

MTB102
NEWSLETTER – SPRING 2011

The winter lay up has been quiet this year. After our September event with English Heritage MTB102 has been in “care and maintenance”. Several little jobs that have been waiting have been done with time spent in the engine room for a change. Also the galley has been cleaned down ready for a repaint.

A MARCH EVENT?

We were asked to take part in a British Tourism event in March. This was called “The Party on the Pier” and was supposed to take part on the U.K.s’ seaside piers. The event was expanded to include facilities next to the water and so we took MTB102 to the Heritage Pontoon in Lowestoft Harbour for the day and also had the yard open to the public. We had several visitors at both venues and late in the afternoon the local MP turned up at the boat so after a conducted tour we invited him to join us for the trip back to the yard. He seemed suitably impressed both with the boat and the yard and our vision for the future.



Party on the pier

SLIP

As there was a slot available on the slip in early April the cradle was set up for MTB102 and on the 8th April we sailed her onto the cradle and pulled her up the slip. After a thorough pressure wash down she was pulled into the shed for a week. Underneath the hull looked very good but some fastenings needed attention. These were sorted, the props and shafts cleaned, the sacrificial anodes replaced and the underside anti-fouled.

With the waterline repainted and the hull paint spruced up MTB102 was ready for the water again.

MORE PAINT

After launching the galley was repainted along with various other areas that needed attention and the engine room was cleaned from top to bottom. The generator had a check over and test run.

SERVICE

Both main engines were in need of a service so after warming up, the engine oil was changed along with the filters and the tappets adjusted. With new fuel filters fitted all was ready for the summer ahead. Rix Petroleum delivered 1500 litres of diesel to fill the fuel tanks.

FILM STAR REMEMBERED

In the late 1970s MTB102 was used in the film "Soldier of Orange" which told the story of a Dutch secret agent, Peter Tazelaar, landed by a Coastal Forces vessel from a small rubber boat. An organisation called the Peter Tazelaar Foundation wanted to recreate the scene from the film and so contacted the Trust to see if MTB102 is still capable of doing this. Of course we said yes and so the arrangements were made.

NORTH SEA

The event was due to take place on the 5th May which is Hollands' Liberation Day and this year marks 70 years since Peter Tazelaar first landed as a secret agent.

Leading up to the event the North Sea weather was bad with up to force 8 gales in sea area Thames so we had to wait for a suitable weather window. Also we were asked to take the son and daughter of Peter Tazelaar with us along with two members of the Foundation. The winds dropped on the night of the 3rd and 4th May so we were able to sail at 0640 for the Lowestoft Bridge lift at 0700.



Joost and Victor with Peter and Eva Tazelaar on the right

SEA CONDITIONS

Already after only a few hours the sea had improved and so we had a reasonably comfortable crossing. It is 98 miles from Lowestoft to Scheveningen and at a steady 10 knots we arrived and were alongside by 1740 local time.



MTB102 arrives in Scheveningen

The berth provided for us was on a pontoon beside the local lifeboat and suited us very well although a little difficult to get into with a cross wind but as most of the wind had gone we managed very well. Our passengers were thrilled with the North Sea experience and had a better appreciation of the 1940 crossing which would have been in the dark with a hostile occupation force waiting. Not quite the same!



With the Lifeboat in Scheveningen

REHERSAL

The next morning we were asked to do a brief rehearsal and so embarked a rubber boat and three young Dutchmen dressed as soldiers. With a bit of ingenuity we had a means of getting them in and out of the boat and took them to sea to try the system. It all worked so back into port to wait for the signal to go.

JAMES BOND

In the film "Goldfinger" James Bond arrived on a beach in a wet suit, removed it and was then perfectly dressed as he walked up the beach. Ian Fleming borrowed that idea from Peter Tazelaar so we had our own man in a wet suit over his best suit. At about 1400 we were positioned off the local beach hidden by the pier and on the signal from shore we moved into position, launched the rubber boat and our three soldiers and secret agent boarded it and rowed off to the beach. When the agent had disembarked the boat was rowed back to us for recovery and we disappeared into the distance. The scheme worked well and the organisers were very impressed especially with our rapid exit from the scene.



Our "secret agent" is landed

VETERANS

Back in Scheveningen Harbour we had open boat for the Veterans that had been invited to come and see MTB102. Most of them were ex Dutch Coastal Forces and appeared thrilled to see a boat of the type they operated. We also had a visit from the Mayor of The Hague and several Dutch Navy personnel. For a while it was very hectic but we were made very welcome by everyone that we came into contact with. The Harbour authorities were very helpful and it surprised us how almost every one spoke English, some of them better than us!

NORTH SEA AGAIN

The next morning we were up early, again, and back on the North Sea bound for Lowestoft. By now with very light winds the sea was almost flat and with the wind mainly behind us we had a very good trip home. On the way back a Dutch Coastguard aircraft did a fly-by and waggled his wings for us. We suspect the crew were getting their exclusive pictures of 102. The visibility on the crossing was not very good, about three miles, so we had to keep an eye on the radar as some of the big ships were making a good speed and were probably a bit restricted in ability to manouver.

HOME

By 1500 we were back in Lowestoft waiting for the 1600 bridge lift and by 1620 MTB102 was back on her home berth. The entire trip had been very good and 102 behaved perfectly throughout.

COMMEMORATIVE CRUISE

Every Dunkirk anniversary the Association of Dunkirk Little Ships hold a commemorative cruise over the spring bank holiday and this year the cruise was to Ramsgate. This destination suits us as Ramsgate is one of the closer harbours to Lowestoft being just over 70 miles away. As the weather has been changeable this spring we were watching the trends over the previous fortnight and decided to sail for Ramsgate on the 25th May. Heading south we usually leave Lowestoft at low water so on the Wednesday morning we took the 1115 bridge lift and set off for Ramsgate.

SEA CONDITIONS

The sea conditions were almost perfect with a light southerly wind and slight sea. MTB102 coped very well and we made good time. Off North Foreland we had to increase speed briefly to avoid a car carrier out bound down the Thames. The big ships don't like to alter course when they are negotiating the channels between sand banks and we use the rule of the sea that says "if it's bigger than us we give way". By 1800 102 was alongside the western marina breakwater in Ramsgate Harbour.

RIGHT DECISION

Throughout Thursday and Friday morning the winds strengthened which made us sure we had made the right decision to sail on Wednesday. Several other Dunkirk Little Ships arrived late on Friday and very early Saturday so that we eventually had 22 Little Ships afloat in Ramsgate.

LAUNCHING

On Friday afternoon a Little Ship that had been undergoing a long term refit on the hard at Ramsgate was launched. New Britannic took to the water via a travel hoist and began to take water so was lifted again and more caulking added at the leaks. Back in the water she was now watertight but just in case, the owner slept on board that night. Brave man. So now we were 23 Little Ships.

EVENTS

The main event on the cruise is the Service of Remembrance. In Ramsgate we are able to hold this in the Sailors Church on the quay side and we have the Rev. Gordon Warren, Honorary Chaplain to the Royal Navy, take the service. As it was by now blowing up to 37 kts in the harbour the ADLS decided to lay the wreath in the church rather than on the waters of the harbour. The whole service was covered by three camera teams and shown on local T.V.

WEATHER AGAIN

While 102 was in Ramsgate the wind conditions were not very good and watching the weather reports we decided that late morning on the Monday would be the best time to sail for Lowestoft so we slipped at 1035 and headed north. This time we had the breeze and sea behind us and had an excellent trip back until we got to Southwold when the wind veered to the north-west and visibility decreased somewhat. But by 1700 we were alongside the holding pontoon in Lowestoft Harbour waiting for the 1800 bridge lift. This went like clockwork and 102 was soon alongside her home berth. The whole trip and event had been very good. The only problem was the wind conditions but we managed to find the gaps and make good use of them. 102 was very well received by the ADLS and Ramsgate and as usual, did all she was asked to do.

FRIENDS of MTB102

The Friends organisation continues to provide valuable support to MTB102 and steadily increases in number. Our thanks are due to all of you for your support. Without you our task would be much harder. Thank you!