Log of Wabbit GBR4604

**Teddington to Calais Swim 2013**

**continued...... The Barrier to Thurrock**

On Monday 22nd July The kayak was taken off the rib and placed in Wabbit’s foresail bungee cords for safe keeping, fresh food was bought and dished out to the cooler bags, Andy’s feet were dressed for infection prevention and all was ready for the off.

A team meeting was called to check on Andy’s readiness and willingness to continue, this of course he gave as a positive so plans were hatched for the best way to get him to the barrier and started. He would go with Lieva in the truck, walk to the PLA pier where the rib Bob2 would pick him up and the swim would continue. Wabbit travelling a little slower would catch up in time to assist if needed. Our lock out time was 13:40, marina fees were paid and once again the south dockers generosity shone through giving us not only a favourable rate for two nights but also a donation for the charity, they also recommended Thurrock yacht club as a good overnight stopping point. The lock was opened, Wabbit entered slowly and Bob2 came along side. Once the outer

gates were opened it again got a bit lively in the lock but we were soon out and on our way eastwards. Bob2 left us behind and raced off to meet Andy at the barrier. Wabbit took time to get to the barrier passing through the closest south bank span. By this time Andy had driven to barrier gardens, talked to the PLA, gained

permission to use their pier for access to Bob2 and started the swim downstream at 14:10. At 15:00 Tanya had a call from

the PLA duty officer who wanted to know if Andy was swimming today as they had not had contact from us, we replied that he

was already in the river and had used their pier to start, but did not have the name of their staff who authorised this. We saw Bob2 in the distance with Andy swimming strongly beside the lane rope,

by 15:55 the swim was at Jenningtree, we passed Bob2 and tried to pick up a buoy at Erith to wait for the swimmer but the tide was too strong to moor safely. We motored back to Bob2 on the north side of the river, and tried to keep pace by toing and froing. At 16:35 they passed Erith Yacht Club at 16:47 we reached Crayfordness and called London VTS to say we were out of their area and now would report to the lower Thames control.

Andy made the QE2 bridge at 17:25 and in the distance behind us the Wabbit crew could see two high speed ribs approaching the bridge fast. We took a position behind Bob2 planning to intercept these ribs and slow them down if they got too close preventing danger to our swimmer. As these ribs approached and slowed we could see that they were RNLI, they had heard our call to lower Thames control and one rib came over to talk to us for a while. Impressed by what Andy was doing they said they were on the river tomorrow and would look out for us, today they were out training. Wabbit left Andy to continue his swim with Bob2 as we headed off to Thurrock yacht club to call for a mooring, we had a

cheery reply “pick any vacant buoy and the bar is open”. Finding a nice looking buoy we tied up and got shipshape so that by the time Bob2 came alongside at 18:10 dinner was cooking and soon jackets with cheese and beans along with frankfurter and salad wraps were served.

Andy’s mum lived close by so we decided to give him shore leave for the night with Lieva and drop him off while the rest of the crew sampled the bar. The boat was tidied and all boarded Bob2 for a trip to shore, the tide was right out and the slipway to the club

looked a bit muddy, how muddy Tanya soon found out - she left the rib pristine clean and after putting one foot on the slipway turned somersault and rolled in the mud. Securing the rib we walked up to the bar and introduced ourselves to the club members who were on a work detail rubbing down and painting the windows to the clubhouse. Seeing the state of Tanya they offered the use of their shower room, Lieva had arrived and luckily had a change of clothes she could lend. Andy and Lieva left for the night while Peter, Nick, Tanya and I had a couple of drinks. Soon we were chatting to the Thurrock yacht club chaps and they were

very helpful, telling us of the changes to depths of the inner channels around Herne Bay caused by the wind farms and the dredging in the Thames for the new deepwater terminal. When the bugs had bitten us enough we said thanks to our hosts and left to return to Wabbit.