

## Powderham Rally, 21-22 October 2017

Bad weather has haunted our rally programme this year, but here was a rally relatively secure from its effects. Participants arrived at the Exeter Court Hotel near Powderham Castle on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> October in strong winds and heavy rain. Ill-health cut our numbers by four, but the weather had no impact because we all arrived by car!

25 members gathered in the cosy bar prior to an interesting illustrated talk by Nick Broomfield, on behalf of Raymarine. Nick took us through the history of navigation using stars and magnetic lode stones to some of the latest offerings of the industry whereby we can almost stay at home and direct our boats remotely from our iPhones! A more serious discussion then followed on the integration of different generations of, mostly, Autohelm and Raymarine instruments. I, for one, was somewhat reassured that there is still life in our 20 year old ST50 displays!

Dinner and wine aided further discussion and renewal of old friendships, such that the hotel had to gently hurry us along late into the evening so that staff could go home!

After a leisurely breakfast, 22 members headed for Powderham Castle, just 4 miles away – although I suspect several travelled much further than that! The poor weather of Saturday was just a memory, and a muddy car park, with sunshine and showers giving a bright prospect of this beautiful castle and grounds.



Powderham Castle has been in the Courtenay family for over 600 years, barring a few years when they fell out of favour following the Civil War. It is still their family home and many of the rooms we visited are in regular use by the current Lord Charles and his family, son of the owner, the Earl of Devon. Our tour guide was brilliant fund of stories, of secret passages and doorways concealed within bookcases, of ghosts in a tower, of a

music room to make royalty green with envy, but also of simple things. Who would have guessed that the near life-size painted ladies set in a fireplace were companions to the lonely lady of the house – hence the origin of the expression ‘a companion set’ for fire irons near the grate.



Some of us lunched at the castle café and it was 8 stalwarts who boarded the tractor-trailer combination for a tour of the castle grounds and deer park. Lord Charles, or at least his recorded voice, accompanied us with yet another fund of explanations and stories.

Overall, the event has been a great success and a model for future boat-less events of this kind

Tony Wildig