

NORTH WALES RALLY 2010

The last rally of the year has traditionally been held in Kippford on the Solway Firth, a very attractive venue. However, in recent years, and for various reasons, there has been a gradual reduction in the number of boats coming to this rally and in the end there were just two regular boats attending. Whilst there is the prospect of having more boats coming in the future, a decision was taken to investigate possible alternatives one of which was North Wales. After a day visiting potential sites and speaking to members with boats in the area it was decided to hold the 2010 rally at Caernarfon on the Menai Straits. The Royal Welsh Yacht Club kindly agreed to host our rally and a dates was set for the weekend of 11th and 12th September.

The Menai Straits is a very attractive cruising ground with many places of interest along its banks. Caernarfon is situated at the south western end of the straights and is dominated by its imposing castle. Berthing facilities are available in the Victoria dock and also in the adjacent river at the side of the castle. The Royal Welsh Yacht Club itself is situated within the castle walls and overlooks the straits.

Although the Victoria Dock itself does not have launching facilities, they are available at Menai Marine situated within the dock complex and with a launching ramp leading directly into the dock.

Six boats attended the rally along with 28 members. Alan and Gloria Parsons, regular attendees at our Kippford rally came in their 34' Benford dory *Badger*. Owain Perry brought his steel 34' Golden Hind *Jua* from Port Dinorwic further up the Menai Straits whilst Ian and Robyn Spey sailed round from Pwllhelli in his Parkwood 28' *Somerled of Ardrossen*. Bill and Kathleen Hyde brought their Virgo Voyager *Tiger Lily* from Beaumaris at the northern end of the straits and two boats arrived by road. Michael Rogers with his 14' Swallow boats Storm Petrel *Cadenza* and Stuart Calcutt with his 18' long keeler *Karmatoo*.



Badger Benford Dory 34'



Jua Golden Hind 34'



Somerled of Ardrossen Parkwood 28'



Tiger Lily Virgo Voyager 23'



Cadenza Swallow boats Storm Petrel 14'



Karmatoo One Design 18'

The Royal Welsh Yacht Club opened up early for us on Saturday morning to allow members to meet up and have a coffee and chat before joining the boats.

The Menai Straits is an interesting stretch of water to sail in. Not only is the scenery spectacular but the straits themselves can provide for some challenging sailing especially if negotiating the Swellies. The straits can be entered from either the south west over the Caernarfon Bar or through Puffin Sound both having buoyed channels.



Of necessity there has to be a change buoy where the direction of the buoys changes. This is situated just off Caernarfon.

Care has to be exercised when entering or leaving Victoria Dock as the tide can sweep past the entrance quite quickly. This can make an interesting spectacle for visitors and no doubt some hairy moments for the less experienced yachtsman. The idea behind meeting up in the clubhouse before joining the boats is to enable the members and

guests to be welcomed, mingle amongst friends before being allocated to the boats for the afternoons sailing. It also provides an opportunity for members who have not been to previous rallies to meet other members. This was especially important this year as we were at a new venue which attracted members who had not been to rallies in recent years.

After coffee the members joined the skippers on board their yachts and ventured out into the straits. We can sail for a little over two hours either side of high water which means the boats

are not just restricted to the marked channel. We sailed down towards the Menai Bride with the tide and back on the ebb.

There was a good breeze blowing in the straits which was ideal for some of the larger boats but Michael Rogers wisely decided to sail *Cadenza* in the much calmer waters in the Victoria Dock. The Hon. Sec. Robin Blain, who also has an interest in Swallow Boats, took this opportunity to try out one of their designs.



The boats out in the straits enjoyed some brisk sailing and used the flood tide to make their way down towards the Menai bridges before returning on the ebb.



Sometimes whilst happily sailing the unexpected can happen. This was true on board *Badger*. Suddenly a noise was heard as if something was scraping against the hull. This was followed by a bang. There appeared to be no apparent cause for this and no evidence of any damage, so sailing continued until it was time to head back to the dock. When the engine was started and put into gear the skipper, Alan Parsons, found that he had no forward drive. Indeed there was no drive at all. The engine revved as normal but nothing else happened. There was no drive. This could mean only one thing – no propeller. *Badger* is fitted with a saildrive rather than a conventional prop shaft. There was now a serious problem, no propulsion to get back to Victoria dock and a falling tide which in time would carry *Badger* over Caernarfon bar and out to sea

The first priority was to get the anchor down to stabilize the situation. This done, thoughts turned to what to do next. The obvious choice was to seek a tow back to the dock but time was pressing, the tide was ebbing. Whilst members back on shore were trying to find a suitable tow the crew on board had to consider the possibility of sitting out a tide. A sports boat just coming into the dock was asked to go out and see if they could help. Unfortunately, although the boat had the power, it did not have strong enough deck fittings to take a tow. Back at the Royal Welsh Yacht Club a member was found who had a large and powerful rib. He very kindly offered to help and along with two JRA members, Francis Phillips and Martin LLoyd made their way out to *Badger*.



With *Badger* in tow, it was decided to take her into the river at the side of the castle where she could be dried out and inspected to see what damage had been done.



After the tide had gone out the extent of the damage was revealed. There was indeed no propeller. This was no ordinary propeller but a Brunton Autoprop. Probably the most expensive prop there is for yachts. As *Badger* has a saildrive there was some concern that the drive shaft may have been damaged when the propeller came away. Nothing more could be done over the weekend. Unfortunately *Badger* could play no further part in the rally. A new propeller was eventually obtained and fitted and *Badger* returned safely to her home base a couple of weeks later.

With all the boats and their crews safely back in the dock the members had some free time look around Caernarfon before meeting up again at the yacht club in the evening for dinner.

The Royal Welsh Yacht Club did us proud with the catering. In the morning they provided home made cakes and biscuits along with coffee and tea and in the evening they put on an excellent chicken dinner followed by a selection of desserts.



Before dinner the Members went up onto the roof of the club for the obligatory photo shoot. Unfortunately the evening sun was rather too low and has rather spoiled the photograph.

Some of the members of the Royal Welsh Yacht Club also dined along side us and afterwards received a talk about the benefits of the junk rig along with recent sail developments. The JRA members were also given an introduction to the new website.

On Sunday morning we met up again outside the yacht club and joined the boats for further junk rig sailing.

The weather forecast for the Sunday was reasonable but was due to deteriorate the next day. As a result some of the local skippers decided to use the favourable tide to make their way back to their home base with their crews and return them to Caernarfon by car.

Consequently *Jua* returned to Port Dinorwic and *Tiger Lily* to Beaumaris both based in the Menai Straits. *Somerled of Ardrossen* had further to go to Pwllhelli and after some sailing in the straits, returned their crew to Victoria Dock, bade their farewells and headed out towards Caernarfon Bar and onwards towards home.





On Saturday Michael Rogers decided the wind was too strong to take *Cadenza* out of the dock. However, on Sunday the wind had dropped to a more gentle breeze and so *Cadenza* was able to venture out into the straits

We had arranged for afternoon tea to be served in the yacht club after sailing for members to say their farewells at the end of the rally. Unfortunately, due to some of the boats returning to their home port some of the members did not get back to the club in time. The Members of the Royal Welsh Yacht Club who had provided us with such excellent hospitality on the Saturday again provided us with a selection of home made cakes for our afternoon tea.

North Wales was a new venue for us this year and was a great success not only because of the warm welcome and hospitality we received from the members of the Royal Welsh Yacht Club but also because of the support of our members and their willingness to bring along their boats. Thanks to all concerned.