaurant which was a substantial size, and the fact that nearly all the tables were full, meant it must be good.

There was a mix up with the menus. Norman had used the summer menus so some options were not available. Still, we made different choices and our food soon arrived. The meals were plentiful and we had a great catch up with friends while we dined.



The wine flowed freely with the waiter refreshing the bottles when they were empty – sorry Norman! Hopefully we can visit again sometime.

When leaving it seemed easier to cross the road – probably because it was school leaving time. There was a lot of slow-moving traffic and cars courteously stopped to let us over the road.

Overall a nice start to 2024. Thank you Norman!



St. George’s Day lunch

“Gill suggested that we try a buffet style lunch sometime, which I thought was a good idea.”



Back to Biggles Restaurant at Denham Aerodrome for our St. George’s day lunch on 25 April. The food is always good there and the staff attentive.



We had a good turn out with 35 people for the meal taking up nearly the whole restaurant. Bob Frame joined us for the first time – welcome Bob! It was nice to see him again and hope he had an enjoyable time.



There was plenty of time to chat with fellow members – some at the bar and others sitting at tables. Duncan and Gill appeared to be deep in conversation about something!

Gill suggested that we try a buffet style lunch sometime which I thought was a good idea. We could talk to more people as well as eating as much as we wanted. Perhaps that was what she was discussing with Duncan?

The food was lovely: I had melon followed by beef stroganoff – neither of which I’d had for quite a while and both were lovely.



As for the sweet trolley, it seemed it was: “Use it all up” as even asking for a small quantity ended up as a plateful. Still it was again lovely and I managed to finish my Tiramisu!

Another lovely meal with friends and colleagues.



Jeff & Shirley’s holiday near Winchester

We’d rented a place in the village of Owslebury near Winchester for two weeks for Shirley’s birthday. It was a lovely quiet place with its own field and for the first and last few days it was sunny so we could sit outside.

We had a curious pheasant visit a few times – it looked through the patio doors probably looking for food. We also saw deer in the field and there was a barn owl in the ‘barn’ on the other side of the field some distance away – luckily we’d taken our binoculars!



Curious pheasant and deer

We visited Hinton Ampner, a National Trust property, twice as it was quite near. The original Tudor mansion was demolished and replaced in a different location



Birdwatch in Owslebury

with a Georgian house. This was remodelled in the Victorian era by encasing it in a mock Tudor façade. The brief was simple – a large drawing room and 30 bedrooms but also that there must be no bathrooms! So this was how it was built.

It did however have toilets, though these were flushed with rainwater from the roof stored in a tank. In wet weather all manner of



Hinton Ampner

debris was washed into the toilets causing blockages. In 1935 the house was remodelled again in the neo-Georgian style. However WWII stopped the work so due to post-war shortages the work was not completed until 1960. Ralph

Dutton, the owner, was hoping to spend time enjoying the ‘new’ building but unfortunately it burned down the same year. It took just three years to repair the house using items donated from other buildings – quite a history!



The Great Hall

We visited Winchester once, though found it busy. Luckily you could pre-book Blue Badge parking for The Great Hall. This is one of the finest halls from the 13th Century, built by Henry III around 1235. It has a round table from the same era although this is now hanging on the wall. It was also used as a law court for centuries. It was here Sir Walter Raleigh was tried for treason in 1603 and the IRA bombers of the Old Bailey tried in 1973. The new law courts, adjacent were opened in 1974.



Mottisfont

We visited the National Trust at Mottisfont further afield, again twice, and also Jane Austen’s house which was very interesting. Finally we visited Sir Harold Hillier Gardens where the rain poured down halfway around our walk and we were rescued by a lovely volunteer in a buggy who gave us a private tour of what we’d missed. Very welcome indeed!

Jeff Taylor

Solent

Solent Sammy Miller Motor Cycle Museum: 22/05/2024



Six members met at the Sammy Miller Motor Cycle Museum (SMCM), New Milton, Hampshire, for a visit to this interesting museum.



Situated in the heart of the New Forest, the SMCM is home to around 500 rare and exotic motorcycles from all over the world.

Sammy Miller MBE is a motorcycling legend. Eleven times British Trials Champion and winner of over 1,400 competition events across various disciplines, all while developing & maintaining his own machines.

Throughout his remarkable career spanning eight decades, he still managed to find the time to restore rare and interesting motorcycles; transforming unrecognisable ‘rust buckets’ into stunning factory condition and perfect working order. These he kept as a private collection until 1980 when he opened his collection to the public to share in the sights and sounds of these iconic machines. Thus, the SMCM was born!



There are now close to 500 motorcycles in the exhibition and they are arranged in various ‘halls’.

This museum is a testament to the genius of times past charting the development of motor cycling and to the prowess of long-lost engineering companies. It is truly worth a visit.



Also on site are various animals including goats, donkeys, alpacas and two aviaries with budgies, lovebirds and cockatiels.

Retail opportunity is not lost with a couple of craft shops and light meals/ snacks are available in the tea rooms.

Thruxton Historic Event: 23/06/2024



A small group of motoring enthusiasts met at the annual Thruxton Historic two-day meeting to see legendary machines and racers on the fastest race circuit in the UK. The grids for the Sunday included the Heroes of FF1600 Sixties Cup, Superperformance Ferrari Club Classic Series, Mighty Minis, Historic F3-1, Chris Moore’s Memorial Trophy and the Jochen Rindt Trophy. There was also a demonstration of American NASCAR cars.

In addition to the day’s racing, a number of classic car clubs exhibited their precious machines showcasing Jaguars, Ford GT 40s (some not



necessarily originals!), Aston Martins, Austin Healey’s, McLaren’s and a contingent of Fiat 500s and Alfa Romeos. A number of these cars took part in a parade around the track during the lunch break.



We were also given the opportunity to visit the pits to see the cars in preparation and talk to the drivers & owners.

Solent Annual Barbeque: 28/06/2024



The Solent barbeque was again arranged at the Royal Victoria Country Park on the banks of Southampton Water. This event has proved very popular and once again attracted 30 members with their partners (and dogs). The ‘barbie gods’ were smiling on us again – blessing us with fine weather and the food was enjoyed by all.

The Country Park is on the site of the Victorian military hospital initially built in the 19th century to

treat military personnel across the empire. It later provided care for the injured in the Boar Wars and for the injured of WWI and WWII.



The main hospital building was demolished in the mid-60’s when a box containing a Victoria Cross, Crimea medal and a set of coins originally placed by Queen Victoria beneath the foundation stone was removed and opened. The original hospital chapel has been retained & refurbed and is now open as a visitor’s centre, exhibition space and venue.

Derek Ward

Pitch n putt

Our annual sporting challenge, in the form of a pitch and putt event, was held on the sandy links at Hayling Island overlooking the Solent. Each of the ‘9 holes are a par 3’ and range from 80-155 yards but for most of us a much longer yardage is involved.



As in previous years we were blessed with sunny but slightly breezy weather. With a mixture of despondency and elation, ten members meandered their way around the course and occasionally through gorse bushes before reaching the sanctuary of the clubhouse.

As a nod to the Olympic Games, which were being held at the same time, our gold medal winner was Graham Baker with a score of 36. For those in need of refreshment and a chance to rest their weary bones the local Ferryboat Inn was a welcome and attractive post event meeting place.

Peter Wallbank

Rural life Museum and Sculpture Park: 10/07/2024



Victorian school

The event was planned as a mix-n-match and so it turned out to be!



Post war bike shop

On a bright morning, seven of us spent a nostalgic morning wandering around a very well-presented step back into the past: a private collection of items and buildings of bygone days ranging from a fully fitted out Victorian school, post war bike shop and a plethora of farm equipment. The museum is also home to the library and exhibits obtained from the Dennis factory after it closed in nearby Guildford. Unfortunately the museum is in danger of being closed due to rising costs.



Farm equipment

Two left but four joined for lunch at the Bel and Dragon followed by a visit to the sculpture park just opposite the pub.



Sculpture park

The park was a wonderland of walks through the woods and the two hours we had before closing was not nearly enough time to take it all in.



Sculpture park

One could have taken a picnic and spent most of the day wandering amongst the trees.

John Clayton

**Twyford Waterworks:
01/09/2024**

Members visited the Edwardian Twyford Waterworks on a bright Sunday morning. The buildings on the site date back to 1898 and 1935 which include the original steam powered pumping station

& associated boiler house. These still contain a Hathorn Davey triple expansion steam pumping engine dating from 1914 & three Babcock & Wilcox boilers dating from 1906, 1903 and 1916 respectively.



There are also three diesel engines supplied by Ruston & Hornsby dating from the 1930's when the plant was updated. The site also encompasses a water softening plant, fed by the pumping engine, and three lime kilns that were used to supply the water softening plant which were fed by on-site chalk pits. There is also a 2ft gauge industrial railway, including a rope-hauled inclined plane, used to transport materials around the site.



The borehole that fed the pumping station is still in use and supplies 5,000,000 imperial gallons of water every day but now uses modern submersible electric pumps. The supply is operated by Southern Water who, as the privatised successors to the Southern Water Authority, retain ownership of the site.

The wells below Twyford Waterworks still supply water today. The buildings and old equipment are now a 'scheduled ancient monument'.

An exhibition of vintage cars was also displayed around the site available for all to view.

Steve Malone

Liberty's Owl, Raptor and Reptile Centre: 11/09/2024

After anxiously looking at the weather for a few days on Wednesday it was a bright and breezy day at the centre near Ringwood. Arriving in the car park at 10am, five of us made the decision to have a quick morning coffee in the café as the first flight show was at 11am. We sat in the sun and chatted in pleasant surroundings.

We then made our way through the centre and visited the various birds sitting in their cages. The all eyed us up with interest and the variety

of species were all well looked after. The cages were clean with information plaques to read about their origins and habitat. We wove our way through the pathways taking pictures and chatting. The flying field was next to the children's play area, well equipped for a digging experience, slides, swings and a huge shoe house! We knocked but the 'old women' who lived there with many children was not in.

The first of the three flying displays was fantastic and the birds coped with the blustery wind well. The field was not too large and posts & rails were right next to the viewing public. We experienced a few wing beats just above our heads on occasion and you could feel the air move over our heads. The sun shone above and the birds performed brilliantly. The commentary throughout was very interesting. Did you know, for instance, that you can tell when an owl hunts by the colour of their eyes? Yellow, Orange or brown? We were told to look to the sky to work it out. You need to go to find out or Google it.

After this show, the next was just after lunch so we snacked at the café with a variety of toasted sandwiches which we all enjoyed. We then wandered through the bird cages again. We passed the fish pond with huge Koi enjoying the sun which usually had a fish feeding show but the water had been treated so there was none on that day.

At the next show, we saw kookaburras flying – this I had never seen before. You hear them before you see them usually. They have a pair that were rescued. Obviously, they are not raptors or owls but a delightful pair of birds. Next the vultures were displayed who are unfortunately

discriminated against because of their looks and eating habits. Their history was described: why they are necessary for the environment and that they have an acute sense of smell. Three miles away they can sniff the air to find their source of food – unlike eagles or owls who use their eyesight to great effect.

One more show, but before that, time to visit the reptile house. There was a small display of reptiles all happily dozing in the semi dark. Snakes, Geckos, a large and quite beautiful Iguana. I personally was incredibly happy to see large, hairy but quite beautiful spiders behind glass.

At the last show, they brought out a beautiful Caracara native to South America. This bird was shown collecting snacks from inside a dustbin. It popped 'in n out' and was amazing, seemingly to really enjoy doing it. The last part was amazing as we witnessed at least six Kites, red and black, catching food thrown into the air. They never landed – I have seen this on the television but never in real life. They catch their food in mid-air and transfer it to their beaks all the while acrobatic flying. Marvellous!

So, a good time was had by all five of us. The weather allowed for the birds to fly as they don't like flying in the rain.

Susan Bridger

Events programme 2024/2025

DATE/YEAR	EVENT	CONTACT
Wed 13/11/24	Battle of Cheriton Walk	Graham Willoughby
Fri 29/11/24	Site visit, Bournemouth & Poole College	Steve Malone
Wed 04/12/24	Christmas decorations, Mottisfont	John Clayton
Wed 08/01/25	Start of the year walk	Graham Willoughby
Wed 15/01/25	New Year lunch, Hayling Golf Club	Derek Ward
Fri 28/02/25	Gods House Tower visit	Steve Malone
Fri 14/03/25	Five-mile New Forest walk	Derek Ward
Thur 24/04/25	Lysses Hotel lunch, Fareham	Peter Wallbank
Tues 29/04/25	National Trust Property visit, Basingstoke	Joan Murray
May 2025	Portchester Castle visit	Peter Wallbank
June 2025	Thruxton Historic visit	Derek Ward
Thurs 26/06/25 (date to TBC)	BBQ at Royal Victoria Country Park	Derek Ward
July 2025	Pitch & Putt golf	Peter Wallbank
Sept 2025	Hurst Castle visit	Derek Ward

MONTHLY GOLF 2024/2025: monthly every first Tues (contact Derek Ward)

05/11/24, 03/12/24, 07/01/25, 04/02/25, 04/03/25, 08/04/25, 06/05/25, 03/06/25, 08/07/25, 05/08/25, 02/09/25

Graham Willoughby

Tempsford

We have had only one new member since our last report – total numbers 256 plus 14 for whom we are second choice. We have had two deaths in May – Don Hewitt and Keith Banks.



Leisurely walk to the Gibraltar Farm

Our events programme has continued in our traditional way. On 7 May, six of us had a leisurely walk in Tempsford from the level crossing to the Gibraltar Farm memorial at the old airfield to see the exhibits relating to the forces that flew from Churchill’s secret airfield to drop paratroopers behind the German lines in WWII.



One of the five memorials

We followed this with a delicious lunch at the Horseshoes Inn, Blunham, where we met another eight members. We were made very welcome by Liz and her husband who couldn’t do enough for us.



Lunch at the Horseshoes Inn

On 13 June we had our lunch at The Park Pub on Kimbolton Road, Bedford – a new venue for us which is a very old hostelry. Ten of us enjoyed our meals and good service. Great care was needed on leaving the venue as the carpark accesses are extremely close to traffic lights at a busy crossroads.

It was with some trepidation that we returned to The Wheatsheaf, Perry, on 11 July as we weren’t sure whether the staffing difficulties the new owners experienced had been overcome. We were served by a delightful young Polish lady who made up for the extremely slow delivery of meals with her jovial demeanour and chat – plus offering us all a free drink!



Ladybird cruise

The 13 August saw our group of 19 gather at the Hartford Marina, Huntingdon, for a two-hour Ladybird cruise downstream and back on the River Great Ouse. The boat is run by volunteers to raise money for the Ladybird Boat Trust which is a registered charity providing leisure time activity with a view to improving the conditions of life for disadvantaged people in the area.



High lock



Low lock

We were lucky with the weather and were able to spend time on the small open deck. The bulk of the boat is enclosed with large viewing windows. The cruise was followed by a pre-ordered lunch at the Hartford Marina Restaurant where the food was lovely and service excellent.



St. James, Hemingford

Our September event was a trip to Leicester to see the Richard III Visitor Centre. Richard III was King of England from 1452-1485. John Busby made the arrangements and reports as follows:

“On 12 September, 20 members enjoyed a day visiting Richard III in Leicester. On arrival our coach was met by a team member from the Richard III Visitor Centre who lead us on the short walk to the venue. At the centre we listened to an informative talk entitled: ‘The King under the car park’, while we enjoyed tea or coffee and biscuits in the King’s Suite. After this talk, we took our time following the life story of the last Plantagenet King up to his death at the battle of Bosworth field. The second story, well told by videos and exhibits, was the search for and finding, against all the odds, the grave and remains of the King in 2012.



One of the three tombs

A highlight was being able to view the grave where he was found, now covered by a walkable glass cover, beyond which was a stone wall bearing the following inscription:

“Lord Jesus Christ, deign to free me, your servant King Richard, from every tribulation, sorrow and trouble in which I am placed.”



Plaque

Lunch was taken nearby, in our own room, at the Globe Pub and Kitchen – the oldest public house still open in Leicester (1720).



The Globe

After lunch, a visit and informative guided tour was taken at the nearby Cathedral where Richard III was reinterred in March 2015.

Still to come are:

- 10 October: the White Horse, Southill, and hope to have a pre-lunch walk
- 6 November: lunch at The Anchor, Great Barford, preceded by a talk on Isambard Kingdom Brunel about the building of his railways, bridges and steam ships by Barry Tomlinson
- 12 December: our Christmas celebration at Pavenham Park Golf Club
- 13 February 2025: return to The Barley Mow, St. Neots, for lunch
- 13 March 2025: back to The Mermaid, Ellington.

Harold Thompson

Anna Marie UK Circumnavigation

by Nigel Burrows

LEG 3: DUNSTAFFNAGE/OBAN VIA THE CALEDONIAN CANAL TO PORT EDGAR, EDINBURGH.

Friday 7 July: Peter was again joining me on this leg and we had travelled to Dunstaffnage two days before. We had filled up the boat with fuel and water then moved her the short distance to Oban. There we were joined by my wife Anna, sister Yvonne and Peter's wife Georgina.



The crew at Oban: Peter, Georgina and Yvonne

There was a strong wind and heavy rain overnight. The CalMac ferry was taking visitors to a musical festival on one of the islands but the winds were too strong to dock and had to turn back to Oban.

By the time we got up at 06.00hrs the winds were manageable and we left at 07.00hrs heading up Loch Linnhe to Corpach marina at the start of the Caledonian Canal. The wind soon increased, gusting over 25knts at times. We sailed with a reefed-in main and jib as far as the Corran Narrows then dropped the main. We sailed under the jib only at 6knts passing Fort William and arrived at Corpach at 12.45hrs.

We met up with the sea lock keeper, Angus, and booked a time

to enter the sea lock the next day. You must buy a licence to traverse the canal. Once you enter the canal this lasts for seven nights including a night in the Sea Port marina at the Inverness end.

Saturday 8 July: Angus called us on the radio into the sea lock at 09.00hrs with a French motor sailor and a Swedish yacht on its way back from the Caribbean. All the locks and bridges are operated by canal personnel who help transit the boats. With great views of Ben Nevis, we went through the next two locks and motored up to the next obstacle, a swing road and rail bridge, arriving at 10.30hrs. In front of these bridges is the Neptune locks which are a staircase system. This means that once you are in the first lock the front gate is the back gate of the second lock and there are eight locks altogether.



The crew waiting to be called in the lock

Boats coming down had priority so we tied up and waited. At 12.30hrs the keepers went off to lunch and we were told that, apart from the scheduled trains, there was also a tourist steam train due so the rail bridge would not be opened until 15.00hrs. The Lochy pub was adjacent so we all adjourned there. Here we



Neptune locks with Ben Nevis in the background

said goodbye to Georgina who was catching one of the trains, that were holding us up, back home.

At 15.30hrs we passed through the swing bridges and started going through the Neptune staircase of locks. The crew did a great job of pulling the boat through each lock and managing the lines. It helped that it was warm and sunny. We got through the last lock at 17.30hrs and tied up on a pontoon for the night.

Sunday 9 July: We had been told that the Moy swing bridge, which was the next obstacle along the canal, would not open until 09.30hrs so we left our mooring at 09.00hrs and got to the Moy swing bridge at 9.50hrs. However, we still had to hover around with three other boats until the bridge opened at 10.00hrs. The lock keeper then drove to Gairloch top lock to open it. We were in no hurry as we had planned to stop after we had gone through Gairloch lock. We took our time and enjoyed the views. Some of us took advantage of our early stop and walked to the Commando Memorial near Spean Bridge. This memorial overlooks the training areas of the Commando Training

Continued...

Depot established in 1942 at Achnacarry Castle.

Monday 10 July: We left Gairloch at 08.00hrs and motored into Loch Lochy. It was sunny with just a few clouds in the sky. I am used to sailing on the East coast where a depth of 20m is deep – on Loch Lochy it was 142m. We arrived at Laggan lock at 09.45hrs but had to wait for other boats to come through. This is the highest point of the canal – It is downhill from then on. Once through Laggan locks we travelled along a very pretty narrow stretch of the canal to a large swing bridge taking the A82 and into Loch Oich. At the end of Loch Oich we went through another swing bridge, again taking the A82 and onto Culloch locks. At the next narrow section we met 'The Lord of The Isles' coming the other way. This is a cruise ship designed to just fit into the locks. We had no choice but to back up. We negotiated Kytra lock and finished at Fort Augustus where we tied up around 13.00hrs. In front of us lay the Fort Augustus staircase locks – a series of five locks. This would be tackled tomorrow.



Laggan section into Loch Oich



Fort Augustus locks

Tuesday 11 July: We had heavy rain overnight and it was drizzling as we headed off at 08.15hrs down the staircase lock at Fort Augustus and into Loch Ness. The staircase locks took an hour to navigate. There were light winds against us so we motored through Loch Ness, diverting from the direct course to have a closer look at Urquhart Castle. No sign of Nessie – the depth gauge read 190m – so I think she was hiding somewhere below. We headed for the locks at Dochgarroch which we went through before tying up for the day.

Wednesday 12 July: There was light rain in the morning. We were advised by the lady lock keeper that Muirtown bridge had problems so no boats were moving. By 10.00hrs the bridge was fixed so we set off to two swing bridges, one in front of the other, taking each carriageway of the A82 over the canal. You have to moor up between the bridges while they close the one behind and open the one in front so that the road traffic is not held up for too long. The manoeuvre is

orchestrated by the bridge operator with the boats going up and down the canal waiting in turn.



Urquhart Castle, Loch Ness

It stopped raining as we got to the Muirtown Flight. This is another staircase flight of four locks. I helped a single hander down while Anna and Yvonne walked my boat down with Peter helming. There was a backlog of boats to come up due to the bridge problems so the lock keepers had us passing in the locks. We stopped in the bottom lock before they emptied it at 12.00hrs because it was the lock and bridge operators lunch breaks. Muirtown bridge is immediately in front of the bottom lock and would open at 13.20hrs. Once through we tied up at Seaport marina, our last stop on the Caledonian canal, before exiting through the sea lock tomorrow.



Sea lock, Caledonian canal, Inverness end

Thursday 13 July: The plan today was to move the boat the short distance out of the Caledonian Canal through the sea lock and

round to Inverness marina. My wife Anna and my sister Yvonne were leaving the boat today, with Peter and I completing this leg to Port Edgar, Queensferry, Edinburgh. We left the marina at just after 08.30hrs and followed a very large motorboat from Florida called 'Gratitude' into the lock. We were held in the lock while a train went over the swing bridge then we were let into the sea lock. We motored round to Inverness marina and tied up. I took the opportunity of the early finish to plan the next passages to Port Edgar knowing that several of them had tidal restrictions and that it was going to be an early start tomorrow.



River Ness

Friday 14 July: We were up at 04.00hrs and underway by 04.15hrs. We started off motoring due to light winds. By 08.15hrs the wind had increased so we hoisted the sails and made good time. We arrived off Lossiemouth, 36nm at 11.00hrs, well before the 12.10hrs deadline to have sufficient depth to enter. We initially tied up on the visitor's berth. I was aware we were on a spring tide, where you get the maximum difference between high and low water, and I was concerned there probably would not be enough depth for my boat at low water which draws 1.95m. We went to see the harbour master who agreed with us and let us move to a deeper berth in the inner harbour. One of the cheapest marinas so far at only £25 for the night, whatever length boat, and it includes electric.

Lossiemouth is a very nice town with large sandy beaches.



Arriving Whitehills

Saturday 15 July: The plan today was to sail to Whitehills, a distance of 26nm. We left as soon as we had sufficient depth of water at 08.30hrs under light winds and motored with the jib up. There was a bit of drama at 11.10hrs when we were called up by a station calling itself 'Guard Ship'. They were asking us to move a further 500m towards the coast away from a cable laying ship which we could see in the distance. The ship was at anchor but they had found a UXB and were waiting for bomb disposal to turn up. Presumably all ended well as there were no reports of ships being blown up off the west coast of Scotland. I had pre-booked a berth at Whitehills. The harbour master, Bernie, said to call him half an hour before we arrived and he would take pictures of us entering the harbour.



We arrived at Whitehills at 12.30hrs escorted by dolphins. Bernie was on the harbour wall as promised. He directed us to our berth and took our lines. A very nice chap. Whitehills is a very small harbour with a narrow rocky entrance channel before a right

angle turn through the harbour walls just before you end up on the beach. It was gala day in the village and as we finished tying up a band of pipers marched past the marina – a very Scottish welcome!

Sunday 16 July: We left Whitehills at 08.45hrs with over 14knts of wind behind us. We sailed comfortably with one reef in the main and a full jib at over 6knts. The wind slowly died away and by 14.15hrs we were motoring. As we arrived off Peterhead the wind picked up. I called up Peterhead Port Control to ask permission to enter and advised them we wanted to pick up some fuel before going to the marina. Peterhead is a working port and the fuel berth is designed for large ships with the jetty some 4m above us plus a massive sausage fender at sea level.



On the way to Arbroath

Mooring is achieved by lines being dropped down to you. With just one person on the jetty throwing lines down and two of us on board, plus the ever-increasing wind blowing us off, it took three attempts.

We completed the refuelling and tied up in the marina at 16.30hrs having sailed 39nm from Whitehills.

Our next port was Arbroath some 65nm away. This again is a tidal restricted harbour and we would need to leave around 03.00hrs in the morning to ensure access. The strong winds were predicted to continue overnight until 09.00hrs

the following day so we decided to stay another day in Peterhead.

Tuesday 18 July: We were up at 03.00hrs and underway by 03.45hrs. We had spent the previous day visiting the old Peterhead Prison which was a lot more interesting than it seems.



Arbroath Harbour

We motor sailed against a tide of over 3knts at times. We passed the entrance into Aberdeen at around 07.45hrs having not seen much shipping since Milford Haven. We were constantly passed by ferries, cargo ships and small fishing boats going in and out of Aberdeen harbour. At 12.45hrs the wind picked up and we carried on under sail only, arriving at Arbroath at 15.00hrs, a good hour before the tidal gate to keep the water in the harbour was closed. Arbroath is a small but very pretty harbour with a mixture of fishing boats as well as pleasure boats. That evening we went out for a beer and sample the Arbroath smokie – very pleasant.



Forth Bridges

Wednesday 19 July: We motored out of Arbroath harbour at 12.40hrs as soon as the tidal gate opened. We tried flying the jib to help against the tide but the wind kept swinging around and was

generally on our nose. This, with very heavy rain showers, made for an unpleasant trip. I was not keen to arrive at Port Edgar in the dark so the engine had a good work out. The channel buoys along the Forth are set up on catamaran rafts. The seals take full advantage of this and use them to lie on. We sailed under the rail & road bridge and moored up at 20.35hrs at Port Edgar, Queensferry – a sail of 51nm. We watched the sun set behind the new road bridge – the sky turned red and created a good photo opportunity.

The following morning Peter caught the train back home. I spent the day cleaning the boat and doing the laundry. That was the end of leg 3 and I caught the train home the following day.

LEG 4: PORT EDGAR, QUEENSFERRY, SCOTLAND TO SUFFOLK YACHT HARBOUR (SYH)



Heading down the Forth with new crew member Jimmy

Wednesday 26 July: I caught the train back to Edinburgh and the bus to Queensferry. On arriving it was raining – it is Scotland afterall! My friend David, who was crewing for me the rest of the way back to SYH, was already on board.

Thursday 27 July: There was heavy rain overnight and the forecast did not look pleasant for the morning. Another friend, Jimmy, arrived around 09.15hrs. He was very keen to join us having flown up from Bristol that morning. We left

at 09.30hrs passing under the old road and rail bridges. The next port was Eyemouth – 50nm away.

Queensferry is a long way up the Forth and it was not until 14.00hrs that we passed the Bass Rock which marks the boundary between the Firth of Forth & the North Sea. The next landmark was St, Abbs Head which we passed at 17.30hrs. We had rain most of the way and once we changed course after Bass Rock the wind was on our nose so we had to motor.



Eyemouth

We arrived off Eyemouth at 18.00hrs which was perfect timing as the tide was just high enough to give us sufficient depth of water to enter. There is a cardinal mark offshore indicating a rocky shelf at which you are requested to contact the harbour master before proceeding further to ensure there are no other boat movements. I then had to trust the charts and my plotter and turn the bow to shore. All I could see were rocks and just as I thought I had got it wrong the entrance revealed itself. We passed the old harbour to our left which was full of the large catamarans that service the wind farms. You do not want to meet one of them in the rocky narrow entrance channel! We rafted up to another boat on the visitors berth further up the tidal section of Eye Water.

The old Eyemouth harbour is a very small pretty harbour which was full of fishing boats and the service catamarans. In there, later that

evening, we saw three large seals. They were completely stationary and appeared to be sleeping with just their heads poking out of the water. Overlooking the harbour is Gunsgreen House, built in 1753, and specifically adapted with large cellars with direct access to the sea for smuggling. It looked well worth a visit but was closed during the period we were there – maybe another day.



Bamburgh Castle

Friday 28 July: Our next port was Amble, 40nm away. This has a tidal restriction of three hours either side of high water. We were up at 05.30hrs to pay the harbour fees and left the pontoon at 06.30hrs. We had to wait for a few minutes, just before the entrance of the old harbour, while a wind farm service catamaran boat came out. We followed the catamaran which filled the channel out to sea before it fired up its engines and disappeared over the horizon.



Amble and the River Coquet

Again, there were light winds so to meet the tidal restrictions at Amble we had to motor. Northumberland has a spectacular coastline with lots of famous landmarks, the first being Holy Island off which we saw several seals. At 09.20hrs we were just off Bamburgh Castle and caught fleeting glimpses of a small

whale as it surfaced – this was probably a Minkie. Later we saw the ruins of Dunstanburgh Castle.

It was nice to see groups of Puffins, which we had not come across before, just sitting on the water. On a sadder note, we also passed a significant number of dead sea birds – probably a result of Avian flu.

We arrived at Amble at 12.30hrs, one hour after high tide, so still plenty of water in the channel and over the sill into the marina. Mick, another friend of mine, was joining us today with Jimmy leaving in the morning.

Saturday 29 July: I had continued to find small amounts of water in the bilges and as we were not sailing today, I was determined to



Warkworth Cricket Club with the castle in the background

find out where it was coming from. When I had checked around the engine before it had always been dry. When I checked this time it was dry but I found dried salts around the back of the water pump. With the engine running and the front panel to the engine compartment off, I could see water coming from the back of the water pump. It was only a small amount and nothing to worry about – so I thought.

It was a lovely day and we walked along the banks of the River Coquet to Warkworth village and castle. We went over the 14th century bridge and into the very pretty town. We walked back via the castle and a bridleway past the cricket club with great views

of the castle. In Amble, we visited the lobster hatchery where you can observe the whole process from the eggs hatching to the young lobsters ready for release.

That evening we visited the Coquet Yacht Club and had a great evening drinking and recounting our trip with the members.

As usual, before turning in, I checked the weather forecast. It was not looking good for tomorrow with winds gusting 25 to 30knts.

Sunday 30 July: As predicted, we woke to strong winds so decided to stay another day. We took advantage of the rest day to do some food shopping and passage planning. We walked to the river entrance – It did look rough out to sea so we decided we'd made the right decision.

Monday 31 July: It rained overnight but it had stopped by early morning and the wind appeared to be a lot lighter. There would not be enough water to get over the marina sill until after midday. We used the time to fill up with water and diesel. There is a tidal gauge which displays the depth of water over the sill. My boat draught is 1.95m and by 13.00hrs this read 2m so we left. By 14.00hrs the wind had increased to 14knts and gusting 17knts. With two reefs in the main sail and a reduced jib, our speed over the ground was still 7.8knts.

Our destination was Blythe, a working port, just 18nm away. We arrived off the entrance to Blythe around 15.30hrs, dropped the sails and called up the harbour master for permission to enter. We were given permission but made aware of a tanker exiting. We headed up river to the mooring pontoons owned by the Royal Northumberland Yacht Club but



Royal Northumberland Yacht Club, Blythe

had to wait to cross the river while the tanker passed. We eventually tied up by 16.00hrs just as the heavens opened.

The area is very much a working port and as such is a bit grim. We did start to venture into town but the rain got heavier and we retreated to the boat. Fortunately, there is a club house adjacent to the pontoons. This is the converted Lightship No. 50, one of the few remaining wooden light vessels built in 1878, and now called HY Tyne III. Surprisingly, we met up with the couple we rafted up to at Eyemouth and enjoyed a few beers with them. They were on their way to their home port Hartlepool.

Tuesday 1 August: Throughout the trip, I had been contacting the harbours & marinas ahead to let them know to expect us, find out what the access restrictions were and, where possible, book a berth. Our next port was St. Peter's Port up the Tyne in Newcastle. Being so close to the town centre, this is a popular marina and I was told that they were full. The alternative is the Royal Quays marina which is in North Shields – a bit out of Newcastle but the metro station is close by so easy access to the town centre.

After checking on boat movements with the Blythe harbour master, we were given permission to leave at 10.15hrs. There was a 9 to 10knts wind and we made good

headway. Finally, the sun was out making for a pleasant sail. I even put the fishing line out and caught a fish but it got away – honest! As we arrived off the entrance to the Tyne we were greeted by a pod of dolphins. This species was larger than I had seen on the south or west coasts.

The Tyne is a very busy river and you are required to call up Tyne VTS for permission to enter and inform them of your destination. We dropped the sails and, once getting the okay, started heading upriver arriving at Royal Quays marina at 13.00hrs. To enter the marina you have to go through a lock. The berthing master came down, while it was filling, to give us a map of the marina and tell us which berth we were on. Royal Quays is a Boatfolk marina whose other marinas include Portland and Bangor. It had come up on his computer that I had berthed in those marinas so we had a chat about our journey around the UK and that we were on our last few passages home.



Heading up the Tyne to Royal Quays marina

Once we had tidied the boat up, we got the metro into Newcastle and met up with my friend Steve who had left the boat at Falmouth. He was rejoining the boat for the rest of the trip. After a walking tour of Newcastle we went for food at the Bridge Tavern. I highly recommend their meat and sea food sharing platters – they are enormous!

That evening I looked at the weather forecast for the next week – it was not looking good.

Tomorrow was bad then there were a few good days followed by a week of very strong winds which turned out to be the first storm of the season called 'Antoni'.

Wednesday 2 August: Having decided to stay another day we got, a taxi to Tynemouth and walked around the old priory and defence installation in the pouring rain. We then walked along the river to the old fish quay and visited the museum in the Old Low Light. This is a low square tower with a fixed light on top. There was also an Old High Light which were the leading lights into the harbour before the sand banks moved. The new leading lights had to be built.

That evening I looked at the forecast again and nothing had changed. Our next port was Hartlepool followed by Whitby then Grimsby. We could possibly make Grimsby but from Whitby this is an overnight passage and I did not want to get caught out if the storm came in early. Whitby is a very small harbour and I did not feel comfortable leaving the boat there for any length of time unattended. So the decision was made to head to Hartlepool and leave the boat there until storm Antoni had blown through.

Thursday 3 August: The plan was to leave just before low water to get the last ebb tide out of the river and then pick up the flood tide that runs down the coast. Having notified Tyne VTS of our intentions we locked out at 11.20hrs. As we exited the lock, the depth gauge dropped to just 0.3m below the keel which was a bit worrying as by my calculations it should have had been at least 450mm deeper. This was probably localised silting against the lock sill as we soon found deeper water as we motored



out towards the main channel. It would have been very embarrassing to have got stuck on a falling tide just outside the lock. Once out to sea we raised the sails. The initial wind speed was 9.3knts and close hauled, we had an initial boat speed of 3knts, but this increased to 6knts as the tide turned in our favour and the wind increased to 11.9knts. We arrived off Hartlepool at 16.15hrs to be greeted by a pod of dolphins. I wondered if they were the Geordie pod that had followed us from Tynemouth?

Hartlepool is a huge harbour and in its present form was built in the 1840s. Adjacent to the entrance lock is a statue of the Hartlepool Monkey. The story is that the monkey was the sole survivor off a French ship that was wrecked off Hartlepool during the Napoleonic wars. The locals thought it was a French spy – it didn't end well for the monkey!

Friday 4 August: Storm Antoni was due to hit the southwest coast tonight and then head across the country with predicted maximum winds of 55mph. As it turned out they were much stronger – over 70mph in places and over 40mph on the east coast where we had

intended to sail. We closed the boat up and caught the train back to our various homes.

Tuesday 8 August: Having checked the weather forecast, Wednesday did not look too bad and the weather was due to get even better in the following days. I met up with Steve at King's Cross station and we headed back to Hartlepool. Dave was making his own way there but Mick was not joining us.

Wednesday 9 August: The next passage to Whitby required careful planning as you need to leave Hartlepool and arrive Whitby on the same tide. There is enough depth of water to leave Hartlepool three hours either side of high water and to enter Whitby two hours either side of high water. The distance is 25nm which should take five hours. We locked out of Hartlepool as soon as we could at 07.00hrs. There was a good wind of 11knts rising to 15knts and it was



sunny – hooray! We sailed with the full jib, one reef in the main sail and obtained a maximum speed of 7knts. We arrived off Whitby just before 11.00hrs, dropped the sails and started entering the harbour. There was a very large swell with waves breaking either side on the rocks. It then got even rougher as we entered the narrow channel between the breakwaters. I was concentrating so hard that I had not noticed the fishing boat following us in. As soon as we got to calmer

waters the fishing boat passed me and the skipper shouted: "Did you enjoy that?"

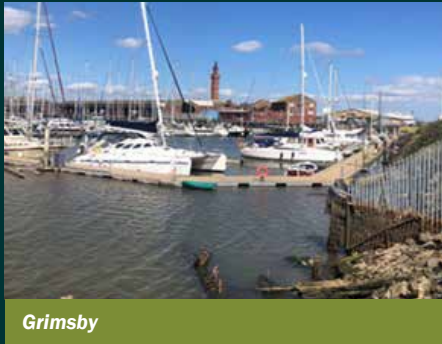
Access to the marina is through a swing bridge that opens on demand at half hourly intervals, two hours either side of high tide. We tied up on the waiting pontoon and I called up bridge control. The next opening was 11.30hrs, the final opening of the day was 12.30hrs, so we made it with an hour to spare.



Thursday 10 August: We followed several other vessels through the swing bridge at 10.00hrs – the first opening of the day. Our next port was Grimsby, 83nm away, about a 15-hour sail. Access into the marina at Grimsby is through a lock which is open two hours either side of high water. This was 01.30hrs in the morning of the 11 August. The wind was initially light so we motored until 16.00hrs when we were off Flamborough Head and the wind increased to 10.7knts which allowed us to put the sails up. In the dark that evening, I grabbed two cans out of the cupboard for tea which I thought were chilli but one of the cans was chicken korma. I had opened both and had mixed them with the cooked rice before I realised. I did not tell my crew, Dave and Steve, until after they had finished and they did not complain! We had a very pleasant sail during the rest of the night and, without the light pollution you get on land, could see lots of stars including a few shooting stars.

We have a chart plotter at each wheel which shows our position and the positions of the navigational marks. During the day you can confirm your position by recognising the colour and shape of the navigation marks in the water. At night though you must recognise them by the colour and unique sequence of light flashes they emit. We were looking out for No. 3 South Cardinal buoy having white quick flashing plus long flashing light with a period of 15 seconds. This is positioned to the south of Chequer Shoal and is on the edge of the traffic separation lanes for the large shipping going in and out of the Humber. We found it at around 23.00hrs and intended to drop the sails before calling up Humber VTS to get permission to cross the shipping lanes. However, as we were dropping the sails, Humber VTS called us up wanting to know our intentions – you are always being watched! I told them our route and they reminded us to leave 0.5nm clearance from the Tetney Monobuoy which had a ship moored to it loading up with oil.

Our destination was Meridian Quay, 10nm up the Humber, within the Fish Dock which is to the left of another set of lock gates into the Royal Dock. I called up the lock keeper to let him know we were on our final approach and for permission to enter. The outer entrance to both docks is marked by a well-lit port and starboard buoys but once past these we could not see any opening in the dark. Then over the radio came: "Hard to port skipper." We all looked to the left and there was the opening. With relief, we tied up in the Meridian Quay marina run by the Humber Cruising Association at 01.00hrs, tidied the boat up and went to bed.



Friday 11 August: We walked around the harbour to the dock area and had a very nice breakfast but generally the whole area is very run down. We filled up with diesel and locked out at 14.00hrs on route to the Royal Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club in Lowestoft. There were strong winds of 15.7knts so we sailed under jib only, making 6.0knts over the ground. The wind died around 16.00hrs, we motored until around 18.00hrs when the wind picked up to 15.1knts and we started sailing again making 7knts over the ground. There are several sand banks along this coast and various routes through them. I loaded up the route onto the chart plotter but had also listed out the various buoys, their light colours and flashing sequence. The person on watch ticked off to confirm our position. This, together with looking out for ships and spotting shooting stars, made each two-hour watch pass quickly.



Saturday 12 August: We arrived at Lowestoft at 07.40hrs and tied up on one of the Royal Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club pontoons.

We had covered the 105nm at an average speed of 6knts. We tidied up the boat and went for a well-earned breakfast, then back to the boat for a snooze.

Sunday 13 August: Another friend, Ralph, had joined us for the final leg. We motored out of Lowestoft at 07.00hrs. Initially we had the tide with us and managed to have the jib up but, once we had got out beyond the Newcome sand bank and changed course to run parallel with the coast, the wind was on our nose and we could not fly the jib. The tide soon turned against us and with a very lumpy sea we had a slow uncomfortable sail.



At 11.30hrs, off Aldborough, roughly halfway home, the seal warning light went off. The back of the engine has a sail drive unit which is a transmission system, from the engine to the propellor, changing horizontal drive to vertical drive then back to horizontal drive. The vertical shaft goes through an opening in the hull which has an inner and outer seal. If the seal alarm goes off it means water has got between these seals. When I looked the engine compartment was flooded. One of the crew started bailing while I called up the coastguard. By good luck the Aldborough inshore lifeboat was out on a practice and was sent to meet up with us.

At this point I still thought that the water was coming through the outer seal so the boat would need to be lifted out for repair. The nearest harbours of Aldborough

and Southwold did not have this facility. The next nearest was Shotley Marina at the mouth of the Orwell but it would be slow going against wind and tide to get there so we turned to go back to Lowestoft. We put the jib up and with the tide made good progress. At 12.30hrs the large lifeboat from Lowestoft took over escort duties. We continued to bail, filling a gallon bucket every 0.5hrs. We eventually got back to Lowestoft at 14.30hrs and went over to the lifeboat to thank them.

Embarrassingly I soon discovered that all the water was coming from the back of the raw water-cooling pump – lesson learnt – I should have changed it as soon as I knew there was a problem. We were very lucky that the engine did not overheat.

I dried the boat out, unscrewed the alarm sensor and there was water between the seals.

When I eventually got the boat lifted out back at Suffolk Yacht Harbour, it was confirmed that the seals were found to be intact. The only way the water could have got between them was through where the sensor was located.



Horne port, Suffolk Yacht Harbour

Monday 14 August: While at Lowestoft, I ordered a new pump from a company located at Suffolk Yacht Harbour where I keep my boat – this would arrive Wednesday. We then headed back

to Woodbridge where Dave lives – I have a second home. Ralph and Steve had already caught the train to their homes the day before.

Friday 18 August: We headed out of Lowestoft at 07.30hrs. Dave and I had caught the train to Lowestoft and fitted the new water pump the day before. It was quite windy, 12knts, so we sailed under the jib only achieving 6knts over the ground. The wind lessened to 9knts around 13.30hrs so we put the main up and had an enjoyable final sail of the circumnavigation. We crossed the shipping channel into the Orwell and dropped the main as the wind had risen again. We picked up the small ships channel and continued under the jib, passing Felixstowe Docks, and arriving at Suffolk Yacht Harbour at 15.05hrs. We were finally home – whoopi!

The east coast had been the most difficult leg of the trip, tidal restrictions, storms and mechanical failure.

My boat, Anna Marie, had been away for 86 days and covered 1,673nm. We had visited 37 wonderful harbours & marinas, one of them twice, drunk lots of beer and eaten lots of fish n chips. I enjoyed planning the trip as much as I did the actual trip. It was a great experience as well as a challenge for myself and my crew to whom I give a big thank you.

This season I am sticking to the local Suffolk and Essex rivers!

Sayings from Duncan Mort

HOPEFULLY SOME OF THESE WILL RAISE A SMILE!

- **Something went wrong in jet crash, expert says:**
Really?
- **Police begin campaign to run down jaywalkers:**
Now that's taking things a bit far!
- **Panda mating fails; veterinarian takes over:**
What a guy!
- **Miners refuse to work after death:**
No-good-for-nothing' lazy so-and-so's!
- **Juvenile court to try shooting defendant:**
That's taking things too far!
- **War dims hope for peace:**
I can see where it might have that effect!
- **If strike isn't settled quickly, it may last a while:**
Ya' think so?!
- **Cold wave linked to temperatures:**
Who would have thought!
- **New study of obesity looks for larger test group:**
Weren't they fat enough?
- **Astronaut takes blame for gas in spacecraft:**
That's what we get from eating those beans!
- **Kids make nutritious snacks:**
Do they taste like chicken?
- **Hospitals are sued by seven foot doctors:**
Boy, are they tall!
- **Typhoon rips through cemetery; hundreds dead:**
Did I read that right?
- **Couple slain; police suspect homicide:**
They may be on to something!

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Merry Christmas & a
Happy New Year to you all

