

SALCOMBE YAWL NEWSLETTER SPRING 2002



BARNEY'S BUMBLINGS

The season is under way. As I write this we have sailed the commissioning race and the first race of the Spring series. Five Yawls made the effort and started on a beautiful, balmy spring afternoon for the commissioning race. Well done that five.

There is much to report and say so please read through to the end as some items are very important.

Firstly the Regatta. SYC have been very good and are giving the Yawls 3 different starts this year. Last year highlighted some difficulties which we have done our best to overcome. It is not perfect but as our fleet has expanded we have tried our best to accommodate everyone. Perhaps it would be best to regard this as an experimental year. We have put these things in place and by the time the AGM comes round we will use that as the forum for discussion on what we have done. It is difficult to say whether the fleet will continue to expand but we must facilitate the possibility based on the last few years. Two new boats have already been allocated numbers this year, 'JB' Britton's Y173, as yet unnamed and Nick Rowell and Trevor Stanton's jointly owned Y174, Harlequin (it's a type of duck, so you know what to do when they come near). Two more new boats will be on the water before long for Dave Lees and Trevor Boardwell. This would put three class winning boats onto the second hand market as potential racers. What we must realise is that for every new boat there is potentially an old one wanting to race. The problem of accommodating this is self inflicted by the owners. The progression of the class into 3 fleets will allow for its continued development and help to maintain the demand and value for second hand boats.

The important thing is that you can decide in which fleet you think you will get the best racing. Having said that the SYC have the final say and they do that in consultation with us. We want to have reasonably balanced fleets to justify the 3 starts, so although you choose you may be moved. Although there are 3 fleets, Red, Gold and Blue, there will be 4 sets of prizes.

The Red fleet is for the whizzo helms and anybody can enter. The Gold fleet replaces last year's Blue fleet which is open to 'old', up to Y140, and 'new' post Y140 boats. There will be 2 sets of prizes in the Gold fleet, one for 'old' and one for 'new' boats. Hopefully this will sort out once and for all the feeling that the 'new' boats have an unfair advantage and a superior helm sailing an 'old' boat in the Gold fleet winning more than one prize. I feel that there will be a great deal of latent competition in this fleet because the 'old' boats will be trying to beat the 'new' boats and the 'new' boats will be working hard to stop them. Call it pride if you like. That will certainly add some flavour to the racing even though the boats are racing for different trophies.

That leaves the Blue fleet. This I have nicknamed the fleet for ladies and gentlemen and it is open to 'old' boats only. It is designed for the less experienced helm who wants to race. We want to encourage all Yawl owners to race but we do not want them to feel intimidated by the prospect. The Blue fleet needs to be encouraged in order to get the fleet established. If you were placed in the second half of last year's Blue fleet you should stay Blue, however if the numbers entering in this category are insufficient it will be made a reasonable number. Hopefully it will sort itself out so please think carefully before completing your Regatta entry based on your results last year. For future encouragement of the class I feel it is important that

there are trophies and prizes throughout the whole class which helms can compete for. If it is necessary three medium sized fleets must be better than two overcrowded ones.

Well, how are the SYC going to facilitate three fleets? This has been a problem which, as I said, the SYC has been very helpful in accommodating. We must reciprocate this year and in future years by giving up some time in helping the SYC run the Regatta in whatever way we can. **This means you!** We are the biggest fleet. Bigger is not better, better is better! Please do all you can to help. We have one of our own in Wendy Palmerone (crew in Y169 Rum Tum Tigger) as the next Rear Commodore Sailing. This gives us the opportunity to show what we as a class can do to help and is one of the reasons why we have opted for the Red fleet to have a morning start this year at 10.10. This should make for plenty of experienced help in the afternoons. In future years the morning start will be rotated with the two in the afternoon at 14.20 and 14.40. As I write this I have received objections from some Red fleet sailors regarding sailing in the morning. I have circulated the Committee and the matter has been thought about over a weekend. After a rethink a majority of the Committee are of the opinion that the Red fleet should race in the mornings this year with the matter being dealt with at the AGM in August. Please accept this change as part of the development of the class.

Since the last Newsletter when there were only 7 confirmed Cork week entrants I am pleased to say that we have had a really good response. We are now the full 15 boats with an additional mega RIB. The Royal Cork Yacht Club has been very accommodating and they seem quite excited about the prospect of something unusual by the way of a traditional class taking part. Should anyone else want to take the Irish waters please get in touch with me for all the necessary information. There is a good mix of boats throughout the whole class from all the fleets with a family holiday atmosphere running through the event. Thank you all for showing your support for such an unusual event. It should be quite an adventure with much to report for the next Newsletter.

N.B. Cork participants. We will be having a meeting over the Whitsun open weekend by which time everything should be finalised. Please ensure that you have done the following:-

- 1) Send RCYC your ISAF Certificate **before 1st May.**
- 2) Send RCYC your crew classification **before 1st May.**
- 3) Send RCYC your crew registration identification **before 1st May.**
- 4) Stephen Parker-Swift's son owns Crew Clothing. They will sponsor two very special shirts per Yawl with the SYOA Cork Week regalia embroidered upon them. Please let Stephen know your two sizes as soon as possible on stephen.parkerswift@btinternet.com or fax to 01548 560 658. There will be other shirts available for purchase with the embroidered SYOA Cork Week regalia.

March 6th saw 23 of us enjoy a very convivial Curry evening in London. We were treated to some excellent food with mushroom bargee, alloo bargee, sag bargee, bindi bargee but no argy-bargy over the bill as there was last year. With members travelling from far and wide it made a good start to the season's social side. It looks like the event is firmly established in our calendar.

Our Skittles season enjoyed mixed success and much fun for those taking part on winter evenings. No glory this year I'm sorry to report.

Please will someone volunteer to take over the position of Honorary Secretary when Tim steps down at the August AGM.

We have one more Committee meeting in May before the next AGM. The Committee may be bringing 3 proposals to the AGM. Two of the proposals concern changes to the Rules and Specification, one on dry sailing and one on fittings. The third proposal may be an addition to our Constitution regarding the Termination or Suspension of Membership of our Association. Please inform our Hon. Sec. in good time of anything you would like raised at our next meeting or of any proposals for the AGM.

Lastly I must remind you that any unsporting behaviour likely to bring our class any disrepute **must be protested**. Have a good season. We all have much to look forward to. I look forward to seeing you both on and off the water. Happy sailing!

Barney

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Ed

I write in defence of our poor put upon Chairman. I understand there have been a few objectors regarding the morning classes for Salcombe Yawls in the Salcombe Yacht Club Regatta Week.

It seems a shame when we have an expanding class that some owners cannot adapt to the necessary changes that result. Numbers preclude us being able to sail in two fleets and the Yacht Club have gone to great efforts to accommodate our needs.

It seems that:-

1. "We will not get good sailing in the morning". How does the Town Regatta survive if this is so - and how is it that the eight morning classes in the Yacht Club Regatta come back year after year if the sailing is of such poor quality?
2. Sailors will be at a loose end during the afternoon and maybe have to spend the time with their families on the beach! Could I make a suggestion; how would it be if these people with time on their hands volunteer for rescue boat or Watch house duties. This was hoped to be a positive result of moving one of the local classes to an a.m. start.
3. It will ruin the social side of the week! Not that I am suggesting that SYC should pander to any demands but if the afternoons are usefully filled by the time they have clocked off duty, the bar will be open.
4. I have also heard silly rumours that the Red Fleet is the "most important" and should not be asked to race in the morning. Most important in what I wonder, definitely at arrogance, yes at whinging and certainly at egos.

Come on chaps, get a life and give the Chairman a break.

Jane

LETTER TO THE MEMBERSHIP re Yawl Top Batten

For those of you that attended the A.G.M. you may recall I proposed that we adopt a full length top batten, instead of the batten that we currently favour. Sadly it was rejected by a majority vote, without those of us who favour this proposal being able to put their reasons to you why it makes a lot of sense to change.

Any sailmaker worth his salt would raise his arms in amazement, if we asked that he design a sail with a batten for a powerful main with a large roach that stops three inches short of the mast. Over the years the adoption of the full length top battens has been raised and rejected for spurious reasons. The current short batten is inefficient and is the cause of sails wearing out and losing shape prematurely. A full length top batten would overcome this entirely. When there was no roach on our sails a small

batten, sufficient to support the leach was O.K. However the roach on our sails has increased substantially over the years and now needs the support of a full length batten. The compression on the batten being taken by the mast where it should be! - and not as it is at the moment, pressing on the sail, 3 inches from the mast, causing a great deal of wear and stretching of the sail cloth at this point. Also the camber and twist of the sail would be more controllable by diligent use of the kicker, making the sail more efficient, particularly in a blow.

It does seem strange that we have allowed some of the best designers in the world to put their minds to developing the hull and yet we have ignored the rig!!

The downside would be in light airs, when the sail would be more sensitive to the kicker and would probably require "snapping" into shape to prevent backwinding on a tack or jibe. For the more athletic, vigorous roll tacking would overcome this!! The mast at the point of compression would probably require reinforcing, perhaps with tufnal or similar - not difficult, or expensive.

I am reliably informed the cost of modifying existing sails would be modest.

Your views would be appreciated, please drop me a line or e-mail me at stephen.parkerswift@btinternet.com

BOATBUILDING and APPRENTICESHIP

It was in 1962 that I left school, I had already decided that I either wanted to be an electrician or a boatbuilder. At the time I lived at East Portlemouth and spent a lot of my spare time with Jim Stone in his boathouse at Longpark, helping or hindering him, I don't really know which.

This time spent with Jim prior to leaving school tipped the balance towards boatbuilding, so I plucked up courage and visited Edgar Cove's Boatyard to see if I could become an apprentice. I met the boss, Edgar Cove and asked him about a job. He told me he would have to discuss it with his mother, and I should return the next day.

On my return I had to go to the house which was opposite the yard and wait in the porch until I was called for; after several minutes I was ushered into a rather dark room with a large oak desk at which Mrs. Cove was sitting with Edward standing at her shoulder (at the time I remember thinking it was like a scene from Charles Dickens). After a few questions I was told I could start the following Monday, to arrive at 8 a.m. sharp and come equipped with a two foot folding rule and a carpenter's pencil. The few other tools I might need would be supplied for a short period by the yard.

On my arrival Edward showed me around the yard and introduced me to the other 'hands' as he called the rest of the workers. He then took me to the office door alongside which stood the biggest broom I had ever set eyes on, and I was told that whenever I was between jobs I had to get 'Bertie' the broom and sweep all the shavings off the floor and place them in a large box by the door, and once a week to burn them on the foreshore. I was rather put out by this as for some rather obscure reason I thought I was at the yard to learn how to build a boat. The other rules were absolutely no chewing of gum, and only speak when spoken to.

As the first few weeks went by I gradually settled in. Mostly my work consisted of helping anyone who needed a hand, still no woodwork of any kind, just moving wood around and holding battens to enable fair lines to be drawn, and of course the daily ritual of sweeping up, oh yes, and worse still, cleaning out the toilets every Wednesday and Friday afternoon.

Then one day Edward said that it was time to learn how to use a chisel, and it would be best if I bought one of my own. It had to be a Footprint brand and one and a half inches wide, and one could be purchased from Clark's shop just up the road. I was told that I could either buy the chisel outright or pay for it weekly, and as at that time for the first year of my apprenticeship my weekly wage was £2 6/3d. and the chisel

YAWLS AT BANTHAM

was £1 17/6d I chose the weekly option. I was also told to order a Stanley No. 4 smoothing plane which then cost £2 7/6d so obviously this also went on the weekly option.

The first job for the new chisel was to fit small mahogany wedges behind all the timbers on a small rowing boat. These wedges I was told were to stop the planks splitting where the copper nails went through and guess what, if any of the planks split it would be my fault - luckily none did!

At about this time the yard got a larger order from the Admiralty for sixteen 14ft. 6in. Drifter boats. These were like very large heavily built rowing boats, planked with mahogany or larch, and everything else in the boat was English oak. Edward Cove had to draw out the boat full size from the Admiralty drawings so that templates of all the different parts could be made. In the top of the yard I had to paint the floor white so that it could be drawn on. Edward then started to transfer the small drawing into full size on the floor and we then started making templates. When this was complete the templates were loaded into a van and we took them to a large wood near Harbertonford where we met up with the estate foreman. The idea was to go into the woods with the templates and actually pick out the oak shapes from the standing trees, and being the youngest I was the one who had to do the climbing. I had to take the template up the tree and hold it up alongside the large branches and move it around until it fitted the shape of the branch, then paint a circle of white paint above and below and the number of the part on the side of the branch.. This job actually took us about two days at the end of which time we had found oak crooks to match all the templates, it was then left to the estate workers to chainsaw the branches and they duly arrived at the yard.

Once the oak was offloaded it had to be 'sided', this converts it from round to flat sections. To carry out this job we had to erect a platform over the slipway to support the large pieces of oak so that it could be 'pitsawn' by hand using a saw which was eight feet long with handles at each end. One person would stand above the wood being sawn and a second person below (guess who), the job of the lower person being to guide the saw along a chalk line and to stop it from jamming in the cut, and also, incidentally, to get covered in wet oak shavings and bark!

When all the oak was sawn it had to be cut to shape on a large bandsaw and the construction of the Drifter boats could commence. On these boats, as with all Admiralty boats, all the joints and the laps between the planks had to have a liberal coating of lead-rich white priming paint, and they had to be assembled while the paint was wet. This was a very messy job as the paint would fly everywhere (I wonder what modern day Health & Safety Regulations would say about that practice).

The Admiralty overseer would come every week to check on the progress and every second boat when complete would have a swamp test.

It took just over a year to complete the sixteen boats, and we then got an order for two 27ft. Whalers. These were planked with mahogany and fitted out with Canadian Rock Elm and when completed were sent to Sierra Leone.

As well as the Admiralty work we also built R.N.L.I. boarding boats for several stations, as well as a large number of boats for local customers. At that time it seemed when people retired to Salcombe the standard package was to have an 18ft. motor launch, a rowing boat or pram dinghy and a Salcombe yawl; we had several customers like this.

The later part of my five year apprenticeship was mostly taken up with building clinker rowing boats and pram dinghies, several Salcombe sailing prams and a 22ft. motor sailer for a local customer.

Looking back on it I feel it was a good time to be an apprentice, as the boats we built were varied, the materials were plentiful, and we were not governed in our work by any nonsensical European rules and regulations.

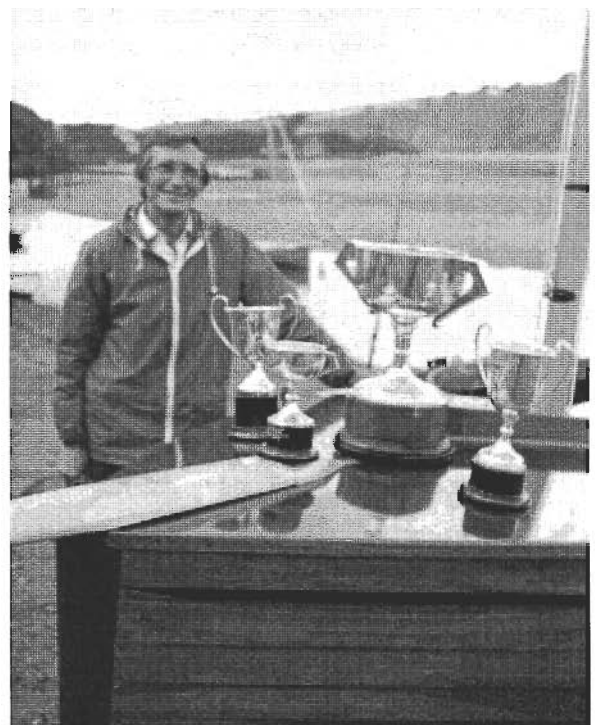
The first Salcombe Yawl to arrive on the River Avon at Bantham in 1960 was when Peter Clothier had a boat built by Jim Stone and named her "Yaffle" (woodpecker in Somerset) and was number Y34. *Yaffle* should perhaps be more properly described as a "Bantham Yawl" as she was fitted with a 1.5 hp Stuart Turner engine. In those days outboards were unreliable and the inboard engine enabled the boat to motor out to sea for sailing and bass fishing - ever popular out of Bantham. *Yaffle* was much admired and remains to this day at Bantham and is used regularly in the summer season for sailing and fishing quite seriously, now owned by A.N. Little, son-in-law of the original owner.

Yaffle's arrival was followed when Harold Turnbull bought *Swift* Y18 in about 1962 from Dr. Hammond, She was later fitted with a 1.5 hp Stuart Turner engine in about 1965 and was used extensively in the late 60's by the Turnbull twins Nigel and Andrew, Andrew cruise-camping extensively along the South Devon and Cornwall coasts. In the early 70's Nigel Turnbull and I assumed joint ownership of Y18.

Yaffle's and *Swift's* appearance in the Estuary was followed in 1967 by *Twilight*, Y54 built by Dr. Barber, again at Stones and again fitted with an inboard engine. In those days the Yawls were not raced as they were somewhat difficult to tack given the engine skeg. In the early 70's, following removal of the engine from *Swift* Y18, we occasionally entered the handicap class in the Bantham Sailing Club Annual Regatta. *Yaffle* and *Twilight* are still used on the River, sadly *Swift* after changing ownership again in the early 90's was last seen falling to pieces in a greenhouse in Aveton Gifford.

During the early 1970's Bobby Beard purchased a very smart new Yawl from Glover and named her *Sabot*, I cannot recall the number, followed by Dr. Clive Sowry purchasing secondhand Y85 *DroopSnoot* so named because of her bent bowsprit. In those years there was occasionally the odd "friendly" involving *Swift*, *DroopSnoot* and *Sabot*.

We then come to the winter of 1975/76. Hugh Cater had arrived in the village some two years previously and was concerned that there might not be enough work to carry him through that winter and he suggested to me that we should build a Yawl. Hugh provided the expertise and labour with me funding the materials. This led to the launch of *Alpha of Aune* Y104 in time to compete in the 1976 Salcombe Yacht Club Regatta. I do not think it is immodest to suggest the performance of *Alpha of Aune* re-awakened perhaps



Hugh Cater with a selection of silverware!

flagging interest at that time in the Yawl. The Hugh Cater design (without recourse to computers!) was the forerunner of what might be called the modern Yawl. In the Salcombe Yacht Club Regatta of 1976 she convincingly won all the major trophies during the week by a considerable margin. (See photograph of Hugh Cater with the silverware).

Immediately following the end of the 1976 season, we sold *Alpha* Y104 to Dr. and Mrs. Openshaw, also Bantham summer residents. They competed her at Bantham and extensively in both Salcombe weeks for a number of years up to the early 1990's. In the winter of 1976/77 we then built *Beta* of *Aune* Y110 winning the 1977 Salcombe Sailing Club week although by a somewhat less convincing margin than in 1976.

At the end of the 1977 season we sold *Beta* to Eddie Dunhill, later I believe to become the Salcombe Yacht Club boat and once again completed the annual exercise building *Gamma* of *Aune* Y115 in the winter of 77/78 and again winning the Salcombe Regatta in 1978 by a small margin. Y115 completed Hugh Cater's and my annual build and I now limit my competitive sailing activities to the River Avon.

Alpha's win in 1976 had created considerable interest in Yawls in Bantham and in 1977 the Ridgway family bought *Aleron* Y53, competing at Salcombe for a number of years. Michael Weldon bought *Pisces* Y70 from Tim and Edward Noyce while Nigel Turnbull purchased *Aleron* Y53 from the Ridgways in about 1982.

The winter of 78/79 saw Hugh Cater building again, this time *Delta* of *Aune* Y116 for Alan Gompertz, another Bantham summer resident, while in 1980 the Ridgway family had *Epsilon* of *Aune* Y121 built by Hugh. *Epsilon* was competed for a number of years at Salcombe and then subsequently sold. The Ridgway family, regretting the sale a few years later, bought Y128 (not presently named).

That brings us pretty well up to date - Hugh Ridgway competing Y128 in the 2001 Salcombe Sailing Club Regatta while the Yawls at Bantham race in the Annual Bantham Sailing Club Regatta over the August Bank Holiday.

The current Bantham fleet is:

- Y34 *Yaffle*, A.N. Little (fitted with engine)
- Y53 *Aleron*, Nigel Turnbull
- Y54 *Twilight*, Richard & Charles Barber (fitted with engine)
- Y70 *Pisces*, Michael Wheldon
- Y115 *Gamma* of *Aune*, Roger Smith
- Y116 *Delta* of *Aune*, Alan Gompertz
- Y128 "not named", Ridgway family

I hope readers find this brief note of the Yawls of Bantham of interest. I suspect there are some errors and omissions due to lack of memory. There is certainly one other Yawl owned by a Mr. Pierce which is occasionally moored in the river but not used a great deal. I am sure the very competitive racing in Salcombe is somewhat different to that we experienced in the second half of the 70's but I do think that at least Hugh Cater and Bantham can claim credit for re-awakening interest.

The Yawl fleet at Bantham continues to give much pleasure, generally being used as family day boats, as originally intended, sailing regularly in Bigbury Bay, including the odd bit of fishing.

A. Ridgway

Foam: Y1?

FOAM; Y1?

While searching through my father Bob Northcott's effects (he died just before Christmas), I came across this fine photo of the *Foam*, taken in the early 1950s. She was purchased to replace the A class keelboat *Jean*. Sadly, this boat had sunk in a storm in Brixham Harbour in 1948 where she was moored during Torbay Regatta and became a total loss. I sailed in *Foam* several times as a child, but fortunately was not aboard when she capsized and sank in Ditch End when Tom Field, a friend of my father's, was sailing her. Helmsman and crew were picked up by a passing boat but *Foam* did not reappear for some weeks, being eventually found near Woodcot Rocks and salvaged by Edward Hannaford.

Foam was apparently built in 1906 by the Dornom Brothers for Andrew McIlwraith of Woodcot, the donor of Cliff House to Salcombe Yacht Club and the town. McIlwraith had joined the Yacht Club in 1908 and competed in that year's regatta in the "Handicap for Motor Cruisers" in a boat named *Mabel*, finishing third. Press reports of the Regattas of 1910 and 1911 list *Foam* and McIlwraith winning the class for boats not exceeding 20 feet overall in both years. The only other pre World War II record of *Foam* which I have been able to find so far is an entry in the under 20 foot waterline class in the 1925 Regatta in the name of I. Jennings, whom I believe to have been McIlwraith's son-in-law.

Foam is said to have originally been Yawl 1, but was converted to a sloop when she was rigged in the 1930s. This assertion requires confirmation. Yawl races were certainly offered in the regattas in the early 1930s. but an organised class was not established until 1935, when a boat named *Sea Lass*, numbered Y1, owned by a Mr. C.S. Saunders, sailed in Saturday races throughout the season. The other four boats sailing in that inaugural year were Y2, *Blackbird* (the first of that name), Y3, *Evelyn*, Y4, *Blond* or *Blondie* and Y5, *Lady Joan*. David Gay's *Blackbird*, Y14, built in the winter of 1938/39, should strictly be named *Blackbird II*.

Foam passed out of father's hands some time before 1966 when (old) Jim Stone built Y50, *Dodo* for him. This boat was usually sailed by yet another Stone, John, who at the time was working at the Marine Hotel. My sister Mary often joined the crew on windy days when a third hand was needed. In those days, the helmsman rarely expected to sit out. *Foam* was splendidly restored by David Cater in 1999. Re-rigged as a Yawl, she assumed the number Y1, but does she really deserve it?

Jane Bar

