



Pentland Firth Yacht Club



Newsletter

October 2004

Website: www.pfyc.org.uk



In Loch Nedd

Dates for your diary

*Steven Mowat and Elaine Hughes
request the pleasure of the company of
everyone at PFYC
at an evening reception to celebrate their wedding
on 4th December 2004 at 7.30 pm
to be held at the Pentland Hotel, Thurso*

RSVP 01847 831378 or Mowatstev@aol.com

(The wedding is in Australia on 3 November)

Tuesday 16 November – 1930 – Annual General Meeting

This will be held in the Thurso Club. An agenda is enclosed with this newsletter. A number of committee posts will be vacant. As a minimum we are still looking for a Training Secretary, Junior and Parent reps, possibly some other posts. Please consider if you can help in any way – without these posts filled it is difficult to provide a normal service. If you are interested in assisting please contact Mark Raffle (01847 894132 or commodore@pfyc.org.uk) or Malcolm Lord (01847 896885 or vicecommodore@pfyc.org.uk)

Friday 25 February 2005 – Park Hotel, Thurso

Dinner Dance – Provisional date

Sat/Sun 18/19 June 2005 – Midsummer Regatta

Other social events – Please let us know if there is anything else you would like to see organised as social events.

Contacts

E-mail addresses – To receive rapid communications, please send yours to commodore@pfyc.org.uk

Newsletter contributions – Send to Mark Raffle by the means of your choice, but preferably by e-mail to commodore@pfyc.org.uk.

I'd be pleased to receive comments on anything else you'd like to see in the newsletter. Contributions always welcome.

Thank you

Thank you to John Paterson for the gift of a VHF radio and a tiller pilot to the club.

Craning out

The cruisers were craned out of the harbour on 2 October. Thanks once again to Alan Doull for organising and supervising this. Eleven boats were lifted out.

Powerboat courses

Anyone interested in doing the Level 2 National Powerboat Course please contact Mark Raffle (01847 894132 or commodore@pfyc.org.uk)

End of season regatta

Saturday 25 September was supposed to be the first day of the End of Season Regatta. The forecast was not promising. However, everything was prepared – big buoys on the guard boat, heavier chain on the anchor, and a team ready to run the races. Even before the briefing, a couple of the competitors approached the Race Officer to say they would not be racing, for fear of damage to their boats. After checking who did want to race, the Race Officer took a quick trip to Thurso Harbour to see what the wind was really doing away from the shelter of the Scrabster cliffs. It was decided that conditions were manageable for the experienced helms wishing to race, so the briefing went ahead ready for racing. However, most of the remaining crews then withdrew, and racing for Saturday was cancelled.

The social still went ahead in the evening and was well enough attended that we covered the costs – thanks to Nicola for all her hard work and those who assisted on the night. John Perry, frustrated at not getting out in a dinghy, turned up later in the evening after having helped to sail a cruiser round to Wick in the afternoon.

Sunday morning started quite calm, but the forecast had up to force 9 in it for the afternoon. Once again, the briefing was that the Race Officer was prepared to try racing for experienced helms before the wind increased, and two Fireballs, a Laser and a Topper set out. The wind was increasing slowly while the course was laid. The Race Officer started the stopwatch ready for the 5 minute gun...and about 30 seconds later blew the abandon signal when the wind suddenly increased. The dinghies were escorted back to the beach, and the buoys recovered – in the process we proved the new anchor does work with heavy enough chain. Back in the clubhouse we tried, but failed, to finish the rest of Nicola's food for lunch. By about 2 pm, the forecast force 9 had arrived, and the cruisers were all busy rearranging fenders to prevent damage.

Thanks to everyone who turned up to try. It's a long time since we were unable to hold any races at all at the End of Season Regatta. Of the four regatta days in the year, we only managed to sail on one. Let's hope we have better luck next year.

Compound

There have been some strange things going on in the compound, possibly due to intruders. If you notice anything, please report it.

Ronnie's regards

Rhonwen Bryce, a former member of the club, has been in touch recently, and sends her regards to everyone she knows.

Farewell

The Phimister family has recently moved south. Both Matthew and Laura were taught to sail at the Club, and continued as active sailors. Alison was a former parent representative on the committee and provided much other support, such as

accompanying last year's visit to Kirkwall for the Intercounty competition. Norman made a big contribution to the last refurbishment of the clubhouse and had also helped out on the guard boat, as well as helping to fix Matthew and Laura's boats when required. We thank them all for their contributions to the Club, and wish them well for the future.

Guard boat anchor

Now that the guard boat anchor has been fitted with some heavier chain, the anchor appears to hold reliably once properly set. (Please tell me if you find otherwise.) However, when properly set, it can be hard to break out the anchor. To release the anchor position the guard boat vertically above anchor and pull in. If anchor hard to break tighten cable at bottom of wave and take a turn around a cleat and allow wave to lift boat and free anchor, you may need to repeat this a few times. Alternatively, with the chain tight up and down, motor forward into the wind to break out (watch the prop!!) If the anchor jams circle clearly around anchor clockwise and try again, if this fails try circling anti clockwise (2 turns needed this time). This is to try and free the line if wrapped or jammed below something. If the anchor can't be freed then ensure the marker buoy is tied securely on the end of the line and leave it for sorting out later. Make a note of position against landmarks.

Scuttlebutt

Glen Foster now has a newer Fireball, obtained from former member Alan Lowther. It's lighter, faster (allegedly) and more fragile – so no more bouncing on the foredeck for Iain!

Summer Cruise 2003

Ishbel, Mark & James Raffle

"The areas covered by these directions can be reached from the West Coast of Scotland by rounding Cape Wrath, but few yachtsmen make the passage as many are daunted by the contemplation of this sinister headland. Although its reputation is not without foundation the fact remains that in the summer months of June, July and August the chances of bad weather are considerably less than those of good weather, and the chance of severe weather is very small indeed" (Clyde Cruising Club sailing directions for N and NE coasts of Scotland and Orkney Islands.)

We finished the previous installment after arriving in Lochinver – definitely feeling out in the wilds by now, and with the challenge of Cape Wrath fast approaching. Here's the last leg.

Monday 11 August. While James and Ishbel went shopping, Mark started with the great job of unblocking the toilet pump. After cleaning up, a Dutchman from a yacht on the other side of the pontoon came along to ask about passage through the Pentland Firth. I went aboard his boat, where the beer was cool, with a large scale chart and the tidal stream atlas to discuss his plans. After filling up with diesel, we left Lochinver at 1215 and sailed in a westerly force 2 to Stoer Head, then motored past the Old Man of Stoer to Loch Nedd – a sheltered inlet on the south side of Eddrachilles Bay. James and Mark rowed ashore in the dinghy and walked several miles to Drumbeg. By now the wind had gone, and the reflections of the surrounding mountains could be seen in the loch.



Loch Nedd

Tuesday 12 August. We left Loch Nedd at 1100, with the wind SW, F1-2. We sailed up the coast, past the bird sanctuary on Handa Island. Here the wind dropped again, so we motored into Loch Inchard, past Kinlochbervie and anchored near Richonich at the head of the loch.

Wednesday 13 August. Some trepidation today. The pressure had dropped overnight, and in the shelter of Loch Inchard we were experiencing a westerly F2-3, cloud and drizzle as we left at 0545. We motored as far as Kinlochbervie before hoisting the sails to beat the rest of the way out of Loch Inchard. At the mouth of the loch, the wind was W-SW, F4 and the sea much rougher. The wisdom of proceeding was questioned, but we decided to continue at least until we had turned north out of the loch and were on a broad reach. Although the sea was still rough, this was much easier, and we decided to continue towards Cape Wrath. We heeded the warnings in the pilot book to give the Cape a wide berth in rough weather, with the sea becoming rougher all the time. We rounded Cape Wrath just before 0900, by which time the wind was F5-6, and sailed outside the Duslic Rock and along the north coast. North of Whiten Head the wind peaked at 30 knots and veered about 30 degrees as a front passed through. With the rigging really humming, we quickly furled the genoa the rest of the way in, with the main already having 2 reefs. The front soon passed, and the wind became more sensible again and we sailed into the Kyle of Tongue. By 1315 we were anchored south of the beach which joins the two Rabbit Islands together, where we could see many seals. This turned out to be a bit of a mistake, as at high tide the beach was covered and provided no shelter. This gave us a bit of a rough night at anchor, but with plenty of anchor chain out we were in no danger of moving anywhere. Although not perfect, it was better than my previous visit here several years ago. The last time I had been on a boat anchored in this same spot, we had arrived at 3 am after a rough 17 hour passage from Pierowall on Westray. I had been on deck for most of this time to avoid seasickness, it was dark, raining hard and the skipper brought us to the anchorage by radar.

Thursday 14 August. It stayed windy overnight, but by the morning the wind had become a northerly F4. The pressure had risen again and it was sunny. We decided not to return to Scrabster in the rough seas, but instead motored round to Talmine Bay, where it was more sheltered. James, in his bunk, noticed steam coming out of the engine, and it was found to be overheating. After anchoring the engine was checked, and the most likely cause suspected to be the thermostat stuck closed. The dinghy had been completely deflated and well lashed down for the passage round Cape Wrath. We inflated it again and rowed ashore to Talmine beach, where Ishbel entertained us by falling in while stepping out of the dinghy. We walked to the Craggan Hotel for lunch, leaving some of Ishbel's clothes to dry on a rock by the roadside. We spent the afternoon relaxing before returning to the hotel to celebrate (almost) the end of the cruise.

Friday 15 August. The pressure was still high, with a westerly F2-3 when we left Talmine at 0715. Rather than sail a dead run, we gybed downwind, and the weather stayed the same all day, giving an excellent day to finish the holiday. We made minimum use of the engine to avoid further overheating. We reached Scrabster and were tied alongside by 1520, having logged 460 miles since our departure 3 weeks previously.



I would be pleased to receive accounts of other sailing experiences for insertion in the newsletter. It doesn't matter if the passage is long or short, whether you went in your own boat

or someone else's, whether you went in a dinghy or a cruiser or a motorboat or a canoe.