

Memories Introduction – Paul Noton

As we have started to feature experiences from some newer members we thought it would also be interesting to share some thoughts and memories of our more long-standing members. Paul Noton, member since the early 1970's has provided us with some of his memories....

A long time ago, 1964, when the sea almost reached the promenade near the Wave Crest Café and Sailors Home pub in Lowestoft, a dinghy club was formed. Soon after that, land was acquired together with an old fishermen's hut as clubhouse. Many beach barbeques and events were arranged to help fund a new clubhouse which officially opened in 1974. The last remaining landmark of where it was is the foundation of a WW2 pill box, not far from Denes, which became the base of the Starters Hut.

We always took part in the Kessingland Carnival Parade with boats on the back of a decorated lorry. Racing was mostly Fireballs, 505's and Javelins plus various Mirrors. Races were usually arranged around buoys laid by the rescue dory together and often included the Barnard and Newcombe navigation buoys as well as a passage race to Southwold for lunch then back again. We also hosted Mirror and Topper national championships which raised a lot of cash. I joined in the early 70's together with John Knight who owned a holiday chalet in Kessingland. We had no sailing experience so bought a Graduate then progressed to a Fireball, 16ft long, main, jib and spinny. It was called Odin.

I'd like to mention here the members then who made us Southerners very welcome to the club. Some are still with us now, so in no particular order: Sid & Pam Pretty, Harry & Pat King-Gardiner, Peter Colby, Stan & Joan Becket, Barry Naylor, Peter and Diane Taylor, Billy Nicholls, Mike Bowler, Alan Brown, Eric & Muriel Garrett & sons Ian & John, Peter Hogg, Chris Addison, Dick & Olive Coleman, Billy Killett, Graham Ling & son John, Brian Whitlow, George Trotter, Brian Burleigh, Hugh & Lyn Blowers, Brian Howes, Chris Jeckells, Paul & Sharon Parravani, Terry Crump, Dr Nicol, Les Leach.

These names were garnered from a few very old yearbooks, and I can put faces to them all.

I'm sure there were others and I'd like to thank them all for running a very successful dinghy club for many years. We learned quickly and had a great time after mastering the landing technique for wavy weather: 1, Sail at speed straight for the beach. 2, At the last second raise the centre board and rudder and free the sails. 3, Crew stands on foredeck. 4, Boat goes up the beach, stops and the crew jumps off grabbing the mast to hold the boat. Simple!!!

Of course, there were times when it went wrong resulting with insurance claims. These events were always appreciated by holidaymakers and others on the beach! Great days which nature took away. We tried old conveyor belting across the shingle, then bought a tractor but the massive beach finished us off in the eighties and we sold up, remaining in limbo for many years.

I stayed on the committee which met once or twice a year to deliberate what to do, and eventually Explorer was bought followed by Edna May (not so good). I became Commodore and we bought Deuxieme Amour, a 34ft Bavaria in Majorca which got Harry, Sid and myself into the Med for some good warm sailing, plus occasional gales! The club decided 34ft was not big enough and Ploes was bought in Greece, and she has proved to be very suitable for us. I must mention now that John Bird has been invaluable to the club for finding boats for us and arranging the buying and selling them as well as getting us into Ece Saray Marina, Turkey.

A few things now from my big boat sailing.... With Explorer in Holland we were in the canals and stopped at a small marina for the night. We asked if we could get a beer nearby and he said it was DIY and pointed to a mat on the floor. He told us, lift the mat and open the box in the floor, and there was all we needed together with a price list and honesty box, brilliant. We paid for the mooring and he left us to it!

Coming back from Ostende we started and ended in no wind but in the middle, wind, more wind, gale force. We had shortened sail to furled foresail then got knocked flat by a giant rogue wave. No damage to Explorer but crew badly hurt and chaos inside!! Again, in Holland on another trip we had a way to go on a long straight canal so, as there was a gentle breeze we put the foresail up and stopped the very noisy engine. Great until a local told us it was forbidden so it was back to the engine!

On another trip back from Holland, motoring in dead calm we spotted a football and spent a long time trying to pick it up, but however slowly we approached it the bow wave always moved it out of reach.

I've also had and enjoyed more sailing in Turkey than anywhere and hope to be there in late April with Harry and John. I tried August once but never again, toooo hot!

Paul Noton Ex Commodore