

MTB102 Newsletter June 2015.

MTB102 had a quiet winter up to the New Year and in early January was slipped, washed off and moved into the shed. Once settled and beginning to dry out our local shipwright got to work on her, removing the Engine room cover that was showing its age. Parts of the old cover were saved for use in making a new cover this time having a camber to shed the water more successfully.

The engine room hatches were repositioned to more reflect the layout when 102 was fitted with the side tubes in 1938, and access to the engine room provided at both ends. Once fitted and finished the wiring was replaced and altered to suit.

While this was going on 102 was sanded top to bottom and repainted. Also the bottom was treated with a bituminous paint, all stern gear cleaned and four anodes replaced.

In previous years all anodes have had to be replaced but as we now have a magic box fitted to isolate the shore power earth circuit there has been a marked reduction in the anode loss over the year. A new speed log sender unit was fitted and wired in to the display unit in the wheel house.

With everything ready, the cradle greased, 102 was run down the slip at 08.00 and waiting for high water. By 10.30 she was afloat and back alongside her own berth.

As much of the electronic kit on 102 is well out of date, Norfolk Marine did us some good deals on a new DSC radio and a chart plotter. So with our new AIS set we are keeping up with technology which helps us keep 102 safe when at sea. With Rix supplying another 1500 ltrs diesel, the main engines and generator serviced, MTB102 was ready for the season and a big weekend at Dunkirk.

This year marked Dunkirk 75 and much interest was being taken in this event by the media. For our part, we were ready to sail on Tuesday 19th May but the weather had other ideas and so we delayed by 24 hours and sailed on the Wednesday. Using the tide to our advantage we arrived in Ramsgate at 14.00.

It was all systems go for the Crossing on Thursday and so from 0700 the slower Dunkirk Little Ships began the convoy. 102 slipped at 0815 and headed out to lead the "Fast Fleet". At 0900 the fleet was treated to a flypast by a Spitfire and Hurricane from the RAF Historic Flight and so we made our way across the Straits under the watchful eyes of two present day Royal Navy Fast Patrol boats.

The crossing was uneventful for us although some of the smaller boats were having a rough time of it. Our only problem was that when cleaning out our high performance diesels on the final approach to Dunkirk at 25kts the port

engine intercooler circuit blew. This didn't affect the slow speed running so we continued into Dunkirk.

Whilst in Dunkirk there were various receptions and the Cruise Supper to attend. 102 was open for visitors of which there were many, and the port engine intercooler circuit was modified to get over the problem.

Bank holiday Monday was the return to Ramsgate day, this time via the Charles De Gaulle Lock in Dunkirk. We hadn't used this lock before. It is very big and not user friendly to small boats, but we coped ok.

Once out and heading down the Dunkirk approach channel the smaller boats at the head of the fleet were having a rough time of it and so decided to turn back and try again later. Several of the bigger boats decided to press on and so once again MTB102 took on the job of guiding Dunkirk Little Ships and lead them back to Ramsgate.

This turned out to be a wise decision as Ramsgate was full of people waiting on the Piers to welcome the little ships home. It would have been a shame if they had waited in vain.

We then had a day in Ramsgate waiting for the small ships to arrive and on the Wednesday were ready to sail for Ostend for the Ostend at Anker event that we had been invited to attend. In company with DLS Mimosa we had a beautiful day at sea and an interesting crossing to Ostend.

On the way we scattered the ashes of Audrey Wilde, whose husband's ashes we had scattered on a previous crossing so I hope they are together off Ramsgate now.

It was a leisurely run of 60 miles and we arrived in Mercator Dock, Ostend at 1810. The dock was packed with historic vessels of all kinds with something to interest every one.

Whilst there we laid a wreath at the memorial to the Canadian MTB crews that were lost in Ostend in a huge explosion that killed many and destroyed 14 MTBs in early 1945.

By the Sunday evening we were ready to sail for home and made our way out through the lock and into the North Sea. The sea conditions were bad, on our operational limit but slowly eased the further we got from the Belgian coast. We only needed one course for the trip to E Barnard, the beginning of the Lowestoft approach, and sailing through the night, were at Lowestoft Bridge at 0445. By 0510 102 was alongside her home berth with a worn out but very happy crew.

Over the twelve days of the voyage 102 had sailed 322 miles, consumed a lot of diesel, been seen by thousands in Ramsgate, Dunkirk and Ostend and been well received wherever she was. This is very satisfying for those that put the effort into making it happen.