

# Foulness Rally Report 2008



I have a confession to make, I've never attended a Foulness Rally, it being rather too early in the year for both boat and owner and I guess I never will, now that the George and Dragon has closed. The stuck-in-a-time-warp pub seemed to be the area's only attraction, Foulness falling in the same category as Siberia and Scunthorpe – everyone knows where it is, but no-one wants to go there.

However this year, boat and owner were sufficiently well prepared, the forecast so un-typically favourable and Trevor had moved the venue to the more attractive Fambridge, that I made the effort and what a magnificent weekend it turned out to be. Seamlessly organised by Trevor Rawlinson in his usual I'm-not-sure-what's-going-to-happen-next-but-it-will-be-brilliant fashion, ten boats gathered at Fambridge, (plus Angele Aline, who prudently ventured her seven foot draft no further than Burnham). Local boats Aussie II, Alice & Florrie

and Mary Ritchie were there of course, together with Molly Cobbler, Mole and Quiet Days from the Blackwater. Nigel in Quiet Days took the phrase 'shake-down cruise' too literally, bouncing on the Swallowtail Bank on the way up the Crouch and proving the shortest distance between two buoys can sometimes be uphill. Bonify, Angele Aline and Random were there from the Orwell, but furthest travelled were Maid Marion from Ramsholt and Crow from Faversham, on her way to the Norfolk Broads.

Not only was the weather unusually good, hot sun and steady F3/4 easterlies, but the occasion was special too, as Trevor had arranged for 'Fred's' ashes to be scattered in her favourite river, on the Sunday. But before that ceremony, everyone piled into the smaller boats and sailed up from Fambridge to the limit of navigation (and their bravery) at Battlesbridge. Getting there was a challenge, but not as entertaining as arriving, which provided lots of spectator interest and proved that, like talking to foreigners, when mooring a gaffer nothing succeeds like shouting.

Everyone then repaired to Roy Hart's place for a much needed drink. Roy is well known as an active Old Gaffer, but he is also outstanding as a barbecue bon viveur and laid on a splendid meal, before shepherding everyone to the river for the dedication of new lock gates, an essential part of his Battlesbridge hydro-electric project.

But time and tide wait for no-one, not even Roy, and the ebb was already running as boats unmoored and motored downriver to Cliff Reach, to meet up with launches from the RBYC carrying more of 'Fred's' friends. It was at Cliff Reach, 23 years ago, that 'Fred' and Trevor joined the Old Gaffers at the first Crouch rally, organised by Brenda Jago, so it was entirely appropriate that it was at this very spot that the flotilla formed up in a semicircle around Trevor in Aussie II and in a simple but moving ceremony, 'Fred' returned to the river she loved so much.



Everyone then repaired to the Royal Burnham for a few drinks and a pleasant but subdued supper, while on the club pontoon, Aussie II lay empty and quiet with her gaffer friends - job done.

Thanks, Trevor and Roy for organising a memorable weekend and thank you RBYC for your hospitality.

Bernard Patrick  
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