

MTB102 News November 2016

With MTB102 fuelled and stored it was time to sail for Ramsgate and the Commemorative cruise with the ADLS so on the 27th May at 09.20 she slipped her mooring and proceeded downstream for the 09.45 bridge at Lowestoft Harbour. All went very well and we had a good trip down the North Sea to Ramsgate where we arrived at 15.30 and berthed on the outside of the Western Marina. Over the next four days we took part in the various events laid on by the ADLS. Meanwhile the weather deteriorated so that we had to delay our return to Lowestoft leaving Ramsgate on Wednesday 1st June. The trip back was rough.

The Dunkirk film was already in production and 102 was required to be in Dunkirk by the evening of Sunday 5th June. For this trip we had John Leach with us who, like me, is an ex-Shell Tanker man and used to skipper 102 in her days with the Scout organisation.

For this trip we made an early start and bridged at Lowestoft at 07.00. The trip was uneventful and we arrived at Dunkirk Harbour at 14.25. 102 is fortunately well used to Dunkirk as we had to lock in and proceed to Basin Du Commerce in the heart of Dunkirk and berthed ahead of an old friend ML1397 which had also been engaged for the film.

102 now had to be made to look as the film people wanted which did lead to some arguments as they found it difficult to believe she now looks almost exactly the same as she did when she was at Dunkirk in 1940!! The only problem I could see is that the mast is now stainless steel and has a radar on it. So the radar was disguised and the mast taped over to make it look grey.

The next argument was over the kit for the crew and on this we had a picture of the crew taken on the fore deck just before Dunkirk so no problem there except that there was not enough kit in the wardrobe department to kit us out properly.

For the next four days we moved around Dunkirk Harbour to be where we were wanted when we were wanted. Most of the time was spent just waiting and getting bored.

The 11th June was the day of the Queen's 90th Birthday Parade on the Thames which 102 was booked in for so on the 10th we slipped from Dunkirk and headed west into the Thames and up to St Katharines Dock. A good trip and entry into St Kats lock but then the usual St Kats problems for us getting into our allocated berth. More delicate manoeuvring but we managed well and spent a reasonable evening there. Next morning we were up and ready for the lock at 06.00

Once out of the lock we hung on the side of a PLA barge just across the river and soon had most of the other Dunkirk Little Ships hanging on the side of us. At 10.50 we slipped and headed up river to Westminster and

then proceeded down river in convoy for the Parade. From our point of view we did all we were asked to do but the timings were “a bit iffy” and as we passed under Tower Bridge heading downstream we broke from the parade to head back to Dunkirk overnighting at Ramsgate on the way. At Ramsgate John Leach left us and John Sallis joined. This John is a historic military vehicle man.

Next morning we slipped from Ramsgate at 10.00 and by 14.00 were running into Dunkirk. Not quite as quick as 102 did in 1940 but fairly good for the old lady she is now.

For the next nine days we were moved here, there and everywhere, most of the time filling in the background until on the 22nd June we sailed for Lowestoft and had a delightful trip back arriving on our home berth at 18.00. We have no idea when we were filmed and what for, so like us, you will have to see the film in July 2017 to see what they did with us.

Back to reality, our next trip was up river to Hippersons Boatyard at Beccles for their Charter Weekend at the invitation of Simon Sparrow. An easy trip until arriving at the boatyard which is not designed for a 70ft torpedo boat, but we managed to get into our allotted berth and then spent the weekend wondering how we were going to get out again. Get out we did with a lot of patience and the help of the Beccles Mayor with a big fender. Also it is a long while since we used Mutford Lock and the lock crew were very helpful to us. On the return trip we had our new trustee, Alec Murray, with us who has just retired as Gt. Yarmouth Assistant Harbour Master and is a Merchant Navy Deck Officer, a useful member of the organisation.

There wasn't much time for rest as 102 was due on the Thames in July so again we took the 09.45 bridge at Lowestoft and set sail for the Thames. If we leave Lowestoft at low water as we usually do, and maintain a speed of around 12 kts we can carry the tide all the way into London. This saves us fuel and keeps the costs down as much as possible. So by 18.40 on the 6th July we were alongside a barge near West India Dock. The next afternoon we took the tide again to arrive at Richmond Lock just after the barriers were raised and continued with the tide to Teddington Lock.

As we were on our way to Windsor Great Park and ultimately the Trad Boat Festival at Henley, Lady Judy McAlpine had negotiated a deal with the Environment Agency for a free pass for us on the Non Tidal Thames. So we were through the lock and on our way up river. That night was spent at Shepperton free mooring and the following night we were at Runnymede again by arrangement with the E.A.

On the Saturday we left in convoy with other ADLS members for Windsor Great Park and an event with members of staff from Windsor Castle. 102 was to host Admiral Sir James Perowne and Lady Perowne on a short trip up river through Windsor and back. That evening we

continued up river to Boveney Island and Lock and a mooring reserved for us alongside the island and near the shower, a very welcome facility. We spent three days there before continuing to Henley for the Trad Boat Rally.

So far this trip had been completed with myself and an all girl crew although the girls were "mature ladies" and had proved to be as good as the guys with the North Sea, tidal Thames and now the locks on the non-tidal Thames.

After three days at Boveney with Phill the Lock keeper, we filled the water tank and headed up river for Henley with Andy, a Friend of MTB102 and his family on board, and were alongside at Fawley Meadow by 17.00. This gave us a day to prepare and do some shopping to restock the galley.

This year the Trad Rally had been extended by half a day so over the course of the weekend we did five sail pasts on the Henley course with the ADLS. Not a difficult task until you factor in all the other craft on the river some of which seemed to want to see just how close they could get to that big grey warship. We had many guests on board over the weekend which kept us all busy through the day. By 17.00 Sunday things had quietened down and so we decided to get on down river as we had a tight schedule back at home that week.

With the help of Phill from Boveney Lock we managed to get as far as Boveney that evening. The Thames is not easy in the dark with all its twists and turns and caused me some anxious moments but we got to our overnight mooring with no mishaps. The next morning we were under way at 09.30 down river to Romney Lock and here we were to meet Andy for the trip down river. Unfortunately Debbie injured her hand going alongside so we had to get an ambulance and send her off to hospital. 102 then continued down river and after being treated at hospital Debbie taxied back and joined us at Molesey Lock.

At Teddington Andy left us and we proceeded to Hammertons Ferry boat yard for the night. Up at 04.00 to catch Richmond Lock as the gates raised we made good time down river clearing Tower Bridge by 05.30 and had a very good trip back to Lowestoft.

By now my crew was down to two girls and one of them was injured but despite this we managed to lower the mast and get under Lowestoft Bridge at 15.30 and by 16.00 102 was back alongside her home berth. Maggie, Debbie and Jane had proved that they are very competent crew and able to cope with the vagaries of a 79 year old boat.

The reason for our quick trip back was that we were to sail to Gt. Yarmouth the next day to take part in the reunion of an ex Royal Navy sailor, Charlie Griffin, and one of his boats that was to be in Gt. Yarmouth overnight. Over a beer or two that evening there was

discussion as to who was quickest, the modern RN P2000 Fast Patrol Boats with their new engines or the 79 year old torpedo boat running on a third of the power she had when in service. Anglia TV and Radio Norfolk were in attendance the next morning for interviews and Anglia TV went to sea with Charlie on his boat escorted by 102 and the two P2000s.

When Anglia had finished filming, the P2000s issued the challenge which was taken up by 102. In line abreast, 102 in the middle, it was throttles open and off we went. I am pleased to say 102 slowly pulled away from the P2000s leaving me to dream about what 102 was like with over three thousand horsepower in the engine room. A leisurely trip back to Lowestoft in company with Charlie's boat, Broad Ambition, and 102 was back on her home berth.

After the event we put together a short clip of this encounter which can be found on the video sharing website *YouTube* by following this link : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W7ePPdehTc4>

The rest of July and August were quiet with a few trips out for Friends of MTB102 to experience 102 at sea although we did have to cancel one trip because of the weather and sea conditions.

The Coastal Forces Heritage Trust were holding an event to celebrate the centenary of the formation of Coastal Forces and we hoped to take 102 to Portsmouth to take part in the event but the weather forecasts for before and after the event were very unfavourable so we had to miss the big "do". 200 miles either way into head seas would not be a good idea.

That just left Gt. Yarmouth Maritime Festival which we have usually supported so we sailed Friday afternoon, had a leisurely trip up the coast, had to wait off Gt. Yarmouth for a tanker to leave running astern and then up to Town Hall Quay for the weekend. As usual characters from 102s past turned up to see how the old boat is these days and we had a pleasant two days and returned to Lowestoft on Sunday evening.

With the summer events over 102 was slipped on 16th November to dry a bit before we start on the winter maintenance around the New Year.

Richard Basey, MTB102 Trust.,