

Chris Dobner's voyage around the UK in Curlew

At the start of the trip Chris wrote: "Well actually it's around most of the UK as Northern Ireland and North of Scotland are going to be by-passed as I plan to go through the Caledonian canal. The aim of the trip is not so much the circumnavigation but to call in and visit interesting places, especially the little ones, along the way.

Curlew is a Halceon 23ft triple bilge keel cruiser and was originally purchased as moulded sections which were fitted out by Club member Henry Hunt, who has sadly passed away but I hope will be looking down on me with a smile of approval. Although boasting 4 berths it is best described as 'cosy' but has good sea keeping qualities, albeit somewhat slow.

The intention is to set off on the 14th May and head West doing coast hops of 15 to 20 nm per day. So the first stop will be Yarmouth IOW then Portland/Studland bay and then to Weymouth. After that it's a long hop around Portland Bill and across Lyme bay. Timings will very dependent on tide times and weather but my attitude is to take as long as it takes and enjoy it rather than be tied to a rigid schedule. Goal for this season is to get to the Oban / Fort William area and find somewhere to lay up the boat up ashore for the winter. I will then return home and go back next spring to resume the voyage which is planned to be through the Caledonian canal to Inverness and then potter back home down the East coast.

Chris Dobner

This log is a copy of the web page recording Chris Dobner's trip around the UK which he started in May 2009. The layout of the log for the website posted the most recent report at the start of the report. So if you want to read the story from the beginning you need to start at the end of this report. The log was compiled by Rod Till from telephone conversations and text messages.

Report No 27 - by Rod Till

IMPORTANT STOP PRESS.....

16 **September:** After 126 days before the mast Chris has achieved his goal for 2009. At circa 18:08pm today he arrived in Loch Feochan being his intended final destination for the season. He is tied up on a visitor's mooring (those Celts treat sailors so cruelly) but tomorrow hopes to be allowed ashore so he can make arrangements for winter storage at the Andoran Marina.

I am sure there will be much relief in the Dobner household that Dad is at last 'home from the sea' and will be back on Hayling shortly.

Without doubt Curlew's voyage has been a remarkable adventure and a real achievement of which CJ 'the ancient mariner' can be justly proud. That said he would not wish me to let this moment pass without a thought for the late Henry Hunt who constructed the fine vessel "Curlew" which has performed impeccably carrying him through both fair and foul weather.

I am sure we all look forward to seeing CJ soon at Mengeham Rythe and buying him a pint or two.

Report No 26 - by Rod Till

07 **September:** CJ decided to throw a Captain's bucket of caution at the awful forecast this morning and take off for Scotland. It proved entirely the correct thing to do since the strong forecasted winds never came. Indeed there was so little wind CJ had to motor Curlew all the way over to Islay. He is now tucked up in Port Ellen and says he intends

staying there tomorrow because an 80 mph gale is forecast. I think that's just a feeble excuse and the real reason for hanging around this fair Isle is the fact that it boasts no less than 9 working distilleries knocking out some of the most famous and finest malt whiskeys in the world. CJ visited Bushmills (see previous report) so it would be churlish not to partake of Islay's wears too. Indeed I wouldn't be surprised if he stayed there until the Spring. On a more geographical note, Islay is the southernmost island of the Inner Southern Hebrides. It is 600 miles square and has 130 miles of coast line with a population of 3200. Check it out on the web: it looks absolutely fabulous.

8-9 September: Tidal streams and times unsatisfactory for moving north so spent these days sightseeing and sampling.

10 September: Set forth for Craighouse on the Island of Jura. Talk about one extreme to another. There was hardly any wind on this leg and CJ again had to motor most of the way. Even then he arrived after dark and there were no lights, no radio signal and no telephone signal.

11 September: Pushed on up the Sound of Jura to a very comfortable anchorage at Crinan (on the mainland of Scotland). Had a pleasant trip but was quite relieved to arrive as he had been without a telephone signal since just after leaving Port Ellen.

14 September: Today's target was the marina at Craobh Haven a holiday resort village built in circa 1983. Although the playground for lots of leisure craft it is recommended that good knowledge of the area and its peculiarities is essential before venturing forth. Apparently it contains some very treacherous waters due to the array of separate tidal races that like to swirl around these parts. The weather is said to be wholly unpredictable and changes for no good reason at all other than to catch out the unwary. To a chap who has faced his 'Swellies' these issues are not a deterrent and after a careful study of the books CJ put to sea determined to avoid encounters with the 'Grey Dogs' and the world's third largest whirlpool which lurks in the Gulf of Corryvreckan. Glad to say he made it and while he reports there is not a lot to see other than the glorious landscape there is one watering hole which I suspect he will not miss called 'The Lord of The Isles'

Report No 25 - by Rod Till

31 August: Escaped from Bangor near Belfast after 6 days of terrible winds (too many curries again) and headed North West along the coast to Glenarm. It was a very pleasant sail until Curlew rounded the last headland where she was ambushed by a howling squall being driven along by 39 knots of wind. It was indeed fortunate that CJ had set only a reefed main for the journey otherwise they could have been in serious difficulty. They arrived safely at their destination early afternoon. Weather permitting it is intended to move to Ratlin Island tomorrow.

1 September: Another month, another leg and another change of plan. The forecast was so poor that CJ decided to leave Ratlin alone for today and push on up the coast to Ballycastle. The wind strength was F4-5 which provided good sailing. This continued until the final headland when once again they were ambushed by a squall (CJ really should take a peek around these blind bends before rushing headlong into the unknown). While not as bad as that encountered yesterday CJ had to resort to the engine and 'motor tacking' (that's a new one) for the final few miles into the anchorage. After a very heavy downpour the sun came out and a pleasant afternoon was enjoyed.

2 -5 September: Well what a surprise, CJ is still loafing around in Ballycastle because that stormy old weather has held him up yet again. By all accounts it has been quite dreadful and considerably worse than our storms last week. At 11:40am on Saturday 5 Sept, CJ reported that the situation might be improving since he noticed the wind speed had dropped to a steady F5-6 from its hitherto F6-7. Also he is quite certain that the rain stopped twice in the previous hour for circa 3 minutes. Ever the optimist sailor (I suppose he is the right size for that class of dinghy) he believes this is a sign which might lead to a departure on Monday but he didn't say which Monday! In fairness he has

not been sitting around with his feet up during the past week. He has visited the Giants Causeway and the famous Rope Bridge and (oh what a surprise) has suffered the agony of a guided tour of Bushmills Distillery in the hope of doing a bit of sampling.

Report No 24 - by Rod Till

Hi all you Dobner followers. Yes its me back again albeit in recovery from two glorious weeks in France and a very rainy camping trip in Cornwall (does the sun ever shine there?). Thanks to Carol Carter for posting CJ's text messages to keep you updated on progress. I note CJ took advantage of my absence to laze around in Peel on the Isle of Man for 10days (no doubt drinkin and wenchin) but clearly he had a weather eye on my return since he got a wriggle on last weekend. Also he never said anything about going via the Isle of Man or Ireland which means extra mapping will be required. No consideration these sailing types.

Putting all that aside, CJ has continued to undertake some remarkable trips despite being plagued by very unpleasant weather. My last report (3 August) had CJ in Glasson visiting family so I will now pick the story up from there.

5 August: CJ waved a fond farewell to his relies and Glasson and sailed over to Peil Island, Barrow, where he anchored for the night ready to cross to the Isle of Man.

6 August: Made good time over to Ramsey IoM but Curlew could not enter the harbour as the tide was out (inconsiderate I say) so CJ picked up a mooring buoy for the night (I shall refrain from commenting on this: after all it is none of my business what he gets up to).

7 August: Dawn (not her again) brought brilliant sunshine for the first time in ages. It was so good CJ donned his shorts and was able to breakfast in the cockpit. Once refreshed he set off down the eastern coast to Douglas. He went into the inner harbour marina for a long weekend and enjoyed the sights and facilities of the town. In the event his stay was longer than planned for once again the weather turned against him.

11 August: Off again, this time to the southern end of the IoM. This however was not plain sailing as CJ ran into some very rough water off Langness (near Castletown). Curlew saw him through and then they had a pleasant run to Port St Mary for the night.

12 August: Today a really pleasant sail was enjoyed. First they passed through the Calf Sound (aka the Calf of Man) then up the western coast to Peel.

13 - 22 August: What was intended to be a one nighter turned into 10 nights. The wind blew for several of those days at F7. Curlew lost her burgee when the staff snapped (the flagpole that is not CJ) and to cap it all a great big steel hulled polish cruiser rammed Curlew while trying to turn round in a channel too narrow for its length! Fortunately damage was limited to a bend in the pulpit which CJ assures me will not interrupt Sunday services or evensong.

22 August: A window of opportunity hove in sight and a pleasant sail across the Irish Sea brought CJ to Ardglass on the eastern coast of Northern Ireland. The NI Old Gaffers Rally was underway there (personally I hate work reunions). On Sunday CJ was invited to join in the festivities by the crew of the boat he was moored alongside. This included a BBQ and traditional folk music.

24 August: As it was blowing a modest F4-5 and the tide was in the right direction CJ decided to push on to Belfast. He is now tucked up in Bangor Marina and is intending to spend the next few days sightseeing. The weather forecast is very poor and so are the tide directions.

Finally, CJ has provided a few stats. To date he has been away for 105 days. He has

been at sea for 34 of those days, wind/tide bound for 46 and resting for 25. He has been underway for a total of 276.5 hours of which 107.5 were under sail alone, 71.5 motor and sail and 97.5 motor only. CJ and Curlew have covered 1080 nautical miles over the ground.

Report No 23 - text report received from CJ on 22.08.09

"Grabbed small window of opportunity and escaped IOM at last. Now in Ardglass on E coast Nrn Ireland where clouds have arrived & wind rising again! Gaffers rally & BBQ 2nite."

Report No 22 - text report received from CJ on 18.08.09

"Still weather bound in IOM. Had F7 sustained gusts in shelter of harbour this afternoon!. Rest of wk looks no better so who knows when I will move. More sightseeing pland."

Report No 21 - text report received from CJ on 13.08.09

"Didnt move today & looks like mon will be earliest weather window - just as well Peel's a nice place."

Report No 20 - text report received from CJ on 12.08.09

"Arrived Peel on W coast IOM after a pleasant sail - fcst not good so may be stuck 4 few days shame as had hoped 2 see tall ships on Sun in Belfast. Down wind of smoke house so boat may b a kipper by morning!."

Report No 19 - text report received from CJ on 11.08.09

"Now in port st mary on s end of island. If wthr ok plan to go to Peel 2morrow."

Report No 18 - text report received from CJ on 10.08.09

"Left Glasson Dock last wed 4 night@anchor off Piel Is b4 crossing to Ramsey IOMan. Prob move 2morrow."

Report No 17 by Rod Till

30 July – Everything comes to he who waits! Anxious to make up for lost time CJ plotted a course that would take him direct to Fleetwood north of Blackpool. This avoided the problems associated with making passage into Liverpool but meant he would have to be at sea for a long time regardless of conditions. At 4:30am and with a degree of apprehension CJ and Curlew left the tranquil shelter of Penrhyn Dock, Bangor. On reaching Puffin Island the engine was shut down and the sails set for the long haul. On assessing the condition of the sea, CJ thought he should probably turn back but then again remembered the fortitude and courage shown in 'Master and Commander' and elected to press on (*he really should stop watching that movie*). The wind was F5-6 coming from the correct direction for the trip. However, the storms of the previous week had whipped up a very strong heavy swell which was not in line with the wind. As a result Curlew was constantly being pushed off course and in danger of broaching. The auto helm simply couldn't cope so it was down to CJ's seamanship to keep them upright and on track. Time and again Curlew buried her nose and decks and the cockpit filled (two seals and a dolphin tried to take up residence but CJ was having none of it. Once he'd evicted them he secured the washboards).

Dressed in his full offshore suit, lifejacket and harness (clipped on) CJ battled the elements for a full 65 nautical miles and 13hrs 30mins. By 15:31 pm Blackpool Tower was in sight. This was his first landfall since Great Ormes Head (Llandudno) and was a very welcome sight. Even more welcome was Fairway No 1 Buoy marking the entrance

of the main channel into Fleetwood. It was 17:30pm in the sanctuary of the marina that CJ breathed a huge sigh of relief and reflected that the passage had probably been the worst he has ever undertaken (*but watch this space!*).

3 August- At last a leisurely sail, this time eastwards across Morecambe bay and into the River Lune. Then proceeded up stream to Glasson and berthed in the Basin. The intention is to visit family who live in Lancaster.

Report No 16 by Rod Till

22 to 29 July – CJ remains storm bound in the Menai Strait. Now berthed at Penrhyn Dock, Bangor, he is waiting for a combination of good weather and the correct tides for passage to Liverpool. The leg will be particularly challenging since once past Conwy there is really nowhere to run if matters take a turn for the worse. Further, he has to ensure arrival at Liverpool in a narrow time window otherwise will have difficulty getting in. When pondering these issues back in Caernarfon the Harbour Master there sagely enquired whether CJ wanted Curlew craned out and moved by road to Liverpool!

Putting these trivial navigational matters aside, CJ has had a couple of other problems.

The 'gnome' that operates the GPS has taken umbrage about the multiple waypoints he has had to process. He is also unnerved by the constant pitching and rolling not to mention the vast distance now between him and the Solent. He claims long distance sailing to foreign parts was never part of the deal so he's jumped ship leaving a string of rude error messages on the display and rendered the unit inoperable. After forking out for a replacement (*wholly contrary to the Mengeham code*) it too won't respond to the keys! Yet another unit is on order but will not be available until at least 29 July.

CJ has also had to spend time cleaning his bilges after a leak of petrol (*that will teach him to fiddle with his carburettor when bored in Caernarfon?*).

Now the good news: Berth fees are only a fiver a night and the 'Tap & Spile' pub is close at hand for beer and food. CJ has undertaken a couple of enjoyable country walks further improving his fitness and enabling him to take his trouser belt in yet another notch. Then there was a trip to Conwy where he spent a minute or so looking around Britain's smallest house and decided it was quite spacious compared to Curlew!

Report No 15 by Rod Till

16 to 21 July – still tucked up in Victoria Dock at Caernarfon. Apart from enjoying this historical town, CJ has revisited his youth by ascending to the summit of Snowden. The last such trip was made on foot but this time it was without ropes and hitches via the Mountain Railway. Lets be honest those old sea legs would never have made it otherwise. Alas the top was in cloud, so absolutely no change there, but the new facilities are pretty impressive. Other trips include a pleasant afternoon at the slate museum, the country park down Llanberis way, a bus ride to Port Dinorwic and a guided tour of the fascinating Dinorwig Hydro Power Station. He has so far avoided visiting the Castle since he concluded there were just too many turrets to climb! He has also spent periods on board relaxing, reading and passage planning in order to escape the torrential rain and winds that have plagued the area of late. When I last spoke to him he was busy cleaning his carburettor!

22 July – Had to be done sooner or later: CJ has faced up to his 'Swellies'. If you didn't know they are a particularly unpleasant set of shallow rocky narrows between Britannia Bridge and Menai Bridge. All the guides recommend that passage should only be attempted in daylight and at slack high water. It is considered dangerous at all other times and the tidal stream can reach 8 knots. As Curlew headed up the Strait from Caernarfon she was chased by 30 knots of howling wind and torrential rain. With CJ in full oilskins, t'was akin to a scene from 'Master and Commander' as they edged into the

void. Keeping the sheaf of passage notes on board and dry was itself a challenge. With toes crossed, buttocks clenched, firm hands on the tiller and flying bits of paper, CJ steered Curlew cautiously on through the treacherous wastes to the blue sky and calm water beyond. He is now at Bangor and in Penrhyn Dock.

Report No 14 by Rod Till

10 to 12 July - Storm bound again and 'boyo' has it rained, rained and rained. Considered an ascent of Snowden but realized Curlew wouldn't make it.

13 July - Set off with every intention of rounding the corner into Caernarfon Bay. Alas once clear of the harbour entrance found the wind gusting 20 knots on the nose and huge seas. Stuck it out for a bit but unable to make any significant headway. Realized the tidal window necessary for passage through Bardsey Sound was lost (*CJ really must take better care of his tidal windows - he keeps mislaying them!*). With great reluctance returned to Pwllheli Marina for another damp night. (*That'll teach him to put to sea on the 13th.*)

14 July – Set off again. This time, wind and weather much better. There was even a modicum of sunshine. Made good progress to Bardsey Sound and passed through without a hitch (*I keep telling him to practise those knots*). Felt quite relieved to be clear of Cardigan Bay with the fun of Caernarfon Bay to look forward to. It started almost immediately! The wind began to box the compass at a variety of speeds. It made for an interesting and somewhat lengthy passage along the Lleyn Peninsula. On the whole an enjoyable day. Arrived in the picturesque harbour of Porth Dinllaen circa. 20: 55pm. Anchored in view of the Lifeboat Station.

15 July – Over a leisurely breakfast plotted the course for Menai Strait. Upped anchor just before 11am. While the sky was murky the rain held off. Made good progress and thankfully reached Abermenai Point on time to catch the tidal window needed for safe passage into both Menai Strait and Caernarfon. Arrived and berthed in Victoria Dock Caernarfon circa. 15:15pm under a sunny sky. Looking forward to a restful afternoon and evening.

Report No 13 - by Rod Till

3 July – After a two day break in Fishguard CJ was ready for his first 3:00am start. This was essential for the long haul across the southern half of Cardigan Bay to Aberystwyth. At first progress was painfully wet and slow but as dawn rose (was that to make breakfast?) so did the wind. In fact it caught him out and CJ had to make haste to shorten sail because Curlew had become overpowered. Once the situation was back under control they enjoyed a satisfying (albeit very damp) journey north. Circa 45 miles and 13 hours later Curlew was berthed alongside Aberystwyth Town Quay with the kettle on.

4 to 8 July – CJ had intended to visit Aderdyfi and Porthmadog and then possibly take the Ffestiniog Railway and a bus to the home of the TV Series 'The Prisoner' i.e. the picturesque village of Portmeirion. Alas, he has remained a 'prisoner' himself in Aberystwyth. The harbours of Cardigan Bay are mostly on a lee shore with bars (shifting sand bars that is - not the type normally enjoyed by CJ) classified as dangerous to approach in bad weather. The weather has been very poor and in particular the wind has been adverse to moving north. Hence his progress has stalled.

9 July - Couldn't take another day at Aberystwyth. Wind direction still hopeless for getting to Aberdyfi, Barmouth or Porthmadog. Also forecast deteriorating for weekend. Decided to bite the bullet and make a long dash across Cardigan Bay direct to Pwllheli. Even then Curlew and CJ faced a f4–5 almost square on the nose for most of their journey. While not the longest time at sea, it was the toughest trip to date. It took from

8am until 19:00pm and CJ reports that he was 'k*****d!

Many of you have enquired whether CJ is enjoying himself. Despite the above he assures me he is. He has always been cheerful and upbeat when we have spoken. He has met many interesting helpful people, shared many a yarn and jars. He is particularly complimentary of the Harbour Masters. Without exception they have shown genuine interest in his voyage and have always been ready with advice to assist passage planning and local excursions. On the occasions when fuel and supply facilities have been a distance from Curlew's berth, they have willingly and freely provided CJ with transport. Long may it so continue.

Report No 12 - by Rod Till

28 June - CJ caught an afternoon tide and left Lawrenny and Miford Haven behind. He headed for Skomer Island where he spent a hair-raising night riding at anchor in North Haven Bay. That is just west of Jack's Sound. There are lots of rocks, 7 knot tidal currents, over-falls and hundreds of puffins! As he turned in for the night he doubtless had his fingers crossed that Curlew would not choose to drag her anchor.

29 June - Fortunately Curlew behaved herself during the night and after waving a fond farewell to the puffins CJ set off across St Brides Bay. By 13:00 he was berthed in the harbour at Solva which looks absolutely lovely. It boasts three pubs, two restaurants and a boat club.

30 June - An interesting day. By the time CJ had enough water to get Curlew out of Solva there was a real risk they would miss their tidal gate at Ramsey Sound. The Sound lies between the St David's Peninsula and Ramsey Island. Whether this dilemma caused CJ to curse a little (as the Sound's namesake might have done) I cannot say. With gritted teeth (he really will have to change to finer muesli) he motored at full throttle for St David's Peninsula. It paid off because he reached the Sound with just enough tide to make the passage. Going through the Sound under sail Curlew recorded 3.9 knots of boat speed and a whooping 9 knots over the ground. Once clear of Ramsey Island Curlew enjoyed a flat sea and a steady 10 knots of wind on the beam. This lasted for an hour. Then, following a brief lull, the wind veered a full 190 degrees, came back to strength and got Curlew bowling along once more. A thoroughly cracking sail was had all the way to Strumble Head. As Strumble Lighthouse was abeam (I thought they only light up at night) the wind faded away so the engine was used for the final leg into Lower Fishguard. They arrived at 15:22pm.

1 July - Stayed put in Lower Fishguard today. CJ took a bus trip to see some local sites and do a bit of shopping. Next leg may require two tides and a 3:00am start. Watch this space.

Report No 11 - by Rod Till - 27.06.09

21 June - Hooray! At last CJ has managed to break free from Penarth where adverse weather and tides have held him captive. Either that or he wanted to stay out of the way of those girls in 'Aviva' who were tearing around at such high speed. Well done to them and well done to Chris for surviving Penarth for a whole 6 days.

He left Penarth early and by 07:45am was sailing past Barry. As there was no sign of Gavin's Stacey on the quay he kept going enjoying a pleasant steady wind albeit 'a bit on the nose' (*must be the odd curries they serve in Wales*). He managed to sail for the 5 hours 30 minutes before having to resort to motor sailing. By 17:29pm he was safely berthed in Swansea Marina.

22 June - After yesterday, decided to stay in put. Assembled the bicycle and had an enjoyable ride round the coast of Swansea Bay to Mumbles Head.

23 June - Left Swansea this morning intending to spend the night in the Burry Inlet. While the wind was light the tidal lift was very strong. Reached Worms Head, at eastern corner of Carmarthen Bay, much earlier than anticipated. Decided to carry on across the Bay to Tenby. Again Curlew managed 5hours 30 minutes under sail alone then failing wind and adverse tide caused CJ to resort to motor sailing for the final leg. The highlight of the passage was an unexpected visit from a school of dolphins. They played around Curlew for a while before heading off to the south.

24 June - Spent a pleasant day at Tenby. While dried out re antifouled rudder and cleaned bottom (*of boat that is*). No barnacles just light weed. In the evening attended BBQ at the local sailing club.

25 June - Made passage to Daugleddau Estuary - Milford Haven. Carried on upstream between Milford and Pembroke Dock. Passed under Neyland Toll Bridge and then on to Lawrenny Yacht Station.

Report No 10 - by Rod Till - 20.06.09

In case you are wondering Chris is still in Penarth near Cardiff, Wales. He likes it so much he decided to stay all week and will probably stay all weekend too! A combination of unfavourable winds, uncomfortable sea conditions and inconvenient tide patterns set against an absence of user friendly places to run to cautioned against starting the journey west. He is, however, having a really good time in Penarth Marina. First it is cheaper than Watchet. Second the nearest pub and shop are conveniently at the top of a very steep hill so he is getting very fit walking and cycling. Apparently the real highlight of each day is when a chap comes to work on the boat in the next berth.

Better luck next week Chris and who knows that wonderful Dawn may yet turn up!

Report No 9 - by Rod Till - 15.06.09

12 June: Left Ilfracombe for Watchet. Alas the weather was not as forecast so progress was a little slow. CJ said they were 'poodling along ok' which was not too bad since Curlew would be unable to clear the Watchet sill until circa 20:00pm. They arrived bang on time and by 20:14pm they were tied up and CJ had got the kettle on. He is pondering how to cross the flood tides to Gymru (Wales). Even if you are one of the few who understand these nautical conundrums please don't send him any clues. After all he got himself into this predicament! Also the Vikings managed it without engines, charts, high tech instrumentation or any local knowledge.

14 June: Croeso i Gymru (Welcome to Wales) The original plan was to sail to Burnham on Sea Monday, anchor for the night then cross to Cardiff Tuesday. However wind and weather changed his mind. The forecast for Sunday was 'south westerly winds all day'. It was wrong. The wind was a steady force 4 from the northwest and so it remained. After a good breakfast CJ left Watchet at 10:00 and headed out into Bridgewater Bay towards Burnham-on-Sea. He anchored at 13:00pm just outside the main tidal stream. Even at anchor the log was recording 1.29 knots of tide. He had a leisurely lunch, considered his options and decided to 'go for it'. At 16:40 he started the engine, upped anchor, and rode the last of the ebb west heading for a pre determined waypoint. It was a choppy ride (wind over tide) but the timing was perfect. The tide was just turning as he reached his waypoint and so he was able ride the flood all the way back to Cardiff. He is berthed in Penarth Marina (which is just inside the Cardiff Bay barrage).

Report No 8 - by Rod Till - 11.06.09

6, 7 & 8 June: CJ enjoyed a really good weekend break at Padstow albeit the weather could have been kinder. He had intended to move on to Bude on Monday 8 June but dawn brought heavy rain and a Northerly wind gusting 5 to 6 - instead of a nice cup of

tea with bacon and egg! So he, and perhaps this Dawn, stayed put for another day.

9 June: Determined to crack on, CJ headed for Bude. The conditions were still unpleasant and it turned into a frustrating day. The wind was on the nose and the sea was 'loppy' whatever that means: perhaps he meant choppy. Progress was painfully slow and he succumbed to motor sailing which may jeopardise his chances of securing 'The Kevin Duffy Award for Penny Pinching Sailors'. I sent a text to find out where he was at 17:30pm. Apparently there was much cursing when the mobile rang as he was about to enter Bude and was trying to furl sail. So I sat in silence thinking the worst until he eventually responded at 18:59pm. Curlew was by then safely moored in Bude lock which apparently he couldn't pass through as it takes 15 men to operate and they had knocked off for the day!

10 June: Before those 15 blokes arrived for work CJ left the Bude Lock in his wake and headed off for Ilfracombe. Another bitty (where is he getting these words from?) day with winds not as forecast: namely light and in unhelpful directions. Many a downpour was endured before the destination hove in sight. At 17:57 pm, he was waiting for water (was that to fill the Captain's Bucket) to get into the harbour. Later he reported that as he came into the harbour, the Paddle Steamer Waverley was leaving.

On a technical note he is now on Chart c59 and Curlew's Log reports total miles sailed 358 – but the GPS reports 423. Tomorrow is a rest day then he proposes to head for Watchet and a proper marina. He is basking in warm evening sunshine – still waiting for Dawn.

Report No 7 - by Rod Till - 05.06.09

4 June: It is exactly 3 weeks to the day that CJ set out to on his circumnavigation of the UK mainland so it is fitting that he chose this day to leave the English Channel and enter the Celtic Sea. Yes folks our bold voyager has rounded Land's End. Departing from Mousehole at circa 05:00am, stiff breezes and a lumpy sea pushed Curlew towards her goal. The weather forecast had promised moderate winds as the day progressed but in the event it held at a steady force 5 to 6 all the way! Fortunately CJ had reefed the sails before departure and reports that Curlew sailed perfectly despite the conditions. The passage round Land's End took them inside Longships and Kettle's Bottom but outside The Brisons.

CJ arrived at St Ives at circa 15:33pm with enough water to squeeze into the harbour. He is now anchored near the Lifeboat Station and will be able to walk ashore when the tide fully retreats. If the wind moderates he plans to head for Padstow tomorrow. But if it doesn't he can enjoy another pasty or two washed down with few pints of 'Doombar'.

ADDENDUM: As the tide ebbed away the starboard keel sank into the soft sand leaving Curlew listing at 30degrees. Not only was this most uncomfortable but CJ had to get out of bed (or did he just roll) at 01:00am to ensure she came safely upright as the tide rose. Fortunately all went well and as far as can be ascertained no damage has been caused. All this walking about on the harbour bottom, both checking the boat and going ashore for refreshment, means Curlew's decks and cabin now resemble St Ives beach as half of it is on board!

5 June: Having had a sleepless sandy night CJ decided to head on to Padstow. The wind today is the opposite of yesterday: very light indeed. He has had the engine running several times in order to make progress. When I spoke to him at 10:00am he had just past Perran Beach and was starting to pass Holywell Beach. He had a message for Carol and Gil, 'Your rocks are still here!' (Note: 'Carter's Rocks' lie at the western end of Holywell Beach).

He is now berthed in the inner harbour at Padstow having arrived at circa 18:00pm. He

will weekend there possibly taking in the Royal Cornwall Show

On a more general note CJ is in high spirits and thoroughly enjoying himself and sends he best wishes to you all. '

Report No 6 by Rod Till - 04.06.09

1 June: After a wonderful weekend of sunshine and sites in and around the River Fal, CJ got underway again and reached Porthleven by 16:46pm. There was little wind during the morning but a really good sail was had during the second half of the trip. CJ also reported that it had been a very hot and tiring day. So, after sending a text at 16:47 to say he was safe, he retired to his bunk for a late siesta before hitting the night live of Porthleven.

2 June: Today CJ moved on to Penzance and is spending the night in the 'wet dock'. He has refuelled (both petrol and grub) ready for the long haul round Land's End.

3 June: Earlier today CJ and Curlew dropped down the coast a little and they are currently anchored off Mousehole. Let us hope they have a calm and quiet night followed by a fair wind tomorrow for they intend to set sail at circa 05:00am to round Land's End bound for St Ives Bay.

Report No 5 by Rod Till - 01.06.09

26 and 27 May: My last report left you with CJ looking forward to a pleasant day in the lovely Cornish town of Fowey. Alas that was not to be. Torrential rain and extremely high winds not only ruined the day but held him captive for a second day. Even going on deck to 'turn his ropes' (whatever that means) drenched him to the skin. Our Sailor's spirits were low indeed when I spoke to him on Wednesday. He was moored against a pontoon and because of the wind direction Curlew was snatching against her ropes day and night. That said he was able to go ashore twice and enjoy some refreshment and a warm shower at the Royal Fowey Yacht Club.

28 May: The situation looked more promising. The heavy rain had stopped and the forecast was 'East 3 to 4' so CJ decided to head for the Helford River. Alas this forecast did not hold true and in the event he spent a dank chilly day at sea with very light south westerly winds on the nose. It was not until 19:45 that he was able to drop a hook in the Helford.

29 May 2009 After pondering the weather forecast CJ decided to go backwards and is now anchored off Treilssick Gardens in the River Fal. The sun is shining and it is very peaceful. The Harbour Master has passed by twice and not asked for any money.

Tomorrow CJ plans to further explore the Fal perhaps spending the evening in Restronguet Creek with a visit to the famous Pandora Inn.

On Sunday, assuming the weather permits, he will set sail for Lizard Point with Portleven Harbour as his intended destination.

Report No 4 by Rod Till - 26.05.09

Sunday 24 May: Following a day's rest and a welcome run ashore, Captain Dobner laid in a course for Plymouth Sound. Under a clear blue sky and with a warm 4 knot wind 'Curlew' began to cream along on a broad reach. Deciding that these perfect conditions called for celebration CJ donned his shorts for the first time and enjoyed some welcome fresh air around his knees.

As Plymouth Hoe'd in sight he headed to the western side of the Sound and anchored

for the night in Cawsand Bay.

Monday 25 May: Another fine day, so CJ pushed on to the real West Country while the 'going was good'. The first half of the trip was a little frustrating for there was little wind - probably because CJ didn't have a curry the previous night! After lunch, matters greatly improved. The sails filled and those shorts stirred and Curlew once again began to make progress.

As Gribbin Head eventually came into view CJ hung a right (turned to starboard) and by 16:32 pm he and Curlew were safely anchored in Fowey Harbour directly opposite the Church.

Tomorrow (Tuesday 26 May) is a day of rest unless of course CJ changes his mind. Weather permitting he will then press on toward Falmouth.

For the technical amongst us, you will be pleased to know that CJ has replaced his Captain's Bucket. In fact he now has two and so when he feels the need he has the choice of three stations!

Report No 3 by Rod Till - 22.05.09

Following the epic trip from Yarmouth to Weymouth on Wednesday 20 May, CJ does it again!

On Thursday 21 May he left Weymouth at circa 6:45am. Almost 14 hours and about 56 sea miles later CJ arrived at Brixham. He was tired and weary after two heavy days and looking forward to some rest. Imagine his despair when he saw the harbour heaving with boats and the quayside full of people because of a bank holiday sailing rally! After one night he could take no more. After a leisurely breakfast this morning (Friday 22 May) he set off for Salcombe where he is now moored and enjoying a lovely sunny evening. He says he is not going anywhere tomorrow.

The boat and gear are holding up well but en route to Brixham the Captain's Bucket was washed over board. A sad loss which CJ says will be remembered in a special service this Sunday. He will just have to put his auto helm on when he '**wants to go**' and repair below to the cabin heads!

Report No 2 by Rod Till - 20.05.09

As already mentioned CJ's first stop was Newton Creek. In the event he had to stay put for two days and two nights. The weather conditions were so poor that a trip ashore was out of the question so CJ had to ride it out. He started running out of milk – so had to drink beer instead!

On Sunday (17 May) he decided to make a break for Yarmouth. Reaching the marina was a great relief and at last he was able shower, get some fresh milk and of course another beer or two.

Alas the weather remained foul and on Monday evening he plaintively asked, 'Is it alright if I come home now?' Being a caring sort of a chap I said, 'No you can't!'

So it remained until Wednesday (20 May). At 6:30am CJ at last got underway bound for Weymouth. With a favourable wind and fair sea conditions he was able to sail until about 15:30pm . By then, however, the wind had almost disappeared so CJ reluctantly started the engine and motored for the last hour or so eventually arriving at circa 18:30.

Report No 1 by Rod Till - 14.05.09

So at circa 13:00 on Thursday 14th May 2009 a small but select group gathered at Mengeham pontoon to witness the commencement of this epic event. There was much joy and banter but eventually the time arrived for CJ to get underway. And so it was to the sound of three rousing cheers and a mournful solitary starting horn that Curlew slipped her chains and headed for Black Can and beyond.

While a grey dawn was not breaking (since it already had) there was appropriately 'a grey mist on the sea's face' which seemed to focus the sadness of seeing a dear friend leaving us behind.

Not to miss any part of the event some of us headed down to the Lifeboat Station to catch a last glimpse of this bold solo adventurer. As we wished CJ and Curlew a safe and pleasant voyage they slipped quietly and unassumingly into the mists on Chichester bar.

I will pause briefly so that you may dry your eyes and put away your hankies.

Now here is the first Bulletin:

After slipping into that mist and in keeping with the spirit of these things, CJ started the engine and chugged over to Osborn Bay. There he found more favourable wind and had 'a good sail' on to Newtown Creek. He says he is likely to stay there until Sunday
