



*The crew of the Kite, first-timers all, want to do it again.*

# Hooked on Raiding



*Jo, The Trusty Crew*

## **“Raiding? What's that?”**

That was my first response, some years ago, when Dad first mentioned going on a Raid. At the time the Solent Raid had not even been joked about but the Great Glen Raid was in

full swing. The idea of a week of sailing and rowing, exploring unknown territories and camping on board along the way sounded, to a girl besotted with Arthur Ransome's childrens books, absolutely magical. At this point *Kite* was still in the early stages, so the idea of using her to go on a raid was slightly far-fetched.

But now, years later, here I am sitting thinking back on four days of sailing – on the tidal Solent, a far cry from Wroxham Broad – in the company of some amazing characters and their beautiful boats.

I didn't really get a sense of how many boats were involved until the morning after launching, when everyone had to raft up for our first briefing on the Raid's mothership, the Thames barge *Alice*. She was anchored way out in the meandering channel at Keyhaven and it was an idyllic scene as we rounded the spit to the picturesque sight of her surrounded by 30 or so, mainly wooden, traditional boats, a scene repeated many times as we voyaged around the Solent and overwhelmed the pontoons at our destinations, often rafting four or five deep.



*An Extreme 40 on one hull showing off for a photographer*

sizes and speed, we became separated on the water but when everyone had returned from a day's sailing, there was a lovely relaxed atmosphere amongst the rafted boats, and some wonderfully multi-national chatter. I think it was that atmosphere that made the Raid so special, and having heard stories from the Dutch Raids I can't wait to take part in another. I'm hooked.  
 Joanna Wolstenholme

### **A New Boat on a New Trailer...**

...to be launched and sailed among a large group of sailors from around Europe; a pretty daunting prospect? Not for her crew of Andrew Wolstenholme, his wonderful daughter Jo and myself;

For someone whose sailing has been limited to the Broads and the Lake District, sailing on the Solent was a brilliant new experience. Not only is there more space and the novelty of sailing to the Isle of Wight – visited previously only once by ferry, on a school trip – there were the added challenges of tides, navigation and container ships. To be fair, most of the tide problems had already been addressed by the organiser George Trevelyan in his supremely detailed instructions but it made us – well me, anyway – feel very professional as we followed our progress on the chart, with the help of Dad's shiny new GPS. The one time we did try some good old fashioned navigation with a hand-bearing compass, we became so engrossed that I turned around to find us rather close to an exposed sand bank, which put a rather abrupt end to our efforts with the chart and compass.



*Mainly wooden traditional boats... rafting four or five deep*

The Solent is a wonderful place for boat-watching, especially in the days leading up to Cowes Week and Kite's binoculars were used more for ogling sleek race boats than their intended navigational role. The first day's destination was the Folly Inn, past Cowes up the Medina River; Cowes is somewhere I had always wanted to see thanks to its reputation as a sailing hub. There we were treated to the sight of three Extreme 40 catamarans jostling for position on the start line, which we had unwittingly sailed across minutes previously and a fourth Extreme 40 on one hull showing off for a photographer. To top it all, once we entered Cowes, we saw two of the America's Cup boats at their base – pretty amazing after only seeing their like in magazines.

The Raid fleet was such an eclectic mix of boats of varying



*Colin, The Old Boatbuilder*



The organisers made it clear this was a non-competitive event

enjoy lunch at the Ashlett Creek Sailing Club.

Then, with the tide rising nicely, the fleet set off for Beaulieu and straight into that tide off Calshot Point. Kite points well and was making good progress when the Old Boatbuilder spotted a nice looking fender apparently adrift in the entrance to the Beaulieu River. The Designer/Skipper and Trusty Crew performed a near perfect Man Overboard manoeuvre and the fender was

we were feeling confident and happy as we took our turn down the slipway at Keyhaven and the moment when *Kite* slipped easily off the trailer into salty sea for the first time was the culmination of years designing and building this wonderful little boat. She was not exactly untried as she had dipped her toe into the water on Wroxham Broad but this was The Sea, with proper wind and tide to test her capabilities to the full.

As the English Raiders set off on the first leg across the Solent, our little boat came alive. The crew soon found their respective roles: Andrew, the Designer/Skipper, thoroughly enjoyed seeing his handiwork being put through its paces as he tweaked the sails to gain advantage on a fellow Raider; Jo, Trusty Crew and myself, The Old Boatbuilder, looked out for container ships or shallow water and dealt with the jib when required.

The first day took us into Newtown Creek and on to Cowes for the evening meal and overnight stop. This was the start of top notch organisation which continued throughout the Raid; the chosen pub had floating jetties where all our fleet could moor. A massive barbeque was soon underway, fostering the camaraderie of the people taking part.

Day two and we arrived back at the boats to find very little wind so those Raiders with an engine provided a tow where needed up the river to the Solent proper. The breeze quietly started to improve and soon everyone was sailing, this time heading for Ashlett Creek – a muddy ditch with charm! Unfortunately most of the boats became stuck fast and had to wait for the tide to come to the rescue before the crews could



A great introduction to raiding

safely aboard. As we bore away it did not take long for the OB to realise the thing was attached firmly to the bottom and had to be jettisoned swiftly before it brought us to a un-planned standstill. After this incident the OB lost some credibility.

The Royal Southampton Yacht Club at Beaulieu provided mooring and meals that evening and once again the ethos of the Raid provided a jolly mix of people sharing tales of a great day on the water.

Lymington via Newtown Creek was our final sail of the Raid. Again the tide was not co-operating but it did keep most of the fleet together as we tacked up the New Forest shore trying to avoid shallow bits. One by one, the boats judged they were far enough upstream to make one last tack to the Island and arrive at Newtown for lunch. The afternoon trip back across to Lymington, with the breeze rising and the Solent chop doing its best to soak everyone meant the sailing really livened up! On board *Kite* we chose not to reef as she

was coping well with the weight of wind and the conditions.

That night the Royal Lymington Yacht Club took charge and it was clear that the organisers, George and Julia Trevelyan and Geoff Probert, had given the Raid a unique spirit thanks to giving enough thought to safety and planning but without anyone feeling coerced or herded. The participants all responded to this approach with great enthusiasm and went home with high hopes it would happen again next year. For Kite's crew, all newcomers to 'raiding', we hope to take part in more of these events – as long as no-one asks us to row.

Colin Henwood

## Kite was launched just weeks before the Raid...

... and she'd only had a few brief sails on the Broads so was largely untried. There was a question as to whether key items of equipment – such as the trailer – would be ready in time. But we made it! And it was a fabulous few days.

In 2002 I had been up to Ballahulish for a workshop before the Great Glen Raid which gave me a taste of what was involved but otherwise I had no experience of



Andrew, the Designer/Skipper



A traditional Dutch grundel built of oak in 1950

raiding. With the organisers planning the itinerary, sorting out moorings, sleeping and eating arrangements – and providing rescue cover – raiding provides a great way of exploring new waters while still leaving you with the challenge and responsibility for your own basic safety and navigation.

The intention of the original raids was that they were competitive events for sail and oar to encourage the development of suitable boats. The competition soon became serious with some exciting boats being produced with winning in mind. We'd always hoped Kite would take part in raids but we had also decided that she was not particularly suitable for rowing and that if propulsion was needed it would come in the form of an outboard motor. Others attending the English Raid clearly felt the same – although most boats could be rowed – and the organisers made it clear at the outset that this was a non-competitive event. Some skippers were keen to see how their boats performed against the others however and a couple of low key races were arranged.

Many of the boats taking part were not designed specifically for raiding, apart from the fine Swallow Boats Bay Raiders and the clever Dutch *Wuptem* with its cat ketch rig and auxiliary pedal power. Most were simple trailer sailers suited to the event and the fleet was swelled by several local Keyhaven and Lymington scows and prams. For the diminutive scows, the safety boats gave them the cover to stretch their legs and sail across the Solent to the Island which they would otherwise have considered too risky.

The two largest boats were the whalers *Molly* and *Collingwood*, which was loaned to a wonderful family of Russians who embraced the spirit of the event. There were several Oughtred double-enders, a David Moss Sea Otter, a Dutch Haven 12 1/2, a few Drascombes, Moray McPhail in his Corinthian OD and a Swampscot Dory. One of the most remarkable participants was another Dutch boat, a traditional

16' (4.9m) grundel built of oak in 1950 as a working boat to take supplies from Aalsmeer to Amsterdam. With her leeboards and distinctive Dutch rig, she was a rare sight for the Solent and was sailed with spirit in sometimes challenging conditions. She must have been a concern for the safety crews and we did hear them over the VHF on one occasion referring to 'the two Dutchmen in the coffin'.

This first English Raid was a great introduction to raiding and we left keen to take part in more raids in the future – maybe Holland in 2011? It will be fascinating to see how the concept evolves over coming years.

Andrew Wolstenholme