

Osprey's first season

Well, last year the boat picture in here was 'borrowed' off the internet. Now I have a proper picture at sea, (well in the Solent) under sail with the new name of Osprey. We did the renaming on a cold day in January. I took her on club weekends in April, May, June and late July. Early July saw my first Cross Channel adventure as skipper. I had hoped to visit friends in the Channel Islands but after getting to Cherbourg the weather took us the other way and we visited St. Vaast on the east side of the Cotenin peninsular before heading home with wine and groceries. When we locked in we saw a gull had hooked itself on some fishing gear and a huge fish-hook was through its beak. We got the dinghy and outboard out and rescued it. Joel is much better than I at holding struggling animals, so he held the bird and thanks to him it was rescued. I had to 'operate' with the bolt croppers and remove the hook. It tried to bite me and rewarded us by leaving a big message in the dinghy, but we felt pleased we had helped the poor thing. We did the journey home on my birthday and heard London had got the Olympics in mid channel on the 5 o'clock news. It was a 14 hour passage and a bit bumpy - not how I had intended to spend my birthday, but it made it a memorable day with a huge sense of achievement! As we approached London on the way home on the next day (7/7) it was spooky to see the matrix signs saying "London Closed, avoid area"! At the beginning of August we took the boat along the coast to Brighton and stayed in the Marina there for 2 nights either side of Brighton Pride. It was quite a strong wind when we set out, but



Osprey in the West Solent and right working out the tides for the long haul home after a St Vaast gull rescue with the help of bolt croppers.

it was behind us which is never so bad. Also we had light wind on the way back off the land, which was very kind, until that faded altogether off Bognor, so we had to motor round Selsey Bill. I was going to have the boat for the late August public holiday weekend, but I got a letting so it went to France instead. Unfortunately she hit something submerged about 10 miles off the French coast and it knocked the sail drive and propeller clean off. That damaged

the gearbox and engine. One insurance job, three lost charters and 7 weeks out of the water later, she went back in at the end of October with a brand new power plant. It transpired that the old engine had given trouble before and others in the charter fleet with the same design engine have had oil feed / seizing faults. Volvo are not keeping their formerly good reputation with this MD20xx series and I made the decision to change to a Yanmar engine. I took



it for a trial over the last weekend in October and it was so powerful that water piled up astern and I've never seen the platform at the stern so far down in the water. Needless to say it's wasteful to do that, so I throttled back and was very pleased with cruising at 7.5 – 8 knots around 2,200 rpm and river pilotage speed (just under 6 knots) at 1,600 rpm.

Turkey

In early October we had a week sailing in Turkey. Something I started by booking a boat at the Boat Show last January. Well 24 others thought it a good idea and 4 other boats got booked so there were 30 of us in 5 boats and we had a delightful week. Most nights we moored up with each other and took over some restaurants but a couple we went separate ways and even cooked aboard. We went to a traditional Turkish bath, built in the 16th century and got scrubbed and mauled about by a chunky but a rather sweet Turkish man who recognised us the next day in the street and smiled and waved as if we'd been friends for years. We glowed and tingled when we came out into the night air. We were so impressed with the area that I'm going again next June – see below.

Country Cottage

In August we were on our way to Wales but made a planned detour to Ironbridge to see a cottage Joel had seen on the internet for sale. Well we ended up staying locally and had another look the next day, abandoned the Welsh visit and we ended up buying it and completed on 12th December. We expect to be there for Christmas. It is an 1830s cottage, listed, in a Conservation Area and in a World Heritage Site. The furnace where the discovery was made that iron could be smelted from coke rather than charcoal - and that changed the world through the Industrial Revolution - is opposite our front gate and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. We expect to use it as a winter weekend cottage



Turkey: Excursion to Gemilla island, reputed home of St Nicholas, sailing back to the final party with all 30 of us. Below; Hanbury Knot garden in the March frost & Joel outside the 1701 mansion. Top: our cottage at Coalbrookdale (left of the pair), middle; 4 views of Dublin and below; the Duke at Kings Cross and the Black 5 on the GCR.

and let it in the summer to help develop local tourism. That way it will earn its keep but be eventually a place for me to use as a base for playing with steam trains. The Severn Valley Railway, of which I am a shareholder, is just 10 miles down the road. Bridgnorth, at the top end of the railway, also has a wonderful butcher – not good news for veggies - but we have had some extremely good meat from there and it knocks the

spots off supermarket stuff. In the first year we will let it at bargain rates to friends and relatives so we can get it right. English Country Cottages is the way we'll market it. We rather like the idea of England in the off season. We tried it as consumers by taking a flat in a National Trust Property near Droitwich. Now a cultural weekend in Droitwich may sound odd, but we went on the Severn Valley Railway, walked some of





the riverside way, had two great gastro-pub meals and woke up to the frost on the knot garden that was truly magical. So we expect to do more English visiting and exploration and less tripping aboard. When the boat is not let we will also use that as a summer Solent cottage to do some of the things there that are interesting and are horrid to do by car.

Dublin - Easter

Easter saw us take a 4 day trip to the Irish capital. What a lovely City that is. I remember last visiting in 1968 and finding it rather dull. It has blossomed as a City with a rich cultural quarter I hadn't previously appreciated, a great new tram and good places to eat and drink that are smoke free. We went out to Kilmainham Jail where the 1916 patriots were held and shot. I got a pretty full briefing on Irish history before I left. The reason for going was a Rugby Tour by the The Kings Cross Steelers - the club I support and Joel plays for. We stayed at the Gresham on O'Connell Street and met up with a South African doctor friend who was working in the Republic at the time. I will look forward to seeing more of Eire as it is a part of these Islands that deserves more time. Joel is now a qualified Rugby referee so we can expect more trips.

Steam Trains

Last December, after the 2004 edition was printed Joel and I went to Ely behind the Duke of Gloucester and recently we did another steam railway trip, on the Great Central between Loughborough and Nottingham. This is an old main line and there is a section reinstated to main line appearance. We were hauled by a Black 5 - made the year my parents got married (1937).



Work

Westminster continues to be interesting. I was promoted to Policy Manager (City Schemes) in June and now have several projects on the go that are keeping my mind exercised. The Brunel Bridge I mentioned last year is still in storage while we get a piece of land back into the partnership of promoting bodies to put it on. The Olympics are altering our agenda. Whatever we do, with 40% of London's hotel beds in our part of the City and most of the Theatres and big shops, we will do our bit to make the visitor experience better.



Travels in 2006

My Society is organising a steam ship trip out of Barcelona for a week after Easter for 7 nights on a classic Italian steamship called the Oceanic. So I am doing that and Joel has a rugby tour to NYC in May. I have a week sailing booked in June while Joel does his Law exams and I have the same boat that I had in October. This time we are going to get out of the Gulf of Fethiye and head east to investigate the Kekova Roads. It looks great in the pilot book. Also I am flying out with Joel and another friend to St Lucia for 12 days in January on Henry's boat (left). We go to Antigua via Dominica and 2 French islands taking 12 days before getting our return flights.

Pussy Cat, Family and friends

Well she is still with us but went very thin until we realised she was having trouble with hard food. We changed her to pouches of Whiskas and she has put weight on but is not coming upstairs much - avoiding the stairs. Steve has moved to Archway, so we need to find a lodger to feed her while we are on the boat or at the cottage as we think it would stress her too much to start travelling at nearly 15! I mentioned last year that friend Daniel was having problems with a brain tumour. Well he seems to be beating the odds and the chemo seems to have worked - fingers crossed. Last time I saw him he looked very well. Cousin James has changed jobs and now has a great opportunity with the Bank of England. David is coming to the end of his PhD and expects to finish in the spring and will then have to sort a job out that may involve him moving. Jackie's eldest daughter got engaged in the summer which was a great excuse for a family party (below) - next one will be the wedding we guess!



Happy Holidays

