

Boat-owner's diary

The PBO 'family' share their boat-owning treats, trials and tribulations

Polly has earned a holiday abroad



After a Round the Island Race and National Championships, Ben Meakins reckons that *Polly* should be allowed to put on a bit of weight

Well, the Round the Island Race was windy, and we made it round in one piece, finishing a respectable 54th overall in IRC, with no breakages. Others have far better stories to tell, judging by the number of DSC alarms that kept one of our crew nipping up and down the companionway every five minutes throughout the race.

Then, only a day later, came the high pressure, and we sat in the sun, drying out the inside of what had become a very damp boat. The forecast for the weekend later, our National Championships, was predicting four knots... maximum. We shook

our heads in disbelief. Surely, this couldn't be? We thought the gales were to be a permanent feature of the summer of 2011.

Sure enough, it was light. But any frustration at the lack of wind was soon displaced by sheer joy at the prospect of some close One Design racing. The Impala class is spread all around the country, but

After a few months as a stripped-out racing boat, *Polly*'s bound for foreign parts

boats are grouping in various places around the coast, and this was to be the biggest fleet of Impalas in the UK for a few years. The racing was close, and in the final race the three leading boats



Polly enjoying some close racing at the Impala National Championships

crossed the finishing line within four seconds of each other. A finish like that gives you a real buzz!

All too soon, the weekend was over and it was back to the

mooring – but not for long. Off came the racing sails and

on went the older, baggier cruising sails, plus the rubber dinghy, anchors, charts and bedding. After a few months as a stripped-out racing boat, *Polly*'s bound for foreign parts, with her freeboard a

good few inches lower than it was and her lockers groaning with stores. All that's left is to buy the food, lock up the house and check the weather forecast.

Where are we bound? No idea. We'll poke our nose out past the Needles and let the boat decide. With a bone in her teeth and a good breeze, we could go anywhere...

■ PBO's features editor, Ben Meakins, co-owns *Polly*, a 32-year-old Impala 28, with two friends. They keep her in the Hamble on a sailing club river mooring

Eddie Mays

Winning pies – race success in pastry



David Pugh has his eyes on the prize – and indeed the pies – on Tim Fuller's Westerly Storm, *Swift*

Traitor! Infidel! Turncoat! I could almost hear Red Dragon's reproaches echoing from her Poole mooring as I rounded the Isle of Wight this year on Tim Fuller's Westerly Storm, *Swift*. It's the first time in five years that we haven't entered Red Dragon into the race, and as it transpired 2011 was a good year for the Contessa 26

– Sundowner took the Gold Roman Bowl (first overall) while, in the ISC-rated fleet, David Armstrong in *Contessina* managed a very creditable time of just over 9½ hours.

Peter Poland's article this month praises the Contessa 26 as a great all-rounder, as at home crossing

oceans as she is on the race circuit or simply pottering around the coast. It's that versatility that makes her a force to be reckoned with on windy races such as this year's RTI – the more wind she gets, the more she flies. On a similarly windy race in 2008 Sundowner, Nyree and Red Dragon all made it round in less

than nine hours.

Despite my pangs for not having raced Red Dragon, the

conditions suited *Swift*'s heavy displacement as well, sending us round to be the fastest Westerly Storm racing under ISC, although part of that may be due to two of the four boats in the fleet retiring or failing to declare. As in previous years we sailed in comfort, enjoying the occasional cup of



Swift bashing upwind on this year's Round the Island Race

tea, slice of cake and maybe a pork pie, and arrived at the end (OK, back where we started) tired but not utterly exhausted.

For me, and many others, that's the essence of the Round the Island Race. It's a long slog if you're under a shouty skipper, but if you're fortunate enough to be on a boat where everyone is focused on the job in hand but still out to have a good time, it's a very enjoyable experience. And pork

pies certainly aren't an obstacle to winning – they may even be a key to success. After all, Jeremy Rogers was once heard to cite them as an essential ingredient contributing towards his three Round the Island victories in *Rosina of Beaulieu* – another Contessa 26.

■ PBO's deputy editor David Pugh and his two siblings jointly own Red Dragon, a Contessa 26 that they keep moored in Poole Harbour

Peter Mumford - Beken of Cowes

Tom Stevens reports from his favourite snug, David Pugh earns a (pie) crust on a Westerly Storm, Stu Davies craves an ideal summer cruise and Ben Meakins sets his sights on Somewhere-or-Other

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We were in our element



Tom Stevens loves being in a favourite safe anchorage when the weather cuts up rough

Some six miles downstream from Aldeburgh we are fortunate to have, in my opinion, one of the nicest anchorages in the UK. The Butley River leads off the River Ore, halfway up the western side of the bird reserve at Haugate Island. During high summer it can get a bit crowded, but most of the time it is fairly quiet and we are occasionally the only yacht there. I still get a tingle when, having motored in and anchored, the engine is turned off and the silence is broken only by the sound of birds.

I work from home, so it's easy for Caroline and I to decide at the last minute that we fancy a night 'at the Butley'. One recent Friday we did just that. The forecast was for a still evening



The Butley River: 'One of the nicest anchorages in the UK,' Tom reckons

with rain and wind overnight leading to a pleasant Saturday. We were on *Oystercatcher* by 1830, and motored on a glassy river down to Butley.

I love being on the boat in a safe anchorage when the elements play up

On this occasion there were only two other boats, and we anchored in our favourite spot just north of the remains of the building at Boyton Dock. Mollie, our black

Labrador, was with us as usual so we had a quick walk before settling in for the evening back on board. To Caroline's embarrassment, I am fairly obsessive about flag etiquette

and anchor lights so, at the appropriate time, the ensign was lowered and the

paraffin lamp hoisted in the foretriangle. Of the three of us, we were the only one showing an anchor light.

True to the forecast, as Caroline

was rustling up one of her fantastic suppers on the ancient two burners and grill, the rain started and the wind picked up. I love being on the boat in a safe anchorage when the elements play up, and really enjoy the feeling of snugness down below, with food and wine, when we can hear the wind and rain bashing away outside. Amazingly, the rain had stopped on Saturday morning so we all went ashore for a long walk before breakfast. The sail back to Aldeburgh was very relaxing, with the wind well aft of the beam, and we were back in time for a lunchtime drink at the yacht club. I never tire of going to Butley Creek despite the fact that it is hardly an epic voyage.

The previous weekend I had lent the boat to our young, to celebrate our eldest son's 30th birthday. They did exactly the same as we do, except possibly with a bit more noise. We gather that there were another couple of boats in that night, so if you were one of them, I apologise that the surroundings were not as tranquil as they might have been.

■ 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

Lo, yet another dreary weather front



A series of lows from the southwest make Stu Davies rethink the planned big sail

It's funny, we beaver away through the winter and spring, get our boats ready for the 'season' and eagerly wait for the magical sunny days with the perfect breeze to waft us along on the 'summer cruise'. Do they ever arrive, though?

We had a week off at Easter (see last month's diary) which was interrupted by the arrival of the eldest daughter from Abu Dhabi. All the dad readers know the way this works – the offspring are on the way home, and they want picking up from the airport... tomorrow!

We had managed the trip to Swansea in fabulous weather, so

we packed up and drove from Milford Haven to Llangollen, then on to Manchester Airport. That was the first week interrupted. Never mind, we had booked the annual two-week cruise for the two middle weeks in June. The Scillies beckoned: maybe France?

We arrived at the boat with some misgivings: XC Weather was saying not-nice things for the following week, and so it continued. Two weeks of low after low piling in from the south-west. To be fair, there were nice days in between, but the big sail just wasn't possible. However, moving to Milford has opened up our choices. Even on



There were some bright, sunny days... Sacha enters Milford Haven with the St Ann's Head lighthouse in the background

bad days, a trip to Dale – where the port authority have provided a pontoon in the middle of the anchorage – and an overnight on said pontoon, followed by lunch in one of the sheltered bays, is very nice. A top tip is to tie up to the lee side of the pontoon: being blown on by a westerly breeze doesn't

make for a quiet night's sleep. How much holiday entitlement have we got left? Let's see if we can have another week off work. We might make France yet...

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

