



Ben Meakins takes a couple of models on honeymoon, David Pugh describes the porpoise of his visit, Stu Davies gets fired up about an Old Gaffers weekend and Tom Stevens gets saddled with an ideal marina berth



Enjoyment is our sole aim



A weekend of Old Gaffers and cannon fire? We'll give it our best shot, reckons Stu Davies

A lovely weekend was forecast and Holyhead beckoned, only an hour-and-a-half away from Llangollen. We were en route to an Old Gaffers weekend, and our friends John and Bev were visiting. All we needed was John and Lesley with *Spiritus* – a Bénéteau Océanis 381, the same as ours – and it would have been just like the old days back in Pwllheli.

We woke up in Holyhead to a fresh, sunny day. The visitors' pontoon was full of evocative boats – the aforementioned Old

Gaffers – and the smell of Stockholm Tar was in the air. Holyhead Marina sponsors this event and provides free berthing: we were in for two days of music, beer and big bangs – there were also lots of strangely-dressed people armed with guns in the vicinity.

These were serious guns: cannons and muskets, in fact. The cannons were one-pounders, which can fire a one-pound ball three-quarters of a mile with a heck of a bang. This bang is sufficiently loud that people are

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advised to open their mouths when the cannons go off, to mitigate the effect on eardrums. The guns were loaded using dry grass as wadding, and no ball – but the bang was still very impressive!

The hobbyists who tour with their costumes and equipment to events such as these lend a welcome air of authenticity, and the parade of gaffers with cannons on board was superb. The sun shone and we had fun: an excellent weekend.

Our thoughts are now turning to the approaching winter. We have left *Sacha's* sails on for another couple of weeks but I have dusted down the Pela oil extractor in anticipation of going into winter preparation mode. This winter I



Old Gaffers and cannons make Stu's weekend go with a bang

also want to beef up the sugar scoop area with a view to putting in more accessible storage areas. Sugar scoops are wonderful for getting into and out of the water, but are a big wasted space inside.

■ Stu Davies has written many practical articles for PBO. He and his wife Laura keep their Bénéteau Océanis 381, *Sacha*, moored in Holyhead

A bit like Monaco? On your bike



Tom Stevens thoroughly enjoys the PBO version of marina-based grand prix spectating

UK weather seems to be settling into a pattern. Good weather early on, rubbish summers then wonderful Septembers and Octobers.

At the beginning of September, Caroline and I had two consecutive

weekend trips, both to the Orwell, and enjoyed probably the best weather of the year.

Our first weekend was in company with other Aldeburgh yachts as we raced to Levington for an overnight stay, then raced back the next day. It was actually more of a cruise in company, with a bit of attitude, as several of us just had husband-and-wife crews. On the return race, in light airs against a blistering spring tide, we got clear away at the start, flying the spinnaker, and held on to win the cup on handicap. My wife naturally tells everyone that it was her helming skills (while I trimmed the kite) that made all the difference.

Our second weekend was to Ipswich. Son number three has

just moved into a flat overlooking Neptune Marina, so we decided to visit him by water. We arrived in brilliant sunshine and a fading breeze: looking around at the waterfront cafés and bars, we could easily have been in the Mediterranean. We noticed lots of activity – stages being built, barriers being erected and an unusually large number of cyclists. By chance, we had arrived just in time for the Tour of Britain cycle race, due to set off the next morning. All thoughts of leaving reasonably early to catch the tide were ignored as we decided to stay and watch the start.

The following morning, we seemed to be surrounded by a disturbingly large acreage of Lycra as crowds of amateur cyclists arrived to see the race off. The teams all appeared on the stage to

introduce themselves, and at this point I had a sudden insight of how the squillionaires moored in the marina in Monaco while the Grand Prix is on must feel. Here we were doing the PBO version, moored in Neptune Marina with a

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perfect view from *Oystercatcher's* coachroof, while the likes of Bradley Wiggins and Mark

Cavendish appeared in front of us and then raced off on their bikes.

We'd missed the tide, so after locking out from the docks we had a bit of a slog all the way to the mouth of the Alde. Despite that, I wouldn't have missed my poor man's version of the Monaco Grand Prix for anything.

■ PBO ad executive Tom Stevens and his wife Caroline keep their Trapper 500, *Oystercatcher*, on a swinging mooring on the River Alde by summer and lay up over winter at nearby Aldeburgh



Oystercatcher (foreground) locking out of Ipswich docks



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