

# Seaward Squadron

The 2020 season has been far from normal. It was planned, that the annual Seaward Squadron Rally would take place in Lymington. However, it became clear that this would not happen and for the first time in 33 years, the rally was cancelled. With restrictions on our boating activity in place, it was difficult to see how much use we would have of our boats. The fine settled weather, at the start lock-down, added to the frustration.

As the weeks went by and restrictions slowly relaxed; Seaward Squadron members did manage to get afloat and the following reports give some details of their activities.

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## Seaward 35 - Estuary Pilgrim - Ron and Wendy Johnson

In August 2017 we took ownership of a well-known and much travelled Seaward 35 and reduced our usual yacht sailing time from Harwich to Breskens by nineteen and a half hours, giving us more time to explore the Dutch coast and inland waterways and at last, the end of those long cold night crossings. This, our seventh boat, is definitely our favourite.

Having never attended a Squadron Rally, this was the year we were to put that right. A cruise to Lymington followed by a visit to the Isle of Wight and then back into the Continental inland waterways via Breskens or the Roompot. Sadly for us and many others, it was not to be.

Based at the Woodbridge Tide-mill Yacht Harbour, by the end of March, the boat was complete with a new Axiom Pro Plotter and Quantum Radar was ready to go, but nowhere to go and no one to launch it.



It wasn't until the first of June, that the engines were finally commissioned and the boat could be launched into a short season of local cruises. As things turned out, the weather for much of the time was superb and gave us an opportunity to revisit some of the Suffolk and Essex estuaries, rivers and creeks we'd not seen for years and which in normal times would be awash with boats from Germany, Holland and Belgium. We cruised areas like the Deben, Orwell, Stour and Walton Backwaters visiting the various Yacht Harbours and anchorages in the quiet (this year) creeks and bays and even in this short season, still managed to clock up over 30 engine hours. If next year, Europe is still out of bounds, it really is worth considering a cruise to East Anglia. All that's needed is an up to date copy of the East Coast Pilot and an Essex / English, English / Essex dictionary.



The final picture for us sums up the season well. It's the end of another lovely day on board, securely berthed for the night at Woolverstone Marina. A beautiful evening, the scene, framed by the sunlit Orwell Bridge and a Covid 19 warning sign by the bow on the hammerhead.

Ron & Wendy Johnson  
Estuary Pilgrim (Alchemy)

## Seaward 29 - Endeavour - Stephen and Sarah Chapman

Built in 2014, Endeavour spent the first years of her life as the 'Seaward Sea School training boat, ably skippered by young Mr Belcher, he still maintains it's his boat and one day he will get it back. She was sold to a gentleman in Penarth in 2018 and advertised for sale with the Seaward brokerage again in December 2019.

First spotted for sale by my partner Sarah just before Christmas, a suggested part exchange with our Cornish Shrimper was rejected.

Endeavour was still for sale in February 2020, another part exchange offer was surprisingly accepted subject to survey, sea trial etc. Both were completed revealing a number of issues which were rectified prior to completion of sale.

The survey was carried out on 19th March three days prior to lockdown. We continued with the sale process, completing the sale on 30th April.

We had to wait another month before we were able to persuade a specialist marine transportation company to cross the Severn Bridge and retrieve our boat, Endeavour finally arriving in Lymington on 29th May.

A real coming home for a Cowes built boat

A two day induction was booked with Angus Belcher early June, which was curtailed due to diesel bug and air in the fuel lines.

Engine finally fixed we re-booked Angus for the 7th July and off we went .

Just to be sure we booked Angus for another training session 13/14 July out of Cowes. We journeyed to Cowes on the afternoon of 12th.



Half way to Cowes we noticed a small inflatable right in the middle of the Solent. Two young men, swimming trunks, no life jacket, one paddle deciding to paddle from one side of the Solent to the other on a sunny Sunday afternoon. A real 'saving lives at sea moment'.

They were cold, frightened and exhausted. We kept very close to them but it became obvious that we had to call Mayday, which we did. The police RIB was the first on the scene, closely followed by the lifeboat.

The rest of July was spent relatively event free as we toured the Solent visiting the likes of Beaulieu, Yarmouth, Hamble, Chichester, Emsworth, Bembridge, Keyhaven.

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## Seaward 23 - Carraig Don - Robert Frewen

### My switch to a Seaward

I'm a long-time yachtsman and since the sale of a half-tonner, a couple of decades ago, I've have kept a 17 ft. 'pocket cruiser' at my home in Co. Kerry, on Ireland's SW Coast. The weather in recent years has been very mixed for sailing singlehanded – too much wind/rain or on the really fine days, strong onshore winds develop in the afternoon. It can make an outing tough, frequently wet, and unpleasant. Clambering around on the cabin-top to reef is risky and sometimes dangerous. During the 2019 season I decided it was time to change to motor and started my research for a rugged motor cruiser. I did not want something light & fast, nor yet too slow: Ideally I needed a cruiser with great seagoing ability and preferably one with twin engines, each about 50HP.

Research quickly led me to the Seaward range and my budget dictated a 23. Sadly there are few of these in Ireland and they rarely come on the market. Buying a car or a boat in the UK is not unusual for Irish people, as the choice of model and availability often is better and can be advantageous when the £ sterling is weak. However, our Covid 'lockdown' put a brake on that option. Then a series of coincidences led me to a Seaward 23 close to me in Kerry. Her hull number is unclear (looks like either 8\ or 9\010) and is said to be built in 1989. Originally based on the south coast of England, she moved to Northern Ireland before being imported by the last owner. She had been lovingly cared for by him, who due to business pressures did not have the time to use her. She was not yet on the market and he was reluctantly contemplating a sale as in some years she had not been launched. Although she had a single Yanmar 140HP and not the twins I hoped for, her condition outweighed that requirement. The sale/purchase was completed in September which allowed me have a delivery trip and a couple of outings before I had to leave the swinging mooring in Kenmare Bay and bring her ashore for the winter. Her handling and performance in that brief period was enough to convince me that my purchase was the right choice.

The Seaward came with a name – that of a past owner's two daughters which had no connection with me or her new home port and it was fitting to consider a new identity. In Celtic mythology Kenmare Bay is said to be the landing-place of the Milesians, one of the first tribes to settle in Ireland. Their chieftain, Donn, upset the local druids who created a fierce tempest that drowned him in a shipwreck on its shores and he was buried on an island at the entrance to Kenmare Bay. Known in Irish as *Teach Doinn* or *Carraig Donn* (Donn's House or Rock) it is marked on Admiralty charts as the 'Bull Rock'. It is steep, rugged and the summit is 305ft above sea level. It resembles a dolmen or portal tomb due to a long natural – and navigable – tunnel running east-west through it. In ancient Ireland there was a belief that the souls of the dead departed westwards over the sea with the setting sun and chieftains were buried under east-west aligned portal tombs/dolmens. Even today Donn himself is said to appear as a phantom horseman riding a white horse across the sea, appropriate to local Atlantic weather. He also is associated with the weather: thunder and lightning mean that Donn is riding his horse through the sky, and if clouds sit over a hill it signifies he is gathering them to make rain.

So, a combination of local history, mythology, geography and climate (!) deemed the name change appropriate. This winter suitable offerings will be made to Poseidon before she's renamed officially '*Carraig Donn*', a name appropriate to her solidity, ruggedness and home mooring on the Atlantic seaboard.

*New member to the Squadron Bob Frewen has over the last sixty-odd years been afloat in boats ranging from dinghies to super-yachts. He was active on the East Coast of Ireland racing circuit, co-owning a half-ton Nicholson Silver Jubilee in which he competed in Dublin Bay, Irish Sea Offshore Racing Association and other offshore events.*

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## Seaward 35 - Little Lucy - John and Gaynor Gibbins

LITTLE LUCY was ashore at Bursledon from the beginning of January and was launched, looking smart and shinny on 20th March, the day Lockdown was announced and put back on her berth. On the next day they closed The River Hamble and we were not allowed to see or get to her till June, about 10 weeks.

Missed all that lovely Sunshine and weather, but at least the photocells did the job and kept the battery banks topped up and ready to go. But where to go? When we were finally allowed to stay on the boat with nowhere much to go.

We have managed a one week trip down to Poole, in late July but don't get on well with the principle of making advance booking for berths with everyone clamoring to get out after Lockdown. The anchor has been called into service with sun filled days at Goat-horn Point in Poole Harbour (see photo) and Newtown on the way back where we saw 6 seals sunbathing on the shore.

One further week was managed with our daughter Susie in the West Solent and did book up and visited the new berths at Lymington Town Quay. Finger berths and arrangement, with electric and water, were very spacious and accommodating but come with a price hike to about £36 a night. How things change over the years.

A few odd visits for a couple of days have been enjoyed around the Solent but LITTLE LUCY sorely misses more use, as do we time out on the water and she is in need of a good scrub.



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## Seaward 23 - Sirius - Martin and Elizabeth Hare

### Looking Astern.

Some bottle out after years of sailing and some stay afloat at the bar. No longer sailing night passages, less agile on the foredeck, a gradual lack of confidence and charged with the safety of others at sea, it was time to sling the hook. Eighteen months without boat ownership sealed it. The withdrawal symptoms were upsetting domestic bliss! A boat was an absolute must, but what to look for? Parameters were laid surrounding build quality, seagoing characteristics, ease of single handed Marina berthing (others might be watching?) and time spent aboard usually for no more than four days at a time. In retirement a 'week ender' is a misnomer but research pointed toward a Seaward 23. Investment was part tailored to the thought that after sailing, full time motoring might not be our scene and we would only survive a single season. We decided an older boat would fit our criteria.

Our 1987 Seaward 23 with its raw water cooled BMW d50s was purchased four years ago. She is everything one could ask of a small boat stationed on the E.Coast. I'm sure a debate rages as to twin or single screw in these days of bow thrusters, stern thrusters and the reliability of the modern diesel engine, despite high tech chips with everything.

From sailing to purchasing an elderly TSMY, the 'what if' question is resolved by the second 'iron wind'. Twin screw appears more popular in our tidal UK waters than in Europe with the possible exception of the Frisian Islands. Those who are the most reserved about their time afloat are the true seafarers. Their modesty is extraordinary and more often than not their silence speaks volumes. Not being amongst their number, it is easy to get caught out. To test the chemistry and competence of a prospective sailing crew member over a pint, I asked if he had much experience. The quiet response was "Does the Southern Ocean count?". So where are the salty stories, the captivating cruise and the holiday pictures of sun kissed shores. I fear those are left astern from yesteryear crewing days in the *Mary Deare*; then 20 years ago in *Minos* sailing 250 miles into Russia whilst circumnavigating the Baltic. In 2006 sailing our Malö 34, *Bugsy Malöne* from Harwich to Riga and then cruising in Scandinavia for another 10years.

Brought up on the Norfolk Broads, Arthur Ransome's books were a compulsive read. Never imagining that years later my base would be in the 'Secret Water' and only an estuary away from 'We Didn't Mean to go to Sea'. Then the Baltic opportunity of visiting Ransome's Latvian base. In 1922 he sailed *Recundra* from Riga to Tallin via the Moon Sound, onward to Helsinki and back with the Cook (Evegina, Trotsky's former secretary) and the Ancient. It's an interesting passage with modern navigation aids. In the early autumn of 1922 it would have been a real challenge. Such was this children's author and journalist who may or may not have been a spy or double agent?

So now visiting the creeks of the E,Coast our shallow draft allows for solitude, wildlife, a G&T or a pint ashore, COVID permitting. Too muddy to be the 'Riddle of the Sands' but that too is another experience. It is very reassuring to hear the compliments we get when we squeeze into a berth near gin palaces or large yachts.

Usually it's about the functional seagoing appearance and sadly not because when looking down they are dazzled by the topsides or coach roof. The first mate refers to this mistress of mine as 'His Man Shed'! We made the right boat decision but there are questions about the owners.

What qualifications for a powerboat? The university of the sea is an endless learning curve and I'm in the pulpit confessing my lack of certificates (other than sailing and CEVNI). Recently this came into sharp focus when thinking about insurance renewal. One questionnaire asked for power boat qualifications. This triggered long term memory. As a National Service Able Seaman, I have a Trade Certificate issued in 1958 confirming at least 100 hours on the wheel of a ship of 100 gross tons or more. Of course the wheelhouse, a tiny encapsulated space, was a dark grotto immediately behind the bridge. When on the wheel we didn't know where we were going; but then what's new? I just hope I don't meet me in a 23 on opposite tacks!

Finally a technical request to seasoned Seaward hands. It is noted some inland waters have speed limits, with cameras, of 3 mph (2.6 knots). How to achieve this? Friendly advice has ranged from :- fit rowlocks and row, tow a bucket but bring it inboard before going astern, navigate stern first on one engine, fit an outboard, tow with a dinghy..... or definitive advice, 'if I were you I wouldn't go there, stay at sea! Good cruising, fair seas and stay safe.

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### **Seaward 39 - Magic - David and Ann Harland**

We had big plans for the 2020 season, a cruise along the Normandy coast to enter the Dutch canals at Vlissingen and make our way to Amsterdam. This was not to happen.

As with other regions of the British Isles, Guernsey went into a strict lock-down at the end of March. We were only allowed to visit our boats to check on their safety. My lift-out for annual pre-season maintenance was cancelled and all plans put on hold.

Guernsey adopted a very strict lockdown policy, with only essential travel in and out of the island and strict quarantine on re-entry. This suppressed the virus and very few cases were reported. Slowly things started to return to normal, by mid May, the boat yards were able to operate, all-be-it behind closed gates and work could begin. Magic was re-launched a few weeks later.

The island was, more or less, free of restrictions by mid-June, shops, pubs and restaurants were open; no need to social distance or wear face-masks. The island was still closed to visiting boaters, we were allowed to visit the other islands of Herm, Sark and Alderney, but not Jersey, France or England.

Our first trip of the season was to Alderney. The tides were right for a day trip and we departed, just before our marina closed at 09:00 and made the short passage, just over 20 miles, in company with another Seaward - Greta.

Before departure we confirmed with the Alderney Harbour Office that the mooring buoys were available. We were told that, yes they were and there would be no charge, a policy that would continue for the rest of the season, and was greatly appreciated.

Alderney was very quiet, we enjoyed a walk up into the town, a fine lunch at the Blonde Hedgehog and then a walk around the island and back to the boats.



Magic & Greta in Alderney



Braye Bay, Alderney



The open road Alderney

Over the next few months we took every opportunity, of fine weather and fair tides, to visit the other islands of our bailiwick, Sark and Herm; returning for several overnight stays in Alderney, logging over 300 miles in total.



La Seigneurie, Sark



A good reason to visit Sark!

Although we have been greatly restricted in our boating activities this year, we must count our blessings of being based in such a fine cruising area and as we have been virus free, being able to move around freely.



As Guernsey could not accept visiting boats, the Harbour Master encouraged local boats to take 'staycation' visits to Victoria marina. We took advantage of this to stay overnight and enjoy meals in local restaurants. As the season comes to an end we are looking forward to next year and hope we will be able to cruise further afield.

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### Seaward 35 - Sirdar - John and Christine Lytle

Up to 12th May the Ministry of Defence Police had been preventing any leisure boating within the Port of Plymouth. Towards the end of 'lockdown', after repeated enquiries to Plymouth Port Control I finally received the following message: "Whilst we cannot give express permission to carry out waterborne activities, we cannot expressly forbid them"!

Our Seaward 35 Sirdar was launched the following day and for the first time we were allowed access to the Yacht Haven.

For our delayed early summer cruise Christine and I left Plymouth on 13th July for Fowey in beautiful warm calm sunny weather with the promise of more to come. Fowey was still quiet on the water, but ashore it was unusually crowded with many up-country visitors who had no thought of social distancing and we heard comments such as "We came down here to avoid all that" - We left.

A quick run up the Fal to Ruan Creek followed and we topped up with fuel and fresh food at Mylor.

16th July brought more sunny calm weather which beckoned us to the Scillies and four and a half hours after leaving Mylor we anchored in the bay west of Great Ganilly where there was one other yacht. We landed at Higher Town Bay on St Martin bought fresh crab sandwiches and enjoyed almost total solitude while we walked the coastal path. Over the next couple of days two or three more yachts arrived but there is plenty of room there. However, we wanted a change of scene and took the southern route to St Helen's Pool.

Weighing anchor was interesting as we picked up a great tangle of rope wound round a heavy rusty admiralty pattern anchor and ours too. It took an hour to untangle this mess and get free and I have to confess that we dropped it back exactly where we had found it.



Sirdar anchored at the Saltstone, Salcombe

We anchored west of the southern end of Tean which gives good access by dinghy to Old Grimsby Harbour on Tresco as well as Lower Town on St Martin and Tean. There was one other yacht anchored half a mile away south of St Helen's Island. Over the next few days we visited the Abbey Gardens on Tresco and returned via New Grimsby and visited the well stocked supermarket. The Marine Traffic app had shown multiple AIS contacts in the popular anchorages on St Mary's and St Agnes as well New Grimsby



Landing at low water on St Helen's



Not a soul to be seen. Higher Town Bay, St Martin's.

where the majority of moorings were occupied. We did more walking on St Martin and thought it appropriate that we should visit the ruins of the plague hospital on St Helen's. In the 18<sup>th</sup> Century any ship with plague aboard bound for England was required by Act of Parliament to quarantine here until declared disease free. It all felt horribly familiar.

Yachts were steadily arriving into the Scillies and by the time we left on 23<sup>rd</sup> July there were twenty well spaced yachts anchored in St Helen's Pool. Back in the Fal we watered at the National Trust Trelissick pontoon and spent the night at Ruan Creek where we met up with an old friend from the Solent.

After two weeks away returned to our berth in Plymouth Yacht Haven. The fuel bill for this trip was £770 for 856 litres for 24 engine hours. We felt this was a cheap deal for a week on the Scillies in perfect weather

Our experience of crowds in the popular West Country harbours suggested to us that we should remain home in the Yealm during August. At the beginning of September, we had another two week cruise to the Fal, Helford, Fowey, Salcombe and Dartmouth. Fowey and Salcombe were still very crowded ashore so we did not linger. With Sirdar on a mooring at Dittisham we walked into Dartmouth and took the ferry back. We had forgotten what a hard walk this is and much prefer the less hilly route from Greenway to Kingswear on the east side of the Dart, which we can strongly recommend, perhaps combined with a visit to Agatha Christie's house and gardens at Greenway. You certainly have to keep your wits about you when entering Dartmouth in the season with pleasure boats, yachts, fishing boats underway and ferries plying hither and thither. As we approached the Lower Ferry both of them were leaving their slipways and we slowed to allow them to pass. I had not noticed a yacht under full main coming fast behind us, which clearly had not seen or allowed for the ferries. I suddenly saw close on our starboard side a long bowsprit aimed straight at Sirdar. We were about to be 'T boned'. With full power and hard to port we managed just to avoid both yacht and ferry. It was a close-run thing. What sort of weather autumn will bring remains to be seen, but we will take every opportunity to re-visit some of our favorite haunts in less crowded conditions.

There is no doubt that the problems of visiting France and the Channel Islands has meant many more yachts than usual visiting West Country. The less accessible Scilly Isles were a wonderful exception.

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Neptune surveys the Abbey Gardens, Tresco.

## Seaward 23 - Kipar - Cristoforo Roco - Port Grimaud, France

My little Seaward continues to be admired by all who see her and gives me and my family great pleasure. At Monaco Marine, the yard where she goes for her annual scrub and polish (and in my case many hours spent taking care of those delicate spray rails..), she is known as 'le joli bateau bleu anglaise'. I am not sure the Russian oligarchs whose super yachts are the yard's principal clients get that sort of treatment.

The photo is KIPAR II at her berth at Port Grimaud at twilight the evening before, what we hoped would be a fun day.

Mid-September to November is the tuna fishing season off the coast of the Var in the South of France. The shoals of sardines and anchovies head south towards Spain as the summer draws to an end and they come closer to the shore (10-25nm) looking for warmer water and the tuna follow them.

We fish following the gulls, looking for the 'chasers', who dive when the sardines and anchovies are pushed up to the surface by the chasing tuna beneath. The water can become a cauldron, all very exciting, and then suddenly all goes quiet as the gulls wait to see where the shoals have moved. We fish with four rods, two outriggers port/starboard and two on the stern going from 70m out to 15m using a mix (depending on the light) of lures.

As we were heading out to the fishing grounds a friend who joined us for the day's fishing took this photo which I thought would cheer up my British friends. It is of 'Talitha G' built in 1929 for an American industrialist at the Krupp Shipyard at Keel. It is now, beautifully restored at the Devonport yard, in British ownership and sports the White Ensign of the Royal Yacht Squadron. It's owner also owns one of the few British sailing boats entered for this year's much reduced Voiles de St Tropez.

Part of the day's exiting catch. At one point we had fish on two rods at the same time so teamwork was important as the helmsman had to cut the engines with a quick burst into reverse so as to bring the boat to a complete halt, the two rods with no fish had to be taken in fast and harness round the waists the fun could begin.

My son Pietro showing that there are certain life skills that you don't pick up at either Eton or Oxford. That particular lesson was learnt long ago..and the result, tuna filleted and cooked to a perfect pink, with a very cold bottle of local rosé, was enjoyed by all.

Kind regards, Cristoforo



**News from the Yard - October 2020**

Seawards yard in Cowes is a slightly different place and experience under Covid.

We are all deeply conscious of the problems Covid can cause and our responsibilities in respect of that as well as our aim to satisfy Seawards customers.

It is a difficult balance, but after a period of lockdown and closure a small team got back to work as early as possible whilst observing best practice in protecting everyone from the virus. The team has expanded as much as we can whilst meeting distancing and protection requirements.

It caused us delays but we have delivered product during this regime and have several boats nearing completion as well.



A couple of 29's recently launched have notable new features and are distinguished by the new style wheelhouse roof that you can see in this picture.

Several more are in build and we continue as always to make our constant improvements to the product line. New E21 evolutions will be available soon.

Meanwhile brokerage has been very busy and quite a few Seawards have moved on to new owners in recent months, maybe the uncertainties of Covid have encouraged people to push forward with their motor boating plans?

If you ring the yard, you will find Sadie and Angus available most of the time to try and help with anything you need, others are working remotely where possible, but they can be contacted as well.

Mike Burnham

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I trust you enjoyed this newsletter. I am always pleased to receive your text and photos to include in future editions.

Kind regards

David

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