



EAST NEWS

CRUISING SAILORS SHOULD STAND UP AND BE COUNTED

FIGHT FOR YOUR FREEDOMS DELEGATES TOLD

One of the most serious problems facing yachtsmen today was where to keep their boats, warned John Goode, Editor of *Sailing Today*, and special guest speaker at this year's regional Cruising Conference at Chelmsford.

"The British Marine Federation (BMF) is building ever more boats, the RYA is encouraging ever more people to take to the water; but where are we going to park them all?" he declared.

As more and more motorboats clogged up existing marinas, pushing cruising sailors, who often had to scrape around to run a boat, out onto river moorings, which in turn were becoming increasingly expensive and scarce, so the East Coast was in danger of following the South Coast

"We need more affordable municipal marinas like they have on the Continent. Developers and planners must resist putting masses of high rise buildings round new marinas. We quite often only want basic facilities," he said.

John, a Master Mariner, Principal of Southern Sea School, Fellow of the Institute of Navigation, as well as Editor of the leading national cruising magazine, told the conference: "I like cruising. It's one of our last freedoms and we must fight to keep it. It doesn't have to be expensive but I fear increasing legislation may make it so.

"We're on the cusp with commercialism threatening to take over," he warned. Adding: "We'll soon be in the same position as farmers in the West country – there are now more Defra officials than farmers in the area!"

DINGHY SAILING SHOW 2006

The Dinghy Sailing Show on 4 and 5 March at Alexandra Palace, London, has over 200 exhibitors – over 100 classes of dinghy, as well as clubs, class associations, chandlers and equipment manufacturers.

DON'T MISS IT!

16th Century Genoese astronomer Cassini, said: "It is better to have absolutely no idea where one is and to know it, than to believe confidently that one is where one is not!"



Above: Part of the Chelmsford audience settle down for the day's debate.

Left: John Goode, Editor *Sailing Today*, brought along his fiddle. Right: RYA Council member Terry Corner acted as conference MC.



Reports following pages

CARRUTHERS DEFENDS RYA STANCE ON CRUISING

RYA Cruising Manager Stuart Carruthers said that despite fears to the contrary the RYA was safeguarding the interests of cruising yachtsmen; and with 60,000 of the 104,000 members of the RYA being cruising sailors the organisation has a major commitment to fostering their interests.

He told the audience that the first priority of the cruising department was to organise the annual power and sail cruises in company to give new-comers confidence and on the water training.

Another aspect of the department's work was organising the Honda RIB Youth Championship, to introduce youngsters to safe boat handling and to introduce them to powerboating at an early age.

Personal Water Craft (Jetskis) were here to stay and part of his role was get them integrated in mainstream yachting.

Through the RYA's membership of the European Boating Association (EBA), the body representing all national bodies in the EU, he was involved in lobbying the EU Commission on boating freedoms.

"The RYA is protecting the rights and freedoms of all boating people," he told the audience. "We represent all aspects of recreational boating and we are recognised by Government as the national negotiating body We'll flex our muscles when there's a need to," he added.

Among successful campaigns on behalf of boaters he included the retraction of the need by the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA) for every slightest bump or graze to be reported.

On light dues he said the RYA supported the premise that as yachts don't necessarily use the navigation buoys laid for commercial ships, they shouldn't have to pay dues, but that the dues should come out of general taxation.

The RYA has persuaded the MCA to accept yachtsmen's charts for small craft instead of having to carry authorised charts, in exactly the same way as commercial ships. (Most of us carry Admiralty or Admiralty derived charts, which are authorised anyway!).

Thanks to RYA pressure the Automatic Identification System, (AIS) is not obligatory on vessels under 500 tonnes gross tonnage. The RYA had also got a prejudicial ruling scrapped that would have made anchoring in or near oyster beds illegal, on the grounds that anchoring was part of navigation.



Stuart Carruthers

Therefore to ban it would curtail the established freedom to navigate the waterways; not that any responsible cruising yachtsman would dream of intentionally dropping anchor in the middle of oyster bed.

The RYA supported the continuation of the derogation (lead by the BMF) for low tax red diesel to be continued to be used in small craft. Along with Finland, Eire, Belgium and Malta he was hopeful we would get a five year stay of execution.

In a presentation that sounded more as if it had been written by the legal department, Mr Carruthers detailed a number of cases where the RYA was actively pursuing the yachtsman's cause. On the question of booze on boats he admitted it still wasn't clear that having a few drinks either at anchor or even in your marina berth wouldn't constitute an offence under the proposed changes to the Railway and Transport Safety Act - Part 4.

On VAT on second-hand boats he said: "Customs and excise really need to think this one through. A number of people who bought boats have been stung for quite large amounts of back VAT because they couldn't produce a valid exemption certificate. They are of a mind to recognise that a bill of sale between UK nationals would relieve the need for additional VAT, but the real problem arises with boats sold abroad."

And on windfarms, he said the RYA had disabused developers that everything moving within a shipping channel did so in straight line. Nor did they need to impose exclusion zones on finished windfarms; only while the towers were being erected and then for purely local safety reasons. There was a dire need for a proper risk assessment programme.

The RYAs position on PWCs was that they should be classed as ships and there-

fore subject to the same regulation as other recreational craft under the Shipping Act 1968.

He welcomed the change in VHF licence regulations giving yachtsmen the chance to apply on-line and get a FREE ten-year-life licence. He therefore thought it a bit daft to choose ten years as research showed most people changed their boats every seven years!

He agreed that something needed to be done about unmarked fishing gear and suggested that incidents should be reported through CHIRPs rather than direct to the MCA as they were being logged by the Coastguard as engine failures, collisions and the like, but very rarely as something involving fishing gear.

However, the MCA has agreed that no regulatory action will be taken against skippers who call up for help with engine failures, although he did urge the audience to get their engines regularly serviced or to take a diesel maintenance course.

On the vexing question of what we should do with our out-of-date flares he said it was now entirely our responsibility how they were disposed. Chandlers wouldn't take them, the RNLI has wound up its collection service and the only recourse left would be to take them back directly to the manufacturer. He feared that unless something was put in place soon, people would stop buying flares.

More reports next page

SEVEN GUN SALUTE



Royal Navy frigate HMS Grafton paid her final visit to her adopted port of Ipswich at the end of January, before being decommissioned. Passing Royal Harwich Yacht Club she fired a seven-gun Commodore's salute, which was returned in kind by the club, using starting cannon and shotguns!

ELECTRONIC NAVIGATION WILL NEVER REPLACE PAPER CHARTS

The biggest benefit of any electronic navigation system is that it provides 'at a glance' navigation, Garth Cooper told the conference. Presenting one of the two technical papers on charts and navigation, on behalf of Robin Cole of Precision Navigation Limited, Garth said that an icon on a chart plotter screen showing where and on what heading the vessel was going was a considerable time saving over taking bearings and readings and plotting them on chart.

The electronic software allowed the navigator to plot his position in much the same way we do when we plot a position onto the paper chart.

"Computer based systems however, go a little further in using tidal data and will, once a route has been prepared, calculate the position of the boat, and give the best time of departure to arrive at a destination at a given time, taking into account the tidal streams. It will display your ground track, and even tell you what weather to expect!

"The downside, however, is that electronic charts are nowhere near updated frequently enough. The chart database issued from the central chart-compiling centre is, at best, a month old before it is despatched to national distributors. The database is then copied and fed out to chart dealers - that takes about another month - so if you reckon this up, it means your latest chart cartridge that you've just bought is two months out of date.

"Bearing in mind that the database is updated four times a year, the chart you have could be as much as five months out of date when you come to use it - even if you've had it updated," he declared.

Many skippers don't get their cartridges up-dated, he said. Those who did, probably did so once a year at the beginning of the season, and it wasn't possible for the cartridge user to edit any data on the cartridge anyway.

Then there was the physical constraint of the screen size. People often found that to get any level of legible and understandable detail, the screen needed to be set on close up. In doing so, the overall context of the local geography was lost and the screen became meaningless. This could be avoided if a larger screen was fitted, but then cost became a factor too. Furthermore, route planning and waypoint creation using the plotter's cursor could be frustrating as



Garth Cooper

the navigator had to zoom in to ensure the cursor was in the right location before pressing the enter key, and then zoom out again in order to see enough of the chart to locate the approximate position of the next waypoint; and then zoom in again to plant the waypoint.

Some plotters only allowed waypoints to be created in this way and not by typing in Lat/Long coordinates. Even those that do, made you scroll through the letters and numbers character by character.

"The market is being led by the manufactures of marine equipment. It is they that put new ideas in front of the boating public and float these ideas along on a tidal wave of marketing budget! Who was it first asked for electronic charts anyway? No one I know. It would appear that manufactures review the latest technology in other markets and then think of ways to adapt them for the marine market," declared Garth.

One of the latest developments from Raymarine was their H6 computer-based system into which many different sensors or data is fed. The data is sorted and stored and can be called up on any number of touch screen displays to give the 'flight commander' information at his fingertips. "Note the phraseology and where much of this technology is coming from", Garth told the audience.

Individual screens present a chart display with navigation information and instrument data, a radar screen, maritime information such as Navtex with weather fax and weather charts.

The computer could also link to a satellite for communication such as phone, email and internet connection. It has a video input for a docking camera or engine room monitoring and of course

the inevitable DVD player in case the watch keeper got bored!

"Navigation has certainly come a long way in the last 20 years! But still the basic principle remains. That is to find your position and plot it onto the chart in order to determine the navigation hazards around you, to ensure that you are on your planned and predicted course, and to work out the course to steer to your next waypoint or destination.

"Whatever the navigation product you use or the technique you employ this remains paramount. So even if you use the 'at a glance' method of a chart plotter, this is better than no plotting at all. The thing to remember is that prudence dictates you run a paper chart at the same time. Electronics are there to help you, not lead you," he cautioned.

IMRAY TAKES DIGITAL ROUTE

Imray, Laurie, Norie and Wilson is now the UK's only independent publisher of marine charts; the company recently bought out Stanfords; making them the single biggest publisher of charts and pilot books combined, Willie Wilson, MD of Imray, told the conference.

Although the roots of the company went back almost to Elizabethan times, it was only since the sixties that publishing charts for yachtsmen became really viable. They were then complemented with pilot books.

"But we've almost reached the limit of existing pilot books. Our increasingly popular East Coast Pilot is a radical departure in terms of presentation and coverage. We're working on a digital version at the moment.

And we're introducing more themed books, such as David Rainsbury's 'Difficult Passages'," he said.

With the increasing popularity of electronic navigation they were introducing a range of chart CDs designed to give full chart plotting facilities on a PC.

"Unlike cartridges you can update these from our website and we'll be increasing their usefulness by adding tidal stream and prediction data as well in the near future," he said.



Willie Wilson

STRATEGIES WILL IMPACT ON FREEDOMS

Yachtsmen will have to play their part in combating the effects of global warming, by taking a more active role in forming future strategies to reduce the effects of rising sea levels and coastal losses, RYA East Environmental Co-ordinator, Chris Edwards told the conference.

"We need to cooperate with the responsible authorities to achieve a sensible balance and ensure that the three aspects of sustainable development – economic, environmental and social – as well as the technical feasibility of proposals, are all taken into account," he said.

"Some of the measures will impact on our freedom of navigation and boating facilities," he warned.

In our region, with its extensive low lying land, rising sea levels were eroding cliffs, washing away saltmarsh and other water-line habitats and putting sea defence under immense pressure. Legislation sought to mitigate these effects by constraining activity and by



Chris Edwards

the more positive step of creating more saltmarsh but, they would impact on our freedom to sail almost where we liked.

It was the aim of the RYA to achieve sustainable boating and raise the awareness among leisure sailors of these issues, so we could operate sympathetically with the environment.

"After all," he said, "It's an important part of our enjoyment of coastal cruising."

The principal issues facing us here on the East Coast were estuary management schemes, estuary and coastal flood management strategies, river basin management plans and, windfarms.

BLINDNESS NO HANDICAP TO SAILING OR CRUISING

Blind Yachtmaster Ken Knowles told the conference that not being able to see hadn't stopped him from enjoying sailing for over 30 years, or owning his own 28-footer for 28 years.

"The only things I can't do is watch-keep and navigate," he said. "I've sailed over 35,000 miles, about half as skipper of my own boat. There's nothing unusual about me, except that I've been totally blind since before I ever sailed."

On average, blind and visually impaired (VI) sailors get to go afloat only six times a year. Yet given the chance most are more than capable of working the boat, carrying out domestic duties and, especially with recently introduced aids, to steer pretty good courses – especially to windward!

For most VIs being a passenger isn't enough.

Being a blind skipper, however, brings a whole new set of challenges. "I haven't exactly been overwhelmed with sighted, experienced crew to sail with me, despite that they can do far more sailing on my boat than they would on many others. I'm no different to most skippers in the need to find the right crew members to welcome aboard.



Ken Knowles

"I have the additional problem of having to have competent people, rather than simply pleasant companions. If you and I were alone in the boat and faced with a collision situation, how quickly could you marshal your thoughts and explain the situation clearly to me? Most people would be dumbstruck for what appears an interminably long time!" he added.

Another area that gives Ken concern is ensuring his crew can competently get the boat in and out of the marina: "You know as well as I do that even experienced boat handlers can all too often make a mess of that! Even the RYA Yachtmaster qualification isn't good enough for my selection process," he said.

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The Tidal Thames -
A Guide for Users of
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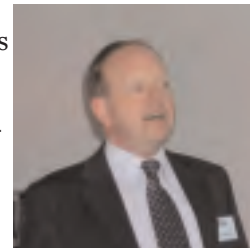
Port of London Authority (PLA) Deputy Harbour Master Capt Roy Stanbrook introduced delegates to the new recreational boating guide to the Thames (pictured above).

Capt Stanbrook, who cruises on the East Coast, is in charge of the lower Thames from Dagenham to its outer limits. One of his current major concerns is the proliferation of wind farms on his patch. The massive London Array farm covering the Long Sand, Knock Sand and Knock Deep would cause major problems routing commercial shipping in and out of the Thames.

Commenting on recent trials to ascertain the problems with GPS, VHF AIS and both shore-based and ship-borne radar, he said that the pillars caused wide radar wipeout, even of automatically-gained commercial radars. There were problems with secondary echoes, and small vessels, such as yachts, could only be identified within or close to an array of pillars if they were at least 300 metres from the nearest.

Trying to spot a small boat drifting into a wind farm in trouble at night by radar was going to be a nightmare.

His said the confusion caused by flashing red aircraft hazard lights throughout the array would show low down on the horizon and could confuse navigators.



STUNNING SCENERY, GOOD FOOD AND CALM WATERS IN BALTIC

Described as cruising's northern paradise, the Baltic is becoming increasingly popular with British yachtsmen. One regular visitor is John Wilson, who with his wife Alison has cruised the Baltic on several occasions in their Halberg Rassey 34, and previously in a Sadler 29.

John, who was presenting a review of Baltic cruising, said: "Any well-found boat will be suitable for Baltic sailing. Many locals sail in quite small craft; this is where the Folkboat came from after all. The main considerations are comfort on the way out and back, and sufficient speed to achieve the distances planned.

"Many harbour moorings are in 'boxes' and you disembark over the bow. It is therefore helpful to have a reasonably manoeuvrable boat and one with a split pulpit and even a bow ladder. Getting folding bikes off our Sadler 29 was quite a challenge! Some pontoons are at deck level but others are very low.

"Much of the Baltic is quite deep and most boats of average draught will manage without difficulty; indeed the sea-bottom can largely be ignored. The exception is among the Danish islands where there are large areas of shallow water. One's nerves are not helped here by the deep weed which causes the echo-sounder to under-read drastically," he added.

Because of the box posts (usually wood or plastic, but rusty metal covered with carpet is not unknown) the widest part of the boat should have a rubbing-strake, preferably with a metal strip - as with a lot of Swedish boats and Contests. An alternative was to fix a stout rope below the toe-rail, which could remain in place for the cruise.



Pictures:

Top: John's boat Shifta, right, moored at a Swedish naturhamn

Above: Gdansk waterfront town centre boasts Europe's highest brick built steeple.

Below: John Wilson at the helm mid-North Sea.

Some means of anchoring from the stern was advisable.

Most people were likely to rely on paper charts and GPS with or without a chart-plotter. He only occasionally met with bad visibility, and most navigation or pilotage could be done by eye. Swedish charts are a must when sailing in the archipelagos, but it is not necessary to obtain all charts before setting off as they can usually be bought cheaper over there.

Although there were no tides to speak of in the Baltic, water levels could change by up to a metre and the depth may be less than charted. This is mainly a problem after winter gales. Navigators may however find there was a current of a knot or so, especially in the Sound, and which generally follows the wind direction, meaning that a head-wind gives you an adverse current.

"Take adequate medical supplies, though no doubt most needs could be met

locally. We have usually had no problem buying toiletries. However, cooking gas can be awkward, especially in Sweden where propane is usual, unlike Denmark and Germany where Camping-Gaz is normal. Camping-Gaz can be bought in Gothenburg, Marstrand and Grebbestad to my knowledge.

"Diesel is available almost everywhere in the Southern Baltic and Sweden, at street prices," he added.

In general the weather resembles that in our coastal waters, with western Sweden experiencing a preponderance of westerlies and the Southern Baltic having a more continental weather pattern. There are often periods of fresh to strong winds, but few gales from May to August. Because of the long daylight hours it is often warmer than the northern latitudes would suggest and in his experience not very different from the temperatures in the Channel.

CONTAINER TERMINAL EXPANSION WILL AFFECT SAILING ROUTES

Britain's biggest container port is set to double in size over the next five years. Following hard on the heels of the announcement that Felixstowe port operators Hutchison had got the go-ahead for the new Bathside Bay container terminal at Harwich, comes news that they've been given permission to revamp and extend Felixstowe South Quay.

The development will see the conversion of the port's original Dock Basin, an area previously used by P&O North Sea Ferries, and the existing Landguard Terminal, into a new deep-sea container terminal.

Preliminary work is expected to start this summer with the first part of the terminal operational by 2008.

The development will include 1,350 metres of quay dredged to 16m alongside, and an approach channel dredged to 14.5m. Local yacht clubs have expressed concern that the new channel will push the recognised small craft route even further to the west of the harbour, over the notorious Harwich Shelf.

There's also concern that the risk of collisions between yachts and swinging container ships being berthed, will increase.

An additional 13 ship-to-shore gantry cranes will bring the total number in operation at the port to 38. An all-new North Rail Terminal, capable of removing up to 500,000 lorries from the roads each year, is included in the plans.

As part of the development, Hutchison's will be upgrading both road and rail connections to the port.



Model of the revamped Felixstowe South Quay. Landguard Point and Fort are bottom left and are to be redeveloped as a visitor attraction. The existing Trinity Quay runs away north, from what is currently the entrance to the Felixstowe Wet Dock.

craft around the Stour, Alde and Orwell.

The final event is the Maldon Town Regatta on September 23, culminating in a parade of sail to the town quay.

OGA is organising other events, on the Crouch and Stour - details later, or visit www.eastcoastclassics.co.uk. EC secretary, Jon Wainwright is available on 01206 393 537 or JRWainwright@AOL.com.

All the other costs attached to owning and operating the yachts (insurance, tax, maintenance, repair, storage, security) are covered by the annual fee. Members must be over 21 hold Day Skipper or Coastal Skipper tickets

The boats covered are a 26ft SCOD, Hampshire Maid; a 28ft Harrison Butler, Night Wind; a 27ft Pintel, Myfanwy; a 31ft Buchanan, Marcita and a 37ft Buchanan, Caressa. Members can also sail with the Nancy Blackett Trust.

Details from www.classicsailingclub.com

BUSY YEAR AHEAD FOR OGA

East Coast based old gaffers look like having a busy season this year - their main race, the annual Blackwater Race, is on June 17, based at Brightlingsea on the Colne, which last year attracted over thirty craft, including restored smacks, bawleys and prawners, and many gaff rigged cruising yachts and classic keelboats. This year the course will take the fleet out to the Wallet Spitway and back to Brightlingsea and should be quite a spectacle.

The Old Gaffers Association also caters for open gaff and lug rigged dinghies and their main event is the Swallows and Amazons rally on July 15-16 in Walton Backwaters. While from August 19 to 28 the East Coast Classics Cruise, takes a sizeable fleet of these

NO HASSLE CLASSICS

A new organisation, the Classic Sailing Club, has been launched by brothers Jonathan and Ian Welch, based on Pin Mill, on the river Orwell. The 'club' is for those who want to sail classic wooden yachts but don't have the time, inclination, skills or nerve to buy and maintain one.

There's a one-off joining fee of £500, plus a refundable security deposit of £1,000 and an annual subscription ranging from £1,500 to £5,500 a year, depending on the level of sailing you want.

The annual subscription gives members points they exchange for days at the tiller on any one the club's fleet of five classics based currently at Pin Mill. The only other costs they have to meet are the day-to-day running costs involved in using the yachts, namely diesel and other sundries.

COACH OF THE YEAR AWARD

The winners of RYA's Coach of the Year Awards for 2006, will receive their trophies at the RYA Dinghy Sailing Show, Alexandra Palace, on Saturday 4th March.

The Awards reward coaches who helped to inspire and improve racing in one of the following three categories: RYA Squad Racing Coach; Club Racing Coach; and Under 21 Racing Coach

The RYA is striving to raise the status of racing coaches within the community and these rewards recognise the work and effort that goes in to achievement at all levels, from grassroots to elite Olympians.

YOUNGSTERS GET THEIR CLUB BACK

After a two-year break following the temporary closure of the King George Reservoir at Chingford, Essex, for essential works to improve the supply of London's water, King George Sailing Club (KGSC) has reopened.

Young members of the club, whose training was at a critical stage, were able to continue enjoying their sport thanks to Fishers Green Sailing Club, near Nazeing, Essex. Not only were the children able to carry on sailing, the KGSC adult Solo fleet (a single-handed dinghy) was also invited to use Fishers Green's lake and have continued to do so until now.

Last December, a farewell race was arranged, after which, King George Sailing Club young members presented Fishers Green SC with an "Appreciation Trophy". Pictured are Christina Allen and Anya Horey, presenting Brian Conroy, Commodore, Fishers Green Sailing Club with the Appreciation Trophy.

King George Sailing Club is located in the Lea Valley Road, Chingford E4 7PX (www.kgsc.org.uk) and prior to the temporary closure, over 50 children

from the local area were being introduced to sailing on Tuesday evenings during the summer months in addition to a full racing programme.

Christina, from Chingford and Anya from Stanstead Abbots are now also sailing in the Cadet Class at Waldringfield SC on the Suffolk river Deben.



Pictured above: Christina Allen and Anya Horey presenting Brian Conroy, Commodore, Fishers Green Sailing Club with the Appreciation Trophy from King George Sailing Club.

GOBA SUPPORTS GREAT OUSE PLAN

Members of the Great Ouse Boating Association (GOBA), which represents more than 3000 boaters, have thrown their weight behind the new Great Ouse Waterway Plan.

The Great Ouse Waterway Plan was recently launched by the Environment Agency (EA, and details plans to improve the infrastructure and maintenance of the river.

Chris Grant, chairman of GOBA said: "This is a significant step for boaters on the Great Ouse and we are

pleased to throw the weight of the local boating community behind the EA plans which recognise that 42 per cent of current assets are classified as being in 'poor' condition and only one per cent in 'good' condition.

"We hope that our input at regular liaison meetings with the EA will continue to help prioritise spending on navigation improvements, so that boaters can begin to enjoy resources commonly available on other EA navigations such as the Thames," he added.

SAILING BOTTOM OF BIRD DISTURBANCE

A new pilot study into the disturbance of water birds on the Stour and Orwell estuaries (Suffolk), shows that while low flying aircraft, shooting and bait digging have the largest impact in displacing estuarine birds, disturbance is most often caused by walkers, especially those with dogs.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust monitored six sites, two on the river Stour and four on the Orwell, over the winter of

2004/5. Walkers caused the greatest disturbance, with or without dogs; followed by motor vessels, bait diggers, cyclists, birdwatchers themselves, and at the end of the list, sailing vessels.

The sites covered by the research were Freston, Bridge Wood, Nacton, Levington, Erbarton Bay and Holbrook.

The whole area is covered by national, EU and International conservation legislation.

LATE NEWS FLASH

DSC INFORMATION

The Spring edition of RYA Magazine, page 15, carries an item entitled 'Routine or Distress?' – a subbing error unfortunately means the information on connecting to the local coastguard via a DSC/VHF radio is erroneous.

The item advises that when making a routine call to the coastguard the procedure is to press the red 'Distress' button to make contact. DO NOT DO THIS, except in an emergency.

The correct procedure, is: Press call, message appears on screen to show set is ready to send; scroll through directory for the MMSI of your nearest coastguard, pre-select ch 67, (if your set doesn't automatically do this when a coastguard MMSI is selected), and press enter. Screen shows when coastguard has acknowledged.

Open voice comms on automatically selected Ch 67. Don't wait for the coastguard to call you on voice, call them on Ch 67 as soon as the acknowledgement shows on the screen.

Contact RYA Cruising Manager Stuart Carruthers on 0845 345 0370 or email: cruising@rya.org.uk, if in any doubt.

THAMES FLOOD BARRIER CLOSURE

The Thames Flood Barrier will be closed once a month for testing for a period of six months, from May 1, 2006.

Navigation in the Barrier Control Zone, between Margaretness and Blackwall Point, will be restricted, and subject to clearance from the Thames Barrier Navigation Centre.

The barrier will be closed on the following dates: (all times BST)

Tuesday, May 16 from 0925 to 1155

Wednesday, June 28 from 0905 to 1135

Thursday, July 27 from 0850 to 1120
Thursday, August 24 from 0800 to 10.30

Monday, September 25 from 0905 to 1135

And, all day on **Sunday October 8** from 0815 (to 0815 Monday, October 9).

The closures will be confirmed by London VTS from 24 hours in advance on routine VHF broadcasts.

EAST COAST DISABLED SAILORS HIT TOP FORM IN OZ AND ITALY

Hannah Stodel (19), from West Mersea and a graduate of The Royal Hospital School sixth form, has retained her world title and taken another step towards her goal of Gold at the Beijing Paralympics.

She and fellow Sonar crewmen John Roberston (helm) and Stephen Thomas (foredeck) won their second consecutive world title for the Skandia Team GBR at the 2006 Alcoa IFDS World Disabled Sailing Championships in Perth, Australia, earlier this month.

Hannah was born with the lower half of her right arm missing. From a very early age she has sailed with her family and today is one of the top five disabled young sailors in the country. She and her younger sister Abi sail at Brightlingsea SC.

She is a past Mirror dinghy champion switching to the bigger and faster 29er class and was a member of the class youth squad for two years. For the past four years she has been one of the three-man crew of a 23ft Sonar keelboat.

The Sonar trio mastered the tricky conditions on the Swan River to successfully defend the world crown they won in Denmark back in September, making Robertson the first skipper in the history of disabled Sonar sailing to defend the World Championship title.

By finishing amongst the top seven ranked nations in both classes at the Perth event, Skandia Team GBR has already guaranteed its berths for both the Sonar and 2.4mR fleets at the Paralympic regatta in 2008. Helena



Hannah Stodel (left) with John Robertson (centre) and Stephen Thomas (right) in Perth, Australia.

Lucas clinched silver for Britain in the single-handed 2.4mR class.

Meanwhile, Brandy Hole YC member Chris Atkin finished off the year on an impressive note at the Martin 16 European Championship in Isio, Italy, narrowly beaten into second place by the Greek Olympic champion. It was a closely fought battle over the five day series and he was never out of the top three places.

The winds were moderate but changeable, making it extremely difficult for the sailors to read.

During the season he had further successes, retained the UK Access national championship at Northampton and the North American championship in Florida. Both these were three day regattas which gained him both titles for a second year.

Chris has been wheelchair-bound for ten years after contracting a viral infection in his spinal cord, leaving him paralysed from the chest down, but this has not effected his determination to continue sailing.

He is a member of the Woolverstone Project based at Alton Waters, Suffolk. His keenness has inspired other local disabled sailors to take up the sport, and the Woolverstone team again won the 2005 Access Travellers National club trophy.

Currently he is investigating forming an independent disabled sailing club in the south east of Essex as at present there are no facilities in the area for physically disabled people to enjoy the sport.



Chris Atkin (helm) in Italy

WHO'S WHO AT RYA EAST

Chairman: Chris Edwards	01621 868834
Vice-Chairman : TBA	
Secretary: Robin Hill-Sanders	01621 816131
Treasurer: Peter Woods	01621 853015
Regional Coach: Derek Burchell	01621 869599
Chairman Training Panel: Terry Corner	01473 730970
Windsurf Liaison and T15 co-ordinator: Gillian Horne	0238060 4194
Sailability Regional Organiser: David Wilding	01223 843769
High Performance Manager: Bruce Bonar	07909 994642
Dinghy Fleet Hire Manager: Martyn Garnsey	01702 206540
Environmental Co-ordinator: Chris Edwards	01621 868834
Regional Communicator: Garth Cooper	01362 699195
RYA Council Members: Chris Edwards and Terry Corner	

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