

# **Bouncing Around Burnham-on-Crouch – A Youth Sailing Adventure**

**24 – 29 October 2021**

By Jack Rodriguez and Robert Ingram

Introduction by Will Eaton

## **Introduction**

The Club has had the pleasure of bringing up children with the fantastic Swallows and Amazons each year to give them the adventure of sailing amongst themselves and being set free to explore their sailing passions. However, up to this point there was little offering besides sailing with family to encourage them to progress into sailing larger yachts independently. I'm sure we can all remember the first sail without our parents!

The trip was thought up a few years ago (as with many trips, a pandemic got in the way) and after the recommendation from Jane Russell, Katherine Ingram arranged for Offshore Adventures, a charity based in Ipswich, to take a group of 13-18 year-olds for a five day exploration of the Suffolk and Essex shores. Accompanied by myself and Henry Pearson (a fellow Cadet), the group would be encouraged to take command of the charity's two Oyster 49's, Ocean Scout and Offshore Scout, plan coastal passages and experience the magic of sailing at night.

## **Robert Ingram**

On arrival in Ipswich, we made our way down to the boats, a pair of Oyster 49s kitted out specifically for sail training. Sixteen pre-cadets were split between the two boats, and two cadets, Will Eaton and Henry Pearson, came to help Offshore Adventure's crew of three; a skipper, a first mate and a second mate. That evening we cast off and motored down the River Orwell picking up a buoy off Pin Mill about four miles from Felixstowe.

On our first morning we sailed out past Felixstowe docks and practiced sailing the boats. We got a chance to feel what they were like to helm, and how the sails were rigged including the mizzen mainsail, a sail which few of us had much experience sailing with. We then practiced some man overboard drills which gave us further understanding of the boats manoeuvrability as well as teaching us a slightly different technique for a valuable skill. That evening we moored in Shotley Marina just to the south of Felixstowe.



The crew of *Ocean Scout* hanking on the yankee at Pin Mill. Photo: Will Eaton.



The aftermath of *Offshore Scout* weighing anchor. Photo: Emily Cantwell-Kelly (second mate).

The following morning, we set out on our first sizable voyage of the week. The skipper had thought that it would be fun to see Sealand, and old gun platform that someone had claimed as their own country. The weather was perfect with plenty of wind and minimal rain, so we set out with the Yankee, Staysail, Mainsail and Mizzen mainsail, which meant we achieved a steady eight knots through the water which wasn't bad for a 30-ton yacht. All of us got a chance to helm which was brilliant fun especially in

such good conditions, as well as getting involved in the hoist, drop and trim of all the sails. After a change of skippers that evening we motored across the River Stour to moor off Harwich's Halfpenny Pier where we met back with *Offshore Scout* who had anchored in the Walton Backwaters. We spent that evening singing songs from the songbook on one of the boats probably to the annoyance of the locals.

### Jack Rodriguez

After a cosy night in Harwich with saddening thoughts of the nearby death of a refugee off the coast lurking in the background (of which we had heard the Mayday's the previous day), we broke free of our rafting partner and ventured out East towards the mammoth wind farm up ahead. Having personally never been so close to a wind farm, it was quite an experience. As we journeyed closer to the mesmerising turbines, the true size began to dawn on us, and the overwhelming power of this incredible machinery became apparent. Despite our awe, we quickly realised we were slightly too snug to the blades and made a much-appreciated tack!

Continuing our well-oiled and incredibly professional upwind tacking procedures southwards, we drew closer to the much-anticipated town of Burnham-on-Crouch, an area celebrated for its maritime history. With challenging winds, skipper Adrian provided a textbook demonstration



*Offshore Scout's* foredeck crew fresh from a North Sea dunking during a sail change. Photo: Emily Cantwell-Kelly

on how to get into a berth far too small for your boat and somehow not damage anyone or anything in the process. An impressive feat!



A lesson in night navigation and passage planning on *Offshore Scout*. Photo: Will Eaton.

Thursday morning allowed us a more relaxed morning **without** the wakeup call of former our second mate, Royal Navy Officer Alice, and Robert and I started to draw up plans for the journey back towards Ipswich. Due to popular demand this was going to take place at night in the Force 7 due to come in from the South which would give us a sleigh ride home through the wind farms and shallow patches well known by East Coast sailors. This was by far my favourite part of the week. Having organised watches and with the passage plan in hand, we set off with the blood moon looming menacingly over the horizon.

After a couple of hours, the notion of a “watch system” began to wear away and Robert and I decided it would be far more fun to do the whole journey together and leave our sleep-deprived future selves to complain. Once we noticed we were a good distance in front of the other boat, we quickly decided that this was now a race (obviously if we had lost then it would not have been- our fair rules) and altered our course for maximum efficiency [note from Will: ‘I distinctly remember them being behind us!’]. It was also deemed necessary to take down the main as gusts started to increase. So, with the help of skipper Adrian, Robert and I went up on deck in the dark rolling sea and pulled down the main with some lacklustre flaking (it was dark so no one could laugh at our shambles) which significantly affected our lead on the others.

Getting closer to the entrance to Harwich, our lead dropped from 1.9 miles to just 0.3 with their AIS showing their speed to be 1.5 times that of ours. With some quick calculations down below, I estimated that they were going to beat us by approximately eight minutes. All hope was lost. But then, out of nowhere (well they were quite obviously in sight given they were hundreds of metres long) a container vessel and two ferries chose this time to exit Harwich, behind us but in front of our opposition! Smug with our win we anchored upriver from the docks and had



The crew of *Ocean Scout* keeping a watch for a potential man overboard. Photo: Jack Rodriguez.

potentially the worst sleep of our lives as winds howled above with the boat pivoting like the pendulum of a grandfather clock every three seconds.

Our final breakfast of sausage and beans fuelled the journal back to Ipswich reaching speeds of 8 knots. A cheeky attempt at stroking a buoy which was not received well by the



Our skippers, Freddie (left) and Adrian (right). Photo: Will Eaton.

skipper. I wonder why? Locking into the marina and arriving back to our home berth, we began the clean-up process. The drab weather brought us rain just as we put sails away and covers on. Thanking the skipper, we departed the ketch for the final time and clambered in the back of a cab to drive back through the blustery and rain filled evening.

### Thanks

Thanks must go to the team at Offshore Adventures. Both boats' crew had a wealth of experience on board and everyone learnt a lot about sailing the unique boats. The recommendation from Jane Russell was an excellent one. Finally, thanks must also go to Katherine Ingram, who organised such a great for the group – they can't wait until next year!