

---

## *Whitsun 2009 for Blue Danube*

*We started the first week with the teenage crew geared up for a full weeks cruising holiday.*

*With a club meet at Tollesbury on the Saturday, Brightlingsea Rally on the Saturday and a visit to Ian and Fi Browns at West Mersea scheduled for the Monday it was going to be a busy, if rather local start.*

*As it worked out Tollesbury was just the ticket to get the cruise off to a flying start. Not only had 'us' older folks booked in for supper in the Marina restaurant, but the younger crew could make the most of the heated swimming pool. In fact they enjoyed it so much we had to do a repeat before breakfast the following morning before setting off to Brightlingsea for the Rally.*

*It was a pleasant sail down the coast once we had cleared the Mersea quarters although a reef was called as we reached out to the Bench Head and Colne Bar to enjoy the longer trip.*

*Another good turnout for the rally, so well done to Chris and Sheila from April Fool for organising everything. Robin and Linda on Saraband provided the hospitality as Host boat, so we all clambered aboard and enjoyed an excellent afternoon in the sunshine. Later one group went off to the Indian restaurant whilst the remainder chose to stay on board their boats for supper. As Linda had enough supplies to feed the whole fleet we chose the latter option.*

*The following morning it was a lively passage back to Mersea where in a stiff breeze it takes a bit of determination to make the approach through the moorings, deep into the harbour area*



*We had been advised by Ian Brown to take up the 'posts', which are in the creek beyond the harbour. Of course, just as we begin to approach Mersea quarters and the anchorage a squall came through which blew everyone all over the place.*

*At this point Chas and Sue headed for the safety of Bradwell. With the strong gusting wind it was probable the sensible thing to do, as it certainly proved tricky. Just manoeuvring through the moorings was bad enough, but of course the water is also getting shallower, so it tests the nerves. Just as we were about to join Chas and Sue, we spotted Dennis Meadows, nice and secure on a buoy well inside the harbour area. So on we went.*

Returning by motor launch from Fi & Ian's lovely new home on Mersea Island was quite a joy in the pleasant evening sunshine. After Chris and Jack had left in April Fool, we settled in to enjoy a comfortable night on the mooring posts. The following day dawned with a blow and forecast for more strong wind, so we left Mersea and continued our Blackwater tour with a visit to Heybridge.

As usual the BBQ proved popular with the crew and even the proposal of a trip to Maldon the next day was given the thumbs up.



Mind you they had not realised at that point that this included quite a traispe around the Maldon Maritime Trail.

There are several options on this walk but they all start from the basin as you follow the Chelmer & Blackwater navigation to Wave Bridge at Heybridge, were we then chose to abandon the footpath and take the causeway to Fullbridge and on up market hill into Maldon. We then made our way down the high street to Promenade Park.

Following a break for lunch by the ornamental lake with the obligatory bag of chips we continued on to the end of the promenade to the statue of Byrhtnoth. This impressive monument was erected in memory of his brave stand against the Vikings in 991. Typically for us Brits. He lost, including his head, but at least is remembered a thousand years later. You can image that by now my teenage crew were very interested in this important bit of cultural knowledge! So full of enthusiasm we set off to return to Heybridge basin via Hythe Quay, Downs Road and Fullbridge and then the sea wall route. There are excellent views of Maldon as you skirt around the disused sand and gravel pits that now form a nature reserve, we just had to avoid being blown into the river as the gale fore winds had been keeping us entertained all day.

Fortunately the following day the weather at last changed for the better and so we left for the bright lights of Ipswich to complete our week. After an excellent days sailing we finally arrived at Ipswich Lock. Bye now it was quite late, low water and dark. But the lock keeper was very helpful, after a short stay alongside the waiting pontoon for another couple of boats to join us, we locked in. Just be aware that the local wildlife uses both the waiting pontoon and the pontoon in the lock as a 'convenience' perch. So courtesy of their domestic arrangements they are very slippery. So take care if you're the one jumping ashore with the mooring lines.

Staying in the Ipswich dock marina places you right in the heart of the town with easy access to all the facilities. So our young crew soon made for the market and shops. So much for culture then.

