



ODCC Waterlog

October 2023



The journal of the Oxford Ditch Cruising Club

Welcome to the Autumn issue of Waterlog. As we near the end of the season, we are already planning to put the boat to bed for another Winter but are now looking ahead to the Christmas lunch.

Commodore's Log:

Our Trip downstream to Teddington and Ham House in August, started on schedule and we arrived at our first overnight stop in Cookham where we were joined later in the day by Philip and Barbara Sachse in their new boat, White Magic.

The following day we all moved on down to the moorings at Boveney where Terry and Lynda in Lady Lynda joined us for a few hours.



By early afternoon, Wayne and Pauline had arrived in All's Fair.



At this point we had become aware of a pressing issue with our domestic batteries. The next 24 hours were spent in Windsor

Racecourse Marina awaiting delivery of two new leisure batteries.

By mid-afternoon the new batteries had been delivered and fitted and we were off downstream again to catch up with White Magic at Egham. We arrived early evening in time to enjoy a meal in the adjacent Italian restaurant.

Next morning, we were on the move again, this time to Shepperton, where we moored on Lady Lindsay's lawn behind Desborough Island.



As we were now at least a day behind our original planned schedule, we took the decision to turn around and retrace our steps at Hampton Court.

First though, we took a stroll into Bushy Park to have a look at the Diana statue and the deer park and indulged in afternoon tea at a cafe in Molesey.



stopped both engines. Fortunately, a member of the Upper Thames Motor Yacht Club was on hand to offer them a tow. On arrival at Teddington, they managed to get one engine restarted and limped up to Cookham on one engine where they had arranged for the boat to be craned out to inspect the damage.



An overnight stop and a meal in Windsor the following day and it was on to our final stop at Cookham where Andy and Chrissie joined us by car in the evening, to relate their adventures on their trip to St Kats.



Returning to Egham the following day saw an unexpected problem develop as White Magic was manoeuvring into a recently vacated mooring slot. Somehow, they had managed to run over one of their own mooring lines which had now become entangled in their prop while the other end was still attached to a bow cleat.

After some skilful manoeuvring using bow thruster only, and some welcome help from neighbouring boaters, Philip managed to coax the boat into the bank again.

Following some head scratching, we detached the rope from the bow cleat, nudged the engine into gear and the rope cutter completed the job, leaving a shorter but still serviceable length of line.

While all this was happening, Andy and Chrissie in *Cavas* had been out on the tideway on a visit to St Katharine's dock. On the way back upstream, they had also managed to pick up a stray rope in their outdrives, which



So sadly, we never made it to Ham House this year, but it was still an interesting and sometimes challenging few days, nonetheless.

Stuart Francis

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Thunderbirds are GO!

Our first expedition on the tideway, what could possibly go wrong?

Since we got CAVAS last year, we've been incandescent with excited anticipation of taking her on the waters she was built for. The prospect of bouncing over the waves, opening up our two 230hp supercharged turbo Volvos had me salivating like a hungry Golden Retriever at dinner time! How would the boat perform, was she properly prepared, did I miss anything crucial when I serviced the engines? New belts, belt tensioners, impellers, filters, oil, alternators with spare alternator, starter motor, tensioners and belts. Even a new horn, windlass and 8-strand rope carefully spliced to the anchor chain, I thought I had everything covered. Sometimes though, be it fate or just bad luck, the unforeseen can spoil your day!

The journey downstream was uneventful and listening to the comforting whine (some may call it a screech) from the superchargers as we bashed the incoming tide was a joy. We even followed a lifeboat for half of the tideway which provided additional comfort. Passing under the historical bridges, culminating in the grand finale cruising between the twin towers of Tower Bridge was a major tick off the bucket list! Even being tossed about for half an hour outside of St. Kats gave us no cause for concern, followed by three great days moored in the heart of London, we were looking forward to the return journey, running with the tide!

Unfortunately, shortly after departing St. Kats and passing under a couple of bridges, the s**t hit the fan (well in our case, the propellers!) The boat felt like it had hit a brick wall, the starboard engine died and, despite the port engine still running, we had no movement. At this point my mind went into overdrive! They say in a crisis you experience a range of emotions from denial, disbelief, confusion, panic etc. I think I experienced all of those but tried to hide the panic and sat there cursing the boat for letting us down. Everything then happened quickly, fast decisions were needed as we were bouncing around in the middle of the Thames, Uber Clippers and other large vessels passing close by; maybe I could diagnose and fix the problem before the tide delivered us against the next, rapidly approaching, upstream bridge!

Sadly, a cursory inspection of the engines didn't yield any clues to my overloaded brain, so I cursed the boat a further time trying to decide

what to do next. At this point the vessel following us out of St. Kats offered assistance and came alongside, which was not easy given the choppy waters. She had a steel hull, not ideal for rafting to fibreglass. Meanwhile one of the tourist RIBs joined the circus (you know the ones carrying about a dozen passengers seeking a thrill ride) followed by an RNLI RIB! Then, looking like Thunderbirds one and two, speeding towards us were Geordie Lass and Black Pearl. I have to be honest, the support we received was somewhat overwhelming and very much appreciated! With a little difficulty, trying not to lose any limbs between the two boats, we secured ourselves alongside Geordie Lass while the RNLI remained on scene to ensure we were safe during the procedure.

The journey upstream to Teddington was remarkably uneventful, rafted alongside Geordie Lass (forever to me now known as Thunderbird Seven), Richard's helming skill was super-impressive and how he stopped us hitting the first bridge was awe-inspiring. We made headway at an impressive speed with Black Pearl riding shotgun in case more support was needed. I sat in my helm seat, frustrated and wondering what had gone wrong, while Richard stood proud at his helm, focussed, emitting the aura of a Greek God, determination etched on his face, willing us to reach Richmond before the weir was lowered!

To help with our speed and reduce drag on Geordie Lass, I had fully raised our stern drives. As we reached clearer water there was something white attached to both drives.....a big, thick rope! So CAVAS wasn't to blame and I quietly apologised to her for my cursing.

We manhandled CAVAS through Teddington lock and, with the assistance of a marine engineer (who was returning from lunch out with his wife) we cut the offending 4cm rope free. This allowed us to continue under our own power using the starboard engine (the port engine had no drive) and we did our best to enjoy the remaining journey to Cookham where CAVAS was lifted by DB Marine.

Lessons Learned:

1. Being part of a boat club pays dividends when things go wrong. Huge thanks to Richard and Judi and Geordie Lass. Also to Richard and Gill for following us in Black Pearl of Henley.

2. The Club cruises are a great way to get to know your fellow members and build lasting friendships.
3. Even with the best preparation the unexpected can happen and catch you out.
4. Carry useful equipment – big shout out to Philip Sachse who told me to carry a sharp knife. I bought a new diver's knife which was used to cut free the rope!
5. Every boater should know how to conduct a raft tow – you never know when you may need to receive or provide one.
6. The support on the tideway is comforting. The feared Uber Clippers avoided us when we were floundering. London VTS were trying to call us on the radio to offer assistance, although I was too busy to answer them. I assume it was them who dispatched the RNLI and I phoned them later to thank them and apologise for not responding which they completely understood.
7. Make sure to attend a Club briefing prior to the trip – lots of useful info/knowledge.

CAVAS is now back on the water. The port drive had a broken shear-sleeve (a component designed to fail if the prop suddenly jams before the engine stalls). The starboard drive had a bent propeller blade.

Some photos:



CAVAS in her fully restored glory waiting to crane back in:



Andy Wilson

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Forthcoming events

19th November

Our AGM is scheduled to take place at the Moulsoford Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Moulsoford.

This will be followed by a lunch at the Beetle & Wedge in the village.

10th December

We have our annual Christmas lunch booked at the George Hotel in Wallingford.

We hope to see you there.

Editor

And finally

We welcome any thoughts or ideas for trips or events, so if you have any suggestions you think may be suitable for the Club in the New Year, please let us know, or bring them along to the AGM, so that we can consider them for inclusion in the 2024 programme.

Editor

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