

Peel Traditional Boat Weekend 2013

The beauty of having a tidal sill with a swing bridge is that besides keeping the tide inside your harbour, it also means that all craft entering and leaving the harbour must do so en masse. When you are holding the Peel Traditional Boat Weekend, this means a series of mini flotillas enter the harbour twice daily!

From our viewpoint alongside Mike Clark's 'White heather' we had grandstand views as the fleet trickled in over the week preceding the event. Great excitement, good banter, much good natured abuse was flying around as craft converged on the historic and very pretty Peel harbour on the west coast of the Isle of Man. Peel Traditional Boat Weekend has been running now for many years, and has been supported since its inception by the Old Gaffers based on the Irish Sea. The NIOGA, DBOGA, SOGA, NWOGA amongst others have always turned out for what has typically been a superb weekend of sailing, singing, shouting, laughing and fantastic fun. This year the organising committee had arranged to accommodate the 50th anniversary celebrations of the OGA into the event, and this led to a record attendance, it really is fantastic the lengths people will go to for a free meal!

This year's event was stretched from three to five days, including two parades of sail making for a spectacular display for the crowds viewing along Peel harbour and promenade. If you have not yet attended the Peel Traditional Boat weekend I can strongly recommend making the effort. The cliffs surrounding Peel, the castle dominating the entrance to the harbour, the swing bridge, the 'olde worlde' winding cobbled streets, the sailing club literally 20 yards from the quay all make for a fantastic setting for what is definitively the best traditional boat rally (in my opinion) in Britain and Ireland.

Mr Mike Clark, his organising committee and small band of volunteers worked tirelessly from 06:00 every morning to ensure breakfasts of kippers, bacon, sausages, eggs and fresh bread were delivered aboard every participating craft, also toiling away to ensure that each venue for the nights festivities were properly set up. We were fed a different meal each night of the event en masse, including a delicious meal followed by a ceilidh in the local Masonic hall to celebrate the official anniversary of the 50th year of the OGA.

The parades of sail were beautiful displays of the attending yachts and working boats; there were standing lugs, gaff cutters, gaff yawls, gaff ketches of all sizes; Bermudian sloops, cutters, yawls, ketches, even the odd classic motorboat steaming among the fleet to add extra spice to an eclectic display of traditional sail. The annual 'Quick and Dirty Boat Race' was a great success, with a frankly huge crowd lining the harbour to watch a display of boat building prowess, followed by an equally entertaining display of eejitry, sinking, swimming, bobbing, drifting, a small amount of efficient paddling, and general nonsense of the aquatic bent! In fairness, with only a few short hours, a small pile of plywood and an extremely limited supply of tools, floating is impressive, actual controlled movement is very, very impressive! This year the best design plaudits were taken by the 'Surveyor 6' team headed by Alex Farrell, and the race itself won by 'Team Noah' headed by Mr Ted Williams.

Congratulations to the lucky prize winners, prizes are allocated by Mr Clark's committee by the means of a secret formula, known only to himself and a limited special few, this year the trophies were as follows: The Roin Bahn Cup – 'Child of the Waves' (Malcolm Hatton), Creek Inn Cup – Ain Mara (Dickie Gomes), 40+ Fishing Boat Trophy – 'Peel Castle' (Graham Bailey), Rum Cove Trophy For the individual to helped the event most) 'Fionne', Nobby Winch – 'Up Sprints' (Dennis Wright) (single handed passage of 60 miles with two dogs, aged 86!), Propeller Trophy – 'Berceuse' (Nick Magnay), Commissioners Cup – 'Fisher Lass' (Mike Craine), Henry Kelly Trophy for best boat by skippers vote – 'Wilma' (Scott Metcalf), Nicky Leg (Booby Prize) – 'Glance' Isobel Hood.

Particular note should be given to the winner of the 'Nicky leg' given out each year to the skipper of the craft deemed to have entertained the regatta by a display or act of such total stupidity and or humiliation that it

would be impossible to go unrewarded. In previous years Mr Adrian 'Madcap' Spence (NIOGA) has single-mindedly claimed this prize repeatedly year after year, after year, Mr Joe 'Master Frank' Pennington (NIOGA) has carved his name on the leg on occasion, but this year the award for a display of 'parking using the depth sounding capabilities of the keel over a four hour window within the harbour walls' was given to the beautiful craft 'Glance' with Strangford Lough and Quoile yacht club's Isobel Hood (NIOGA), once again ensuring that the award for buck stupidity remained firmly on the west side of the Irish Sea....

As with all regattas, the setting, organisation, and weather are important, but without the massed ranks of the slightly eccentric, mildly deluded, and in some cases, frankly bonkers boat owners and crews, prepared to converge from all corners of the British Isles and farther afield onto this small island, most famous for motorbike racing, the Peel Traditional Boat Weekend would not happen. This year's event was record breaking, it was a blur of craic agus ceol, sailing, diesel fumes, the distinctive aroma of cooking kippers drifting across the harbour (a fair amount of black market trading in illicit kippers between skippers too!), ceilidhs, but most importantly a fantasmagorical collection of beautiful craft, some perfection, some on-going projects, some tiny, and some fairly huge, and above all, we came, we were welcomed by a community like no other for a superb Trad boat hoolie, and we enjoyed ourselves! Congratulations to all involved, and see you next year.