

# *the* **BEAMER**

AUGUST 2016

## **Port Edgar Yacht Club's Newsletter - Summer Edition**



*Hello, everyone!!*

*Welcome to the Summer edition of the Beamer.*

*We're now half way through the sailing season, and we've had some great cruises and some great Racing - and we have some great articles!!*

**Catherine Bryant**

### **Featuring:**

- **Update from the Commodore**
- **Mix 'n' Match - it's really working!**
- **Canal racing**
- **A day in the life of a Race Officer**
- **Yawl racing in Co. Mayo**
- **Bird's eye view from the new bridge.**

## **Commodore's Summer Update. (Terry Kirchin)**

With the sailing season now in full swing, we're seeing some interesting things happening. Apart from a few bright spots, such as the recent 707 Sunday (11 boats racing), the early May Yacht Training day and the first of the August/September Sunday Series (again 11 boats), support for weekend racing seems to have been patchy. Turnouts in FYCA FIG races have been modest, as has support for regattas in the Forth .... and for East Coast Sailing Week in the Tay. This was despite Royal Tay YC's hard work and imaginative programme. Their efforts attracted only 15 yachts - four from the Forth, one from the north of England and ten from the Tay.

On the other hand, midweek racing at Port Edgar is as popular as ever, with as many as 25 yachts racing. Plus, the switch to three divisions seems to have worked well and proved popular.

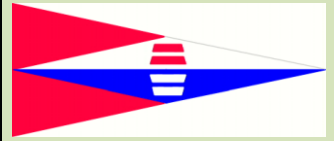
If there's an underlying message ... it could be efficient use of people's time seems to be a key factor and an emerging trend. Is this what will more and more shape the design of our future sailing programmes, including the East Coast event when it comes back to the Forth next year?

Away from the Forth, PEYC boats have been capturing the headlines. Dara O'Malley's 707 was awarded the prestigious trophy for best performance across all the classes at Scottish Series and Gordon Lawson's Moonstruck2 won the 'Round St Kilda' race. Well done both!

On the combined cruising/racing front, Erin was once again 'showing the flag' abroad. This time it was back to Norway for John and his crew. I suspect other PEYC boats have been on their travels this year. I look forward to hearing their stories.

Back home, it's great to hear of the work going on to kick start kid's dinghy sailing in the club. More power to everyone's elbow on this!

Also close to home (but this this time shore-side), work is still going on behind the scenes to keep our clubhouse project alive.



As members would expect, we're working closely with the marina operator as they develop their thinking around the idea of a mezzanine floor in the main building but, at the same time, we're keeping alive our other options. When the picture's clearer, we'll call a general meeting. This decision is very much a members' prerogative.

So, as we approach the end of the summer holidays, there's still lots going on and lots to look forward to - not least the Skippers/Crews Evening that is being planned for September and of course the Night and the Autumn Series to round off the season.

Fingers crossed for some decent sailing weather!

Terry Kirchin  
Commodore

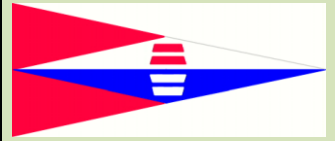
### ***Mix and Match has now been operating twice as long as Tinder!*** *(Ian Hards)*

Yes, PEYC's mix and match system to help racing crew find boats and skippers find crew was first launched in 2010—nearly three years ahead of Tinder! Long gone are the days of posting your needs on the notice board outside the clubhouse on a Wednesday evening! Mix and Match has been the starting point for many club members and some who still like variety or can't come to regular sailing have been avid users for a number of years.

In the bad old days people would have to come down and put their name up on the board outside the clubhouse hoping that someone who was short of crew would notice. Equally, skippers who needed crew would put up the boat name and a pontoon number stating how many crew they needed. It was all a bit pot luck and sometimes skippers still wouldn't have enough crew to race and crew might come all the way down to Port Edgar and discover they weren't needed. Although there were a few changes in the first few months the system that was set up in 2010 remains pretty much intact.

Since introducing Mix and Match, skippers and crew are able to plan ahead and there are fewer wasted journeys and disappointments. Typically 30-40 crew register each year and 10-15 boats use Mix and Match frequently, with many finding regular crew through the system. Wild Horse, Henceforth, Eurobo, Sula, Salmon, Suspicion, Pink Gin and Jammin have all been frequent users with No worries and The Black Prince often stepping in to offer to take crew as well. All crew complete a survey form which highlights their level of experience and what they are ideally looking for. While many boats are just grateful for one spare pair of hands these forms can also be used to help more discerning skippers understand what to expect.

If you haven't heard of Mix and Match before then you can find more details at <http://www.peyc.org.uk/getting-started/yacht-racing/mix-and-match/>



### *A day in the life of a regatta race officer* (Pete Sykes)

This year's event was the third Port Edgar Dinghy Regatta run as a joint venture between the Club and Port Edgar Watersports that we have planned in recent years. The reason I say planned was because we ran one very good event in 2014 but in 2015 we were presented with 5C temperature and 35 kn winds; only one sailor said he was prepared to go out to race and his crew soon put him right about that.

2016 could not have been more different. We had gentle breezes of 3 – 6 kn and it was unseasonably warm all day. Racing was on Windward Leeward courses in Queensferry Bay and those that didn't have their sun block cream with them probably wished they had. We had classes for the RS400, the RS200, the Feva and a handicap class; 34 boats in total.

Race Officering this sort of event is different from running a standard PEYC race night. You know you have a skilled visiting fleet, you know you aren't going to compromise the courses just to make them easy to run and you are also going to make it a bit different from what we normally do. Hence I owe thanks to Irvine for the use of his yacht Helix as committee boat, to the 5 other race officers on that boat, to the crew on the marks boat and the ribs and to the shore crew for organising the slip, the competitors, and the results. We opted to race in Queensferry Bay rather than go to St David's, as with light NW wind, St David's was too far and too sheltered. Race 1 was slow — the course was, to be honest, too long and they were only going to do one lap; so for the rest of the day, we shortened the courses and got some multiple lap races in. I had had a couple of problems laying the course as the wind was still settling down in the morning so had been guessing how long to make it. Brain fade was a problem too: "*RiverWitch, RiverWitch. What depth are you laying that mark in?*" – "*About 5 metres*" – "*RiverWitch, Are you sure?*" – "*Yup, 5m, 5.1 to be precise*". RO stares hard through binoculars up the course at the marks boat carrying the windward marks. "*RiverWitch, RiverWitch. You should be in about 20 to 25m there*" – "*Committee boat, Committee boat. Faithful probably is, but this is RiverWitch, at the leeward mark ... behind you*". I suspect most of the competitors heard the laughter coming off Faithful at hearing that!

During the racing we had some very good starts - boats nicely spread over the length of the line and most of them hitting it within a second or two of the start. We also had some very close photo finishes. Margaret had a double entry recording system running and we needed it. In race 3, the tidal eddy had kicked in and the start mark moved up-course a bit. The RS400 and 200 fleets worked this out and bunched up at the far end, resulting in a general recall each so we shifted the mark for the RS200s to un-bias the line and it all settled down again. This did of course mean by the time we started the handicap and Feva classes, the RS400s were completing lap 1! Some of the 400s were a bit surprised to find the RRS apply to all boats, including those in a starting sequence and not just those on the same lap as yourself.

By the time of the last race the wind was going light; so we decided to run a one lap decider and call it a day. There were of course a few incidents on the course: Kevan Gibb and JP (i.e. the local lads in the RS400 fleet) allegedly hit the bottom a few times while dodging the tide. The lead RS400 in the first race retired after sailing the wrong way though the line. The kids in the Fevas kept falling out of them between races. And Simon and Cath Bryant were sailing their wooden Scorpion for the first time in a few years. They scored a respectable 2<sup>nd</sup> in the first race but slipped back after that. Apparently this was nothing to do with the water leaking into the boat, but instead because it was inexplicably running out of freeboard.

There are some photos from Jim Scott of the boats at the windward mark – have a look at his [Dropbox folder](#). There is also a very nice [YouTube video https://youtu.be/grrYrTY-kEk](https://youtu.be/grrYrTY-kEk) of the last race taken from a drone

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## *Photo montage from Dinghy regatta May 2016*



PE Dinghy Regatta - May 2016



PE Dinghy Regatta - May 2016



Its going to be busy at the leeward mark



PE Dinghy Regatta - May 2016



PE Dinghy Regatta - May 2016

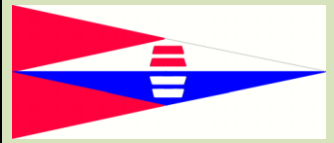


PE Dinghy Regatta - May 2016



PE Dinghy Regatta - May 2016





### *Takin' it nice 'n' slow on the Canal Du Midi (Pete Sykes)*

Towards the end of last year, Sue and I were talking about holidays for 2016. I seemed to be spending far too much time on trains and aeroplanes and fancied something easy and local. Sue wanted sun. "How about a canal boat" says I: "Life at 4mph, relaxing, interesting bits of the UK and never more than 1 hr from a pub." The response was "How about life at 7kph, interesting bits of France and never more than 1 hour from a vineyard". The logic is hard to deny so the plan was to fly to Beziers, train east to Montpellier where after a couple of days in the Camargue, we pick up a boat, sail west on the Canal du Midi for a week to near Carcassonne, spend a few days there then train back to Beziers, and back home. Sounds ideal!



The choice of boat is an interesting one. The Canal du Midi was built for wide barges and there isn't a "standard" design as you see on so many of the narrowboats in the English Canals. There are some old traditional converted barges, but these are huge and tend to be hotel boats, not self-hire. Think 50% longer and nearly 3x wider than an English narrowboat. There are plenty of modern flybridge cruisers, but if like me, you aren't a fan of the modern swoopy-fast powerboat design, especially on a boat designed to do 6kn max, then you tend to ignore those hire fleets. We looked for a nice boat and found the "*Penichette Classique*" for hire in various sizes and went for the 3 berth at about 10m long. Later, some friends decided to join us and booked an identical boat so we had a convoy (*or a race, as it's also known!! Ed.*)

The *Penichette Classique* is a flat bottomed, bluff bowed boat with no keel. It also has no discernible chines either and only about 2ft draft. You should therefore be able to make it do more or less anything; turn on a sixpence and drift nicely sideways into a berth, and mostly you can. Trouble is, so can the wind! The boat also has a single big prop and a barn door rudder and is a martyr to prop-walk. Don't even think of turning port in reverse, it won't do it. Putting someone ashore with a warp ASAP is the best way as I found when reverse parking in a berth barely wider than the boat in 20 kn of wind. Big fenders are supplied.



Our plan was leave Montpellier the morning after picking up the boat but as our driving lesson only lasted 20 minutes before we were told we were OK, we headed off early. The first days would be in the Canal du Rhone, a commercial waterway leading into the Etang du Thau, an inland lagoon narrowly separated from the Med. The barrier was the lifting bridge at Frontignan. It lifts twice a day at 8AM and 4PM for boats waiting in the queue – and only for those boats present at that time and waiting for it

Why this is so, I cannot fathom. The road is a lightly trafficked urban street with a motorway bypass 1km away. The actual lift takes just a minute and only 2 cars had to wait the 10 mins it was open as we went through. However we had a problem for the next day: The Etang du Thau produces 20,000 tonnes of oysters each year, the oyster beds are huge; 17km long. An out of control tourist boat can do a lot of damage and they are barred if the wind is stronger than 10 kn. The weather forecast said we went through the Etang the next morning, or not again for a week. We started motoring at 6:00 that morning, made the bridge for 8:00, and crossed before the wind blew. We did meet another tourist later who had tried that afternoon, dodged the coastguard, lost it in the wind (lost his navigation reading the buoyage too) and incurred the €800 (uninsurable) tow off charge as he ran aground.

We were now in the Canal du Midi and the character changed a lot. The Canal du Rhone is a wide commercial waterway passing through modern industrial towns. It's also a graveyard for dead boats sunk on their moorings and looks very very sad in places. It's not just a few of them either, we must have passed a couple of hundred sunk, or about to sink. I was glad to be out of it.

Once on the Midi, things change. The boats go up-market, the canal gets smaller and more touristy, the straight lines go and elegant curves appear (especially as you sail past Beziers) and the classic tree lined canal vista appears – far nicer. The towns get nicer with medieval villages, grande chateau, vineyards and wineries, and a plethora of nice little bars and cafes, rare on the Canal du Rhone.





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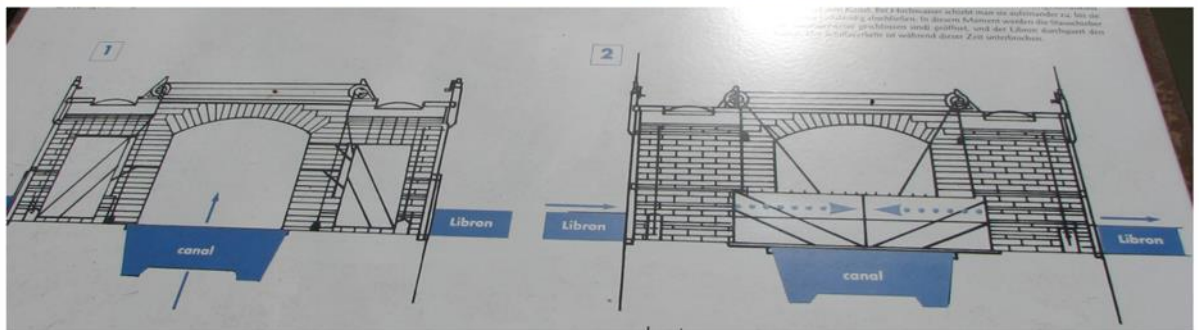


The quality of boat goes up too; suddenly we went from being respectable to being the poor cousin. Most of the big boats were floating hotels with gourmet chefs on board. Some were very very nice holiday houses and not small ones either. Some like Caroline in the photo were beautiful comfy big cruisers.

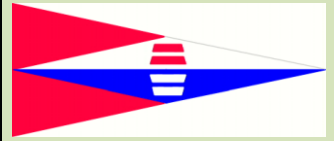


The locks were more interesting here; arc shaped sides, and at Agde, a circular lock with 3 gates to choose from. There was also some superb engineering where the canal crosses the River Libron. Normally the river flows under the canal, but it floods 20 times a year and flows higher than the canal. The crossing is designed to keep the canal open at these times and uses a set of moving caissons to divert the river above the canal one side or the other of a central locked section.

Very clever, very interesting, it's been in use since 1855, and it's still working today. All the locks on the canal are manned and mechanised. A lock keeper with a remote control does it for you, all you have to do is



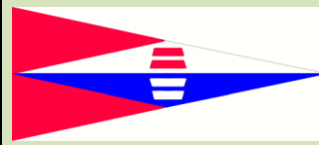
motor in, and look after your lines. The lock flight at Beziers is rather more exciting though. It's a 5 step staircase and it was empty as we entered to go up. The *modus operandi* is then to put you in a lock basin, open the gate above it and the paddles for the gate above that. Follow the link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9QrRv03FWcY> to a YouTube video when you click on it and note, the person in control of all this is the woman in the blue T shirt with the remote, I've not had the pleasure of this lock technique before and I'm sure its frowned on in the UK canal system!



So, what top tips would I have for anyone planning a similar trip? First; just do it, it's relaxing, it is 7kph, and you are never too far from a glass of wine. Next, if I was doing it again, I'd skip the Canal du Rhone and head straight for the Canal du Midi. I would instead opt to start where we finished and go west from there towards Toulouse. Southern Central France definitely has it over The Camargue and the Etang du Thau, although the flights to Carcassone and Toulouse aren't quite as good from Edinburgh. I would also keep the Penichette rather than the flybridge modern thing, though I'd go up a size and get the one with the bow thruster – cheating I know, but I'm not proud. I'd like to pick the weather better, we had 20 kn winds for a week and 10C was a warm day. We did however manage to avoid the floods in Northern France, and miraculously even got home on time despite a rail strike, a fuel station strike, and air traffic control strike all in the same week.







## *How Other Clubs do Racing – Yawl Racing in Ireland* (Simon Bryant)

Even on holiday, I'm sure many (most?!) Port Edgar sailors are drawn to other clubs' sailing activities. So when we were visiting Achill Island, way on the west of Ireland, and noticed there was to be Yawl racing that evening, just near the bridge over the sound, we resolved to return to watch. This was very different from a PEYC race night. Firstly the boats - they are about 25 ft long, with 4-7 crew, with a single quadrilateral sail on a lateen rig. The tack is clipped to the stem, the clew goes to the mainsheet. And that's it, as far as we could see. Quite a lot of plastic sacks of sand were being loaded as ballast. Something wrong at the top of the mast? Just put a loop on the main halyard, put one foot in it and get two burly crew members to hoist you up. Who needs bosun's chairs, cleats or winches?



The start is intriguing as well. Imagine a line going out to a buoy from the pier, with a number of 3 metre lines attached. As the start approaches, each of the boats takes one of these lines, and cleats it to the stern, with the boat pointing downwind. On the signal to go, the lines are dropped, the sail is hoisted, and the boats round up to aim for the first mark. One would imagine a recipe for a lot of collisions, but it seemed to work.

Foredeck work is also a little different. For a tack or a gybe, the tack of the sail is

unclipped from the stem and the whole yard pulled down at the front so it's vertical, to allow it to pass behind the mast and the tack reattached with the yard on the other side. I have no idea how that works in strong winds.

And finally, an idea which could definitely be adopted at Port Edgar. Using tannoy's on top of a car, there was a continuous commentary on the racing (or anything else that took the commentator's fancy), in the style of a horse race. Maybe an additional part of the officer of the day duty?

To get a better idea of how it all works, have a look at the following video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-3q3378To2U> – look out at 2:50 for a great way to get more weight on the rail!



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And no, I don't have access to a drone, I just know someone who has friends in "high places"!!

As ever, thank you to our contributors for this edition, in particular Pete Sykes who's written two articles!

If anyone would like to submit an article for future editions, or has an idea for an article, then do please contact me at any time on [catherine\\_bryant@yahoo.com](mailto:catherine_bryant@yahoo.com)

And if you would like more information about the club or its activities visit the website [www.peyc.org.uk](http://www.peyc.org.uk) or e-mail [peycwelcome@gmail.com](mailto:peycwelcome@gmail.com)