

BOATS IN THE BAY 2006

In bright and very breezy conditions (which freshened to Force 6 on occasion) the participants thrashed their way around the course set by Richard Sadler, the race officer and members of St.Ives Sailing Club creating a scene like a painting by Charles Napier Hemy come alive. The two pilot gigs attending performing particularly well with '**Fear Not**' (Devoran) winning the first race and '**Royal**' (Truro) the second. The recently rebuilt St.Ives lugger **Barnabas**, although fitted out in record time especially for the event, very nearly missed out. She broke her mizen-boom on her first attempt to get to St.Ives, and returned to Newlyn. On hearing the news Mike Laity and Kerstin Gorvin (having only just got **Dolly Pentreath's** foremast stepped) went to their aid repairing the mizen-boom and providing much-needed extra crew for the second attempt. Although reefed down to 2 mizens **Barnabas** was "goin' like a gerrick" looking resplendent with her pennant streaming and took second place in the second race. (**Fear Not** having retired suffering some damage).

Phil Slater with his wife Gillian at the helm won much admiration as they battled their way in their Falmouth oyster punt that he had rigged especially for the day with an experiental dipping lugsail and an equally experimental leeboard. They gained 3rd place in the first race before retiring exhausted from the second.

Owing to the extreme low tide the course was necessarily some distance from the shore. Consequently **Dolly Pentreath** skippered by Mike Laity, withdrew from racing to provide a show for those ashore by sailing close to Porthminster and Porthmeor beaches ending the day by sailing right into the harbour before rounding up smartly and dropping her sails. With the building of the 'Dolly' 14 years ago, Mike's father Norman Laity has championed the response in St.Ives to the current enthusiasm for traditional sail. Happily, his enthusiasm for luggers and seamanship have been passed on to Mike.

Just as the boats were returning to their moorings the largest of the luggers **Happy Return** arrived in time to enjoy the activities ashore. In spite of missing the racing they had sailed all day to support the event.

Meanwhile ashore, the Museum's curator Brian Stevens gave two well-attended, illustrated talks on the fishing industry of St.Ives. He had prepared a display of photos in support of the Jumbo Project. One of these show two new jumbos alongside the recently extended Smeaton's Pier. Clinker-built and without washboards and foredecks they are a model for the new jumbos that the Project proposes to build.

Jonny Nance's replica of Silas' punt, that inspired the concept of 'Boats in the Bay' and the Jumbo Project at its' launch last December, was on show at the slipway. His fathers' scale models (1:24) of St.Ives fishing boats comissioned by the late Jim Holman were on display in St.Leonards chapel on the quay. They include a mackerel boat 'Ebenezer' SS340, the pilchard boat Godrevy SS92, a gig , a seine boat and a punt which Jonny made after his fathers' sight had failed. Interestingly, the Jumbo is not represented.

Whilst the crews were enjoying their pasty (generously donated by Tim Symons) and pint (courtesy of St.Austell Ales) the St.Ives Community Choir performed for a large crowd of locals and surprised visitors from the plat outside the Shore Shelter which Johnny Perkins had 'dressed overall' with code flags. A display of information relating to Jumbos assembled by John McWilliams was mounted on the railings nearby.

Cllr. Harry Isaacs opened the formalities by introducing the Mayor, Bill Fry who in turn welcomed the visiting crews and introduced the Boats in the Bay/Jumbo Project's originator (and heritage activist!) Jonny Nance.

Introducing Mr. Robert 'Bean' Goodden who has ordered the first new jumbo, Jonny announced that the Jumbo Project was now underway. Much had been achieved since the idea was first mooted in April. He used the occasion to press home the social relevance of the Jumbo Project as a vehicle for the regeneration of the waterfront community, and raised a defiant cheer when challenging the town to reverse the policy that has seen the exodus of all worthwhile manufacture by reintroducing boatbuilding into it's heart.

Stephen Bassett, the Harbour Master then presented the prizes - **Barnabas** received the bottle of champagne generously provided by the Union Inn; the Slaters were presented with a token for £25 of fish - courtesy of Stevens fishmongers. The overall winners - **Fear Not** and **Royal** were awarded the top prizes - 'Somerset Royal' cider brandy in ceramic bottles that were made and donated by John Leach, who trained here in the 60's with his grandfather Bernard Leach. Like so many of his generation John was driven from the town by the adverse effects of tourism and so, not surprisingly, indentifies wholeheartedly with the Project's aims. All participating boats received a framed copy of the watercolour painted by R.Morton Nance (Jonny's grandfather) in 1888 when he was just 15 years old. This painting was used for the 'Boats in the Bay' posters that were kindly printed by Toni Carver.

The skipper of the Truro gig took the opportunity of pointing out the irony that St.Ives Gig Club were not represented despite having a gig rigged for sailing. Apparently the Cornwall Pilot Gig Association is actively discouraging sailing on account of insurance and safety issues. Nonetheless, it is hoped that future 'Boats in the Bay' events at St.Ives - *and there's little doubt that there will be* - will become established in their programme as a regular *sailing* event for pilot gigs and will include St.Ives' **Porthminster**.

The evening concluded with a performance by the Cadgwith Singers who came entirely at their own expense in support of the cause. Mr. David Muirhead introduced '*A nice bit of fish*' by John Barber of St.Ives which, he explained, through rugby connections had made it's way into the Cadgwith repertoire. Despite the chilling breeze the Singers enjoyed warm support throughout.

Later at the Union Inn the Singers struck up again and were joined by some locals. Once a regular event, singing in St.Ives' pubs, like so much of our heritage, died out some years ago. But later still, after the last had left for Cadgwith, a small group a locals struck up on their own - just like the old days..!

Overall the event was a tremendous success and thoroughly enjoyed by those taking part. Everyone participating did so entirely at their own expense for the benefit of the maritime heritage and residents of St.Ives. "It is so encouraging and very significant that an event on this scale can be staged these days without sponsorship - or a budget of any sort -but rather relying entirely on the goodwill and generosity of the community." Jonny Nance exclaimed. "This bodes well for the Project which, after all, was only mooted 4 months ago. These are interesting times - what a change from the 1930's when my father Dicon Nance, working alone and braving derision, restored the **Godrevy** SS92 down at Lelant. If he only knew what he was starting...!"

Jonny Nance 9/11/06