



AssurMada 2008

Last Thursday the 5th of June 2008, 21 ships with approximately 120 sailors set sail to Lowestoft from so many ports on the Dutch coast, for the eleventh edition of the AssurMada, the annual sailing event by and for Dutch members of the insurance business (and related companies). The purpose of this journey is twofold: first, a geographic goal and second, a social one: to meet and get to know each other in an adventurous spirit.

The number of ships that have joined this event, has seen a steady rise over the first decade, reaching a staggering forty ships for the 10 year jubilee in 2007. The collective departure from the Veerhaven port in Rotterdam was a very impressive and cheerful sight.

So far, all editions have passed off quietly, without any incidents, although last year both crossings were shrouded in mist. The current AssurMada committee set out to maintain the track record on the absence of accidents. Therefore the preparation of skippers and their crew has seen extra attention on the subject of safety this year. This was, among others, demonstrated with an extensive briefing at the skippers get-together last Mai. This briefing clearly laid out all rules for taking part in the AssurMada 2008, with an emphasis on the skipper's own responsibility for decisions regarding the crossing.

The program in Lowestoft this year was, apart from the traditional collective wining and dining – with the band The Hot Papa's playing – the karaoke at the Fishermans Wharf, also focused on safety. The visit of the rescue-party 'Zeevang' to the Lowestoft port in the beginning of June was not wholly coincidental. This organisation, consisting of twenty volunteers, is ready 24/7 for aiding people in distress on the water. It took the Dutch rescue-party as little as six hours to cross the channel to Lowestoft in their dinghy Simac.

On Saturday the 7th of June, there was a joint presentation and demonstration of their work by the SAR Station & Rescue Vessel Lowestoft and the Rescue Station 'Zeevang' from the Netherlands. Zeevang member Eric Weiffenbach was the victim in distress, and he was rescued repeatedly by both crews before taken safely back to shore.

Afterwards, RNLI member Paul Grey held a very inspiring presentation on sea safety on board and he was kind enough to inspect the AssurMada ships on safety, which yielded many useful observations.

Naturally, the AssurMada foundation supports the Dutch and English rescue teams and organisations with all their heart. This applies also for Sailability, a non-profit, volunteer-based organisation which enriches, through the activity of sailing, the lives of people with any type of disability, the elderly and the financially and socially disadvantaged.

After a rainy outward journey to and two full days of rain in Lowestoft, on Sunday at last the sun showed. With a northerly (wind) all ships set sail for the return-journey to the Netherlands, which all participants reached safely on Monday.