

# Travels with the Old Yellow Boat (part 2)

Steve Parry

*In which Phil takes a final capsize and prepares to bid a fond farewell to Sea Willow*

**It was over breakfast that Phil had his first premonition that something unpleasant was going to happen.**

We were sitting enjoying the view of the Dovey estuary from the first-floor restaurant window at the Anchor Inn in Aberdovey, having travelled down on the day before in readiness for a long weekend of GP14 sailing. The sun was shining, and the breeze looked perfect to me but Phil, putting on his usual gloomy demeanour, pointed to some scudding high cloud and insisted very firmly that it foretold of stormy conditions beyond the calm of the estuary. As if!

## All at sea!

First up was a day of *sea-training*, aimed at those who wanted to polish up their skills in readiness for the National Championships that would be taking place in the following month in Looe. The word to note here is *sea*. And at Aberdovey, finding it involves crossing the legendary sand bar that defines the mouth of the estuary. Only then can one be said to be on the *sea* and therefore able to undertake *sea training*.

So it was that our coach led his small flotilla of seven boats downstream in



near-perfect sailing conditions, expecting to carry out his



*Steve, Phil and the Old Yellow Boat sailing on the River Ouse*

final brief for the first exercise from his RIB on the water.

As we approached the mouth of the estuary the wind began to freshen rapidly and what had first appeared as a distant strip of white water, took shape as a wall of breakers through which a narrow path was marked with buoys.

*"...feeling rather smug as we were soon the only crew to be the right way up..."*

We had been told on no account to venture outside the defined route and now it was only too clear why!

It was a bumpy ride but we all made it safely over the bar and then the fun began! The gentle breeze at the club

house had somehow become a screaming gale in the open water, which being somewhat shallow now, threw up a steep sea of white horses! To make matters even worse wind it was wind against tide.

## Capsize

One of our number turned for home immediately but the rest of us tried to locate our coach to receive his instructions. It immediately became clear however that stopping close to the RIB was going to be challenging and hearing our coaches' words of wisdom would be impossible! And then the first capsize occurred, swiftly followed by the second and third. Attempts at coaching were rapidly suspended and replaced with rescue coverage.

Phil and I planed up and down for some time feeling rather smug as we were soon the only crew to be the right way up. But then, before we could react, a slamming gust knocked us over and, much to his annoyance, Phil was swimming. (Having clambered over the side and onto the centreboard, I felt best placed just to give the instructions!).

*"We bailed continuously..."*

*Sea Willow* was her usual well-behaved self and did not invert but Phil caused alarm in the rescue boat when he announced: "This is a Series One boat so it will sink!"

Needless to say, we did not sink but we did drop the main to improve stability upon righting and, as the whole flotilla



was given the *go home* signal, we left it that way. We rocked and rolled our way back over the bar under jib only, desperately trying not to broach with a boat full of water.

We bailed continuously in the hope of improving comfort but waves were breaking over the side-decks with such frequency that it was an impossible task.

### **Wet and tired**

Everybody was too wet and tired to do much sailing that day so we drained out

and dried off. After a short classroom session we prepared for day two and Race One of the Welsh Area Championship, for which more boats were already arriving.

The least said about our performance in the Championship, the better. The weather conditions were superb on both days. However with a fleet of only 19 boats, very few bronze fleet sailors and no other classic/vintage boats, Phil and I could only act as tail-end sweepers.

But like everybody else we were really only there to get some practice in ahead of the National Championships in Looe.

*The question is, did it pay off?*

Look out for the next gripping instalment...



## **My first year as a Commodore**

*Jens Kuhn*

**In my defence, I have actually only been a member of this club for three years. Sometimes I feel like I've been there forever, and sometimes I feel other members feel the same, but the fact is, I am actually quite new here.**

I still remember the first time I visited the club. It was a freezing Sunday morning in March, and when I confidently walked into the compound, there were less than a handful people standing on the deck outside the club house, contemplating the weather. (The usual suspects as I soon learned.) And now I seem to be one of them, standing there almost every Sunday morning. There's the evidence that YRISC really is a friendly and welcoming club.

I also still remember Hugh explaining to me the risk of ending up on the committee sooner or later. I didn't mind to be fair. I had been without any decent opportunity to sail for so long that I wasn't so easily deterred.

Now, three years later, I am the Commodore of the Club, but to be honest, I mainly took the job because it seemed less work than being the secretary or treasurer! And because I am hopefully slightly better at writing newsletter columns than crunching numbers in Excel. But enough of that, and over to the nautical parts of sailing club life.

### **What have we done this year?**

Well, we have tried some new things for sure. We experimented with different dates for the Open Day to coincide with the *RYA*

*Push the Boat Out.* We used paid social media advertising for the first time to attract new members (paid for by a York Council grant, so at no extra cost to members). And it worked. We definitely attracted an interesting selection of new people, doing our best to get them out on the water and racing with the limited resources we have. Not all of them stayed on longer term, but some did, and that's all that counts.

That said, there were a few weeks in early summer when the racing schedule suffered, because we were too busy getting newcomers sailing, and on behalf of the committee our thanks to everyone who coped with that.

*"...it seemed less work than being the secretary or treasurer!"*

Apart from that? We attended the North Berwick regatta with two boats, and even brought home a prize. And we managed to have all the usual events, from our Classic GP14 Open meeting and the

Annual Regatta against Yorkshire Ouse to the Level 1 course, which seemed in danger for a while but finally happened after the summer. And yes, we did go to Ullswater. And sailed, despite the gale that welcomed us for most of the weekend.

And despite the weather and water levels trying to deter us, we did have quite a few good days racing on the river too. That's not too bad for a small club like us. But, I do have to admit, after having been to North Berwick and Burton sailing clubs... I do envy them for having a nice bar and a cafe in their club houses.

*That said, we still have the best cake.*



*Compass Cakes*



# Is a Beach Club holiday suitable for a *real* sailor?

Jens Kuhn

**I'm not trying to be presumptuous here, there are many people who are better sailors than me. But I admit that the thought was in the back of my head when Tracy and I discussed where to go for our family summer holiday this year.**

After having dragged the girls to freezing Scotland one time too many, a warmer destination was desired. Laura really wanted to go to Croatia, all the girls wanted a beach, warm sun and a tan. Go on then, I reluctantly agreed, feeling my wallet contracting in pain, but there better be boats!

## Ticking all the boxes

So after some research we decided to try a brand new beach club in Croatia. While the bill was considerable, it did tick all the boxes we were looking for. There were plenty of dinghies to sail, pool, beach, bars and a historic town not too far away. So we went. And we liked it, despite a certain weariness when organised holidays are concerned.

And yes, my family being what it is, no-one actually ever joined any of the planned activities. The girls frowned on kids and teen clubs and I, early on, decided that all the RYA dinghy courses on offer were actually below my level.

*"Turns out, they didn't mind sailing at all..."*

But the good thing is, you don't need to do all these things. The boats are all free to use, and there was a selection of familiar and less familiar ones. Thus I could try out different boats and adapt my sailing to the wind conditions, which were predictable but interesting. Most days the morning started gently with a flat sea and a light breeze, perfect to



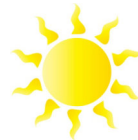
*Jens and girls enjoying sailing in the sunshine aboard the 'nice, fast catamaran'*

actually get Tracy and the girls out on the water. Turns out, they didn't mind sailing at all, as long as there was sun, the water was warm and a lot of space on a nice fast catamaran...

After lunch the wind increased and by 2pm it was blowing 20 knots with bigger waves rolling in, and gradually increasing until most people would stop sailing at around 4-5 pm.

## Frustrating restrictions!

For my own part I had fun in smaller dinghies once it was too windy to keep the cat up alone (by that time the girls had moved on to the beach and tan part of the activities).



I tried a Laser, but learned I am not heavy enough to keep it upright in any decent wind, even with a radial rig, so eventually reverted to Laser Picos which are actually really fun to sail when there is proper wind and waves. *(I know some readers will frown on this, but remember that I normally sail a Topper when single-handing, so this is a trade up.)*

But yes, there were downsides, too. I fully understand the requirement that, as a RYA recognised venue they need to have rescue boats out and keep track of who is sailing where. And boy did some of the people need that!

*"I wanted to take the cat... and explore a little."*

But for my own part I soon grew a little bored of the *"don't sail past that cardinal mark there or that buoy here"*, rule. I wanted to take the cat to the castle just beyond and explore a little. Having a whole coastline to explore, a boat that can get there quickly, but not being allowed is definitely a restriction. It might not be a problem if you're there to learn sailing and mainly mess around with the fleet. However in my case, and in the case of a few others I could see, it ended up with a few cats trying to sail as far outside the area as they could get away with, and then quickly tack and, normally, nip back in just in time to avoid the safety boat telling off. But hey, that was fun, too. *(continued on next page)*



## Would I do it again?

The only other downside really was that the boats were very basic. They were brand new and in top shape, but the sails were standard ones, and the Picos didn't have jibs. But then again, they were free.

So would I do it again? Probably yes, particularly if it was with the family as it is a holiday that works for everyone. But I would want to do it somewhere else instead, so there'd be new waters to sail and different places to explore when not

sailing. It's not as good as chartering a boat and go wherever you want, of course.

*But if your family isn't keen on that kind of holiday, it works perfectly well.*



*Above:*

*A montage of photos of our many and varied Club activities during 2017. From Wednesday evenings to the Icicle series, Cake Day to Push the Boat Out, Sunday racing to Level One. Can you spot yourself?*



## Congratulations

*...and best wishes from everyone at YRISC to Justine and Phil on their recent wedding,*

*And finally — thanks to everyone who has written articles for the Newsletter this year. Please keep them coming, at the moment the cupboard is bare! Contributions from new members are especially appreciated.*

*It just remains for me to wish you all*

**A Very Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year**  
*Angela*

