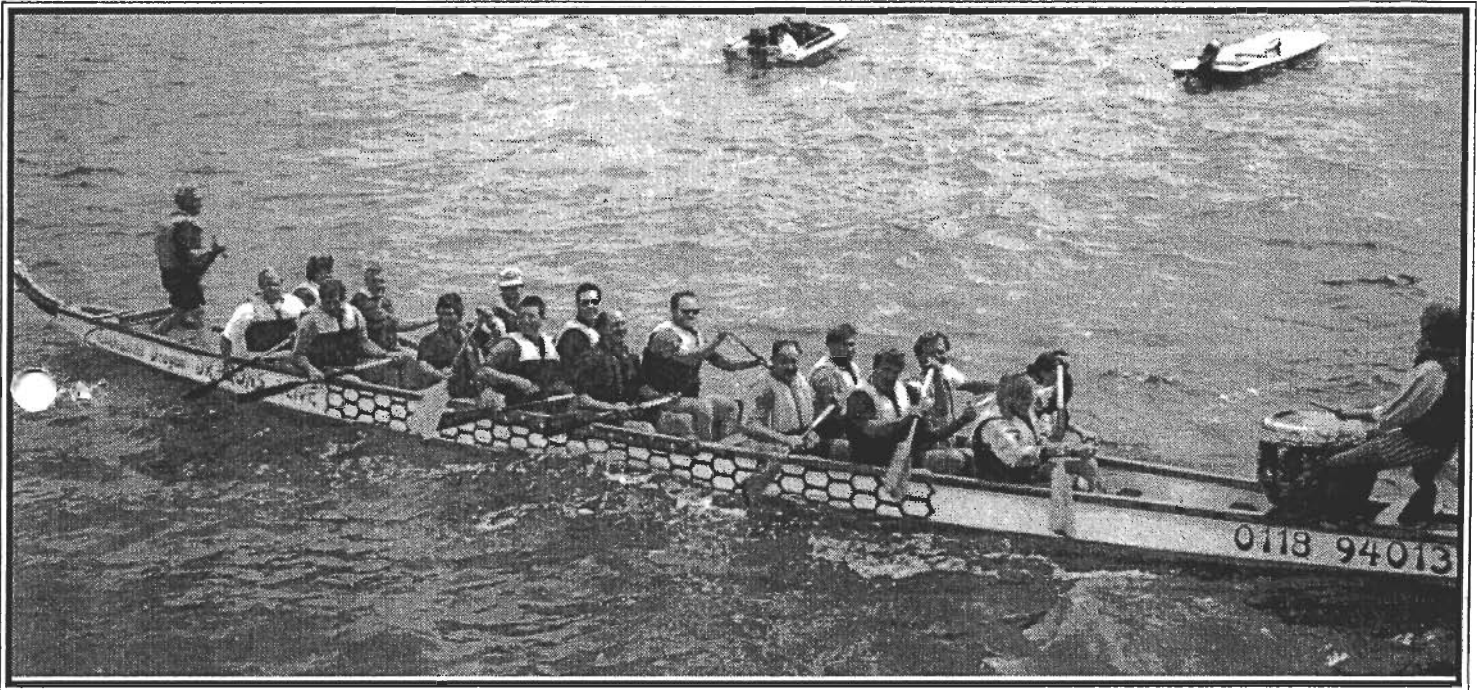


SALCOMBE YAWL OWNERS
NEWSLETTER
JULY 1998



Yawl Sailors change technique to triumph in Dragon Boat racing - see back page report.

FROM THE HIGH CHAIR

Dear Salcombe Yawl Owner,

Firstly an apology for the lateness of the Association newsletter. This is because the committee have considered the revision of the class rules to be paramount, and unfortunately this has taken longer than anticipated. However it seems that the rules revision is nearly completed and will now be put to the members at the AGM during Regatta week. To this effect a copy of the latest revision is enclosed for your perusal.

The committee have agreed to put the proposal to you as a package and hope you will be able to support this essential revision.

As no revisions can be voted on at the AGM it is of the utmost importance that any members' concerns are dealt with immediately. Therefore please read the revisions very carefully and if you feel you cannot support the proposal please let myself or the secretary know ASAP.

Your committee consider the revision to be absolutely essential for the class to continue and flourish and will be looking for every member's support. May I take this opportunity to thank all those members whose comments and suggestions have greatly helped in drafting the enclosed copy.

Malcolm

Chairman: telephone (01548) 843681
fax (01548) 844181

Secretary: telephone (01548) 852812
fax (01548) 854320

XANTIPPE AT 30

At the end of 1966 Micky and I and the children spent three days in Salcombe, between Boxing Day and New Year's Eve. I had last been there some 20 years earlier, and it was her first visit (her parents had spent their honeymoon there in 1949; their photo-album shows a precursor of a Salcombe Yawl). By the time we returned to London we had booked a place for the summer and ordered a Salcombe Yawl.

Why Salcombe? Why a Yawl?

Before the War my father kept a yacht in Poole Harbour. First there was White Heather, built in 1908, a fine boat. (Incidentally, she is still afloat). In 1935 he switched to the somewhat bigger Larry, a Camper & Nicholson boat, built at about the same date. They were both gaff-rigged cutters with long bowsprits. He was a keen ocean-racer. (In White Heather he peaked with a first in the Channel Race in 1934 and in Larry with a first in the Heligoland Race in 1936). Although his work was in London and the Midlands, we lived at Poole.

For the summer holidays the pattern was to set out southwards, towards Cherbourg or the Channel Islands, and then head NW to a West Country destination. This might be Dartmouth, or Fowey, or Helford, but most often it was Salcombe. Family photo-albums show us there in 1931, 1935, 1936 (when we clambered all over the Herzogin Cecilie), and 1937. An image of Salcombe as an enchanting place was imprinted on me.

My next stay in Salcombe, in 1947, was unplanned. The

desperately cold winter of that year was followed by a fabulous summer. I have been looking at the meteorological record. It was the sunniest since 1899, the hottest since 1911, and included an unprecedented spell of anti-cyclonic, north easterly weather. Temperatures peaked during August 16-18, reaching 95F at Bournemouth. (What the weather did next I will say in a moment). I was a student, on long vacation. My father had been invited to cruise down the Biscay coast in a friend's yacht, Tally Ho, a fine old ex-Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter. I was invited along too; I had been a navigator in the Royal Navy, and would work my passage by doing a little navigation and giving the owner tuition in sun and star sights.

We set out from Poole in early August. We sailed placidly along the Brittany coast, passing quite close to the Ile de Batz. I scanned it carefully but there was no sign of the German destroyer I had seen beached and burning there on June 9 1944. At L'Aber Vrach, our first stop, we took onboard an enormous langouste. The foreign currency allowance was small but Tally Ho's owner had happily had the foresight to bring a large tin of coffee beans (coffee was still very short in France). This kept us well supplied with shellfish, chickens, and wine throughout the trip. We went on to Concarneau, and eventually to Belle Ile. Then we turned back. It had been a lazy, hedonistic, sun-drenched trip. By August 20 we were some miles NW of Guernsey, on our way to Poole. The late afternoon forecast was much as it had been day after day - 'Light variable', 'Calm', 'E to NE force 1 to 2', I forget which. But the weather was not the same. An unpleasant sea was kicking up. The Navy had left me with a fairly strong stomach, but before I finished supper I was volunteering to take the tiller (my qualms subsided once I was in the open air). The meteorological record gives force 7 for the Guernsey area and says that winds were high in Devon, with gusts up to 45 knots at the Lizard. It also speaks of thunderstorms and heavy rain. I remember the sky turning ominously dark. We carried on under reduced sail for a while, but before midnight it was decided to heave-to.

If you have to heave-to, a Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter is a good boat to do it in, and the night passed uncomfortably but unalarmingly. The trouble, though, was that next morning, August 21, we had little idea where we were. We had no electronic navigational equipment, and our overnight drift was difficult to estimate. The whole south coast was heavily overcast according to the meteorological record. We were all straining to catch some sight of land when the murk at last lifted a little to reveal, rather frighteningly, a large, ominous, black mass. Tally Ho's skipper knew the South coast like the back of his hand; 'Bolt 'Ead', he pronounced. Our rate of drift must have been quite high. We cautiously nosed our way into Salcombe Estuary. What a relief!

That was a Thursday. We were still in the main anchorage on Saturday, enjoying this unplanned respite. That afternoon I was on deck when I was startled by the sight and sound of what, I learnt afterwards, were Salcombe Yawls swishing past. It was still quite windy and they were going fast. As I recall, there were about five of them. I have tried to find out which they were. The highest number at that time was Y15 (Kingfisher); she had been launched quite recently and was almost certainly racing, crewed either by Harris Thorning's father or by Harris himself. Y14 (Blackbird) was probably out, though Harris says she missed a race around that time. There

would also have been Y9 (Priscilla; in my old lists she is called Patricia, but that is incorrect according to Harris), an open-decked boat with a mizzen fixed to her transom, and Y7 (Choice). And Y4 (Blonde) and Y3 (Evelyn) could have been there.

After my father died, in 1952, my mother lived on in the house on Poole Harbour looking out over Brownsea. Micky and I were living in London, and usually took the family to Poole for summer holidays. It was after my mother died, in 1966, that we made that visit to Salcombe. My 1947 experience must have etched a sharp picture in my memory. I had had no further contacts, direct or indirect, with Yawls since then but I was not quite clear that a Salcombe Yawl was what I wanted. We stayed at the Salcombe Hotel. When I mentioned my interest they directed me to Pete Petit (the then manager) as someone knowledgeable in this area. I asked about a possible boat-builder I had heard of; he shook his head: 'No', he pronounced emphatically, 'for Yawls - Stone'. So the next day we went over to Goodshelter. An agreement was soon reached: a new Salcombe Yawl for £520, excluding sails. (I noticed that for many years the price of a Yawl and that of an Austin Mini remained about the same). We heard later that her sail number would be Y60. And her name? I circled around unavailingly until it occurred to me that Socrates's wife was called Xantippe; for some reason the name clicked.

I went across to Jim Stone's boatshed to take possession of her on July 27, 1967. The sight of her afloat thrilled me; I could not wait to start sailing her, thereby foregoing the shrewd advice which Jim would have given me. (I made up for this later). She seemed beautiful to sail, and I have never wanted to replace her with a younger boat. I entered her for the Regatta rather nervously, my previous dinghy sailing having been confined to pottering about in Poole Harbour. As the first race was starting a yellow Yawl appeared from nowhere; she carried on past the rest of us, to win easily. It was Y61, soon to be known as the "Yellow Peril". 'Bungy' Taylor had been working on her up to the last minute. That season she swept all before her. When it was time for us to go back to London I suggested to the Stones that before she was laid up one of them should take Xantippe on a race, to see how she went when sailed w. At that time Terry Stone was helming Bill Shelvoke's Yawl, but she had recently been holed, and it was suggested that he try out Xantippe. He did, and won easily. According to David Gay's account (Newsletter July 1997), on returning home Bill Shelvoke immediately ordered a new yawl, to be just like Y60. (This became Y65, launched in 1968).

After the 1967 season it was decided to introduce a minimum weight for Yawls, and those built that year (Y57, Y58, Y60, Y61) were weighed. Y61 was lightest with Y60 next, and the weight of her hull, 6cwt. without centreplate, was chosen. Xantippe's first suit of sails had the advantage that on the beat you could see where you were going; but Terry Stone had not thought well of them and we switched to McKillop sails. My brother took to coming over from Poole to join me for Regattas; in 1970 he ordered a Yawl for himself (it became Y71, launched in 1971). Xantippe's cup-winning career peaked rather early, I'm afraid, with the Stonehanger Cup in 1969. A nice feature in those days, especially for newcomers, was the Sunday racing from the ICC, organised by Ted Pearce. After the race we would pick an ICC mooring and go aboard Kiwi (or, later,

Egremont) for tea. Over tea one could sometimes pick Alec's or 'Bungy's' brains.

Forward now to 1985. July 30 was a calm day; I was adjusting the forestay and shrouds prior to the SYC Regatta, when a motor boat went by. I heard a strange sound from the mast. Close inspection showed horizontal cracking at deck level, almost as if it had been sawn half-way through. I hurried in a panic to Jim's boatshed. It seemed that I was in luck: one spare wooden mast was still available. In due course we rigged it. But because of high winds and the cancellation of the first race, the mainsail was not hoisted until before the start of the race on Monday August 5 - and it would go only half-way up: the groove was defective! There was now only one recourse. Alec had had a metal mast at Goodshelter for some years, and I would have to borrow that. It was rigged on Tuesday morning. In the race that afternoon it was soon spotted and there were protests on the water. The issue would come up at the AGM of the SYOA to be held that same evening. I searched through minutes of previous AGMs. Eventually I found what I wanted, and that evening I was able to remind members that it had been resolved at a previous AGM (admittedly one held some years ago, in 1974) to reaffirm the principle of wooden masts but, at the same time, to invite members to gain experience of the metal mast at Goodshelter; the idea was that it would circulate round the fleet with Yawl owners sending in reports on it. I added that one owner (Andrew Milligan of Y75) had agreed at that meeting to be the first to try it out; but in the event he found its shrouds too short for his boat; there the matter had been allowed to lie until Xantippe took up the invitation 11 years later. (It was as well that no one else present had studied those minutes; the experiment was restricted to the 1974 season). The meeting agreed that Y60 be allowed to use this mast for the rest of the season.

Forward now to the Town Regatta in 1986. The first race was to be on August 25. The weather forecast at 0755 that morning was dreadful (I remember the announcer saying, 'If you're thinking of going out, don't'); the British Isles were under the influence of faraway Hurricane Charlie. I assumed that all racing would be cancelled. But no; the OOD, Pete Petit, rightly foresaw that it would be some time before the gale materialized, and the race went ahead under a black sky. Micky and I did rather well in Xantippe, lying second for some time, but falling back to sixth on the beat to the finish with the wind strengthening all the time. (As I recall, Martin Payne won in Y91 with Simon Gibbens second in Y137). Later that day it blew very hard. Next morning Xantippe was not on her mooring! We found her painter cut. It turned out that the night before a Harbour Master's launch had been towing a yacht, with its owner aboard, to the safety of the Bag. The yacht was towing an inflatable; its painter got the wrong side of Xantippe, slid up the shroud, caught round the mast, and Xantippe was pulled over. After the yacht had been safely moored, Xantippe too was towed to a mooring in the Bag where, to our relief, we found her later that morning. She was half water-logged, and her jib had gone, having floated out of its bag which remained on board. Otherwise she was little the worse for her ordeal. Storrar & Bax were remarkably quick in replacing the jib, and we did not miss any races.

In conclusion, a catalogue of the main changes to Xantippe over thirty years: 1968, J. McKillop sails; 1969 centre mainsheet and tiller extension; circa 1970, adjustable

jib fairleads; 1973, Ratsey and Lapthorn sails; 1983, Storrar & Bax sails; 1989, varnish stripped, boat painted; 1991, new (iron!) keel and bronze centreplate; 1992, controls for centreplate, kicking strap, and Cunningham eye led aft to helmsman; 1993, Pinnel & Bax sails, new boom for loose-footed mainsail, new mast.

John Watkins

MY FIRST YAWL RACE

by James Greenhill (aged 4)

Saturday September 27th, 1997

It was back at the beginning of this sailing season in April that our Daddy first said that he was going to take Jasmine and me sailing in our Yawl Number 138. She's called "Betty" after my Great Auntie, that's my Granny's sister who we never knew. The idea of sailing then didn't appeal to me very much and Jasmine wasn't at all keen so it seemed that as the season progressed it became less likely that we would have to go sailing. Daddy's been away a lot working this year so the opportunity to go for a sail on a nice summer's evening did not even present itself. Jasmine and I watched more sailing from the shore this year than ever before and it looked quite exciting to me.

I was 4 on April 15th and share the same birthday as Fin Honey and Foxey Walker (148 and 107 respectively, not their ages I might add!). On the day I was born they all went to the Dodbrooke Inn with Daddy and over imbibed. They all felt worse for wear the next day. Why do grown up people behave so irresponsibly? I'll never do anything like that when I grow up.

I was a bit surprised then on this Saturday that Daddy asked if I would like to come for a sail in the Autumn series. At first I declined the invitation but as Jasmine was going to a party and there didn't seem to be too much wind after some thought I decided that I would like to go sailing especially as it involved racing.

I felt a bit apprehensive on the way to the boat park but once I saw that 'Baby Anthony' Squires (he's 6) was going sailing with his Mummy and Daddy I felt much more confident. The confidence was not to last very long. Everything was OK when we set off but once we got out of Batson Creek into the main estuary it all suddenly became much more daunting. There was a bit more wind than I expected, from the Northwest, about a force 3. We arrived at the start just before the Solos started. I didn't like the sails flapping and the way she leant over a bit. I was sitting on the cross thwart and when I started to cry Daddy and Mummy tried to console me. That was no good, I was petrified and wanted to go home. Everything was so big and all the noise so unfamiliar, I was really frightened. Daddy said I could come aft and sit with him and move from side to side as we tacked. That wasn't any better as I now looked across the boat and all I could see was the water rushing by as she leant over. I was sure that we were going to fall in. Daddy had his arm round me and I had hold of his thigh which made me feel a bit better but then we would suddenly go about and we had to move to the other side of the boat. Daddy said it was very difficult and that we would wait for the other boats to go at the start of the race before we set off. Things quietened down a bit after the start but we were still having to go from side to side. I was still whimpering but I didn't want to spoil

Mummy and Daddy's Saturday afternoon ritual.

By the time we got to Crossways on our way to Yalton we were much closer to the other boats. I was getting used to tacking and we seemed to be overtaking some of the others. We were fifth by the time we got to Yalton and then everything seemed to slow down and go quiet. This was running which seemed much better. Mummy got me out a packet of Jaffacakes which cheered me up until I dropped one. That upset me even more than the sailing but Mummy found the Jaffacake so all was well. I felt a bit cold so Mummy took off my life jacket and put on another pullover. This was much better and after a drink and my sleeves rolled down to keep my hands warm I was quite enjoying myself.

Daddy was more settled now and kept on telling me what all the different bits were. By the time we got to Frogmore we had nipped in front of two more and were now third. How does he do it!! It didn't last long and by the time we came out of that creek we were back down to fifth. Up to Gerston and back down the Estuary to Blackstone with the wind decreasing all the time. But what's this? - the boat in front has sailed on past the Millbay buoy and doesn't realise it until we are round that buoy and away back to Blackstone. Don't people know where they are going, or maybe there was a distraction in the boat!!

After the Blackstone buoy we sailed to the line to finish 4th. Well done Dad, I love this sailing, can I come again next week? I think that I could get the hang of this sailing malarkey and teach Dad a thing or two. There's nothing wrong with this boat apart from 'the nut on the tiller'!! Where's Mr. Honey?

The Ninth Plymouth Classic Boat Rally August 1st - 3rd 1998

The Plymouth Classic Boat Rally, now in its ninth year has become one of the favourite events in the south coast sailing calendar. Plymouth Classic Boat Rally is the perfect highlight to any visit to the south west.

The rally is based at Plymouth Yacht Haven marina on the historic Mount Batten peninsula. All boats are berthed alongside allowing easy access to the marina facilities and the pretty village of Turnchapel. Plymouth's famous Barbican is only a short ferry crossing away.

Hosted by the Plym Yacht Club, the rally welcomes vessels of all varieties and sizes. From gentlemen's yachts and salty work boats to classic sailing dinghies, from schooners to skiffs, everyone will enjoy the atmosphere of this friendly event.

If you would like more information about this year's Plymouth Classic Boat Rally, please contact the Entries Secretary at Harman, 24 Dean Hill, Plymstock, Plymouth PL9 9AD, telephone (01752) 406711/880724.

Plymouth
CLASSIC BOAT RALLY

Diary Dates

SYC Regatta

2nd - 7th August

Association AGM

4th August, 8 p.m. at Salcombe Yacht Club

Yawl Dinner

6th August

Town Regatta

10th - 14th August

Open Meeting

29th/30th/31st August

Cocktail Party

Sunday 30th August at 7.15 p.m.

Yawl Golf Day

Friday 18th September at the Manor House Hotel, Moretonhampstead - please see enclosed form for details.

YAWLERS SLAY THE DRAGON FLEET

The Salcombe Yacht Club team, captained by Malcolm Squire, paddled its way to victory in the recent Dragon Boat Races on the Salcombe Estuary. The yawlers managed to pip the team from the Fortescue Arms in the final race.

Malcolm Squire, when asked about the victory, stated, "I think the win came down to the strength and experience of Budgie O'Brien and a number of the other crew. Budgie was truly inspirational."

The only mishap of the day was the Salcombe Rugby Club's hasty attempt to convert their dragon into a submarine. This misguided attempt to outwit the competition ended in their elimination from the event and a thoroughly good soaking for all involved.

