

# Northampton Off-Shore Cruising Association



## NEWSLETTER

March 2010

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Visit the NOSCA website: [www.nosca.co.uk](http://www.nosca.co.uk)

**Important note: following on from the February meeting, NOSCA has invited the 'Cockleshell Heroes' guys to come and give their presentation to us on March 2nd. We are independently told it is exceptionally good! This is an expensive evening and should be really exciting for those who remember the film or even the actual WWII event. PLEASE MAKE EVERY EFFORT TO ATTEND.**

### For your Diary:

|           |   |
|-----------|---|
| March 2   | 'Echoing the Cockleshell Heroes' presented by Roger and Sandra Downton from Poole |
| March 6   | RYA Radar course in Isham Village Hall  |
| April 13  | Fitting-out Dinner at <i>The Red Lion</i> , East Haddon                           |
| May 1 - 3 | Spring/South Coast Rally  |
| June 1    | A return visit to Foxton Locks with a guided tour and pub meal                    |

### Membership renewals

For last year's members who have not yet renewed their membership, this will be the last copy of the Newsletter that they will receive. A reminder will be posted out for those who have just forgotten and, the form with a cheque, should be sent to Tony Johns at the address printed on the form. If you have posted your subscription to Tony in the last week or two, then please ignore this reminder.

### Commodore's Column

Ahoy All!

Planning for the year's sailing is progressing well. VC Adrienne Hyde is organising the May Rally (see later details), so boat owners – please let her know ASAP that you intend coming. For others, if you want to come but don't have a berth, please let me or Adrienne know so we can put you in touch with skip-pers. And, for the club 'newcomers', don't hesitate to give me a call as I am chartering a boat and will welcome you on board. But don't delay – I already have 5 others signed up! My NOSCA boat is booked for the FSC Sail Challenge in June, so if you fancy a trip round the Clyde, Jura and the Mull of Kintyre, let me know.

The proposed Honfleur trip is proving rather more of a challenge. Not only does there seem to be a complete blank on communications with France, no NOSCA boat owners have yet let me know they plan to come. Of course, if you have been thinking of taking the plunge (pun intended!) and are wondering about chartering a boat for this, let me know as I am talking to a couple of Solent-based companies and hope to induce them to offer us a discount. And

cont page 2

if you'd like to come but don't feel you want to charter, again, let me know and I can start drawing up a list of crew wanting berths. The sooner you all let me know, the better!

No doubt many members are making their own plans for the season. I have already been updated on plans to cruise the Baltic (again!), and another to the St Kilda archipelago. It would be good if all NOSCA members would let the newsletter (Tony Johns) have brief notes about their sailing intentions for 2010, as we will all be interested and perhaps even inspired!

One little reminder though. I have no doubt at all that NOSCA members have a culture of 'safety first' at sea, but I have to admit to my own weakness. I have noticed that it is very easy for me to slip into a mind set of 'I know how to do all that, so I don't need to go into all the detail'. This is sloppy, not a good safety-first approach and I am determined to pull up my socks not to mention my sea-boots. From time to time, I browse the MAIB's website <http://www.maib.gov.uk/home/index.cfm> and look through their accident reports. Sometimes these are very relevant, such as the loss of the *Ouzo*, but non-leisure marine accidents can be a warning and a reminder. I noted one involving a fishing boat with two crew. Returning to port, they hit a patch of strong overfalls and one crewman went overboard. His mate got him alongside but was unable to pull him aboard (one of my pet worries about MOB's!). However, that was as far as their bad luck went, as they had done everything else correctly. They both had lifejackets and a working VHF on board. So the crewman in the water remained afloat while his mate got back to him and called the coastguard. A SAR helicopter got to them quickly, lifted the man in the water to safety and hospital where after a check-up he was quickly discharged. This contrasts to so many other MAIB reports, which draw pictures of error after error mounting up until someone cops it.

The lessons I draw is that lifejackets should not be optional, that MOB drill should be practiced and that Mayday call procedures must also be rehearsed. No doubt you will all have your pre-season safety checks and rehearsals in hand – haven't you? So with that in mind, I trust everyone can look forward to an enjoyable sailing season!

For now, warm breezes and safe sailing to you all,  
Maurice Chittock

## New Members

On behalf of both the NOSCA committee and the club itself, may I wish a warm welcome to new members this year. Firstly, the return of Paul Gill who had previously been a member for many, many years with his wife Valerie.

Real new members are Nigel Houghton from Market Harborough and Glenn Webster from Kettering.

We do hope to see them regularly and that they enjoy our monthly meetings, not to mention perhaps one or more rallies and cruises with us.

## 'In the Wake of the Cockleshell Heroes' presented by Roger & Sandra Downton March 2, 8.00 pm prompt

In December 1942, twelve men set out to execute a daring and imaginative attack on enemy shipping lying in the docks of Bordeaux. There unfolded a war story of great human sacrifice, courage, danger, tenacity and achievement. The mission was called Operation Frankton and the men involved became known as the legendary Cockleshell Heroes. At the outset of the Operation, a succession of disasters left only four men to continue with the mission. Eventually, after a gruelling, covert, canoe journey at night in the depths of winter, they successfully planted their specially designed magnetic 'limpet' mines on the enemy ships moored in the harbour of Bordeaux. Just two men came back alive.

This is not only the story of the Cockleshell Heroes and their famous Second World War raid, but the tale of two ordinary civilians, Roger and Sandra Downton from Poole in Dorset who, in July 2004, inspired by the heroism and daring exploits of the Cockleshell Heroes, retraced, with very little knowledge or experience of canoeing, the course of the daring mission. This absorbing account of Roger and Sandra's research, oddball training programme, adaptation of more 'economic equipment' and clothing, and their quest to raise sponsorship are all

cont page 3

Page 2

lightheartedly explained and delicately interwoven together with the gripping story of the original men of Operation Frankton. Paddling in the wake of those commandos, this intrepid married couple set off up the perilous River Gironde. In a canoe, lovingly called *Sardine*, follow their frightening struggle with the ferocious currents, the uncertainty of where they would stop over night, and the peregrination that took them past the famous, picturesque wine regions of France, eventually culminating in their triumphant arrival at the scene of the attack in the splendid harbour of Bordeaux. Truly a display of great stamina and fortitude.

This is surely a 'must' to come and both see and hear the tale including a bit of BBC film about this adventure.

## Fitting-out Dinner at *The Red Lion, East Haddon on April 13*

As I have already reminded members of this event from last year and what a great time we all had at this nice venue, not to mention the food and ambience, there is nothing more to say except that tickets will be available at the March meeting from Adrienne. The menus will be printed on the back of each ticket and I understand the cost has been maintained at £15/head for two courses with a pudding as an option.

## South Coast Spring Rally May 1 - 3

While the rally itself has been set-up, going to Haslar on the Saturday and *The Folly* on the Sunday, there is still some detailing to be finalised. Eating on the Saturday will be via the ferry across to Portsmouth.

On the Sunday afternoon around teatime, I have **provisionally** arranged for a demonstration and detailed information on AIS, thanks to Peter Cotton of Comar Services UK Ltd, based at Cowes. Doug Forrester has kindly agreed to let us use the large Raymarine chart plotter on his boat as the demo display. AIS (Automatic Identification System) is very much 'of the moment' and used by commercial

shipping as well as within the leisure industry. There are two versions, one being a pure and dedicated radio receiver that tells one all about other vessels within VHF range. The other and more versatile kit is a transponder that not only does the display of received information but also lets all other vessels within range know about your boat and its movements. A truly up to the minute, worthwhile safety device for those cruising anywhere.

Please let Maurice know ASAP if you will be coming on the rally either in your own boat or chartering.

If you are one of our members who would like to be there, either as a guest on a member's boat or on a charter, again do let Maurice know.

## Return Visit to Foxton Locks and guided tour, June 1

We've been to Foxton before but quite some years ago. Since then, the pub has been totally updated, the food is we are told good pub grub and has a typical cost of around £14/head for a two courses.



We have arranged for a guided tour of the locks which will make it much more interesting. Starting time to be advised in

the Newsletter for June if not before.

## June Sail in Company and Ferry Trip to Honfleur

This is a provisional cruise and ferry trip. However, to date, Maurice has not received much enthusiasm or commitment. Honfleur being such a picturesque place, it was thought that such a combined 'outing' would appeal, especially at the height of summer and the long evenings.

If you are interested, **do let Maurice know ASAP** and Adrienne is looking into the ferries for those who would prefer to do it that way, staying ashore on the Saturday night and back Sunday afternoon.

# Fire Fighters Charity Sail Challenge 12 - 19 June

## Maurice says that the NOSCA Boat ...

this year is a Bavaria 31, which he is chartering from 'Flamingo Yacht Charters' in Largs on the Clyde. This 'Sail Challenge' is dual-purpose; to have a damn good time sailing, and to raise a bit of money for the Fire Services Charity – more details when you call him.

Those who've sailed in this area before will already know what a great sailing it offers. There is so much to explore and, linked with the usual Fire Fighters Charity camaraderie, we are in for yet another a great time. Depending very much on the weather, the plan is to sail from Largs to the Crinan Canal, transit that, then south in the Sound of Jura, stop off in Jura and perhaps Islay, then round the Mull of Kintyre to Cambeltown before returning to Largs. Estimated mileage would be about 180 nm.

There are up to 5 berths available, and cost is estimated to be about £275 for 7 days – it doesn't seem worthwhile driving that distance for less than 7 days. This year almost everything will be included in the basic price; charter, mooring fees, boat fuel, outboard and most food. Beer and some meals ashore will be the only extras. If you're interested,



give Maurice a call to talk over the details - he'll be very pleased to hear from any of our new members. Go on now ... you know you want to!

## Membership Activities Survey

Thanks to everyone who completed the rating survey from the ideas that you all put forward at our brainstorming session.

Lots of interesting suggestions were put forward and a total of 24 forms were completed. You may remember you were asked to complete the form by rating the topics you came up with as: 1 Not Very Interested to 5 Very Interested. I have made the conclusions by counting all those rated 1 and 2 as Not Very Interested, and all those rated 4 and 5 as Very Interested. Those rated as 3 were taken to be neutral and the assumption made that people would support as and when they found something of interest.

The highest number of 'Very Interested' results under each category are as follows:

**Sailing:** East Coast Rally Weekend – 58%; Thames Barge Sailing; weekend or Evening – 50%; Broads Sailing Weekend – 50%; Weekend on Classic Yacht – 46%  
Charter in other areas – e.g. N. England/Ireland – 46%

**Social:** Themed nights – Indian, Chinese, French etc – 54%

**Meetings:** In pub with meal/village hall – 54%

**Courses:** Boat Handling - 25%; Boat maintenance – 29%

**Misc Activities:** Paid Ads in Newsletter – 33%

I think it is fair to say that the suggestions for 'Meetings', 'Courses' and 'Misc Activities' do not have a great deal of support. We will However take all these ideas into consideration in planning activities for the coming year. So many thanks once again.

Adrienne

[www.Safety24.co.uk](http://www.Safety24.co.uk)

Bob Newton-Cross has sent this to me for possible interest to NOSCA members. Have a look at their website for more details and costs involved.

[safety24.co.uk](http://safety24.co.uk) can be used by Anyone, Anywhere, Anytime, where the possibility of injury, accident or losing your way could occur. If something were to happen to you or a family member, if you were to find yourself in

cont page 5

an emergency situation, having injured yourself whilst alone or became separated from your group, it would be comforting to know that there is someone who has all your medical details, including any allergies or specific medical requirements and also the contact details of your specified next of kin.

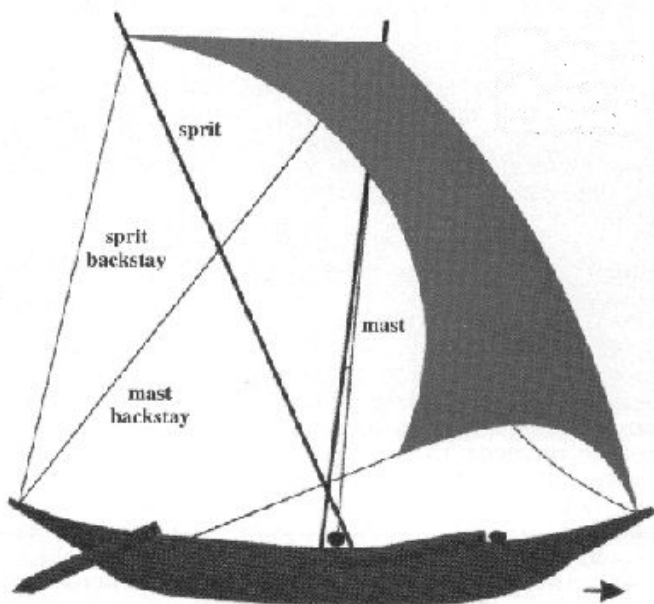
Via a unique ID wristband, [safety24.co.uk](http://safety24.co.uk) can offer the assurance of safety, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from anywhere in the world. By using the unique identification number on the wristband [safety24.co.uk](http://safety24.co.uk) will:

- Step 1: Establish the identity of the person found
- Step 2: Ascertain whether the person found is ill, injured or has simply been located
- Step 3: If required, relay medical information to the emergency services including Next-of-kin details, Medication requirements, Allergies, A crisis plan, Doctor details
- Step 4: Immediately begin to contact the next-of-kin and family using the contact details stored on the [safety24.co.uk](http://safety24.co.uk) register
- Step 5: Our Emergency Response Team will liaise between the emergency services and your specified next-of-kin until you are safely reunited

## Proa Sailing in Sri Lanka

Eb and Dorothy recently went on holiday to Sri-Lanka and while there went sailing on one of these Proa craft. Eb has sent the following description of these odd boats and how they tack - or rather don't!!

The Proa is a traditional craft seen around Micronesia. All have a main hull, or vaka, and an outrigger or amas but the detailed design and sail arrangements vary significantly between regions. In Sri Lanka they are called uruas and 100s of these boats are still used for prawn fishing on a daily basis. The best place to see them is at Negumbo, just north of Colombo. We went out on Mohamed's boat from Brown's beach.



All the boats are of similar construction but do vary in length. The boat we sailed on was about 10 metres long – comparable with one of our yachts. The construction is entirely of timber, mostly tree branches selected for their size and shape all tied together with string. What is astounding is that something like that is capable of sailing at speeds above 10 knots. The symmetrical hull is about 10 metres long with a rudder at each end and a dagger board near the centre. It is constructed from a solid piece of timber with planks being, at their widest, about 30 mm.

The outrigger is considerably shorter than the main hull and the connecting timbers articulate. This helps the boat to pierce through the waves and was a comfortable sail (according to Dorothy) even in a strong breeze. The proa per-



forms best when the outrigger is partially submerged and this is achieved by having one of the crew sit or stand on the outrigger. The wind was quite strong on one of our trips and a forth crew member was taken along to carry out this task. He actually put his body weight on the shroud as well to pull the mast towards the outrigger.

The spars consist of a mast and a sprit, each about 8 m long consisting of a single bamboo cane. The mast slots into the centre of the hull and the sprit into a socket fashioned out of a block of wood. This enables the centre of effort to be varied.

The top corners of the rectangular cotton sail are attached to the sprit and the mast. One of the bottom corners of the sail is attached to the front of the boat and the one and only sheet led back aft. A shroud between the top of the mast and the outrigger plus backstays on the mast and sprit complete the rigging.

The boat has three foils all configured as a leeboard about 1 m long: one at each end of the boat and the other close to the mast. These are controlled in a manner similar to a steering oar so both the angle of attack and depth are adjusted with a stick inserted into the fixing hole.

Anyone who has tried to sail a catamaran will know they are extremely difficult to tack and conversely are easy to gybe. This is due to the lack of a keel which on a mono-hull provides a resistance to the pressure of the wind. The lack of any keel on a proa means that they are incapable of tacking and I think if one tried to gybe it would break up. So the boat is turned round by a process called shunting. This is where the symmetry of the boat comes into play.

cont page 6

The boat is shunted simply by transferring the sail control lines and the steering to the opposite end of the boat. This required a crew of three to carry out – one at either end and one at the mast. The crew of the boat I sailed on jokingly commented 'this boat has two captains!' The shunting process is carried out by first taking the boat off the wind and then passing the lines from man to man in sequence.

I was amazed at how controllable these boats are. During our first sail my hat blew off – man overboard. I was sitting up by the mast and the helmsman tried to catch it but failed so he stopped the boat in about three boat lengths, truly amazing. One of the crew members then tied a rope around his waist, dived in and swam after my hat. Alas he failed because the rope was too short.

Launching and retrieving is not a simple process. I do not know how much the boat weighed but I have seen estimates as high as 2 tonnes. The boat was kept on the beach which shelved steeply so it took about 8 people to manhandle the boat into and out of the water. Also it was a lee shore and there was a considerable amount of surf running at an angle to the beach.



I asked one of the crew members what was the longest trip they had ever done? He replied that a Dutch couple had once chartered the boat for the day – they had set out at 5 am and returned at 10 pm. I later heard that one boat had got stranded near the Indian coast and had been towed home – the coast of India is about 100 miles away.

The proa design concept has been successively used in racing yachts. In March 2009 Macquarie Innovation set a new C class speed sailing record of 50.08 knots over 500 metres in wind speeds of 22 to 24 knots. Also in March 2009 Richard Jenkins set a world land wind-powered speed record of 126.1 miles per hour in *Ecotricity Greenbird*.

For further reading on proas go to: [www.pacificproa.net](http://www.pacificproa.net)

## “Awayward Girl” Mediterranean Trip – Corsica - July 2009.

Our visitors left by ferry from Calvi to Nice. 6 hours later the high winds of the previous week had died away and we decided to leave Calvi, next morning at 6 am for Ajaccio. We awoke to a flat calm, so we motored down the west coast. Clear skies and warm sunshine developed during the morning.

The west coast has many secluded and safe anchorages (making marinas very optional) but with strong winds although Ajaccio is sheltered from almost all wind directions.

Following the engine overheat, on the way down, I removed 2 buckets of sea water from the below the engine compartment (separate to the bilges) due to a leak from the exhaust box. As it was not increasing we continued, reaching Ajaccio at 4 pm. We sailed only the last 8 miles but on a good beam reach. Arriving at the marina we were allocated a berth by the lads in an inflatable, but “for only one night only” which ended as 3 nights

Marina’s in France and Italy run by the local council, without emphasis on berth utilization efficiency. Berth holders come and go without informing any one and berths stay empty. Therefore asking for one night and then extending is easier.

The leak was sorted by Lawrence self employed as A2Marine. He recommended a Vetus and re piping the exhaust, and completed the job 2 days later. I asked him to quote for an Electric windlass, (Lofrans Cobra).

**Windlass Note:** We had the original Lofrans Royal manual. While hauling up the anchor, earlier in the year a Belgian, (who had been out for 22 years accompanied by his wife and had completed 2 circum navigations), came over in his dinghy to tell me I should get an electric windlass as if there was ever a gale I would be on the rocks before I could get the anchor up. I thought about this, if the anchor was dragging enough to risk running on rocks surely it would be easier to haul up being un-attached to the sea bed?

cont page 7

My better half's logic was if everyone is doing something else, it's probably the best way. We had seen about 300 anchored boats and no matter how old or small the boats all had electric windlasses.

### Back to Lawrence

We agreed his quote, and fitting date. We left to anchor out and returned after 10 days to find the wrong had arrived from France. We had another wait on anchor, returning a week later for the job to be completed in one day.

### Anchorage while waiting:

The first was 20 miles south at Porto Polo in the bay of Propriano. We arrived about 4 pm from Ajaccio with a forecast NW F6. The chart showed this was well protected. For 2 days the wind blew and a mile out the sea was up and looked like F 8, but our highest wind in the anchorage was about 25 knots. Porto Polo village was a short distance away and



leaving the dinghy in the small marina we walked through the village. The weather was hot and the air full of the fragrance of wild herbs. One rural road passes through the village, with locals selling produce from stalls at the road side. There is a small supermarket and a few shops with fresh bread, & cakes, fruit and souvenirs. I managed to buy the Corsican courtesy / flag. These are white with a Corsican "Bandoleer" head.

Forest fires in the interior brought in the civil fire/sea planes, the flying by the civil sea planes scooping water then flying from the surface to the fire has to be seen to be believed. At Ajaccio they were picking up water in the fairway between anchored boats!



The second was a protected small bay 5 miles south of Ajaccio This anchorage is between two sets of rocks about 200 yards apart. To the seaward side of the rocks was open sea. The rocks dissipated all swell, and the shore was 50 yards away. We walked often around the headland, with its Genoese Tower, in hot sunshine. Day time temperatures were 75 to 80° F with 90s mid day. So we generally walked in the morning or evening, with lunch, wine and a siesta or swim during mid-day.



After the windlass was fitted we left next day motoring for the southern tip of Corsica.

We arrived mid afternoon at our next anchorage – Anse de Roccapino – a narrow inlet 200 yards from entrance to the small beach at its head. It was about 100 yards wide at the entrance, with submerged rocks about half way up the inlet.

Heinkel's pilot: - "draw a line from the Lion de Roccapino, (rock outcrop roughly shape of a Lion – west side), to the entrance rocks on the opposite side (east side) and the line passes over the submerged rocks. Pass well to the left of this centre". We passed close to the left side after entering and as we passed the centre point we could see the

cont page 8

underwater rocks about 12 inches below the surface with no surface wash! Over 50 boats were already anchored.

In the Mediterranean you quickly adjust to close anchoring. A yacht arrived after us and anchored ahead of us. From his cockpit he could put out his hand and touch our pulpit. After a few minutes he looked nodded his head and moved forward about half a boat length.

This close anchoring is facilitated by, no tide, a sea to land breeze F 4/5 in the daytime and a night a land breeze F 2/3. This leaves all boats safely aligned to each other apart from a tense 1 to 2 hours, evening and early morning, when one wind cancels the other to nil and the boats roam everywhere.

The next day we left to visit Bonifacio. The entrance a cutting into the limestone cliffs and is about a mile long. The village is on top of the cliffs overlooking the entrance. We arrived about lunchtime to chaos. There was only enough width for two processions, one in and one out. There is a marina at the head. The processions were every conceivable size of vessels, sail and motor. The local fishing boats were charging in and out at 10 Knots with the accompanying wash. We were glad to say we had seen it but at the marina turned and left.

We sailed towards the southern most point of the island about 2 miles away, the northern coast of Sardinia 5 miles away across the straights of Bonifacio. We were passed by a super motor yacht and a tourist tripper boat one each side of us. They passed at 20 knots and we held on as their wash hit us we rolled through 30 degrees!

We passed the southern tip turning north for the east side of Corsica. This is a rock strewn area and needs vigilant navigation, with the depth changing from 20 metres to 2 metres in a few boat lengths. At 2 metres depth the rocks were visible below the water - quite intimidating.

To anchor we chose a deep bay called Santa Amanza. Three miles in from the sea to its head with about 4 perfect anchorages depending on the wind direction. We stayed a night then carried on up to Porto Vechio.

We had a recommendation to anchor in Porto Vechio, which was 5 miles to the head from open sea, with a headland half way in. We anchored at the head where the medieval Village/town of Port Vechio is perched on the hill top. A daily ferry service runs from here to France.

The main channel is dredged and anchoring out of the channel the depths are generally about 2 to 3 metres on mud. It is about half a mile, by dinghy, to the marina/landing area with a walk up the hill to the town. In the anchorage there was no swell. We stayed for 5 days. The town although touristy has retained all its charm.

We left to continue north with the idea of reaching Solórzano (45miles) and then Bastia (50 miles) and then crossing to Elba (40 miles from Bastia). Anchorages are limited on this coast. We entered the marina at Solórzano and the dinghy lad said he had a berth but to wait. We held station for half an hour and as he arrived back he said the control had said no berths available but to anchor outside and we could use the petrol berth from 8 pm until 7:30 am. Declining his offer we anchored in a bay we had passed 4 miles earlier.

As it was a full moon with no cloud and no wind we left Corsica for Elba some 70 miles away at 2 am. We motored through the night, with visibility of 2 miles arriving at Elba at 4 pm.

Peter Tansley

**Deadline for the April Newsletter is Sunday night, March 28 please. With the April Fitting-out Dinner put back from our normal 'first Tuesday in the month' due to Easter, I can afford to delay the April copy by a week.**  
**Tony**