

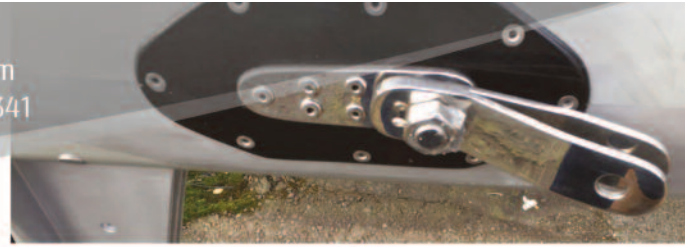


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Soundings

2026





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This picture, the Contents one and those on the Front Cover by Elysia Ehrhart



The Poole Yacht Club

The Yacht Haven, New Harbour Road West,
Hamworthy, Poole, Dorset BH15 4AQ

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department options follow

Welcome to the 2026 Edition of Soundings.

May 6th, 2026, and Soundings is off to the printers today, phew! Is it me or do things take more effort nowadays?

It's a bumper issue, eight pages up on last year. That is partly due to the dinghy classes responding to my plea for more input. I say my plea but it was actually James Stafford who encouraged the dinghy captains to do their bit, thanks James.

Aside from the dinghies there are articles with a wide range of subjects, not just sailing related. Swimming, rowing, even an appearance on TV, are covered. Confessions have been introduced this year, but simply these are learn from our mistakes articles, which will, hopefully, amuse you too.

New members are warmly welcomed to the Club and encouraged to get involved in Club activities and volunteering opportunities. Getting involved is a great way to meet fellow members and become part of the Club community.

There are many different volunteering roles available; — see the article on page 18 for more details.

Soundings 2026

Let us make new members feel welcome: we can all do our bit with this.

Thank you to the contributors, you've created a great issue. Special thanks to Elysia Ehrhart, who provided many of the pictures. Mike Millard is always around taking pictures too and you'll find his scattered throughout this issue, thank you Mike.

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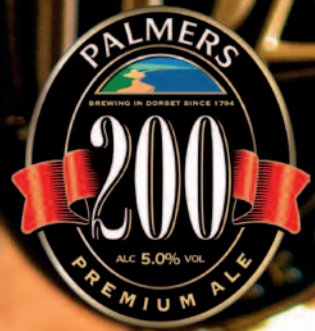
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Our Commodore

Tim Edom

It has been my pleasure and privilege to serve as your Commodore for this past year and thank you to those who supported myself and the other members of the team at the AGM to serve another year. I would also like to especially thank our General Manager Chas, Flag Officers, General Committee and all the staff who work tirelessly for the Club.

We are working hard to deliver on the key initiatives I wrote about last year so thought it would be good to see how we've done on these.

Listed here are last year's aspirations with a comment below each on progress.

- Costs down and Income up. Easy to say, harder to do but the team's focus and hard work over the past year is showing positive signs of paying off.

Through the efforts of the General Committee, especially our General Manager, and close scrutiny by our Treasury team, we achieved a healthy surplus at Full Year ending October 2025. Current projections are encouraging for this year due to continued focus on keeping a lid on costs and driving income opportunities. From this position, we are now in a better place to look at further investing in Club infrastructure

- Increase Sailing and Racing. Facilitate more members, their guests and especially youth to get sailing, both cruising and racing.

2026 sees a bumper year of Sailing Events ; Co-hosting the Poole International Paint Regatta and hosting Optimist UK Championships, Zenith, Dayboat and Hobie 16 Nationals, Topper Southern's and Class. In addition, we are running all our regular Series and Trophy races coupled with Social and Cruising activities throughout the season. We are still not seeing enough of our own dinghy sailors out racing so please let us know what would help to encourage you to participate. Please do get involved to help us make these activities a resounding success.

Wing foiling – a taster session has been arranged, which has attracted interest from over 60 members, so we are testing the water with this exciting branch of sailing, to see if this will appeal to existing and new members

Big welcome to Sailability as a new addition to the Club and the Haven! After many weeks of due diligence and discussion, their four Hawk dayboats and rescue boat are berthed at the end of the Waiting pontoon. They take less able sailors out 4/5 times per week, mainly when the Club is quiet, introducing them to the sport we all love. I know that their volunteer skippers are finding our facilities much improved from their previous location and am confident that this initiative will be mutually beneficial for both the Club and the Charity.

- Rebuild our reputation for being a friendly Club – this has taken a dent over the last couple of years and I hope we can all work together to restore this.

Following many conversations with members, it seems that there has been a positive shift and the normal friendly



atmosphere has been largely restored. As part of being in a Club, it is vital that we continue to treat each other with respect, members and staff so we can all make a difference here.

- Bring back the Volunteers! A huge thank you for all the volunteers on and off the water who keep the Racing Programme, Nightwatch, fuel delivery, and odd jobs going. Gaps are appearing in the rotas so I am keen to re-energise this core aspect of Poole Yacht Club, which can increase engagement and drive down costs

Room for improvement on this one, to be honest. The fact is that the key volunteer coordinators are struggling to fill all the roles due to the lack of members stepping forward. If it doesn't improve, we will end up with having to cancel races or other activities, which would be disastrous. Please step forward to help if you can; If we all do a bit, then we don't have to rely on our fellow members doing a lot.

- Plan ahead. Combine the great work on the Masterplan and Asset Survey to produce a costed 10-year plan for the members

On the basis that the future is more than usually unpredictable currently, we have focused our planning on the next five years, taking input from the Masterplan and Planned Preventative Maintenance plan. This should go for review to General Committee in May before release to the wider Membership

Ongoing initiatives

- 1 Reviewing the Membership fees for the Under 40's to look at how we can make the Club more attractive for this sector. At the same time, we are continuing the trial of the over 80 Associate membership following the successful launch last year.

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- 2 The Odd-Job team did a great job of refreshing the Changing Rooms over the winter as an interim measure. We have now set up a working party to finalise requirements and initiate a project to look at necessary improvements, which will be shared with the Membership before proceeding.
 - 3 We have an Open Day in May to give interested folk an opportunity to see what we do before applying for membership
 - 4 Following the decision to bring the support of the Club Website in-house, our Office and volunteers are working hard to put the final touches on the revised site, which should be launched in the near future.
- Sweat our assets. A good thing that came out of the 2025 AGM was the mandate to trial large non-member events here to generate income. Our focus must remain on

bringing large scale sailing events here but to augment our income, and keep our fees to a minimum, we do need to embrace all opportunities to help balance the books.

Steady progress on this. We have successfully brought in Sailability and have run wakes for a small number of non-members. We have had a few enquiries about weddings, but the dates have clashed with Sailing events so we have had to decline these opportunities to date.

So, all in all, progress in the right direction but much more to do. Please do email me with any offers of help or suggestions of how we can continue to grow our Club further into the vibrant, thriving place it needs to be for current and future members. Meanwhile, I hope you have a fantastic season on and off the water at the Club and further afield!

Fair Winds, Tim



Commodore's Charity

The Ellen MacArthur Cancer Trust is a registered charity that supports young people aged 8 to 24 to rebuild their confidence after cancer. The charity offers free sailing and outdoor adventures to help young people rediscover independence, confidence and purpose. I got involved in this Charity a few years ago following a big nudge from a fellow member, who is also a nurse for the Trust. I applied and went through an assessment, that checked my UNO card game, baking and empathy skills as much as my ability to skipper a 45-foot yacht. Happily, I got the nod and have skippered for them for three to four weeks each year since.

To see the changes in the young folk as they get to grips with life afloat is truly heartwarming. Our job is to keep everyone safe whilst providing an adventurous challenge to the young people to help them compare experiences with their peers and have fun.

The Trust has bases in Cowes and Largs on Scotland's West Coast, and it provides long-term support through sailing trips. The Trust has supported over 2,400 young people across the UK since its inception in 2003. The Trust's mission is to inspire young people to believe in a brighter future living through and beyond cancer.

Every day around 12 young people under 25 in the UK are diagnosed with cancer.

Happily, survival rates are increasing. But what happens after treatment can be as difficult as, if not even more so, than the treatment itself. This is not talked about or is understood as much as it should be.

Young people remain vulnerable after treatment as it comes at a time of rapid physical, emotional and social development. Cancer in young people often leads to lower educational achievement, relationship and friendship difficulties, body image issues, and/or ongoing late effects, such as extreme fatigue, infertility, osteoporosis, thyroid problems and hearing or vision loss.

Through the Trust's free sailing and outdoor adventures, young people laugh, gain a new sense of purpose and self-worth, rediscover independence, and feel optimism for the future.

I am delighted to appoint them as my Charity for the next two years and appreciate any support you can give.

To find out more about the Trust, please visit:
www.ellenmacarthurcancertrust.org

Thank you – Tim Edom
Page 11

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Facilities

One of my jobs is to chair your Facilities Committee, consisting of Chas Kirkby, Sarah Burnet, Bob Hazell, Andy Macgregor, Andrew Tate, John Lewis, Mark Titterington, Matt Latham (Yard Team) and until recently, Ian Hull.

We meet monthly to walk around and talk about your Club, with a view to maintaining and improving it. Robust but polite and respectful debates are leading us to what seems to be a sensible way forward. We draw on the Masterplan and Phil Hunt's Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM) Programme to guide us and have been grateful to many members for advice and practical inputs.

- We rely heavily on the superb negotiating skills of Chas our General Manager. He seems to be able to get a better deal than us every time. It might be worth thanking him when you see him. You will be aware of the excellent way Matt, Ian and Toby, our yard team, have organised haulout and facilitated the arrival of our dinghies.
- Not long ago, there seemed no doubt that the slipway and roof would need expensive replacement. We spent £20,000 on a detailed slipway survey and many hours investigating. The wonderful results are that rumours of the demise of both slipway and roof were premature. What they need is planned maintenance and sensible use: the 13-ton weight limit for haulout is working and we have regular inspections planned for the roof.
- I hope that you are enjoying the automatically opening gates. This came on the back of a complete change of our alarm systems, making us all safer. If the gates do not open for you, inform the office of your car registration number.
- Sailability joining the club has been a high point this year. We are working with them to improve disabled access to their boats. Please make our new members and guests welcome.
- Our solar panels have been a great success and we are considering whether boosting our electricity generation further is a sensible option.
- We are exploring repairs to the yard surface.



- Sarah Burnet is leading a group looking at improving our changing rooms. The initiatives to get more women into sailing has been successful but a spin-off is that the old facilities for them are dated and cramped.
- Paul Thorneycroft has raised the problems of climate change and storm surges, threatening our haven. We are taking this seriously and considering our options. No decisions yet.

I hope that gives you a flavour of what volunteers and staff are doing on your behalf. Please do get in touch if you can contribute to the smooth running of our friendly Club. We need more members to join us, especially those who are not as male and old as me!

Finally, it has been a privilege to work alongside Tim, John, Simon, Jan (our Treasurer) and Richard Cake (our sprightly young Honorary Solicitor) and to know that we are building on the work of those before us, notably, Tracey Lee who pushed both social and women's sailing. There have been many changes at the Club and to stay ahead, more will be needed. We will need to look at how all parts of the Club fit and contribute together, in particular, looking to attract more younger members (join us wing-foiling!) whilst caring for those who have sustained the Club for many years.

Onwards and upwards
Chris



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Sailing

In our Commodore's report, you will have already read that we are hosting a lot of events and, off the back of this, Volunteering is key to making these successful. Over the winter we have been running PB2 courses, our own Dinghy Capsize & Recovery Training, Mark Laying, VHF and First Aid courses to name but a few. We're also trialling a 'reward' for volunteering this year with a chance to win discounts off your Club membership next year if your name is pulled out of the hat, the more duties you do through Dutyman, the more chance you have of winning. Dutyman is core to scheduling volunteers for our volunteer activities and a big 'Thank You' to the team working behind the scenes to make this happen!

Dinghy Race Participation – The RYA recognise that sailing is under significant pressure from other recreational activities, what are we doing at our Club to ensure we are best place to tackle this. We have seen significant growth at the Club with Social Sailing, in previous years we've opened up to those that have paid Social Sailing Fees, Big Shot / Hot Shot and Youth Training fees to be able to enter both our Summer Trophy Races and our Sherwood Cup Pursuit Race series. For this year, Sailing Committee have extended our offering to also make Monday Night Dinghy Racing available to these sailors with a view to encouraging more to 'give racing a go'. We have a working party looking at how Monday Night Racing may evolve to make this more attractive to our racing newbies and our Youth Members transitioning from Hot Shots, by having a racing environment that is friendly and where other competitors can provide advice and guidance to our newer members to encourage them to catch the 'racing bug' and improve their sailing.

Youth R19 – John Lewis has kindly purchased an R19 for use by our Youth Section, this is to help us build on the fantastic success of our Commodores' Challenge Team that currently train from September to December, by having a boat available to them for our entire racing season. We have a working party shaping how this will be crewed and managed and will be bringing this to fruition.

We have another busy year hosting events at our Club, these include:

- Cherup / ISO / International Canoe Open – 18th & 19th Apr.
- Opsrey & Contender Open – 9th & 10th May
- International Paint Poole Regatta – 22nd to 25th May
- R19 Worlds – 20th June
- Topper 5.3 Invitational Training Weekend – 4th & 5th July
- GP & Dayboat Open – 25th & 26th July
- Dayboat Nationals – 27th to 30th July
- Hobie 16 Open – 8th to 10th August
- Zenith, Zen and Zen2 Nationals – 18th to 20th September
- IOCA UK Championships – 3rd & 4th October
- OK Open – 10th & 11th October
- Topper Super South – 17th & 18th October



In the middle of these we have our Club Regatta from Friday 26th June to Sunday 28th June, save this for your diary!

With the above packed diary, we can only make this work with the help of all our volunteers, a big 'Thank You' in advance for all our members that make our on the water events happen day in day out! If there are any training requirements that you have that are holding you back from volunteering, please email AJ (training@pooleyc.co.uk) and we'll see what we can do.

Following on from the Club Forum and our AGM, I'm joined on Sailing Committee by the following:

- Simon Philbrick – Sailing Secretary – Race Management
- Sarah Agnew – Assistant Sailing Secretary – Youth pathway /RYA Principal
- AJ Windsor – Sailing Events Manager /RYA Chief Instructor
- Andy Macgregor – R19's
- Fraser Burnett – Youth Rep
- James Stafford – Dinghy Lead Rep
- Ian Aitken – Cruiser Lead Rep
- All Dinghy Class Captains
- David Evans – Race Participation
- Rich McAvoy – Social Sailing Class Captain
- Cruiser Race Class Captains and Cruising Section Class Captain also join us once a quarter (or for any meeting if they request)

We have a new safety boat on the fleet this year, after 20 years of service and suffering from a rotting floor, Safety 11 has been replaced with a new Ballistic 6m RIB. This has been spec'd to meet future RYA powerboat training requirements by providing an option for four people to be seated inside the boat with the rear two seats being removeable to provide a suitably large working space for Mark Laying etc. The boat has been supplied Copper Coated and we will be monitoring how this performs over the coming seasons. The outboard has been transferred across from the old boat as it was only two years old.

Looking forward to seeing you out enjoying the water,

Simon
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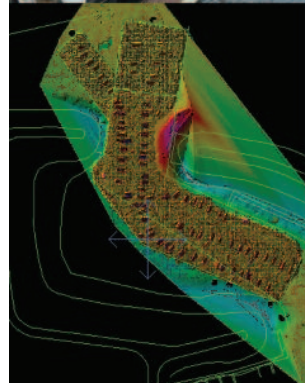
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Dear fellow members

I am pleased to be writing this piece for Soundings, having now completed my first year as your Rear Commodore Services. I am looking forward to getting into my second year of working with fellow Flag Officers, Committee members and our staff colleagues.

Thank you for electing me. When the role of “Services” was introduced a few years ago, the aim was to give more focus to the aspects of the Club operation that provided the supporting activities and services.

So much of the Services activity just churns away, mostly in the background, to ensure that our members receive from the Club, the bar, catering, social and other activities and support to the standard and requirement that you, our members, wish to receive.

I do thank our team of staff, under the professional watchful eye of our General Manager, Chas Kirkby. They really give us great support and service. Much work is underway with IT and the new website, and we are really pleased how this is coming along. Many thanks to the colleagues involved and the technical inputs from Carla, our IT Support.

The Social Team, led by our Social Secretary, Amanda Jones, organise for us a fantastic range of social events and I do thank Amanda and the team for all the hard work that is undertaken, on our behalf.

Financial pressures, inflationary effects, changes in demographics, changes in the ways we wish to spend our leisure time and events around the world do affect all of us and the Club is no exception.

We will continue to review these and then adjust our offerings in response to these challenges. An example is the changes we have made to the winter opening hours. We keep a very close eye on the level of bar and catering subsidy. It is something of a fine balance.



Our financials are reviewed every month at our committee meetings, under the watchful eye of Jan Hunt, our Honorary Treasurer and the Treasury Team.

We do need to continue to invest in our Club assets; not only to ensure we have the structures and equipment that are in working and safe condition for today’s needs, but for the future. You will see from the minutes of General Committee, such debates and decisions are high on the agenda.

The Membership Committee is looking at how we best recruit and select new members and ensuring how we help make their journey into our Club life a satisfying and enjoyable experience. Sarah Agnew, our Assistant Sailing Secretary, with AJ are planning a Club Open Evening in May. Particular focus, at this time, is on families and under 40s joining our Club.

The Nightwatch team, of which I am a member, is reviewing its activities and we will, in the weeks ahead be concluding this work and making recommendations to General Committee. The take up of Nightwatch duties by fellow Members over the last two years has been disappointing and we are considering what changes are needed.

In addition to the above, I still greatly enjoy being part of the volunteer Race Officer Team and owning my Drascombe Lugger “Jambo.” Regrettably, due to increasing family responsibilities, I have had to step back from RYA Regional Committee duties.

I am always pleased to receive your comments and suggestions. Please call me, drop me an email, or catch me when I am around the Club.

John Yonwin
Rear Commodore Services
07966 551038
johnyonwin3@gmail.com

Volunteering



Picture by Mike Millard

We've all heard it before at the various briefings; "*Volunteering is the lifeblood of the Club*", but it's only when you start looking at the sheer volume of volunteers the Club needs every season that you start to appreciate how true this is.

For example, the Monday, Thursday and Saturday dinghy racing series comprise approximately 120 events that require nearly 1000 individual duties to be fulfilled. The Friday and Sunday Social Sailing events are another 50 events that need a further 200 duties to be filled. The Regatta needs 120+ people to ensure it runs smoothly – on both Saturday and Sunday. This is before we run Open Events, Trophy Races, Youth Training, Frostbite etc. so it's easy to see what a Herculean effort members make to ensure all of these events run smoothly.

The Club is always looking for more volunteers to ensure these responsibilities are shared equally. So here is a quick guide to the roles we need to fill each season.

Safety Boat Drivers

The Club is lucky to have one of the biggest fleets of RIBs and Rigiflex boats in the south and they are all used to good effect during our racing and training events. To drive a Safety Boat, you will need the RYA Powerboat Level 2 qualification, which can be done at the Club during one of the regular courses that run each season, the cost of which is mostly refunded after a certain number of duties. The Club also offers powerboat refresher courses and a one day safety boat course to practise recovering capsized boats.

Safety Boat Assist

Every Safety Boat needs both a driver and an Assist. Assist is one of the most important jobs on the water as it's likely you will be the one actually righting capsized boats or rescuing sailors from the water as the driver keeps the boat steady. No previous experience is necessary and it is a great way to spend time on the water.

Principal Race Officer

The PRO is in overall charge of each event, from completing a Risk Assessment to the organisation of the actual race. PROs may start races from the Race Hut or a Committee Boat but the PRO will always have a number of people assisting. It is a very responsible role but one that the Club offers full training for. The Club requires more people to train to be a PRO, so if you have experience of racing dinghies or cruisers at Club level or above, plus an organised mind, we would be very grateful if you could give up a few evenings each season to ensure our racing programme can continue.

Race Assist

Every PRO needs at least two or three race assists to help record

the positions and times of the racers, raise or lower flags or start the timing lights. No previous experience is necessary and this is a great way to learn about racing and meet new people.

Night Watch

The security of the Club is very important so we ask that everyone tries to undertake at least one night watch duty a year. You won't be expected to wrestle any would be burglars to the ground, but you'll walk the perimeter of the Club shining a powerful torch around the Haven and out onto the moorings.

It's more to show a presence and let any would be thieves know that they will be seen and reported if they try to enter the Club. If you have PB2 and have completed the launch training, you can also take the Club launch out into the harbour. We try to encourage people to do this in pairs for safety reasons so why not do this with a friend?

If you are available for a Night Watch duty please contact Mike Jones on nightwatch@pooleyc.co.uk

Electronic Volunteer Forms

Lastly, a note on completing the electronic volunteer forms. These form the basis of every volunteer team leads rota and they save an enormous amount of time when scheduling events. Once completed, the forms are downloaded into Excel so they can be filtered according to the day and duty type, meaning each team lead has an instant list of volunteers to choose from.

Please fill out your electronic form every season, even if you have done the same duty for many years as it saves a huge amount of time emailing and calling people to see if want to continue volunteering. Forms are usually sent out in October after the volunteers "Thank You" meal and it really helps if you can complete them as soon as possible. By submitting this form every year, you guarantee your name is on the list of volunteers for the coming season.

The Social Team

The Social Committee is always on the lookout for new members, they bring new ideas and enthusiasm. These pluses, coupled with the experience that others have gained, creates a balanced blend that can achieve anything!

Thank You

Lastly, a huge thank you to everyone that has been involved with volunteering at the Club, either this coming season, or for previous seasons.

If you have read this and would like some more information on volunteering, feel free to look on the website for more information or email dutyman@pooleyc.co.uk

The Poole YC Youth Sailing Pathway

by AJ Windsor

For full up-to-date details see the Club Website



- Parent & Child Mirror Racing
- RYA Stage 1 & 2 (Oppy or Pico, depending on age)

The aim for all our new young sailors is simple:

FUN ON THE WATER!

Parent Mirror Racing is a great way to give your child the confidence of sailing whilst on the water with you.

From the age of 8, they can start their own sailing journey on the water with **Our RYA Youth Training Group**

Mirror Racing:
Fridays @17:45hrs
Contact: Matt Burge –
mburge@hotmail.com

RYA Youth Training (Manic Piranhas): Wednesday @ 17:45
Contact Sailing Manager:
sailing@pooleyc.co.uk



- RYA Stage 3
- RYA Seamanship Skills
- RYA Start Race

Once we have our excited new sailors, it's time for them to start understanding the technical and safe side of sailing.

One for parents to encourage as this is how they learn what to do in different situations. They also start exploring what sort of sailing is right for them. This could be solo sailing, sailing with a friend, racing or social sailing.

RYA Youth Training (Manic Piranhas): Wednesday @ 17:45
Contact Sailing Manager:
sailing@pooleyc.co.uk

It is possible for children to come straight in to one of these groups if they are competent with sailing. AJ can advise on the best courses for them



- Multihull Sailing & Racing
- Double-Handed 420 Sailing & Racing
- Youth Race Coaching
- Cruiser Racing – Commodores' Challenge

It is time to give them as many experiences as possible:

- Weekly Racing, on a specific youth only course. We would recommend this in a Topper, Laser or a 420.
- Multi-Hull or 420 Sailing. Learn the techniques for these performance boats and propel their enthusiasm for racing.
- Cruiser Racing: join the Commodore's race team and take part in the prestigious Commodores' Challenge against Parkstone Yacht Club.

RYA Youth Training (Manic Piranhas): Wednesday @ 17:45
Contact Sailing Manager:
sailing@pooleyc.co.uk

Hot Shots (Youth) Racing:
Thursday @ 17:45

Sailors must have Start Race or signed off by a Club race coach



- Competitive Weekly Club Racing
- Club Social Sailing
- Instructor Training

At the Club we are keen to grow our classes and ultimately have as many people as possible sailing each week. We offer Dinghy and Cruiser Racing, plus social sailing seven days a week!

We also have an Assistant and Dinghy Instructor Pathway, which offers many job opportunities within the industry.

Look at the Notice of Race Calendar for the year and see what takes your fancy... We have so many opportunities to get you on the water.

Any questions contact:
sailing@pooleyc.co.uk



From Ham Bay to.....

Part One - The Journey

Some of my earliest memories are of learning to sail at Poole Yacht Club. I was very young, sailing an Optimist called *Poppy the Oppy* and, like most sailors at that age, I spent far more time bumping into other boats than sailing in straight lines. We played pirates in Ham Bay, which provided the perfect safe haven for chaos, laughter and mistakes. I was incredibly lucky to be taught by two of the Club's stalwarts, Andrew Tate and Andy Hadley, who somehow managed to turn all that chaos into learning.



One memory stands out clearly. Before the Poole Regatta, one of the Andys drew the racecourse in the sand. It was simple, but it was the first time sailing stopped being about just floating around and became something else. That was my first real experience of racing, and from that moment I was completely hooked.

I didn't win that regatta – not even close – but I was struck by the unique challenge sailing offered. It wasn't just about going fast. It was about thinking, adapting, and solving problems in an environment that never stayed the same.

At the following regatta, I noticed a group of slightly older sailors racing further out from the shore. They had newer boats and looked confident and composed. To me, they seemed like superstars. I overheard someone suggest that one of them might

one day go to the Olympics, and that idea stayed with me. From that moment, becoming an Olympic sailor became my dream.

In 2012, my family took me to Weymouth to watch the London Olympic Games. Seeing the Macgregor girls compete made everything feel real. From then on, sailing was no longer just something I enjoyed - it became an obsession.

Every weekend, my dad, Simon Foster, would take me and my friends out on a small orange safety boat and tow us into the harbour. We raced endlessly around the islands, turning Poole Harbour into our own racetrack. Wednesday night training with Colin Rainback taught me about the harbour's unique tides and eddies, while winter training with Rob Kemp taught me how to hike properly – using explanations that may not be entirely suitable for print, but which I've never forgotten.

One of my defining early experiences was the Spring Championships at Poole Yacht Club. I came dead last. In fact, I was scored a DNS after taking more than four minutes to cross the start line. Despite barely racing at all, being surrounded by sailors from across the country was incredibly inspiring. It was there that I first learned about Zone Squads - and, more importantly, noticed the jumpers the sailors wore. From that point on, all I wanted was to earn one and wear it with pride.

Rob suggested that if I wanted a real chance, I needed to sail through the winter. So I did. I trained in a leaky drysuit, getting far too cold far too often. That following spring and summer, I travelled all over the south coast competing in events to qualify for the Zone Squad. Being selected was a huge moment for me, especially as many of the sailors were significantly older.

My first large fleet regatta at Grafham was another turning point. Finishing third introduced me to a completely different type of racing. Sailing became less about speed and more about tactics - a game of chess played on the water. That problem-solving aspect is what really drew me in.

As my ambitions grew, the goalposts shifted again when I saw the National Squad sailors in their distinctive red jackets. Like the Zone Squad jumper before it, the jacket represented



Olympic Ambition!

excellence and opportunity. It was another symbol of where I wanted to go.

Throughout my Optimist years, Poole Yacht Club remained at the heart of my development. Thanks to the dedication of many volunteers, the Youth Section grew to over 140 sailors on Wednesday nights. We had a brilliant Optimist race group, constantly pushing each other, and were often coached by Jonny House, who managed to balance our tendency to mess around with delivering outstanding racing insight. Parents regularly organised additional coaching, making Poole YC the central hub of my training.

In my final year in the Optimist, I won the Southern Traveller Series and had the opportunity to represent Team GBR abroad. I sailed in Flanders, Naples, Lake Garda, and the Braassemereer. Those events were intimidating, with bigger waves and stronger tides than I was used to, but they were formative experiences that marked my transition from club sailor to international competitor.

Moving from the Optimist into the Laser 4.7 was a shock. I was immediately introduced to sailors like Angus Kemp, whose experience in the class helped bring me up to speed. I qualified for the national squad during a period dominated by light winds, where my low body weight worked to my advantage. As soon as the breeze picked up, however, the limitations were clear – the boat was simply too big for me!

At my first major event, I capsized fourteen times in a single race. Unlike the Optimist, you didn't have to bail out the water, which was both brutal and liberating. Despite the setbacks, I qualified for the squad, and the winter training that followed was intense. We had serious discussions about what it meant to be "World Class", setting ambitious targets for fitness and discipline. With limited coached training each year, everything else depended on self-motivation.

The environment was demanding. If you were late – even by a second – you had to do ten press-ups for every minute the last person arrived late. You were never late twice. Days often

began with an hour of intense activation, which frequently ended with someone being sick. At fifteen years old, it was a steep learning curve.



Between camps, we were expected to log gym sessions, sailing sessions, and cardio sessions. For me, that meant playing basketball five days a week for cardio, gym sessions every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, and sailing whenever possible at weekends. Within eight months, we attended the World Championships in Poland, where I finished ninth. A few weeks later at the Nationals, I placed second, just two points off first.

The following year, 2019, after transitioning into the Radial, I won the Youth Nationals. That result earned me selection as the sole British male Radial sailor for the Youth World Championships - effectively a miniature Olympics across all sailing classes. Being selected gave me a real glimpse of what representing your country at the highest level could feel like.

While still at school, I was able to dedicate most of my time outside lessons to sailing and fitness, completing my school work during school hours. I also had to manage significant physical changes, moving from 49kg to 78kg across successive class transitions - a process that involved a lot of time dragging my parents to the gym.

Picture courtesy of Anders Dahlberg



After school, I faced the challenge of balancing elite sailing with university. Inspired by sailors such as Micky Beckett, I enrolled in Ship Science at the University of Southampton, combining my love of sailing with engineering. It wasn't easy. I swung between focusing too much on sailing and too much on studying, eventually having to step away from sailing almost entirely in my final year to achieve the marks I needed.

At that point, I assumed full-time sailing might no longer be financially viable. But after graduating, further support from my parents allowed me one final year to pursue the campaign properly, with a clear deadline: the 2025 World Championships in China - my first real opportunity to qualify for the British Sailing Squad.

With a single season to prove I belonged at that level, everything I had worked toward was suddenly compressed into one year. It was the point where ambition met reality, and where the safety nets began to disappear.

Part Two follows that year - and the attempt to earn a place on the British Sailing Squad.

Part Two:

The Year Everything Was Tested

By the time I stepped into my first senior season, I knew this wasn't going to be about just one race. It was going to be about whether I could sustain a full international campaign - physically, mentally, and financially - long enough to earn a place on the British Sailing Squad.

The calendar was full before the year even began. Two winter Vilamoura Grand Prix events would build the foundation, followed by a long European circuit and three key qualification regattas: the Princess Sofia Trophy, the World Championships, and the European Championships. To be selected, I needed to finish inside the top 50% at one of those events - but in a fleet made up almost entirely of full-time international athletes, that meant competing against sailors with a decade or more of senior experience.

Vilamoura - building belief

I began the season in Vilamoura, Portugal, where winter training and two Grand Prix regattas set the tone.

I won the Silver Fleet at both Vilamoura Grand Prix events, **Soundings 2026**

finishing right on the edge of the Gold Fleet. That mattered. The Silver Fleet is often filled with very strong sailors who have been pushed out of Gold by a single mistake - a black flag, a breakage, one bad race - which means you're racing against people who are often far better than their position suggests. Racing at the front of that fleet also requires a different skill set. You're not just trying to survive in traffic - you're managing risk, controlling the fleet and making decisions that affect dozens of boats behind you.

Those regattas showed me something else as well. My speed was there, but my starts weren't consistent enough. Over the winter I began working with a sports psychologist, using visualisation to rehearse what a good start feels like - how the boats stack up, how the pressure builds in the sail, how it feels to commit and accelerate, and how you shoot forward and break free. That mental shift began to change the way I raced.

Princess Sofia - the first standard

The Princess Sofia Trophy in Palma was the first qualification regatta. It's the hardest regatta of the season, filled with Olympic medallists, funded national squads, and sailors who have been in the class for a decade.

I finished 70th out of 174 - inside the top 40%. That was well within the standard I needed, but selection didn't come.

Hyères - and the van that nearly ended it

From Sofia, the season rolled straight into Hyères. It wasn't a qualification regatta for me, but it was the final build-up before Worlds - the last chance to sharpen everything. This is where things went a little pear-shaped.

The van made it onto the ferry - just. But by the time we came off the other side it was barely alive. The power steering had gone. The ABS lights were flashing. The dashboard looked like a Christmas tree. When the ramp dropped, the van wouldn't move. With a line of traffic building behind me, I climbed out in flip-flops and pushed just to clear the way for the eager travellers behind me.

The van ended up stuck at a mechanic's in Toulon. Our boats were locked inside the port. While everyone else was training for Hyères, I was watching days slip away.

When I finally got back on the water, I was behind - but I still raced, and finished 47th out of 112.



World Championships:

Prepared for one thing – given another!

As Qingdao was the venue for the 2008 Beijing Olympics, we knew that the tide would be a major factor. That's why, before travelling, we had a training camp in Lymington focusing on fleet positioning, laylines, and how to race effectively through tidal gradients.

When we arrived in China, some days were 15–18 knots, full hiking, big waves and big pressure. Others were 3–8 knots, where everything came down to patience, positioning, and timing. All of which was done in a strong tide, building a picture of how races unfold when the current is doing half the work.

Unfortunately as the regatta began, the 'wind machine' turned off – the first five days passed with only two races sailed. Fog settled over the bay. A long rolling swell pushed through the course. The wind never quite established itself. Everyone waited. Then, on the final day, the whole place turned on.

A 25–32 knot offshore breeze blew straight off the city. The wind was weaving between the skyscrapers, breaking apart and tearing across the racecourse. You could be flat hiking on one tack and seconds later the boat would try to tack itself as a gust slammed in from a new angle, forcing you to dive across just to keep it upright. It was wild - but it wasn't random.

The pressure was visible on the water and, if you committed to it, you could still race. In many ways it was strangely familiar, like sailing in Poole Harbour in a winter northerly, where the breeze comes off the land in sharp lines and you have to read it fast.

Through all of that, I finished 56th out of 138 – once again inside the top 40% of the fleet and my best result yet. Two qualification events. Two times inside the standard. Still no selection.

The financial edge

By this point, something else had become very real. If I didn't qualify for the squad, I had just enough money left to make it to the next Princess Sofia – but only if I moved back to my parents' house, so I left Portland and stepped away from the training group and environment I had built. The European Championships weren't just another regatta. They were a fork in the road.

Euros - when it all had to count

By the time I arrived at the Europeans, everything was hanging on it and, when it mattered most, I delivered. I finished 46th

out of 129 – top 35% of the fleet. My best performance yet and winning a race on the final day topped it all off.

Three qualification events. Three times inside the standard. And, finally, it was enough.

I earned my place on the British Sailing Squad!

The season you've just read about wasn't just built on training and results - it was built on logistics.

Between winter training in Portugal, racing across Europe, the World Championships in China, and keeping a boat – and myself moving from event to event, a full international campaign costs around £28,000 a year.

That covers travel by road, ferry and air, regatta entry fees, boat transport and chartering, sails, equipment, and the training blocks that make it possible to compete.

None of it is optional. It's the cost of racing against full-time athletes from around the world.

I don't share that number to ask for sympathy – only to give context. Because behind every result is a chain of decisions and commitments that most people never see.

The reason I've chosen to share this story is because this journey began here – in Ham Bay on Wednesday nights, with volunteers and coaches who gave their time because they believed it mattered. I wouldn't be where I am without that support, and I'm deeply grateful for it.

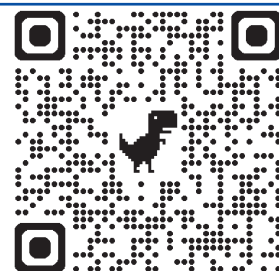
If you would like to be part of what comes next, I've set up a simple way to help support the campaign. Contributions go directly toward the practical costs of racing: travel, entry fees, equipment and getting the boat to the start line.

There is absolutely no expectation. Just by reading this, you're already part of the journey.

If you would like to help in a more tangible way, you can do so via this link: <https://revolut.me/james0srl/pocket/DU8nMjzhvk> or scan the QR code.

Thank you for being part of where this all began

If you'd like to explore how your business could get involved, please email me at:
foster.james@mail.com



Old Harry to The Needles

by Chris Elfes

A one-day passage (without a boat)!

We all know the route from Old Harry to the Needles. It's a classic. Line-of-sight navigation, steady compass bearing across Poole Bay, reassuringly recognisable landmarks at either end. Many a yacht club member has made the passage with little more than a glance at the chart, a decent cup of tea and maybe a lie down.

I decided to attempt it without being in the boat!

The swim from Old Harry Rocks to the Needles became part of my three-year build-up to an official, solo English Channel swim attempt. I had completed a relay Channel swim in 2018, which was both inspiring and mildly delusional in equal measure. Being relatively new to serious swimming – and having taken it up at a stage of life when most sensible people are buying comfortable slippers – I knew I needed time. Lots of it.

Learning to Love the Cold

Winter sea swimming without a wetsuit is something one does not so much embrace as gradually stop complaining about. Dorset's waters are invigorating in July and character-building in January. Still, week by week, season by season, I adapted.

Much of my structured training took place at Canford School. I had the privilege of sharing lanes with some exceptionally talented swimmers. I was never going to match their speed, but they did note my ability to “just keep going”. Stubbornness, (as described by Juliette when being polite), so it turns out, is a transferable skill.

Expert advice was generously offered. My once-terrifying technique slowly improved. I began to understand nutrition, hydration, and the peculiar logistics of marathon – and later ultrathon distance open-water swimming. Feeding quickly from a bottle on a rope while treading water in a sea swell is a skill in itself.

The Seed Is Planted

Through Dorset's welcoming and many sea swimming communities - ranging from nervous beginners to hardened Channel veterans – I heard that the first ever crossing between Old Harry and the Needles had only recently been completed as a two-person relay. Shortly afterwards, a super-fast local female swimmer achieved the first ever solo crossing. That left me to try and become the first ever solo male swimmer – my very own ‘world record’ perhaps?

Both swims had used the same highly experienced local,



Poole-based fisherman as pilot. He knew the tides intimately, and for a swim of this nature, tidal planning is everything. Even on neap tides, the ebb around The Needles can be very intimidating on a small boat, let alone as an aged swimmer. A swimmer must arrive at The Needles before the tide turns against them – or risk becoming an exhibit in a Cherbourg ‘Museum of Idiots’!

The crossing seemed a logical stepping stone. If successfully completed, it would be excellent preparation for the Channel. So I booked the boat for an early August 2022 neap tide. Remarkably, the simple act of booking focused my training overnight. Clearly, I need targets.

Passage Planning (and Humility)

I had studied the tide tables carefully. My view was that we should leave Poole Harbour at 0900 for a 1000 start from Studland. The skipper disagreed - firmly. He wanted an 0700 departure.

We discussed tidal speeds, my swimming pace (brutal honesty required), and the consequences of arriving at the Needles with the ebb increasing. Eventually, I did the sensible thing and deferred to the man who makes his living on the water. Departure: 0700.

Ultrathon distance sea swimming is never a solo endeavour, however much the swimmer may appear alone. It requires planning, safety cover, and a committed team. My Dorset-based open water coach was due to be on board but had to withdraw two weeks beforehand due to family commitments. Fortunately, two outstanding swimming friends – Hannah and Trish – stepped up from crew to coach, along with my naturally clumsy brother-in-law, Sean, whose primary role was photographer (and, as it turned out, comic relief for the crew).

Hannah and Trish are vastly stronger swimmers than I ever will be and are both experienced in long-distance events. Crucially, from multiple swims together, or rather with me trailing some distance behind, they understood my pace, temperament, and how I respond under pressure. In endurance swimming, the crew has the unenviable responsibility of pulling the swimmer out, if safety demands it. Trish herself had once been withdrawn from a Channel attempt with just one nautical mile to go after 15½ hours, requiring hospital rehydration. These were not people who would let me quit lightly - but nor would they let me sink due to my own pride. I was quite certain however, that they would (enjoy) pushing me to my limits and shouting at me a lot. They are a tough pairing! Reassuring.

The Start

We left Poole Town Quay just before 0700 in glorious sunshine. Even so, nerves made themselves known. There is a peculiar pre-

swim routine: stretching, hydration, sun cream, and the application of generous quantities of grease to prevent chafing in salt water. For me: armpits, the front of the neck and, for general affect, a bit of groin rubbing. Glamour knows no bounds.

By the time we reached Studland, mild performance anxiety related nausea had set in. At that point, the only cure is to get on with it. I jumped into the sea, adjusted my hat and goggles, and waited for the start signal.

Friends in Swanage watched the start from atop the cliffs at Old Harry. My brother-in-law began the day as a keen, semi-professional photographer but ended it horizontal, burping, sun-burnt, heavily medicated for seasickness, and intermittently asleep.

The Hard Part (Which Came Early)

Within 20 – 30 minutes the sea turned choppy off Old Harry. Wind against the last of the ebb created awkward, breaking waves. When I rotated to breathe, I was frequently rewarded with a big mouthful of salt water, sometimes inadvertently inhaled. Waves bounced off the boat unpredictably increasing the number of times I took in seawater. For the first time ever, I felt seasick while swimming – a disconcerting development.

After one hour and 55 minutes swim time, the standard five-minute warning whistle was blown and a large “5” sign hung over the side of the boat. Verbal instructions are useless in wind, swell, diesel engine noise and, of course, with a swimmer’s ears being both underwater and enclosed in a swim hat! The swimmer must acknowledge the messages with a quick thumbs up, mid front crawl stroke when facing the crew. At two hours, on the dot, my first feed was delivered by dipping a feed bottle ahead of me, tied to a fishing line for quick retrieval.

Although I felt terrible, I knew I needed regular calories to succeed, so swallowed quickly. Unfortunately, at the same time, a wave broke over me. I ingested more salt water; and promptly vomited back all the feed. There was simply a ‘*get on with it, you can feed in an hour*’ voice from above. The swimmer simply must get going again, hungry or not. Feeds





are strictly timed to prevent the swimmer drifting off course and starting to feel the cold. My feed times were terribly slow 'like a day out for a picnic' was Hannah's view, I believe.

It was, in hindsight, an 'educational gift', although at the time I would not describe it quite so positively.

I wanted to stop. I could see we were being pushed west towards Swanage rather than east towards the Isle of Wight. Internal mental frustration mounted both with myself and my blaming of the choice of start time. I felt slow, off-course, and unwell. Negative thinking is unhelpful.

Luckily, I also began thinking of the people who had supported my training – the early mornings, the winter dips, the endless lengths. I imagined their comments. Some sympathetic. Some truly merciless. That did the trick!

I realised that, compared with the Channel, this was 'only' a rehearsal. I would need to master feeds in rough water and made a note to myself to buy some proper feed bottles. My screw lid, wide-necked, one pint plastic milk containers might be cheap, but were useless! I learned that I would need to accept seasickness as a probability. However, I would need to keep going regardless.

By the three-hour mark the tide had slackened. The chop eased as we moved clear of the small race south of Old Harry. The second feed went down successfully. Well, the warm liquid component did. However, Sean was given 'one job' by the girls and failed manfully. All he had to do was hold a fishing net in front of me, so I could take out a much-anticipated M&S mini-pancake with butter on. Sadly he simply dumped it in the cold, salty water and I watched it dissolve in front of me. He then promptly had to lie down and shut his eyes again. We all know that horrid feeling, but I'm afraid to say that, at that



moment, I did not feel as sympathetic as I should have done....

Feeding would move to hourly, then more frequently as dictated by my speed and need for energy maintenance. Complex carbohydrates and a small amount of quick acting sugars are the order of the day. Too many quick carbs cause a temporary 5-minute high before a problematic and prolonged low, so must be avoided. A swimmer must drink enough (based on their bodyweight) to be able to pee (while swimming) hourly. This is carefully checked for and noted by the support team. Failure to pee is a potential red flag as regards hydration and crucial, internal salt balance.

I felt better almost immediately. The southwest wind was also now helping rather than hindering, with a gentle swell behind me and the sun shining overhead.

Across Poole Bay we went

The Middle Miles

Endurance swimming is a study in rhythm. Ideally, the swimmer stays midships, neither too close (touching the boat is not permitted) nor too far (unhelpful and unsafe). I prefer swimming slightly forward, as though encouraging the boat to keep up with me rather than the reverse. Diesel fumes discourage a position astern.

Hannah and Trish each swam short stints alongside – just behind me, never in front as that is illegal in terms of swim distance rules. If racing, swimming behind someone to gain 'drag' gives a competitive edge. Their presence was hugely reassuring. They are both strong, and I am used to them slowing down for me. For once, it felt helpful rather than humiliating to pretend that I was ahead of them because I was faster!

Hours passed. According to Trish's meticulous notes, by hour six they were concerned I was slowing. "Why is Chris looking tired?" she wrote. Quite! Cannot understand it myself.

Yet my stroke rate remained remarkably consistent. Technique held. I was tired, certainly – but not failing.

As we approached the final stages, the crew became acutely aware of the next tidal turn. Timing mattered. Both Hannah and Trish entered the water again for the final push. I cannot repeat their motivational speeches in full, as yacht club decorum must be preserved, but suffice it to say that they were 'very direct and clear'.

With the promise that we were within twenty minutes of the finish, I found another gear. Eight hours and twenty-eight minutes after starting, I completed the crossing.

Champagne and Perspective

Hannah had secreted a bottle of champagne on board. It tasted magnificent. Almost as magnificent as having our reserves of fresh drinking water poured over me by Trish to remove the crusted salt that had effectively laminated itself to my skin.

As we motored back towards Poole Harbour at a civilised speed, I collapsed into an exhausted sleep. Reviewing the data later, I realised I had effectively swum almost two-thirds of a Channel distance. I also now knew that I could keep going, albeit slowly, even after over eight continuous hours. It was a significant stepping stone.

The Channel and Beyond

The following year, Hannah completed her solo Channel swim in 13 hours. Ten hours into it, after very tough wind against tide conditions for the first four hours, and being sick twice, she faced her own psychological low. This time, it was my turn to swim alongside and offer encouragement – again, heavily



seasoned with language unsuitable for print. At one point I swam one-armed to avoid overtaking her; this indignity of being nearly overtaken (and attempt annulled) by one of the slowest swimmers in the group proved the perfect motivator!

My own five-day booked Channel window arrived in September 2024. The date had been etched in the calendar ever since successfully booking two years earlier. With the weather forecast looking dubious, rather than wait in Dover, I stayed at home. Each day the skipper would ring at midday, to discuss whether we could start at midnight (after promptly driving over). Each day, having already looked at multiple weather Apps, the predicable outcome was agreed – ‘no swim tomorrow due to strong winds’. No solo swim attempts are started in F5 or above. I found this psychologically difficult, and subsequently found out it is well known as the “Emotional Dover Coaster”.

A second, short notice additional late-season slot also fell victim to the same ongoing poor September weather. The daft thing was that Poole Bay was experiencing gentle F2 winds! Shortly afterwards, I injured my wrist in a 4-hour training swim and had to postpone a 2025 attempt. Surgery beckons shortly.

Whether I have another two-to-three-year build-up in me remains to be seen. Whether my lovely, but long-suffering wife, Juliette, does is another question entirely. Perhaps I need

to politely ask what she ‘*really*’ thinks?!

So, for my solo Channel attempt, I did not even get a toe into the water... I even wondered whether the charity I had raised money for, Compassion in Dying*, would need to give their £20,000 back.

What I Do Know

What I do know is this: sea swimming has given me some of the best friends of my life. It has provided challenge, perspective, humility, and joy – in equal measure, plus an unequal amount of coping with being cold.

There are countless swims still to be done, in Dorset and far beyond. Short ones, long ones, sociable ones, and perhaps the occasional slightly mad one.

And if any member of this club, having read this, is even mildly curious about sea swimming, then do get in touch. There is a welcoming community ready to help. Just don’t expect the water to be warm....

Chris Elfes

*Please consider looking at or recommending this fantastic charity, which affects every single human on the planet:

<https://compassionindying.org.uk>



Left to right: Trish, Chris and Hannah

The Sherwood Cup Pursuit Races



Picture by Bill Frewing

The 2025 season saw the inaugural races in the Sherwood Cup, a new series of three reverse handicap, or pursuit races.

For those unfamiliar with this format, boats start slowest to fastest, according to their handicap, and race until a predetermined time, where their position at that point is their finishing result. If all goes well, and the starting times have been calculated correctly, the fleet should finish around the same time if everyone has sailed an equally competitive race.

There are a number of advantages to this format if you are new to racing, not least of which is that, unless you're winning, there will be a boat in front of you to follow, so the risk of getting lost on the course is minimal. And, of course, if you overtake someone, that's a position gained in the race so it's fun chasing everyone down.

Race 1 - 23rd May FW: 18:30 - SW 12 to 16 knots

48 boats competed in the first race, which took place on a beautiful spring evening with a light southwesterly breeze and very little tide.

The RO, Simon Lawson, set a long circular course around the top triangle, which proved to be perfect.

First across the line was Dave and Amber Hale in their 420 but, regrettably, they were later disqualified on a technicality promoting Martin Clooney and Peter Frith into first place in their Osprey.

Social Sailor - Claire Daniels (Wanderer)

Big Shot - Chris Townsend (ILCA)



Soundings 2026

Lady - Sally Ross

Winner - Martin Clooney & Peter Frith (Osprey)

Youth - Lottie Eyre (ILCA)

Race 2 - 11th July FW: 18:25 - S 5 to 7 knots

The second took place on the Friday evening of our Club Regatta. Parkstone Yacht Club were invited to attend and 24 boats sailed from Parkstone to the Top Triangle along with some of their safety boats to help out.

102 boats from Poole took part, so 126 overall, making this event one of the best attended since Barts Bash in 2014.

Simon Lawson was the RO, once again, and set what has become known as the "Pac Man" course – a circular course around the top triangle with a dog-leg inwards. So the course resembled the famous Pac Man.

The weather was hot and sunny, but the high pressure seemed to have chased the wind away and so there was some concern the race would be abandoned. However, there was just enough breeze to start the race westwards against the tide.

One of the main features of this race was the Wednesday night Youth instructors decided to compete in Club Oppys, although progress against the tide at the start proved difficult.

It was also great to see that several of Rich Sherwood's friends and crewmates came out to support the event in Club dinghies, with Will Dennis (skipper of Blues/Saska), Dale Rickard and Paul Haigh all racing. Will and Dale (Hartley 15) even won a medal each in the Social Sailing category. Special mention goes to (Insert Name) from Parkstone who came 5th overall in an Optimist!

Social Sailor - Nicky (GP14)?

Big Shot - Chris Townsend (ILCA)

Lady - Sally Ross (ILCA)

Winner - Ollie and Amber Hale (GP14)

Youth - Alex Pluck (Topper)

Race 3 - 29th August 18:30 SW 8-10 knots

The third race saw regular RO Simon Lawson bring back the well proven Pac Man course, but this time it was run anticlockwise starting with a beat up towards the Wareham Channel.

The Met Office had forecast 27 knots and thunder earlier in the week, which caused some concerns, but come Friday there was no sign of heavy weather: it was a gentle 10 knot southwesterly breeze which dropped to eight knots over the course of the race.

The strong ebb tide meant some of the sailors who don't regularly race struggled to get over the Yellow Line but, once



out of the tide, made good progress to Mikey. The course then proceeded to be a series of gybes round the marks until we finally turned upwind.

30 boats competed, which was excellent considering the weather forecast, and the race finished in the twilight (some might have said the dark). Then it was back to the bar for dinner and the awards ceremony, which was presented by our Commodore, Tim Edom.

Social Sailor - Claire & Jo Macgregor (Wanderer)

Youth - Devon Green & Fraser Burnett (Hobie 16)

Big Shot - Sandra Macgloughlan (Laser)

Veteran - James Stafford (GP14) Pictured far left

Lady - Lottie Eyre (moved from Youth as she's just too good!!) (ILCA)

Winners: Richard Hattersley & Peter Frith (Osprey)

Congratulations go to the overall winner of the event who was Peter Frith in his Osprey, helmed over the series by Martin Clooney and Richard Hattersley.

Sherwood Cup Endeavour Award

This award was voted on by the Safety teams and Race Management and is given to the sailor who showed positive energy, determination on the race course.

Many names were nominated: Laiyla Stewart in her Topper, Nick and Carol, who raced for the first time in their new

Wayfarer: *Robin*. But the award deservedly went to a young man who has only just completed his RYA Start Race qualification on Wednesday Youth nights, but who competed in all three races with a massive grin and came a very impressive 33rd out of 124 boats at the Friday Regatta event, beating many more experienced racers. So a massive congratulations goes to a well deserving winner; Alex P. (pictured above receiving his trophy from Tim Edom) in his Topper.

Thanks to:

This event would not have been possible to run without the input from many members who helped both on the water and off. I can't name them all here or Soundings will run out of room but, in particular, Simon Lawson and Bill Frewing for being RO & Assistant RO. Thanks too to the safety crews many of whom did all three races and were last back to the Haven after making sure everyone had got in safely. Robert Holdway for compiling the results, AJ for much of the organisation and generally smoothing things over. Thanks to our Commodore, Tim Edom, for taking care of the MC duties at the awards and Claire Eyre and Bernie Davis for organising the registration and trolleys like a military operation. Can I also thank everyone on the Sailing Committee who agreed to support this series and covering the cost of the trophies and prizes.



The concept and Richard Sherwood

During my time on Sailing Committee I was very keen to increase participation in dinghy racing, particularly with sailors that sailed socially or who were still learning. A few years ago we replaced the Friendly Fridays event, that usually ran the evening before the Regatta with a Pursuit Race, open to all members. This proved popular and afterwards a few competitors asked if we could run a series as they had enjoyed it so much.

A few months later, one of my friends, Rich Sherwood, who was a member of Poole Yacht Club for many years, passed away after a long battle with cancer. Rich loved sailing and, as well as campaigning his own cruiser in the Solent, raced regularly out of Poole on *Blues* (a Sigma 33) then *Saska* (a First 31.7) both skippered by Will Dennis, a long time Poole member. Rich had an infectious personality and it was impossible not to love him. He had a joke for every occasion and faced his own challenges uncomplaining with a smile. Until the end, unless you knew, you wouldn't think he had a care in the world.

I wanted to remember Rich and his attitude towards sailing so an idea formed for the Sherwood Cup - a series of races but with an emphasis on participation as well as competitive racing.

The Sherwood Cup Endeavour Award embraces all of the characteristics that Rich Sherwood personified and, to me, is the most important award in the event.

Rich McAvoey

Ugly Duckling and the.....

2023 Rolex Fastnet

In the next few weeks, the campaign will get underway for the X412 Delta X for the 2027 Fastnet with the first qualifier falling at the end of the forthcoming season. With that horizon getting closer, George Beevor took the time to look back on his last go in 2023.

A skipper's account of a campaign years in the making....

"It was a dark and stormy night..." is how the best childhood stories began and, fittingly, that's how ours began too – on a foul July night in Studland Bay, battered, bruised and wondering what on earth we were doing. Six days later we would sail into Cherbourg, exhausted but elated, finishing third in class in one of the toughest Fastnet's in living memory. This is the story of how *Ugly Duckling*, a 1972 Sagitta 35 and a crew of five, ended up there.

Finding the Boat That Wanted a Fastnet

The roots of this campaign stretch back to a hot day on the River Dart in 2018. Olly and I were racing our Impala 28, *Magic*, and had reached the limits of what she could offer off-shore. A brokerage listing led us to a Sagitta 35 – solid, elegant, unmistakably Sparkman & Stephens. We stepped aboard and immediately felt she was "right": over engineered fittings, powerful lines, and the sense of a boat built for weather.

Within a year we were winning JOG races and Hamble Classics. On the beat home from a Cowes – Alderney win, Olly wondered aloud whether Duckling was hinting she wanted something bigger – perhaps even a Fastnet. A seed was planted.

Why Take on a Fastnet?

People always ask "why?". For me it came down to privilege and time. Owning a boat like this, with the support of Olly's father, Hedley, – Hamble boatbuilding royalty – is a gift that won't last forever. I didn't want to be one of those sailors who retires and spends the rest of their life wishing they'd done the big one. Let us not die wondering.

Soundings 2026

Building the Crew

I've always believed the greatest joy in sailing is the crew. The sunsets, dolphins and trophies are all better when shared with the right people. For a Fastnet we needed sailors I trusted enough to sleep off watch – an honour skippers rarely grant. The crew almost picked itself:

- Olly, my long time co-owner and shipmate.
- Tom Chicken, calm under pressure, an engineer whose hydrogen fuel cell company would later save our electrical system.
- Matt Thornton, paramedic, natural helm, and a sailor who can crack a joke when everyone else is clinging on.
- Lisa McCrindle, experienced, unflappable and a brilliant communicator.
- Daryl Reis-Day, electronics engineer and navigator, who simply walked up to me at Cowes Week and said, *"I hear you're doing a Fastnet – I want in."*

We planned to race with six. Fate had other ideas.

Qualifying, Refitting, Preparing

The qualifiers went well—third in the Cervantes Trophy, a frustrating retirement in the de Guingand, and a gritty third in the Morgan Cup after kedging in 60 metres off Portland. We learned how to suffer together, how to keep going, and how to trust each other.

Over winter, Hedley led a major refit: new engine, new safety kit, hull taken back to glass. Tom's company loaned us a methanol fuel cell that kept our batteries above 12.3 volts



throughout the race—transformational for comfort and safety.

We trained, we did sea survival courses together, we stowed food and water with military precision.

Then, a week before the start, Lisa broke her foot. We were 5!

The Start: Into the Teeth of It

The 2023 Fastnet was forecast to be brutal and it lived up to every word. Visibility was poor, the Solent was blowing hard, and our start – delayed, with a wrapped batten in the blade – felt anticlimactic with note of the helicopters and press boats that normally mark this occasion out as a bit special. But once sorted, we tore through the fleet under #3 and two reefs.

Then the sea state built.

Between Yarmouth and Hurst we got a riding turn on the genoa winch, fully loaded. We narrowly avoided a collision with *Scherzo*. I knew then we'd need the storm jib – but, with a big class behind us and chaos all around, finding sea room was to be a challenge.

Out past Hurst the waves turned vicious. When Tom and Matt went forward to secure the blade and set the storm jib, a breaking sea submerged the entire foredeck. For a few seconds I couldn't see either of them. Those were the longest seconds of my life. When the bow rose again, they were still there—soaked, battered, but aboard.

We limped into Studland Bay and picked up a mooring. Everything was wet. The storm jib was wrecked. The blade had a hole. Guardrails were bent. Matt had a bruise on his back from a stanchion that had literally kept him on the boat.

We ate lasagne, drank our alcohol free ration, and talked. I told the crew: *"I don't believe we're going to finish. But I'm not done yet."*



Sea Survival Course

Everyone chose to continue. The Long Road West

Sunday became a day of small victories: sewing sails, drying clothes, fixing what we could. We set off with the modest goal of “just getting round St Aldhelm’s Head”. Then Portland. Then Start Point. Each time we said we’d stop if it looked bad. Each time we carried on.

By Monday we were in sunshine near the Scillies, dodging Clipper 70s struggling in the light airs. Realising we had more water than we needed, we did laundry in a bucket while dolphins played around us. Clean socks in the Celtic Sea is a joy I’ll never forget.

On Tuesday we were reaching towards the Fastnet in building breeze. Spirits rose as Daryl downloaded weather via sat phone. We might round the rock by Wednesday lunchtime.

The Rock: A Battle of Attrition

The forecast was right. By Wednesday morning we were in a full gale. We dropped the main entirely and battled on under blade alone. The seas were enormous – well above the spreaders, sometimes seemingly at masthead height. The boat shuddered, bulkheads groaning under load.

A whale surfaced directly in front of us. For a moment I thought we’d hit it. Somehow it slid away into the depths.

By the time we reached the waypoint south of the rock, we were exhausted. The Fastnet itself appeared through the murk – less a romantic symbol, more a milestone we desperately needed to round so we could bear away and stop being beaten up.

When we finally turned downwind, I re-hoisted the triple-reefed main and collapsed into my bunk, sleeping like the dead.



George in the companionway looking tired

The Run Home

Thursday brought sunshine, spinnakers, and the first real smiles in days. Matt slept for ten hours straight with me standing his watches.

Then came the sat phone incident: the bag slipped off the halyard on which we'd hoisted it to get a clear signal, and fell overboard. We executed our first real man overboard drill perfectly, recovering it on the first pass. Spirits soared.

But the sea wasn't done with us. That night the mainsheet block parted, leaving the boom uncontrolled. In pitch darkness we rigged a preventer and replaced the shackle. It was our third "incident" of the day—superstition satisfied.

By dawn we were running fast again, switching between spinnakers as repairs failed and winds built.

The Cherbourg Problem

For the whole of Thursday we reached up the Channel, covering the distance from the Bishop's Rock to Alderney between dawn and dusk. We surfed at double digit speeds—astonishing for a 50 year old 0.898 rating cruiser racer. The hull sang. The crew whooped. *Ugly Duckling*: heavy and over-built, was suddenly flying, all in glorious sunshine.

As we approached the Channel Islands, the wind filled from the south and we surfed at up to 14 knots. But the Cherbourg finish has a flaw: a 15 mile tidal gate, 25 miles from the line, with streams up to six knots. Arrive at the wrong time and you can lose hours – or the race. Whilst Cherbourg is a wonderful host, putting this tidal gate in the last throws of such a long race does rather undermine the event as a sporting contest. We arrived at the wrong time!

We clawed our way along the edge of the TSS, adding seven miles to our course. It was frustrating, but we kept pushing.

The Finish

Just before 04:00 ship's time, in the dark and under full pressure, we crossed the line and entered Cherbourg. We were emotional, exhausted, and utterly spent.

Our elapsed time: 6 days, 13 hours, 1 minute, 12 seconds.

Our result: 3rd in IRC4B.

Our season: 5th of 56 in IRC4, and – unexpectedly – IRC3 Champions of the YC de France Manche Atlantique Series.

Reflections

Ugly Duckling was magnificent. She looked after us when the sea tried its best to break us. She is heavy, over built, and stubborn – but in a storm, I'd choose her over anything modern. Olin Stephens once said: "I don't like to be retrograde, but I'd rather be on one of the old boats in a storm." He was right. And as for me? I can't wait for the next one.



Safely tied up in Cherbourg



The Good Ship Lollipop &

The ISW 2025

by Richard & Jenny Marshall

Approaching Cresswell Quay

Looking out on a wet and windy day in November the thought of sunny days with gentle winds sailing the Pembrokeshire coast in June seemed very enticing. Reality struck in early June when we received the arrival and launching information. What had we let ourselves in for?

As recent owners of a Shrimper we had much to learn about launching and trailing. We read the comprehensive information and Jenny put red rings around things like ‘narrow road,’ not ideal for launching unless good weather and plenty of help’ We had spent a few nights on *Lollipop* (1083) previously but not ten days, so preparation was key and careful packing essential.

We set off early with Karen Macey’s forecast of sunny days and favourable winds ringing in our ears. Not only was the boat stuffed with every provision, but the bikes, beds and hanging wardrobe were in the van for Jenny’s ‘just in case.’ Pinging from the WhatsApp group alerted us to the fact that a competition had already started as to who had the longest journey. Jenny tracked progress and was sorry to hear of *Coffee Bean*’s transport failure on route. Crossing the impressive Cleddau Bridge gave us a bird’s eye view of Neyland Marina and entering the town they had even put the flags out for us!

Driving towards the shore we were met by the sight of fellow Poole YC Shrimpers Cameron (940), Moonfleet(920) and Alice Rose(417) already sailing in sunshine with a stiff breeze. Many Shrimpers had arrived and were busy rigging in preparation for hoisting in on Friday. Building works in the marina had not

Neyland Marina with Milford Haven beyond

gone to plan and so the new facilities were not as described online. “A good job I packed all those extra clothes,” said Jenny.

I decided to launch on the rough slipway near Neyland Yacht Club, ‘not ideal for launching unless good weather’, but Jenny was less than enthusiastic. Rigging and raising the mast went well but we were aware that we were being watched with some amusement from the clubhouse. One NYC member, a fellow Shrimper owner, volunteered his help. It wasn’t a graceful launch, more akin to that of a lifeboat! Jenny towed our trailer back to the marina saying “I can’t turn round if I get stuck, I’ll just leave it.” I motored *Lollipop* up to the marina in desperate need of a stiff drink and a pleasant evening was spent meeting fellow Shrimpers.

Friday 20th June dawned with grey skies and a stiff breeze. We found our new berth and the marina facilities, but the only shower blocks were quite a stretch of the legs away. Cat, from Parkstone on *Samphire*, came prepared with a folding bike! Apparently, there was singing accompaniment in the ladies’ showers courtesy of Chris! Morning has broken being the favourite.

Breakfast enjoyed and weather improving we ventured up-river with *Alice Rose*, *Moonfleet*, and *Cameron* with one reef in 23 knots of gusty breeze. Returning to our new berth proved somewhat of a challenge due to most of them being occupied by motor cruisers with large protruding outboard propellers. The day improved and we enjoyed the sunshine whilst watching



Martin Blake, SOA National Hon.Sec., welcoming the fleet members at Neyland Yacht Club

the hoisting proceedings. *Coffee Bean's* crew arrived undeterred and went to Aldi to stock up. Thanks to the camaraderie of the Shrimper fleet, they enjoyed the week in other boats. The day ended with the Welcome Dinner at Neyland Yacht Club (above). Old friends reunited and new friends welcomed.

Saturday 21st June – Up the Cleddau

Briefing prompt at 0900 gave us sailing instructions for the day: To explore the upper reaches of the Cleddau. In a light breeze we set off. A few were enticed to the Lawrenny Arms for an early lunch, others continued up to Haverfordwest, while *Cameron*, *Moonfleet* and *Lollipop* ventured up the Cresswell River (pic below) hoping to make it to the Tide Mill.

Admiring the rural landscape and varied wildlife we didn't notice '0' on the depth gauge! We almost took to the footpath at Ford Point and walking was nearly an option as *Lollipop* became firmly stuck in the mud. Lots of reverse engine and swinging on the whisker pole thankfully did the trick. *Cameron* tacked round but *Moonfleet* headed further upriver, almost making the mill, but she also ran aground and Robin had to war dance on the bow! We all beat a hasty retreat to Neyland on the ebbing tide, including most of the fleet tied up at the Lawrenny Arms.

The fleet tying up at Lawrenny Arms



Sunday 22nd June awakened to angry winds and rushing tide. Even morning prayers on the pontoon were to no avail. Trips were made by car to local attractions and hostleries, including St. David's Head and St. David's Cathedral, and many limericks were penned. Another ISW competition!

*There was an old boy with a Shrimper,
Who remarked with a moan and a whimper.
"It's too windy for me.
To go out to sea
To sit in the pub will be simpler"*

And on that note supper was enjoyed at the Ferryboat Inn to round off a wet and windy day on the Pembrokeshire coast.

Monday 23rd June

The great expedition to Pembroke Castle Pool

A forecast of a 4-6 south-westerly in our direction of travel with a two knot tide against us. Challenging but most of us motored the two nautical miles to Wear Spit then reached into Crow Pool. Anchors dropped we awaited instructions to make our way up river to the tidal barrier. Timing was critical as the



Jenny anchor away



Follow the Leader into Pembroke Moat



barrier only opened for 15 minutes. The plan: follow the leader up the tortuous narrow creek. Jenny is particularly good on anchor duty but chose the muddiest part of Crow Pool. At least it kept her busy cleaning herself and the anchor instead of worrying about the depth.

Pembroke Castle Pool is a tranquil haven for wildlife and locals were excited to see the appearance of a flotilla of Shrimpers decorating their dock. Mooring at the quay appeared most favourable, but with limited space we took the decision to tie up against the wall. The 10-foot ladder did not impress Jenny however mutiny is not acceptable.

As there were no dockside facilities, we played hunt the public loo! Evening culinary options centred around fish and chips, while some of us had other ideas – ours was almost romantic at the Coach House. At least there was a loo! Later most met up for drinks in the Waterman Arms.

We awoke to a chilly Tuesday morning, ready for our visit to Pembroke Castle (below), a short walk from the dock. The



Lollipop dressed at Pembroke dock



enthusiasm and knowledge of our guide was exceptional and he kept us enthralled with the castle's history and its importance throughout the ages. Established by the Normans in 1093 it is one of the most impressive and formidable castles in Wales.



In the grounds I found a statue (pic below left) of one of my ancestors. William Marshall 'Europe's greatest Knight'. His son Richard Marshall (my namesake) recorded as 'a popular and unusually cultured figure.' Such fame! Lunches consumed and souvenirs purchased we prepared to depart the Castle Pool at 16.15. Again we only had 15 minutes to navigate our way out, with a few scary moments at the barrier as the incoming water pushed us all backwards. With careful manoeuvring we all made it into the creek and returned to Neyland in a brisk force 4-5 downwind.

Our passage plan was to head west and circumnavigate Thorne Island, anchor for lunch in Angle Bay, and return on the flood. **WARNING!** We are likely to encounter large shipping. Monitor channels 16,77 and 12. We were only able to lock onto two channels resulting in a close shave with a large pilot boat who gave five hoots and megaphone requests to keep clear of tanker about to leave!

Anchorage at Angle Bay was grey and overcast but calm. Most of fleet returned to base but, as we hadn't had enough excitement that day, we decided to sail to Dale cardinal followed by a broad reach back with a good breeze. *Lollipop* logging 7.8 knots with tide! Didn't take long.

The next day, whilst others visited West Wales Heritage Museum and other places of interest, we took a bike ride upstream to Westfield Pill Nature reserve. Managed by the Wildlife Trust it boasts 150 different species of birds. Not being seasoned twitchers we only saw seven.

The evening venue at the Cresswell Arms was situated at the upper reaches of the Cresswell River. Due to our earlier encounters upstream we decided to go by car. Four intrepid boats made the journey with Poole YC's *Money Penny* employing a crew member sitting on the bow with a physical depth log on a piece of string. They still touched bottom but this time the tide was rising. Great barbecue and cake enjoyed by all, then a quick exit by the boats to catch the last of the tide!

BBQ at Cresswell Quay



Friday 27th June

Wind gods angry again so no passage to Skommer or Dale. Jenny was insistent on seeing puffins, so we made our way to Martins Haven to take a tourist trip around Skommer Island. The boat was about half full due to the sea state and we would be only able to see some of the island as it had to keep to the sheltered north side.

On board entertainment was supplied by Skipper Jim and 'Tonto' the herring gull. Tonto's fame has spread throughout out Wales. Tonto has accompanied Jim for the last 10 years. Lured by special treats he perches on Jim's shoulder. Tonto decided that because of the similarity of her coat, Jenny also must have treats and became extremely interested in her pockets. (pictured above right). Jim waxed lyrical about the Skommer wildlife and the tracking of puffins on the island.

The passage on Saturday was a sail down Milford Haven to Dale. Slightly grey with 3-5 south-westerly. We sheltered in the bay for lunch and some made it onto the pontoon to eat at the Griffin. Picking up a spare mooring buoy, a first for us, we became the target for swimmers. Much to their surprise they



could stand when they reached us. We shared our beers and chatted in the sunshine, and then more arrived! I was curious to see the sea state off St Ann's Head, so we took a sail out. It was calming down so returned to base on a lovely broad reach. A wonderful day finished by supper, whisky and nostalgic music courtesy of fellow Poole YC Shrimpers Cathy, Peter, Jeff, Geri and Mike in their cosy Air BnB a stones's throw from the marina.

Sunday 30th June – Homeward Bound

I motored Lollipop across the estuary and under the bridge to East Llanion Boatyard. Vance the owner had agreed to lift out boats early if it did not interfere with his round of golf!! De-rigging went well and we all managed to make the end of rally lunch and prize giving at the Yacht Club. Tales were told, thank yous said, prizes given and meal enjoyed. So off we travelled back home all in one piece. New things learned and new friends made.





Gannets & Gowns

by Jo Macgregor

Author's note: The cruise was completed single handed (except for the leg from Portbail to Dielette), though I often use the plural pronoun 'we' to refer to me and my boat *Primrose*. I also often abbreviate *Primrose* to *Prim*.

My two weeks of summer holiday 'boatpacking' began on the evening of Sunday 3rd August, with the rough plan of sailing to Dinan and back. The first hurdle of crossing the channel came with the added spice of a summer gale, Storm Floris, spinning across the North Atlantic and threatening to block the English Channel for a day or two. So instead of my preferred evening trip out to Swanage and then an early morning departure across the channel the next day, I decided to leave on the Sunday evening direct to Alderney or Cherbourg. An overnight dash racing the storm across the channel. The 1800 shipping forecast read:

Wight, Portland, Plymouth. West or South West 4 – 6, occasionally 3 at first and 7 later. Slight or moderate, becoming moderate or rough later. Rain or showers. Good, occasionally poor.



As darkness fell we were punching south at six knots on a beam reach into a steep head sea, as if *Prim* was aware of the urgency to get south before the wind backed. I was seasick after a few hours despite loud repetitions of my favourite sea shanties. The wind dropped overnight and I struggled to stay awake as we wallowed in the pitchy blackness with no stars or moon. The intensely grey dawn came almost suddenly and was a huge relief. Shortly afterwards the wind backed into the SW and it was instantly obvious that we wouldn't fetch Alderney, so altered course for Cherbourg adding 2~3 hours to the voyage.

Fog settled in and the wind rose as we crossed the east bound shipping lane, with visibility down to 500m. Alarmingly I didn't see a single ship whilst we were in the shipping lane! As a precaution I broadcast our position every 15 minutes to 'All Ships' on VHF channel 16.

Out of the shipping lanes the wind rose further and I dropped the mainsail and fitted the washboards. The cockpit started to feel very exposed, lonely and cut-off without being able to see *Prim*'s tiny but homely cabin. *Primrose* sailed it like a 'queen' though and I didn't doubt her for a second.

We passed the Cherbourg breakwater at 1320 local time, 16 hours and 15 minutes after setting off from Poole YC. I spent a frustrating 15 minutes in the outer harbour trying to get the outboard started, till my sleep deprived brain remembered to put fuel in it (!) we then slipped quietly and proudly into Port





Chanteryne. We moored next to a 26ft Polish yacht, who seemed a little put out that we'd just assumed the 'honour' of smallest visiting boat in the harbour from him! The professional crew of the classic maxi yacht *Storm Vogel*, who had just finished the Fastnet Race, also stopped for a chat and to give *Primrose* and I 'kudos' for crossing the channel!

After a day of drying out (pic below), catching up on sleep, stretching my legs and sampling the café culture, we set off again on the evening of 5th August bound for Alderney. A majestic evening sail in the pinky dusk with *Prim* sliding to windward and Chappel Roan blasting out the little Bluetooth speaker. As darkness fell Cap de la Hague and Alderney light-houses blinked their messages across the black heaving sea. However, I realised too late that I must have entered my way-point for Alderney incorrectly into the GPS unit and we had been sucked into the Alderney Race. As I considered what to do, a large, steep, over head height breaking wave appeared from leeward and broke into the cockpit. I fitted the washboards in an instant and tacked to put *Prim's* stern to the waves to ease her passage through. A check of the tidal atlas showed a back

eddy along the island shore which I hoped would be enough to allow us to edge our way into Longis Bay. It worked out and we felt our way into the unlit anchorage of Longis Bay, relying heavily on the chart app on my tablet. Though the primitive navigators tools came to play too ... I knew we were getting too close to the rocky shore when I could hear grasshoppers!

Perhaps fate, or just coming full circle, it seemed somewhat appropriate as Longis Bay was where the RNLI had towed the wreckage of my previous boat *Bluebell* almost a year before.

In contrast to the opening verses of the cruise the next few days were uneventful, enjoyable, sunny cruising, as *Prim* and I caught up with friends on Alderney and made our way south, via St Catherine's Bay on Jersey, to St Malo (arriving on the 8th August). In St Malo I walked round to the ferry port to 'clear in' and get my passport stamped by the PAF (Police Aux Frontiers). The PAF officer started asking questions about *Primrose* and where we had come from, and I was instantly anxious that we'd done something wrong. But it turned out he was also a small boat sailor who was just impressed with how far we'd sailed. He wrote down some Youtube accounts on the back of my form to look up when I got Internet.

In St Malo I had the best Croissant Almande of my life, that one patisserie made EVERYTHING so far instantly worthwhile!



St Malo is famously pretty, but I had my heart set on reaching Dinan and exploring the River Rance. So once I had completed the customs and immigrations formalities, *Prim* and I set off up the river, which entails passing through a lock in the tidal barrage. Once through the barrage, mile upon mile of picturesque Breton countryside slipped past the gunwhales, interspersed with little village and chateaus.

We arrived at the top end of the river a little early and the last couple of miles were a little too exciting with very shallow water and a fierce incoming tide. But *Prim* and I shared the adventure with a little French motor boat and we cheered each



other on. Arriving at the Chatelier lock at the head of the tidal Rance, I was instantly invited onboard this little motor boat and offered a drink: pastis, biere, vin blanc, vin rouge, rose.... Actually not vin blanc, the vin blanc is 'fini'! In five minutes I learnt three things from the group of friends onboard:

1. It was one of their birthdays, I wasn't sure which one...
2. In Brittany everyone is drunk
3. Bretons have the best sense of humour!

Through the Chatelier lock I parted ways with my new friends (who steered their boat in a wobbly line up the river) and found a peaceful mooring on the river bank, where we swapped the cry of the sea birds for the gentle hoot of owls and swooping bats as the dusk turned to night.

The next day though, I felt distinctly uneasy. I felt 'trapped' by the two locks separating *Prim* and I from the open sea and the water surrounding us didn't move with the tide or swell, it seemed 'dead'. More tangible though, the seven-day forecast now reached across our intended return to Poole, which was predicting the chance of more strong winds for the return trip.

My initial instinct was to turn back to the sea and head north, to be able to get home in reasonable weather. But, after coming within five miles of Dinan, it would be such a shame not to see the place. I worked through in detail a day by day plan of where we could be and when. This put my mind at ease that, if needs be, we could sail some long passages north and miss any foul weather if we needed to. I also spent a couple of hours giving *Prim* some love which gave me even more confidence in her.

Dinan is an intensely beautiful and historic walled medieval town. What a privilege it was to moor little *Primrose* on the ancient quay and explore the old cobbled streets, as centuries of mariners have done before us. Also couldn't resist buying a stripey Breton top, it might be cliched but everyone was wearing one and they looked so good!

The trip back down the river was idyllic, as was the downwind dawn sail back up the coast to Granville. I prefer to visit quiet anchorages, wild spots and villages, but I had a special desire to visit the Christian Dior museum in Granville. It was





well worth the effort, fascinating and beautiful. In Granville we stocked up on baked goods, cheese and petrol and set off for Iles Chaussey, a low lying rocky archipelago about 10 miles off the French coast where I walked barefoot over the sandy earth amongst blackberries, pears and figs.

Despite the coastal heaven we were passing through, we were still on somewhat of a schedule so set off from Iles Chaussey at 0320 to meet Poole YC friends (the Gandys) in Portbail. As I prepared to get underway, I realised how lucky I was, being the only person to be experiencing that exact moment. The night was perfectly calm, with a bright moon and the water gently lapping on the rocks around me, the beam of the lighthouse sweeping rhythmically overhead. It's moments like this (as well as exquisite pastries) that I go sailing for!

Portbail has a drying marina, and also a large protected drying expanse of (harbour) sand. I was not sure whether to play it safe in the marina or cut my walking distance to the Gandys' house, and marina fees. As I arrived at Portbail my adventurous spirit took hold and, armed with a zoomed in Google satellite view and some careful recces watching the echo sounder I, somewhat warily, put *Primrose* aground a short walk from the

village. Even though *Primrose* has bilge keels, it still takes a lot to overcome three decades of sailing instinct to not put a boat aground! (picture top of previous page)

I had a wonderful time with the Gandys as they showed me Portbail and we ate and drank. Helen and Izzy joined me aboard *Primrose* for the next leg up the deliciously interesting coast to Diellele on Friday 15th August (pic left).

The forecast for Saturday was for some very fresh easterlies (the strong winds that worried me earlier in the trip materialising) and only slightly less fresh easterlies on Sunday. So I decided to continue to Cherbourg on Friday night, wait out the worst of the strong winds on Saturday and head for home on Sunday. Heading around Cap de La Hague was a very strange sensation, there was a gentle breeze and flat water so the only sense of speed was the transit of the low moon galloping along the horizon behind the lighthouse... and the SOG reading on the GPS which peaked at 11.2 kts!

I spent an uneasy Saturday in Cherbourg, catching up on sleep as much as I could and trying to enjoy the last of my holiday. The anxiety of a breezy sail home was looming heavy. Going for a run, enjoying the café culture and a final meal with the Gandys definitely helped though.

We set off from Port Chanterayne at 0330 (UK time) on the 17th August, set sail and cleared the western entrance at 0400. With a forecast of Easterly 4-6 I was nervous, but with two reefs, a well-reefed headsail and everything stowed securely we could make the course at over four knots and felt relatively comfortable. As dawn arrived I could finally see the size of the waves "they've got big" I thought, till I realised, they'd always been that big, it was just I could actually see them now... So I employed my most powerful 'fear management' technique, plugging in to loud heavy dubstep and drum & bass, which seems to always turn my anxiety into pure stoke! All that was left for me to do was hang on, keep *Prim* on course and watch out for ships. The hours ticked by and so did the distance, 60, 50, 40, 30 miles.... And my constant mental ETA slid earlier as *Prim* sent it northwards and I started to thoroughly enjoy the sailing. The sail back up the Swash Channel and through the harbour was so familiar and I became very emotional for what we'd just done. We moored back in *Prim's* berth on F pontoon at 1840 and I enjoyed one more night onboard before heading home the next day. There was no way I could leave *Primrose* straight away after that adventure!



The Lilla Trophy

by Tim Edom

The Lilla trophy is a large solid silver salver hallmarked 1768 and is an important item of Poole history. It was discovered by Sue Thornton-Grimes as a result of the extensive research Sue has undertaken on our Club's history. It was named after the yacht that won the trophy in an early regatta.

The "Lilla" Salver is awarded annually by the Flag Officers to a Club member or group of members who have made an outstanding contribution or achievement to our Club. Members of the General Committee are not eligible for nomination.

Whatever the reason for nomination, the person or persons

who won will have made a positive contribution to other members in the Club or will have put our Club in the spotlight in a very positive light.

This year we had four nominations for the Lilla Trophy and all were very worthy. One option considered was to share it amongst all of them, but we decided that fence-sitting wasn't an option so the joint winners for 2026 were John Withers and Rob Gibson. I have summarised their nominations below and hope you will join me in thanking them for all the commitment and contributions to the Club over the years.



Rob has been PYRA Captain since 2020 and has made numerous beneficial changes during that time based on his wealth of experience in Offshore and Coastal racing, supporting the VPRS system, which helps to keep costs down, making yacht racing more affordable.

He has helped with the yachting side of youth training for more than 10 years. Every year Rob helps train the younger members of the Commodores' Challenge in yacht sailing skills, so they are better prepared for their roles as they progress. He also makes sure every child gets an RYA Start Yachting Certificate, provided by him personally. He gives older children who compete an RYA Competent Crew certificate.

Finally, because he takes hundreds of people sailing every year, Rob has been a constant source of new members into the club, actively promoting Poole Yacht Club on every occasion.

John is a long-standing member of Poole Yacht Club, having raced regularly on Tuesday nights, both on his own boats and crewing for other owners. He also supports a wide variety of Social Events and is a core member of the Social Committee.

For many years he was instrumental in the organisation of the Club Revue, persuading many members to get up on stage and showcase their talent – better in some cases than others!

For at least 15 years he has been the Editor of Soundings, and under his tenure this has grown to be an excellent Club magazine. It is very professionally produced and has a variety of interesting articles covering all kinds of members' activities, both on and off the water. Club members receive this free, doubtless due in no small part to John's ability to attract a wide range of advertising revenue. The amount of time involved in the production of the journal must be phenomenal.



Team Duette's Endeavours

by Joe Cross

The usual *Duette* crew of Joe Cross, Russell Wheeler, Matt Hitt and Tim Lees, along with our shore crew Didi, made the short trip to Weymouth for the 2025 Sonata Nationals held over the August bank holiday weekend.

The pressure as defending champions was somewhat eased by the presence of 19-time National Champion and leading class sailmaker Steve Gocher on *Eric the Boat* and 2023 Champion Tony Woods on *Frankie the Rhino*.

The first day of racing was held in a moderate southerly in Weymouth Bay. Some great boat speed upwind (and somewhat surprisingly downwind) yielded good results. Ending the day with two wins from two, although with *Aquila* from Blackpool & Fleetwood sitting close behind with two 2nd place finishes.

Day 2 started with two windward leeward races in similar conditions to Day 1, continuing the good trend with a 2,1 score-line for the day going into the longer distance round-the-cans race. A significant increase in breeze just before the start meant the first beat was incredibly short this, coupled with a starboard rounding, meant that chaos reigned although we managed to escape well in 3rd. Having reeled in the boat in second I was glad to be sailing with Matt, who had insisted we checked the course board again as both Marks "I" and "1" would be logical places for the course to go (although a check of the course board confirmed it was "1"). Having got onto the tail of *Eric the Boat* we were there to pounce when they went to "I" instead of "1" completing the course unchallenged to finish the day with a regatta score line of 1,1,2,1,1.

The third day saw the wind increase resulting in racing inside Portland Harbour. Again a compressed fleet saw a few hairy moments at the windward marks but sailing conservatively we managed to bank 3,2,3 which after some number crunching was enough to retain the title with two races to spare.

Day 4 dawned with a big wind forecast with many teams thinking racing was unlikely. Having discussed as a team we made the decision to stay ashore and get the boat packed away for the trip home. This is not something I have ever experienced before and not something we would do in normal conditions but

having seen the fleet return in a 40 knot squall after one race I much preferred being on the balcony than on the boat that had been blown onto the rocks (no damage done).

Last year I was pleased to write about Russell ending his quest to win a nationals, this year is more indulgent for me having spent over 10 years regularly finishing as the bridesmaid for Steve, we finally managed to get ahead (a strong end bringing team Eric in second overall).

The *Duette* Adventure wasn't quite over, as myself and Tim returned home by land with *Duette*, Russell and Matt, with assistance from Jake and John Waters, brought the "Floatels" back from Portland Marina.

I had just tucked Sebby into bed when my phone rang from one of the Sonatas sailing home to say they had heard Matt put out a MayDay with engine trouble. Fortunately with a little help from a big orange boat Matt and *Dusk* are safely back in Poole ready for more adventures.

Keelboat Endeavour

The National's win earned us an invite to represent the Sonata class at the Champion of Champions Keelboat Endeavour, hosted by the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club in Burnham on Crouch, sailing their matched fleet of Hunter 707s. Nine teams were entered for this year's event.

The event format is as many short races (~15-20 Mins) as possible over the two days. The races are scored using a high points scoring system (5 for 1st, 4 for 2nd etc) with no discards so the team with the highest score at the end wins, or if teams have completed a different number of races then average scores are used.

Following what is becoming our traditional Friday evening Pool and Darts tournament in a local pub (well done on the win Tim) racing started in light winds on the Saturday morning. We were drawn in the first race of the day in which we finished 3rd whilst trying to shake off a winters worth of rustiness.

Following a two race break we were in for three races where we started to find our stride with a 2,2,1. Another two race



break was followed by a 2nd and a 5th, proving that in a fleet of national champions one mistake will drop you right to the back of the fleet. A race off to lick our wounds and we were back on for another three races. The first saw a big wind shift with us finishing second. There was then a significant delay whilst the course was moved to a different bend in the river to suit the new wind direction.

Following the delay the course was set short for the light breeze that remained. In the final minute to the start the wind increased significantly, resulting in a very short race. We even debated if there was time to hoist and drop a spinnaker on the run. Fortunately for us though a good start put us ahead to lead from start to finish. We followed that up with a second place in our final race of the day.

On reaching the clubhouse the scores from day one had the Hunter 707 team leading with an Average of 3.9 points. Us in 2nd on 3.78 points and the Elite class a close 3rd. RCYC showed off its great hospitality with a curry evening and the conclusion of the six nations to keep us entertained.

The Sunday dawned with heavy winds forecast, again we were on for the first four races of the day. Our first race was eventful, we worked hard on the first beat and run to line ourselves up on the inside for 2nd around the first leeward mark. A late call had been made that spinnakers would not be used.

In our final gybe on the approach to the mark the pole down-haul bridle caught on the winch pinning the main in and causing us to broach. Eventually the pole retainer on the boom gave way with Matt's front tooth taking the force of the pole flying at him (He really is taking some punishment in this report). We recovered quickly and staged what would prove a critical recovery to get back to 3rd at the finish.

The next two races suited our Poole Harbour experience with a beat against the tide into the shallows then trying to judge the right time to tack out for the mark. We got this right in both races to lead from start to finish. At this point things were due to get interesting with us, the 707s and the Elites all competing in the next race. Sadly that never got to play out as with the breeze building further and still more forecast the Race Officer made the difficult decision to abandon racing for the day.

At this point my head was desperately trying to work out the impact of the three races and 13 points we had scored on the averages along with the changes to the Elite score. I came to the conclusion I thought we might have just scraped it, which when results were available was confirmed with us scoring 47 from 12 races meaning an average of 3.92 beating the 707s by just 0.02 point. The elites improving to 3.8.

It is a great achievement to retain both our Sonata National's title and our Keelboat Endeavour title. I am incredibly lucky

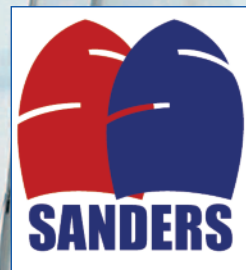
that I get to sail with a great crew of good friends who also happen to be about as good as it gets when it comes to making a small keelboat go fast, so thank you team!

The 2026 Nationals

Our focus now shifts to the this year's Nationals, to be held at the Royal Southern YC in Hamble. This will be the classes 50th Anniversary so promises to be a big one. The target is 50 boats which I hope we will get close to. It is looking like it will be hotly contested with several past champions returning, but we will do our best to make sure John has to 'encourage' me for a report again!

If you think our exploits sound fun then now is a great time to consider a Sonata. They are a very cost-effective way to get top-notch one-design racing/ Not only do you have a big nationals within a short sail this year, a fleet is building within the harbour, there are already 10+ boats, with potential for more, and a real mix of crews from seasoned veterans to family teams. Please reach out if you are interested and we can help you find a boat.





Dayboat Week 2026

2025 saw our Championships at Falmouth in the last week of July. Thirty boats, including seven from Poole, enjoyed a great week racing in Carrick Roads. The best placed Poole team were Pete Hewitt, crewed by Chris Lockett, who came second – beaten by another member of the Hewitt family!

This year our Championships, sponsored by Sanders Sails, is taking place here at Poole from 25th to 30th July. Early indications are that we will equal, or possibly exceed, the 30 boats that entered last year. At the time of writing (mid-March) entries are already coming in well.

This year we are making some changes to the usual format. There will be six Championship races, five to count. There will be a separate three-race series for young helms. The Class has trophies for under 15 and under 18 helms. The normal “Opportunity Race” and the long distance race are included. Conditions permitting we aim to set an out of harbour course for the long distance race.

Years ago Dayboat Week used to include a rowing race. For the uninitiated Dayboats are required to carry oars, rowlocks and an anchor. This year we are going to revive rowing! The tides that week are not strong and we are thinking of a relatively short course. It will be an interesting experiment.

Club racing will of course take place as usual during the week, but the bar could be a bit busier than usual!

Our 2027 championships will be at Brixham SC.

Soundings 2026

On the home front:

Season 2025 was a mixed one from the Dayboat point of view. Far too often the weather, at both ends of the spectrum, found a number of us in the bar watching instead of being on the water. Given good sailing conditions we had days with double figures of DBs on the start line. Let’s hope for better in 2026.

The Poole Dayboat fleet continues to be a very friendly, welcoming group of people. On the water those of us who race are, of course, out there to do well. After racing on Mondays and Thursdays you will usually find a group of us sitting down together for race food. Our social events always attract a number of past Dayboat sailors whom we are delighted to see.

Our very well attended Annual Dinner and Prizegiving was held in February. This year the trophies were won by a wide range of our sailors, which is nice to see. Our thanks to the Club staff for laying on an excellent meal with great service.

If anyone is tempted to see what a Dayboat is all about and maybe take one out and give it a try please contact me (Steve Wilson) at:
stevetwilson675@gmail.com or 07986 905940
or any Dayboat sailor.



by James Stafford, GP14 Class Captain

Introduction

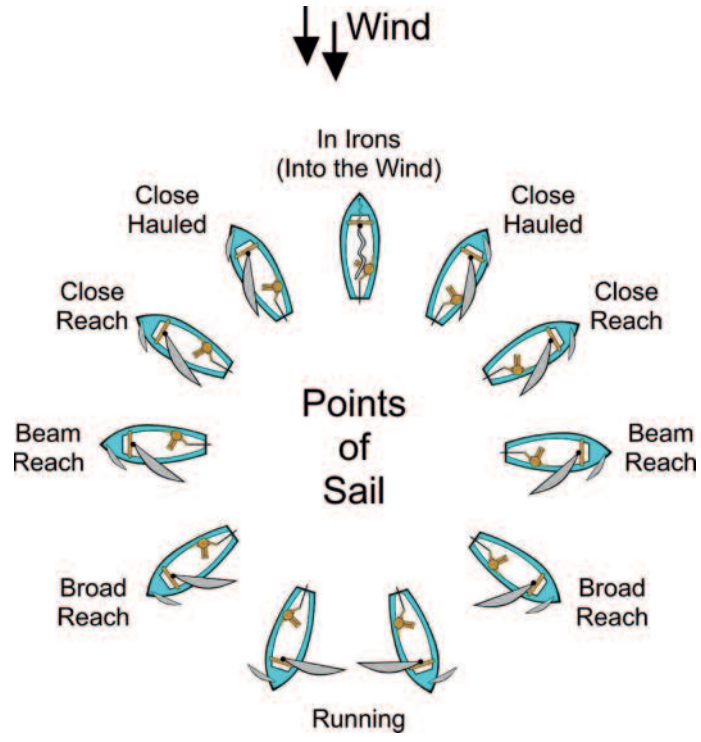
This article is intended for sailors who have completed a basic sailing course in light conditions and are now preparing to sail a dinghy without an instructor present. What do you need to consider when going Social Sailing, Dinghy Racing or simply cruising around the harbour with friends or family? The purpose of this article is to bridge the knowledge gap between basic training and confident, independent sailing.

The Nature of Dinghy Sailing

Dinghy sailing is all about managing the dynamic relationship between the boat, the sails, the wind, and the sailor. Unlike cruising yachts, which are stabilised by heavy keels, dinghies rely solely on the sailor’s bodyweight and the adjustment of the sails to remain upright. This natural instability means that, with enough wind or inexperience, capsizing is always a possibility – even in designs with metal centreboards like the Dayboat or with flat-bottomed hulls such as the Optimist. The advantage of instability is that it creates speed and manoeuvrability, much like the difference between a stable jumbo jet and a nimble fighter jet that needs computer assistance to be flown. Although technological advances may one day introduce electronics into high-performance foiling dinghies, for now, the sailor’s own skill and judgement are paramount in controlling the boat.

Understanding Wind Power

Dinghies are entirely powered by the wind, so understanding wind strength is vital for effective and safe sailing. The power of the wind increases with the cube of its velocity, and the practical effect of this is that when the wind speed doubles, its potential power increases eightfold. This can be a startling revelation for sailors who have only trained in moderate breezes. At 10 knots you will be trying to capture as much wind power as possible but at 20 knots you may need to manage the energy by flattening the sails using the Kicker, Cunningham and Outhaul controls. Some cruising dinghies are fitted with reefing systems to reduce sail area while afloat, but this feature is not present on racing dinghies, although many classes, for example the Laser, allow you to choose a smaller sail size before you set off.



Points of Sail and Boat Handling

The angle of the wind relative to the boat determines how easily the boat moves and how challenging it is to sail. Sailing with the wind behind is relatively straightforward, but as the wind shifts to the side or towards the bow, the forces become more complex, increasing the risk of capsizing. The centre-board or daggerboard helps prevent the boat from drifting

sideways but also adds to instability by ‘tripping’ the boat. To counteract this, sailors must use their body weight effectively, hiking out more as the wind increases. The boat is thus squeezed forward between the mainly sideways force from the sail and the opposing force of the water against the hull and centreboard. Most dinghies, such as the GP14, are designed to be sailed as upright as possible, as “Flat is Fast” in nearly all circumstances.

Historically, sailors sometimes wore weighted waistcoats for extra leverage, but this practice is now banned. Boats with a trapeze system, like the 420 dinghy, allow lighter, more agile sailors to generate greater leverage, though this adds complexity, particularly in manoeuvres such as tacking.

Apparent Wind

The wind felt on the boat is not always the same as the wind felt on land, because the boat’s own movement creates ‘apparent wind’. This alters both the direction and strength of the wind as perceived by the sailor. Sailing downwind reduces the apparent wind experienced on deck, while sailing upwind increases it and causes the wind to shift forward. Larger yachts may have instruments displaying both true and apparent wind, highlighting the difference, but all sailing boats sail in apparent wind. It is important to note that wind strengths manageable when sailing off-wind can become much more demanding when heading upwind. Sailing down the harbour with a strong west wind behind you can be exhilarating but it is often worth turning the boat around briefly and seeing how the wind feels when it’s on the nose. Weather forecasts generally provide average wind speeds, but gusts, which can be up to 50% stronger, are often sudden and localised, requiring sailors to be vigilant.

Manoeuvres: Tacking and Gybing

There are two primary manoeuvres in dinghy sailing:

- Tacking: Turning the bow through the wind. This manoeuvre is typically safer, as the boat slows down and only regains

speed after completing the tack. However, in lighter wind conditions, single-sailed dinghies like the Topper can become stuck head-to-wind if they lack the momentum to complete the turn.

- Gybing: Turning the stern through the wind. While often simpler, gybing carries more risk in strong winds if not executed properly, as the boom can swing across rapidly and destabilise the boat, potentially resulting in a capsize. In windy conditions, safety boats often position themselves near gybe marks for this reason. As with most things in sailing, preparation is crucial, try not to surprise yourself or your crew if you have one! Slightly ease the kicker, ensure the centreboard is not fully down, gently pull the tiller towards you and be prepared to quickly straighten the rudder and balance the boat, as the boom passes across. Remember gybing is not compulsory! Even racing sailors may choose to tack around instead of gybing, sacrificing speed for increased safety. Remember, capsizing is fast, but recovery is often a slow process!

Downwind Sailing and Spinnakers

Sailing downwind under the standard sail plan can sometimes feel slow. To increase speed and enjoyment, sailors use a spinnaker – a large, colourful sail specifically designed for downwind sailing, which also makes for excellent photographs. Traditional symmetrical spinnakers require a pole and can be adjusted for a wide range of wind angles. Asymmetric spinnakers, found on boats like the RS200, are easier to set and retrieve but are less effective when sailing directly downwind, resulting in a zigzagging downwind course similar to upwind tacking.

Spinnakers are powerful sails and must be handled with care in strong winds. Turning the boat directly downwind when hoisting can make the process more stable, and lowering the sail early, rather than rushing at the last moment, will help prevent mistakes.





themselves, frequent capsizes indicate a need for more guidance. Recovery is a standard part of all dinghy training courses, and modern boats with built-in buoyancy ensure that, after righting, most of the water drains away quickly, allowing sailing to continue. However, underfloor buoyancy can cause the boat to invert. While not a major issue in deep water, in shallower areas the mast can become stuck in the mud, making recovery more difficult and sometimes necessitating help from a safety boat. Most club race rules now allow for this kind of assistance without disqualification.

Planing and Speed

Planing is one of the great joys of dinghy sailing. A boat's maximum speed is usually limited by its waterline length, known as 'hull speed'. For example, a 30-foot cruiser will rarely exceed seven knots through the water, as additional power merely increases the bow wave, which the hull cannot overcome. Reported speeds of 10 knots are generally achieved with the help of a favourable tide.

Fortunately, in sufficient wind, most lightweight dinghies and catamarans can 'plane' – rising up and skimming over their own bow wave, which dramatically increases speed. Planing is made easier by flat hull sections towards the rear, as seen in racing dinghies. Once planing has been achieved, moving the helm and crew weight towards the stern will help stabilise the boat in this mode.

Modern foiling dinghies, such as the Wazp or Skeeta, go even further by lifting the hull completely out of the water, allowing for even greater speeds, though achieving this requires considerable skill and practice.



The Importance of Safety and Club Support

One of the biggest advantages of sailing within a club is the access to safety support, which enables sailors to push their abilities in a controlled environment. It is important to bear in mind that safety crew will always prioritise the sailor's wellbeing over the condition of the boat during a recovery. Nevertheless, a well-maintained boat should withstand recovery with only minor issues, such as muddy sails or a lost burgee.

Dealing with Tides

Finally, a few words on tides. The wind may be a fickle friend, but tide can be a remorseless enemy. Sailing downwind and down tide with a sea breeze can be exhilarating, champagne sailing at its best. However later in the afternoon when the sea breeze dies, paddling back against the tide is no fun – assuming you remembered your paddle! Always check tide times before setting out and, if in doubt, try to sail up tide first. Certain locations, such as near the Chain Ferry, are known for strong tidal flows and wind shadows, which can create hazardous situations. Exercising caution and seeking local knowledge are key to avoiding accidents.

Conclusion

If you found these tips unnecessary, congratulations – you're already adept at sailing a dinghy! Time for you to be inspired by James Foster's excellent article on his path to becoming an Olympic Sailor on page 20.



This picture is by Kana Butkovic. All the others in this article are by Mike Millard

Capsize and Recovery

Capsizing is a constant risk in dinghy sailing. While it is often said that those who never capsize are not challenging

Simon Cross tells us
about going from

Novice to PYRA!

My wife Natalie and I have been members of Poole Yacht Club for just over two years. In that time, I have been lucky enough to crew on the MG27, *Tigerlily*, on Tuesdays and Sundays, which led to my first experiences of PYRA racing. I've also had the opportunity to do a few races with PYRA's Captain, Rob Gibson. Before any of this my sailing experience consisted of little more than the odd school activity day, certainly nothing that would make anyone think: "*Yes, this man should buy a racing boat.*"

But that is exactly what I did. After two years of crewing, and passing my Day Skipper in April 2025, I decided it would be a brilliant idea to buy my own boat. So, naturally, I jumped straight in at the deep end and bought a Jeanneau Sunfast 3200, basically the raciest boat I could find while still convincing my

wife it was a cruiser. Yes, it has two 'bedrooms', a toilet and we even installed an oven. No, it does not have heating, hot water, cupboards, or anything remotely resembling luxury. That being said, it's an easy boat to sail and was designed to be sailed short-handed, so with a small crew we manage surprisingly well.

When I was crewing for other people, I felt confident, excited and absolutely in love with sailing. So I naturally assumed that having my own boat would feel even better. The reality: Terrifying!

Suddenly everything was my responsibility: the boat, the crew, and every decision. My confidence evaporated overnight. Thankfully, the Club is full of generous sailors who offered help, advice, and encouragement. I also managed to find a like-minded crew and together we decided to enter our first PYRA race. Our goal was simple: don't sink and don't embarrass ourselves.

Our first PYRA race: Lymington (AKA Stress fest 2024). Our class was the last to start, which suited us perfectly; our strategy was to keep well out of everyone's way and cross the line behind absolutely everybody. And honestly... our start wasn't too bad! But then the wind rose to 20 knots, which was far more than we'd ever sailed in on our boat. Panic ensued: changing sails, reefing, praying to the weather gods... you name it. We eventually arrived in Lymington frazzled, exhausted, and very definitely last, but also relieved and proud that we'd made it.

What happened next sums up everything I love about PYRA. Other competitors, people we had been nervously watching all day, were waiting to help us tie up and congratulate us. That support was incredibly reassuring.

Later came the evening entertainment, the prize-giving, and





the traditional rum tot accompanied by a wonderfully colourful history of the Royal Navy. That night, we truly felt part of the PYRA family.

It's more than racing – it's a community. This is what makes PYRA special. It's social racing at its best: 30 plus boats heading off to a destination together. Some crews are fiercely competitive, some are just out for the adventure, but everyone looks out for one another. On the water and in the marina, people help each other with berthing, repairs, rigging issues... anything.

Before joining PYRA, my wife and I had never sailed beyond Studland Bay without an instructor. Despite visiting Cowes during our courses, we would never have attempted a Channel crossing on our own. But being part of the PYRA fleet gave us confidence, sometimes in conditions we definitely wouldn't have chosen on our own!

With an experienced skipper joining us on our first Cherbourg Race (which had gusts of 35 knots plus!), we crossed safely. Since then, we've sailed to Cherbourg twice more entirely on our own and towards the end of the season we even managed to win a couple of races, and one of the series championships.

At this year's PYRA opening event, the Spring Party, I was asked to give a talk on my experiences as a newcomer. I was incredibly nervous, most PYRA sailors seem to have been racing "man and boy", but that talk led to me being asked to write this article.

The truth is simple, if you enjoy sailing and you've got even the tiniest competitive streak, PYRA is for you. It has given Natalie and I the confidence to go places we'd have never dreamed of and to sail in conditions that once would have scared us. Most importantly, we always know we have friends around us. I'll admit that being skipper is still stressful at times. Sometimes I look back fondly on my carefree days as a

crewmember. But I wouldn't change where I am now for the world and I look forward to the day when I feel fully confident in my sailing abilities.

We've now started Cruiser Racing on Sundays and Tuesday evenings, which is definitely a step up, but one we feel ready for thanks to PYRA.

We can't wait for our second PYRA season, especially the new Bay Race Series. We also hope to take part in the Poole Regatta and the Round the Island race this year.

Sailing is full of excitement, challenge, friendship and the occasional rum tot. We're loving every minute of this adventure!



Simon and Natalie Cross



For more information about Poole Yacht Racing Association take a look at:

www.pyra.org.uk



Ben Green reports on The Handicap Fleet

2025 was a great year for the Handicap Fleet and 2026 is already off to a great start,

The class is the welcoming home of all classes of dinghy, racing on Monday and Thursday evenings, Saturdays during the spring and autumn, as well as trophy races.

On Monday evenings the format is average laps racing and we are joined by our friends in the Osprey and ILCA/Aero fleets. Monday nights are perfect for anyone starting out on their dinghy racing journey as we aim to keep courses relatively short and simple. Because there is a wide range of boats there is always someone to race against and the average laps format means everyone gets a similar length of race, so far in 2026 we have had upto 23 boats racing and hopefully more to come as the season progresses.

Whatever dinghy you have, you will always be welcome in the Handicap Fleet. Currently we have a range of classes from Gulls to RS800s racing. We set the courses each week to fit whoever is racing that day, whether that be fast asymmetrics, hiking singlehanders or a mixture.

There has been an increase in double-handers and asymmetric boats racing over the last year including RS800s, ISOs, 29ers, Cherubs and RS200s as well as our club 420s.

If you are interested in crewing or fancy a blast, do get in touch. We would love to see more youth sailors come out on the racecourse with us and are always happy to help explain the courses and start procedures to make things as simple as possible.

With the summer already here, the fleet are looking forward to the Club Regatta. Last year was a weekend of champagne sailing, fingers crossed we get the same again this year. The summer trophy races are a brilliant opportunity to explore different parts of the harbour (and beyond), they are also a great chance for some of our faster boats to stretch their legs... or capsize in other areas of the harbour!

If you are interested in joining us, pop down and say hello on a Monday, Thursday or Saturday, everyone is friendly and we will always help to get extra boats on the water. The fleet is planning to have a try a boat day later this year, so if you are considering changing classes and want to see what's available, keep a look out for information though the usual club emails and posters.

Soundings 2026





Bob Hazell

Tracey Lee tells us about her introduction to

Overlord

I was introduced to *Overlord* through PYC members Bob and Elaine Hazell; romantic side note, Bob and Elaine met when they were sailing and racing on *Overlord* and her smaller sister ship, *Sea Scamp*. The Offshore Cruising Club who own and run the yachts sailing and maintenance programme, were running some taster sessions to boost membership and so in mid April I had the very great pleasure of sailing on *Overlord*. We bowled across the Solent in strong winds and for my turn on the helm, I found it surprisingly light and responsive on the tiller for a yacht of this size. Down below, the accommodation is snug and comfortable. I spotted a small plaque on the bulkhead celebrating a regatta win with the Luftwaffe eagle holding the Nazi swastika in its claws; its dated July 1943.

Overlord is a 17.37 metre Bermudan sloop, with mahogany planking on oak and steel frames. Built in 1936 by Abeking & Rasmussen of Lemverder for the Luftwaffe. She was part of a fleet of Windfall yachts – 100 sq m, 50 sq m and 30 sq m yachts used at Lemverder for Officer training and in particular, for training Luftwaffe navigators. In 1945, *Pelikan*, as *Overlord* was then named, plus many more yachts in the fleet, were taken as prizes of war at Kiel and later included in the reparations agreement. Many of the yachts were distributed amongst the British Services and *Pelikan* was used by The Sappers at Chatham, who re-named her *Overlord* in

memory no doubt of the Allied forces campaign which lead to the end of WW2.

Between 1946 and 1955 she had a distinguished RORC record with the Sapper Yacht Club. In 1961 she was bought by Tony Venables, a 33 year old retired Army Officer who had been her skipper whilst serving in the Royal Army Service Corps. Tony, who was planning to sell her after two years to recoup his capital and the running costs, was persuaded to retain her and formed the Overlord Sailing Club, now the Offshore Cruising Club.

In 1969, Tony sold her to the club syndicate members. She currently sails around the Solent on weekends in the spring and autumn, undertaking more sustained trips in the summer. In her time in private hands she has cruised to many and far reaching destinations including the Scottish Isles, Orkney and Shetland, Ireland, the Baltic, the channel Islands, the French Atlantic coast and Northern Spain. She has spent time in the Mediterranean venturing as far afield as Turkey and has had at least two adventures to the Azores.

If anyone is interested to know more about the yacht and how to sail on her, please speak to me or Bob Hazell. There is a great Youtube clip done by Tom Cunliffe (go to YouTube: Tom Cunliffe Sails on Overlord) and there is more information on the website: www.sailoverlord.org

The Club awaits the guests for the Annual Dinner



In October 1975, Bohemian Rhapsody was released and, almost 50 years on, the song once again filled the clubhouse at PYC as we enjoyed a brilliant Queen tribute evening. With aviator sunglasses, moustaches, and non stop crowd pleasing anthems, it was an evening to remember. It was slightly surreal meeting the entertainers beforehand, only to see them later transformed in full costume – very reminiscent of the old Stars in Their Eyes days. Their talent and genuine desire to entertain really shone through.



Back by popular demand on 16th October, we will be delighted to welcome Garry Foley, aka Elvis. This was a fabulous evening a couple of years ago and Garry is a superb entertainer, so please make a note of the date and book early to avoid disappointment. We would also love to hear your thoughts – which tribute acts would you like to see at PYC? Please let the Social Committee know.

We are incredibly fortunate to have such versatile space at PYC and, with a little creativity, it can be transformed into something truly stunning – as demonstrated at this year's sell out Dinner and Dance. The photographs don't do it justice. A special mention must go to Chris Kriek for her amazing efforts (above) in decorating the room, not just for the Dinner and Dance but also for Burns' Night, Beaujolais Night, and many other themed evenings.

Soundings 2026

Amanda Jones reports on the Club's Social Scene



Social events at PYC aren't just about music and food – we also aim to appeal to our creative members. In November, we hosted our first Coffee and Craft Morning, perfectly timed for some unique Christmas gift shopping. The clubhouse buzzed with conversation and a wonderful range of crafts was on display. We're pleased to announce it will return on 7th November and, if you'd like a table to showcase your talents, please let me know.



Our Mother's Day Afternoon Tea also included a creative twist with a Paint and Prosecco session – or rather, Paint by Numbers! As someone who doesn't usually wield a paintbrush, I was surprised by how relaxing it was, and it was lovely to see so many positive comments on Facebook afterwards.

In response to feedback, we've made an enhancement to our events booking system. We will soon be trialling a follow up email after social events to gather constructive feedback or suggestions – whether about the event attended or ideas for future improvements or activities. We really look forward to hearing your thoughts.

We do take feedback seriously and responded to numerous requests to arrange more daytime activities. Our film sessions

now run as both matinée and evening showings and have been very well received.

This year also saw the introduction of our Leisurely Lunches, featuring a main course, tea or coffee with chocolates and an entertaining speaker. These have proved popular, and we're now planning a programme of speakers from October through to March – so watch this space.

It was a shame that numbers were lower than expected for the Vodka and Rum Tasting Evening, hosted by Shanty, a distillery located by Poole Bridge. Those who attended were treated to a delicious range of cocktails and samples from the Shanty collection. Polly has some of their products available at the bar, so please do have a look and consider supporting this local business next time you fancy a rum or vodka. Shanty will also be joining us at the International Paint Regatta with their pop up bar – I highly recommend a visit!



A new addition to the calendar was Bingo... with a difference! Aimed at family fun, we swapped the usual cash prizes for something a little more unusual – the inflatable pink flamingo certainly raised a smile. Aidan rose magnificently to the role of Bingo Caller (a slight change from last orders calling!) and we'll be calling on his skills again on 13th November for our next Bingo evening.

We have enjoyed some fantastic events at PYC this year, which I hope you have all enjoyed too. Of course, none of these happen without our amazing Bar and Catering teams, who work behind the scenes to bring our social plans to life. Thank you to Polly and her team for their help in setting up the clubhouse – and for patiently working with my room layout diagrams! Another big thank you goes to Elod and his catering team for producing excellent menus throughout the year. Finally, thanks to Chas, who helps keep a close eye on event costs and ensures we can continue to offer such great value for money.

Your Social Committee are now busy preparing the events calendar for October 2026 through to March 2027 and beyond, – you might be surprised how far in advance we are planning.

Please keep an eye on the monthly What's On email, the weekly update from Chas, along with digital signage and posters around the Club. We'll keep you informed as more events are confirmed, so you can mark your diaries and book your tickets early. Please also see the Social Programme on the following page.



Chris and Nick Kriek at Burns' Night



Après Ski



Annual Dinner



Greek Night



The Social Programme

So much to keep you entertained!

Poole Regatta

Sunday May 24th: **Cutting Edge**

Club Regatta

Friday 26th June: Music by **Cutting Half**

Saturday 27th June: **Wildfighters**

Friday 11th Sept: **Martin Clayton Jazz Night with The Bob Barter Quartet** – Fine Dining available

Wednesday 16th September: Talk from **You Row Girl**

Sunday 27th September: **Classic Vehicles Event**

Wednesday 14th October: **Film Night and Matinée**

Friday 16th October: **Garry Foley is Elvis**

Monday 19th October: **Leisurely Lunch**

A light lunch and enjoyable speaker

Friday 23rd October: **Trafalgar Night with Jaunty**

Saturday 7th November: **Coffee and Craft morning**

Wednesday 11th November: **Film Night and Matinée**

Friday 13th November: **Bingo**

Monday 16th November: **Leisurely Lunch**

See Website for details nearer the time

Saturday 5th December: **Annual Dinner and Dance**

Wednesday 9th December: **Film Night and Matinée**

Saturday 12th December: **Childrens Xmas Party**

Sunday 13th December: **Flotilla of Lights**

Friday 18th December: **PYC does Christmas dinner**

Thursday 24th December: **Christmas Eve Celebration**

Thursday 31st December:

NYE Barn Dance with Black Sheep

Saturday 30th January: **Australia Night**

Leisurely Lunch Dates '27

18th January • 15th February • 15th March

See Website for details and booking of Social Events

Have you been given the challenge of planning your work's Christmas Meal or Party?

Speak with Polly or AJ about your requirements and the options available

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The R19 Interview



picture by Mike Millard

The Soundings Editor asked for more input from the racing Class Captains, so we interviewed the R19's skipper, Andy Macgregor, to get the lowdown on the Club's most active class.

Q: So what exciting things did the R19s get up to last year?

Andy Mac: *Um, well, much the same as usual.*

Q: No tales of great voyages across vast oceans?

Andy Mac: *There was a Swanage race – but it didn't get out of the harbour.*

Q: Cruising to exotic lands?

Andy Mac: *A couple of boats stayed overnight in Studland! (crazy people).*

Q: What about racing then?

Andy Mac: *Yes, we did that.*

Q: Did anyone from Poole go to the World Championships?

Andy Mac: *Oh yes, lots of people did.*

Q: That's more like it! How about some interesting anecdotes from your journey across continents.

Andy Mac: *Um, not really. We all got to Hamworthy OK.*

Q: Was there some stiff international competition?

Andy Mac: *No, the chap from Hampshire couldn't make it.*

Q: The 2026 season has started – how did the first race go?

Andy Mac: *It was raining, we didn't go out.*

Well that sounds pretty dull!

Actually, the everyday ordinary of the R19 fleet is quite remarkable. Designed and built for Poole Harbour, almost every R19 in existence is on the water and racing at PYC. Around 90 Club Members regularly sail in the Class and our Tuesday evening turnout of 20-25 boats provides what is probably the biggest and best one-design keelboat racing in the country.

Add on the more relaxed Thursday evenings, manic Friday singlehanded, weekend trophy races, the International Paint Poole Regatta, the Spring and Winter Series: over 100 races to choose from.

On the results front, the usual suspects shared out the 2025 Tuesday trophies, but didn't have it all their own way. With competition particularly from *Ranty* and *Rokoko*. The Hale family in *Ragamuffin* won the Early and Mid Summer Series', Joe Cross in *Rapid Reflex* took Late Summer and the Macgregor girls in *Rubber Duck* got their own back in the Sunset Series. Stevie T in *Roulette* won Thursdays, despite *Rebel* snapping at their heels and Andy Mac won the single-handed Fridays. Last, but not least, our 2025 "World" Champion is Tom Campbell's *Riff Raff*.

New for 2025 was the revamped "Teapot Trophy" which was run as a one-day open meeting style event, with the added interest of team results. Teams were selected on the basis of past results (best teamed up with worst etc). Everyone enjoyed it and we will be doing the same again this September.

Several under-used boats have gone to enthusiastic new owners over the winter and 2026 looks set to be bigger and better than ever.



pictures (left) by Andy Woodruff (above) by Nicky Walsh

James Stafford reports on



The GP14 Dinghy Class

Overview of the GP14 Dinghy

The GP14 is a planing dinghy that is relatively stable in a wide variety of wind and sea conditions. This is likely a key reason for the boat's sustained popularity over more than 75 years. Although modern GP14s now feature large genoas, advanced spinnaker rigs and other improvements, the core appeal remains, especially to husband-and-wife teams. Most importantly, the PYC fleet is large enough to support regular class racing at the club. While handicap racing allows different dinghy types to compete together, class racing provides the purest form of competition.

The Challenge and Appeal of Class Racing

Racing in a fleet of nearly identical boats, with crews of similar weight and fitness, tests sailing ability and tactical decision-making. The feedback during races is immediate, offering sailors a clear indication of their performance. The experience is akin to playing chess on the water, with shifting winds and tides ensuring every race is unique; strategies that succeed in one race may fail in the next.

Key Tactical Decisions

Sailors must consider where to position themselves on the start line – whether closest to the wind or in the most favourable tide. Decisions include whether to tack on every wind shift or only when significantly headed, and whether to sail high or low on the downwind mark to secure clear air or try for an inside overlap. Do you concentrate on attacking the boat ahead or defending against the boat behind? These decisions are universal to all dinghy racing, but in a single class competition, the results of your choices are clearly visible.

Racing Schedule and Social Events

Class racing is held on Mondays, Thursdays, throughout the season, and also Saturdays in Spring and Autumn, with series prizes, and additional prizes for club trophy races. GP14 sailing at PYC also features a strong social component, including dinners and events such as Wine & Cheese evenings. After racing, participants gather in the bar, where the day's winner is persuaded to share their strategy and tactics. The idea is to encourage the exchange of knowledge among sailors. These

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sessions are open to all, so newcomers are encouraged to join, regardless of experience.

GP14 Open Meeting

This year the class Open Meeting takes place over the weekend of 25th and 26th July and always attracts boats from across the UK. The fleets from Frensham Ponds, Surrey, and the Welsh Harp in London are especially regular visitors. A highlight of the open weekend is the Saturday team races around the harbour islands – one clockwise and one anticlockwise. Teams of three boats are randomly drawn from all the entrants, giving novice sailors a chance to win and ensuring that prizes are not always claimed by the usual favourites.

Classic round-the-cans racing for the Bell Trophy is held on the Sunday and is keenly contested by both visitors and locals.

In 2025, Colin Rainback and Barry Southam won the first two races in challenging windy conditions but were forced to retire, leading to victory for Paul Trubridge from Frensham. The previous year, Oli Hale and Tom Cluett took the trophy, and we hope that it can be reclaimed this year by a PYC team.

Support for Novice Racers

Racing can initially seem daunting due to the complexities of start lines, signals, and courses. However, once understood, it is straightforward, and the club is keen to help novice racers overcome these challenges. Newcomers can be paired with experienced teams for guidance on everything from boat rigging to finding the marks during races. While victory cannot be guaranteed, the GP14 class aims to help everyone enjoy the sport of dinghy racing.

Try a GP14 in 2026!

The Club owns a GP14 dinghy available for free use by members with basic sailing knowledge. Those interested in racing or cruising in a GP, can contact myself or Barry Southam, the Class Bosun. Alternatively, arrangements can be made for members to sail with an experienced helm at a convenient time.

James Stafford
GP14 Class Captain

The Laser/Aero Class:



No Crew, No Excuses, Just Great Sailing

If you're looking for the most active and spirited fleet at Poole Yacht Club, look no further than the Laser/Aero. We pride ourselves on being unofficially the "First In, Last Out" crew – the first boats to hit the slipway and the very last to leave the water, squeezing every possible minute out of the breeze.

Monday Nights: Harbour Handicap

Monday nights are all about getting on the water in a more relaxed setting. We join in with the club handicap racing, weaving around the markers in the harbour. It's a little less intense than our Thursday sessions, but it offers fantastic sailing and a great chance to enjoy the harbour while keeping the mind active.

Thursday Nights: The Top Triangle

When Thursday rolls around, the intensity steps up. You'll find us out in the "Top Triangle," where we have a knack for finding the perfect wind conditions and setting a course that is second to none. It's pure, tactical racing in the best part of the harbour.

The Perfect Course: 15 Minutes of Intensity

On our dedicated race days, we specialize in a trapezoidal course, designed to give you all four points of sailing. It is 10 to 15 minutes of pure, concentrated hard work that tests your fitness and focus. It's short, sharp, and incredibly rewarding – the ultimate way to hone your skills.

Five Chances for Glory

Our evening features a five-race format. We've all been there – if you muck up Race One, there's no need to worry; there are always four more races to reclaim your pride. You won't find a long list of formal results here because we don't need a spreadsheet to tell us the score; we already know exactly who we're trying to beat to the line.

The Ultimate Selling Point: Pure Solo Freedom

The real beauty of the Laser/Aero is the total freedom it provides. In a world of complicated schedules, the class is your stress-free escape. There's no need to spend hours on the phone hunting for a reliable crew, and you'll never be let down by a last-minute "no-show" on the slipway. It's the only time you

get sensible conversation, on your own, talking to yourself on the water, questioning what is going on in life and why is everyone going faster than I am!

When the wind is right, you just grab your gear and go. It's just you, the boat, and the water. This simplicity makes it the most accessible way to race – you are the helm, the crew, the tactician, and the powerhouse all in one. If you want high quality racing that fits around your life, this is the racing for you.

The Friendliest Fleet?

Despite the solo nature of the boat, you're never alone. We are the most welcoming group at the Club, making sure the sailors at the front are always talking to those at the back, sharing tips and urging newcomers to give it a try.

Whether it's a Monday handicap or a Thursday in the triangle, we'll see you on the start line!

By Stephen Ehrhart (below) with pictures by Elysia Ehrhart



RYA First Aid, VHF & Diesel Engine Courses

- January – March
- No experience needed
- Three fantastic courses to aid in your knowledge

RYA Powerboat Level 2

- November – February
- Min Requirement for all Club Rib Drivers
- Basic skills and understanding of how to operate a powerboat.

Training Opportunities At Poole Yacht Club.

Capsize Recover & Mark Laying

- February – March
- Must have PB2
- In house qualification/skills so you can assist with Sailing and Events at the club

Adult Big Shot Sailing

- April - October
- Must have RYA Level 2 or similar
- Great way to meet new sailors and gain the experience and confidence to join our Race Fleets

For more information or to book onto a course head to the events page on our website or follow this QR Link:

Alternatively contact the Sailing Manager:
sailing@pooleyc.co.uk



The Cruising Section 2026 Programme



Swanage Day Trip: Sunday 12th April

This cruise is ideal for people who want to experience getting out of Poole Harbour and have a sail in company past the magnificent Old Harry Rocks and Ballard Down to Swanage, where we will be able to stop for a few hours for lunch before returning home.



Solent Week: May 8 – May 18

This cruise promises to be full of interest with five stops over eleven days around the Solent. This trip will suit both those new to cruising and the more experienced members that love to sail in company and help newer members.



Lymington

This is one of our favourite venues for cruising. There are plenty of eateries, a great town with many interesting shops.

We will have full use of the Lymington Harbour's Dan Bran pontoon and the Lymington Sailing Club's facilities. This historic, coastal town offers plenty for the visitors. The colourful and vibrant town is an ancient seaport with a rich maritime history and with so much to see and do.

Mercury Yacht Haven on the River Hamble

This marina is set in a sheltered site where the waters of Badnam Creek join the River Hamble. Its excellent facilities include the Gaff Rigger bar and restaurant and a good chandlers. The marina is also just a short walk from Hamble village where you have some interesting shops and eateries.

Haslar Marina, Gosport

Tucked away just inside the south-west corner of Portsmouth Harbour, Haslar Marina is perfectly located for a cruise visit, with dining, drinking, staying over, and there is the historic dockyards with the Warrior, Mary Rose and Victory in Portsmouth. For the retail therapy there is the Gunwharf Quays Designer Outlet for great shopping.

Shepards Marina, Cowes

Shepards Wharf Marina is just a short walk from the centre of Cowes with all its shops, restaurants, and nautical places of interest. There is a lovely walk along the foreshore past the Cowes gundeck with stunning views over the Solent. The marina has good facilities and an onsite, award winning, Basque Kitchen restaurant specialising exquisite cuisine from the Basque Region, well worth a visit.



Yarmouth Harbour

Yarmouth is the second smallest town in Great Britain, and from its lovely harbour to its ancient church and picturesque pier, this West Wight town has something for everyone.

There are plenty of things to do, some great pubs, cafes and restaurants, lots of super attractions in the area and great walks. Yarmouth is a very special place and many love to visit it.

Portland Marina: June 5 – June 8

We'll be spending the weekend in Portland Marina enjoying the areas delights. There are a few interesting walks from the marina such as Chesil Beach, the Naval Military Cemetery, and a good climb up to the Verne where you have the most amazing views over the harbour and Chesil Beach. There are also some >



interesting places to visit, such as the American Military Normandy Invasion Museum in Charlestown, just a short walk from the marina, and Portland Castle. There are a few eating venues in and near to the marina and a new Lidl's.



Cross Channel Cruise 2026: June 5 – June 14

This cruise is individually booked to suit the participant and therefore has no booked schedule. It has been left to the members that book onto this cruise to sort out their own itinerary.

Guernsey is one destination and is well known for beach resorts like Cobo Bay and the scenery of its coastal cliffs. Castle Cornet, a 13th-century harbour fortification in St. Peter Port, above, now contains history and military museums.

Hauteville House is the lavish former home of French writer, Victor Hugo. From St. Peter Port you can go island-hopping to Hermé and Sark and go on outdoor adventures on both. There are a multitude of eateries, from beachside kiosks and cafés to local pubs and award-winning restaurants. You can delve into the past to explore the islands heritage on guided walks or in museums. Take a bus ride around the coastline or hike along miles of cliff paths with views. It's wonderful to feel the sand between your toes on one of the many unspoilt beaches and take a dip in the crystal clear waters



Lymington & Beaulieu: June 19 – June 23

Lymington is one of our favourite venues for cruising. There are plenty of eateries, a great town with many interesting shops, and even two chandlers.

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We will be on the Lymington Harbour's Dan Bran pontoon and have the use of Lymington SC's facilities and bar. We will also have our usual pontoon party.



Yarmouth Harbour RIR: July 10 – July 13

Yarmouth is a great venue to watch the Round the Island race from the Victoria Fort, and we will be having an evening meal at the Royal Solent Yacht Club in the evening.

Yarmouth has some lovely walks along the River Yar. Plenty of pubs, eateries and trips on the bus from the quayside



West Country Cruise: July 10 – July 19

This cruise is individually booked and therefore has no booked schedule. It has been left to the members that book onto this cruise to sort out their own itinerary. This will allow more flexibility for longer distance cruising members to adjust their venue choices to suit the conditions and weather without having a restricting itinerary.

Possible venues could be:

Torquay, where there are many shops, restaurants and places of interest within easy walking distance. In the past we have booked a meal at the Torquay Yacht Club.

Plymouth, berthing in the Queen Anne Battery Marina under Plymouth Hoe, where there is the Waypoint Bar and Bistro on site with a good menu if you don't fancy wandering off too far. The Barbican is only a short walk from the marina with all its marvellous shops, eateries and galleries.

Dartmouth. This beautiful town, situated on the mouth of the

River Dart is one of South Devon's most popular and enchanting towns. With its charming historic streets, scenic river location and surrounded by South Devon countryside you have to go a long way to find a town as pretty.

Brixham, is one of the busiest fishing ports in the UK, but it's also a place where you can discover a range of arts and culture, excellent local food and some unique attractions.

Falmouth is famous for its harbour. Together with Carrick Roads, it forms the third deepest natural harbour in the world, and the deepest in Western Europe.

Salcombe. This beautiful coastal town sits on the banks of the Kingsbridge Estuary, making it one of the prettiest towns in South Devon. Salcombe is a great base for holiday spent messing about on the water or just for a day trip – either way you will fall in love with this beautiful town.



Bembridge, Chichester & Yarmouth: July 17 – 23

Bembridge is our first port of call and is a popular destination. The Harbour is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and nearby Brading Marshes are home to the first RSPB site on the Island. There are many picturesque walks in and around the area, historic sites to visit and beautiful beaches.

Chichester. We are staying in the Chichester marina, surrounded by the natural beauty of Chichester Harbour, Chichester Marina's premium facilities and relaxed environment give it a special character, making it a worthy recipient of the THYA five gold anchor award. Perfect for bird watchers, discover wildlife along The Salterns Way or follow the canal path to the historic city of Chichester.

Last stop is **Yarmouth** Harbour and from its lovely harbour to its ancient church and picturesque pier this West Wight town has something for everyone.



Island Harbour & Cowes: August 14 - 17

Island Harbour is conveniently situated on the River Medina, two miles south of Cowes, it's one of the most picturesque riverside locations. This peaceful marina offers berths for visitors, as well as many other amenities including a chandlery, boat builders with a repair workshop, luxury showers, laundry room, and FREE Wi-Fi. There is a path into Newport, so is



ideal for walking in to town. It is also convenient for Island bus routes, so is a great base from which to discover the island.



Weymouth Marina: 28th – 31st August

What better way to spend your August Bank Holiday than having fun in Weymouth, with its shops, interesting variety of pubs and bars and the Weymouth Quayside Music Festival?

There is also the wonderful beach spanning the whole bay. There's a firework display on the Sunday evening, if you want to stay an extra night.



Port Hamble Marina: September 18 – 21

The River Hamble, right in the heart of the South Coast's sailing scene. With thousands of visitors every year, this busy marina is popular with racing enthusiasts and cruising vessels looking for an exciting atmosphere. The marina has its own Banana Wharf Restaurant and a Force Four Chandlers on site, along with the picturesque Hamble Village, with its inviting pubs and restaurants, only a few minutes' walk away.

For full information on these cruises and all the other Cruising Section activities go to:
pyccruising-section.co.uk



Roy & Wendy Davies report on

Cruising's Winter Walks

Throughout the winter months Cruising in Company sailors continue to socialise by organising walks, usually on the third Sunday of the month from November to March. We ask for a volunteer to arrange a walk starting at about 10am and finishing lunchtime at a Pub.

On 18th January 2026 an organised walk took us from the Bridge House Hotel around Longham Lakes and Poor Common. Although a damp day it was enjoyed by 24 walkers and finished at the Bridge House for lunch. Some were lucky enough to see Grebes performing their mating dance and Sue Grundy took the featured photo, inset above left.



On 23rd November we started off by walking from Hengistbury Head car park to Mudeford Spit and back, followed by lunch at a pub on Southbourne Overcliffe. This was a very sociable stroll attended by 20 walkers.



22nd February was a very wet and misty day, five brave souls went walking out to Houns Tout and along the Dorset Coast finishing with lunch at Wareham Golf Club.



On 21st December a fine blustery day, five of us walked to Old Harry from the Bankes Arms, later returning for lunch via Studland churchyard where Ian recounted the story of the Dorset Soldier at Waterloo.



The programme of walks ended on 29th March with seven of us walking from Durlston Country Park along the coast past the Globe and Tilly Whim Caves in a circular walk finishing back at Durlston for lunch. A lovely walk on a beautiful day.

None of the walks are strenuous and they are open to all, so keep your eyes on the Cruising Section Website and come along next Autumn. We just ask that you book if you are having lunch as we need numbers to reserve tables.



The "Rogues' Gallery" is in the snooker area, take a look when you are next at the Club



Past Commodores:

Frederick H Jennings

by Sue Thornton-Grimes

Frederick Herbert Jennings was born in 1858, the 9th child of 15 born to Josiah George Jennings and his two wives. George Jennings was a Sanitary Engineer, and was commissioned to provide one of the landmark inventions of the Great Exhibition held at Crystal Palace in 1851. He installed the first flushing toilets for public use. People paid one penny to use the 'Monkey Closets', as they were known, and for this sum they received a clean toilet seat, a towel, a comb and a shoe shine. The origin of the term 'spending a penny' is clear to see!

Frederick moved to Poole in the 1880s, initially working as a Surveyor. His father had purchased a 70 acre plot of land south of Ashley Cross in the 1850s and set up the South Western Pottery, to make use of the clay available there for his range of sanitary ware. Frederick is shown as General Manager of the Pottery in the 1891 Census.

In 1886 the Poole Artillery Volunteer Force was formed and Frederick joined up. He rose through the ranks, serving as Lieutenant to Captain Marston, and on the latter's death in 1892, was promoted to Captain. He was apparently a good and most painstaking commanding officer, and was very popular

Commodores 1852-1952

POOLE YACHT CLUB

1852	William Curling Esq
1853	Major William Petrie Waugh
1855	Thomas Wanhill Esq
1872	Sir Ivor Guest, 1st Lord Wimborne
1892	Frederick Herbert Jennings
1894	Captain Harold Kearsley
1896	Major William Bridges Webb
1899	Frederick William Livesey
1900	John Hayter Slade
1905	Charles Van Raalte
1908-14	Dr Robert Edward Durell

1919 Cmdr Hugh Ross Linklater

1914-18 - WW1 (No sailing in Poole Harbour)

1939-45 - WW2 (No sailing in Poole Harbour)

with his non-commissioned officers and men.

In 1892 Frederick Jennings was also elected Commodore of the Club. There is no mention of his owning a boat and indeed his name does not appear in any of the racing results. He was no doubt a good organiser, chaired various committees and oversaw the organisation of the regattas held in the harbour. He was re-elected Commodore in 1893 and continued to work for successful sailing and rowing events in the harbour.

He may well have been re-elected for a third term as Commodore, but in early February 1894 he was diagnosed as suffering from an acute attack of influenza. However, his symptoms worsened and he was found to be suffering from a virulent type of typhoid fever. He died on 15th February 1894 at the family home of Edenhurst in Saltern's Road, aged 35 years.

The funeral took place in London and he was interred in the family vault in Norwood Cemetery.

174 years of Commodores

Those of you who never enter the hallowed portals of the snooker table area may not have viewed the 'Rogues Gallery' of photos of Commodores past and present. Every Commodore since 1949 is pictured there, and there are also a great many photos of those who were in office from 1852 onwards – including those from the Hamworthy and Bournemouth Sailing Club, which merged with PYC in 1949 and moved Poole Yacht Club into the old clubhouse now occupied by the Harbour Commissioners.

There have been some remarkable people who have led the Club over the years and each made their contribution to the successful organisation it is today. If you go and take a look – please don't interrupt the snooker!

HAMWORTHY SAILING CLUB

1905	Robert Newman
1909	Henry John Travers
1912	Charles Boyer Hill

1919 Lt-Col Cecil Pierce

1945 Lt-Col Cecil Pierce

1948 Cmdr Norman Hadley Hibbs

1949 Merger of POOLE YACHT CLUB and HAMWORTHY & BOURNEMOUTH SAILING CLUB

POOLE YACHT CLUB

1949 Cmdr Norman Hadley Hibbs

Studland Bay:

What's new for PYC's Cruisers in 2026?

By Howard Davidson, PYC Member and Studland Bay Marine Partnership Representative

For many of us at Poole Yacht Club, Studland Bay is the “front garden” of our cruising grounds. It's the place we nip across to for lunch on a settled day, tuck into for an overnight stop, or introduce visiting friends to the joys of our coast. So, it's worth keeping up with what's happening there – especially as Studland is a Marine Conservation Zone with a well established eco mooring scheme.

The big picture: eco moorings and a thriving seagrass meadow

If you've been anchoring or picking up a mooring in Studland for years, you'll know this has been a hot topic for some time. The Studland Bay Marine Partnership (SBMP) exists to protect Studland's large seagrass meadow and its associated wildlife – most famously the Spiny Seahorse population – while still allowing recreational boating.

A few latest headlines...

- In 2022 there were 10 eco moorings. In 2026 there are now 87 eco moorings in place.
- 92% of boaters are now respecting the Voluntary No Anchor Zone (VNAZ) and either using an eco mooring or anchoring outside the seagrass.
- 73% of boats in 2025 used a mooring (up 9% from 2024).
- Only 8% of boats were found anchoring in the meadows (a drop of 2% compared with 2024).

From a skipper's point of view, that means finding a mooring is much easier than it used to be – there are now plenty. The authorities are clearly watching what happens in the bay quite closely, and the data shows our collective behaviour genuinely makes a difference.

Using the eco moorings: costs and how to pay

The SBMP runs on a not for profit basis, 100% of the mooring fee goes into maintaining and deploying the eco moorings each year, insurance and administration as well as ongoing scientific monitoring of the bay.

For the 2026 season the charges are:

- £7.50 for up to 4 hours
- £15 for up to 24 hours (overnight)
- £150 for a seasonal pass



Payment options:

Sippi app – SBMP continues to use the Sippi app for Pay2Moor. On water card payments – the Studland Watersports team will again be acting as the SBMP “voice on the water”, and they can take card payments directly from your boat if you don’t want to faff with apps.

The monitoring report showed that only about 35–40% of boaters actually paid for their moorings over the 2025 sample period, even though most people were using them. That’s better than 2024 (26.4%) but still low. In other words: most of us are happy to use the buoys, but too many are quietly skipping the fee.

If you value having a safe, conservation friendly mooring field on our doorstep, it’s worth making a point of paying. Otherwise, the scheme simply won’t be financially sustainable in the long run.

Operational tweaks you’ll notice from the helm:

There’s some good news on the practical, boat handling front. The SBMP’s boating representatives have helped refine the moorings setup based on feedback from skippers.

For 2026 you should notice:

- No more small yellow floats on the pick up lines. Those have been removed to cut down on fouling and confusion.
- Shorter pick up lines: now 3 metres. This is specifically to reduce the chances of snagging a prop as you manoeuvre.
- Conventional pick up buoys. The yellow floats have been replaced with familiar style pick up buoys attached by light weight loops, so picking up should feel more like any other visitor’s mooring.
- Improved assembly below the surface. The underwater hardware has been upgraded to reduce wear and prolong the life of the moorings – which should mean fewer failures and less disruption for users.

So, if you’ve had the odd wrestle with the previous setup, it’s worth giving the new arrangements a try. The SBMP has clearly listened to practical feedback from boaters.

Anchoring: where you can and can’t drop the hook

The Voluntary No Anchor Zone (VNAZ) remains in place over the seagrass meadows. Within that zone, the expectation is:

Use an eco mooring if one is available, or:

Anchor outside the VNAZ in areas of sand where you will not damage seagrass.

From the 2025 monitoring:

- 14% of boats chose to anchor outside the VNAZ
- 8% still anchored within the meadows and so were classed as non compliant.

For now, this remains voluntary not a byelaw, but the scientific condition assessment of Studland’s Marine Conservation Zone is due to be published shortly. That will feed into future management decisions. The more we stick to the voluntary scheme now, the stronger the case that cooperation works without needing tighter legal restrictions.

For Club members, the practical message is simple

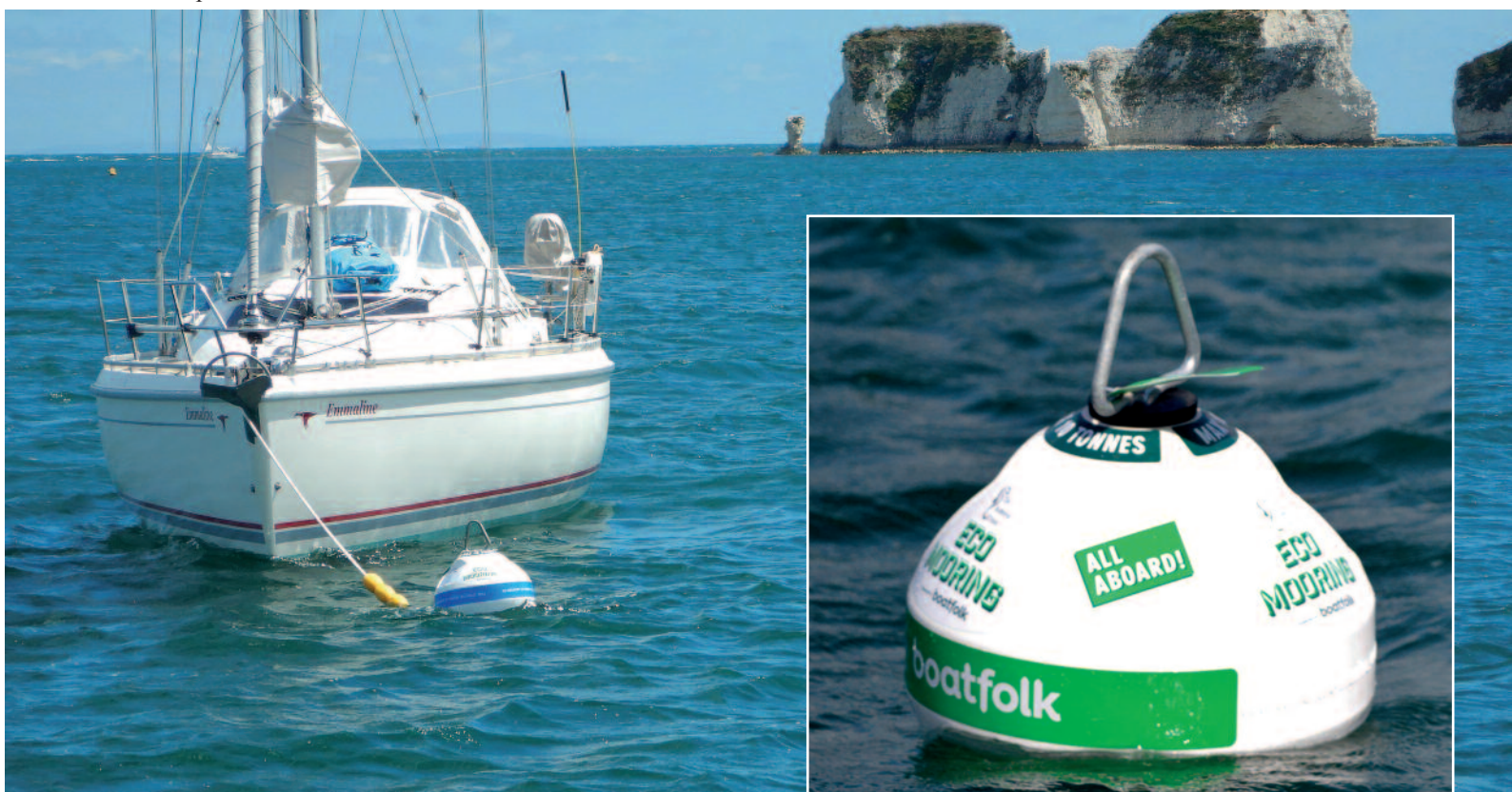
- Plan to use a mooring as your first choice in Studland.
- If none are available, anchor well clear of the marked VNAZ
- If in doubt, ask – the Studland Watersports boat is there to help, not just to check payments.

Science behind the scenes: what’s being monitored?

Natural England and the Marine Management Organisation are closely involved with Studland as a Marine Conservation Zone. The upcoming Condition Assessment of the Studland Bay MCZ will summarise:

- How the seagrass and associated species (including seahorses) are doing
- What impact boating and anchoring are having
- Whether current management measures are sufficient

The SBMP has also released its 2025 Monitoring Annual Report which is available on their website. It’s full of detailed analysis,



Eco-mooring pictures: boatfolk

but the headline for us is that reduced anchoring in the meadows is already measurable. The shift to eco moorings isn't just a feel good gesture – it's demonstrably reducing damage.

If you're interested in diving a bit deeper (or want to understand what people may be proposing in the future), the SBMP also runs online talks, which are recorded and posted on the Dorset Coast Forum YouTube channel



People, partners and future plans:

The long serving SBMP Project Officer, Sara Parker, who has been with the partnership since 2022, retired in April 2026 after overseeing the growth from 10 to 87 eco moorings and championing Studland's seahorses and seagrass. Expect some change of faces, but the direction of travel is clearly set.

A new donation partnership has started with Knoll House Hotel. Guests can now add £1 (or more) at checkout as a direct donation to SBMP, which not only raises funds but spreads the word to non boating visitors.

A new standalone SBMP website is due to launch in late spring 2026, separate from the Dorset Coast Forum pages, with clearer information for visitors, boaters and local communities.

There are also several engagement events planned, including an online session on the MCZ Condition Assessment and an Outdoor Classroom Day for local schools at Shell Bay. These don't directly affect your passage plan, but they reinforce that Studland is being managed in a genuinely collaborative way – with academics, local businesses, schools, conservation bodies and boaters all involved.

What this means for Poole YC members: If you're heading to Studland this season, here's the condensed "skipper's checklist":

- Expect plenty of eco moorings – 87 in total.
- Budget a modest fee if you use one: £7.50 for a short stay, £15 overnight, or consider a £150 seasonal pass if you're a regular.
- Pay up– through the Sippi app or by card to the Studland Watersports team.
- Avoid anchoring in the VNAZ – anchor outside the seagrass if all moorings are taken.
- Look out for the updated mooring gear– shorter pick ups, conventional buoys, less tangle prone.
- Remember what's under the keel – a nationally important seagrass meadow and a protected seahorse population.

Studland has always been one of the jewels of our local cruising area. With a bit of cooperation and a few pounds in mooring fees, we can help keep it that way – both as a favourite stop over and as a thriving marine habitat on our doorstep.



For more information visit the Studland Bay Marine Partnership's website at:
www.dorsetcoasthaveyoursay.co.uk/studland-bay-marine-partnership

By embracing sustainable practices and supporting conservation efforts, we ensure that Studland Bay remains a vibrant destination for generations of boaters to come.

Confessions

The Inverness Incident



We were lucky enough to sail around Britain in the summer of 2017 in our trusty MGC27, *Rum Juggernaut*, and our track took us west along the coast of the Moray Firth on our planned route via the Caledonian Canal.

We kept a blog as a way to keep friends and family updated, but this event was something we omitted to publish at the time: at nearly the furthest point from home (we were closer to Norway!), we didn't want the attention!

So the 3rd June started at a fairly leisurely 9am. It was a bright morning as we potted out of Banff harbor, and like most of the trip we had left to catch the tide. While a fog bank rolled through soon afterwards, Inverness still looked like an easy stretch before dark, and in spite of a forecast for showers.

Heavy grey skies loomed after lunch which made it clear that "showers" was an understatement: we had plenty of time to don waterproofs and tuck a reef in as the wind went forwards and freshened, and the rain started streaking sideways. Lightning flashed more frequently while rolling thunder began to echo around the hills.

Somewhere off Nairn, at least one dolphin joined us, but it was hard to keep track in the spray, rain, and gloom, and the noise of the storm was by now overwhelming... It (or they) seemed to follow us to Fort George.

As we entered the Inverness Firth though, it was like a light switching: the skies cleared and the wind died completely, so

we struck the sails and motored in to the final phase of the day with the kettle on. As we relaxed in the unexpected sunshine, admiring the long views and anticipating a hot dinner and a well-earned drink the autopilot helmed...

The buoy marking the fairway down the centre of the mile-wide loch was in sight ahead, and all was good in the world until **CRUNCH** – the noise every boat owner fears (and no-one who's heard it forgets)!

Our long day and my inattention had led us to hit the only mark for miles around! Fortunately the height of its projected edge meant the damage was well above the waterline and mainly to the anchor locker: the sea state was calm, and without sails the rig was easy to stabilise using spare halyards (at this point structural damage was unknown).

Burning with frustration (and on my part shame) we covered the final few miles to Inverness marina in silence. A trusty roll of gaffer tape covered the hole until we could get it assessed, and we tried to enjoy being ashore while we waited for events to unfold.

A huge credit to Caley Marina who were able to fix it "better than new" within a fortnight and our insurers who facilitated that. We disappeared in a rented camper van to explore the highlands (as we wrote about then), and in that week we made friends that we would otherwise never have met. By the 16th we were away again, wiser and chastened...

Confessions



Nomad: No Mad Idea!

The boat pictured above was *Nomad*, a 24' river cruiser that my friend (Fred Deacon-Smith) and I bought in 1972 for £15. Bargain we thought, until we started stripping and prodding. We found that the whole cabin was rotten so, from the gunnels up, we set-about the reconstruction.

It was a very quick learning curve (I'd done metalwork at school, not woodwork, which would have been more handy). Wood and ply were purchased by the trailer load. We steamed planks, learnt caulking, replaced ribs and Fred even marinised a Morris Vedette engine. Come the spring of 1973 she was ready, although the interior was incomplete, including no engine cover.

A mooring was laid near the power station outlet, which was a mistake in itself: the warm water being a magnet for all forms of marine life and festoons of weed and barnacles took a fancy to *Nomad's* bottom.

Our first outing was to Wareham (see picture above). When we got there the quay was full. We had no idea that you ask to tie alongside and proceeded to tie to the grass bank opposite.

Off to the pub (or pubs) we went, leaving *Nomad* to gently settle on the sandy beach. And back from the pub there she was: high and dry! What to do? It was mid-week and we all had work the next day. We had no sleeping bags or bedding of any kind but *Nomad* was going nowhere.

The next day frantic phone calls from the telephone box nearby: me to the Echo, Fred to Plesseys. Sorry apologies all-round. Soon enough we got going to retrace our route back to Ham Bay.

The next adventure was eastward: Christchurch and Lymington. Remember the No Idea headline above? I think a "Please do not try this" proviso is relevant here. At Mudeford we headed for the pub for refreshments before continuing towards The Solent.

Soundings 2026

You know that the channel at Mudeford isn't like ours at Poole. Very strangely it continues along the shoreline before turning at rightangles seawards. We didn't know that of course and we turned outwards as soon as we were passed the spit. Two outings – two groundings! Holiday makers helped push us off and we were on our way.

Lymington Quay and, once again: no room. So we tied up to a wall nearby (I'm thinking this was a private wall at the end of someone's garden). Then off for refreshments, do you know how many pubs are alongside Lymington High Street? We did!

It was foggy the next day and we wanted to go to Yarmouth. "Let's follow the ferry" some smart Alec suggested – so we did.

In Yarmouth (The Bugle's beer garden) we noticed the trees were moving about. So Fred goes off to ring the Coastguard: "If you have to go, go now, the wind is due to increase later". So we had another pint and set-off. At least the fog had blown away.

One thing you should never do, especially in a carvel-built river boat, is drive directly in to waves. That comes naturally to a sailor of course - you can't go directly into the wind. Not to us newbies though: BANG – BANG as we fell off the wave tops.

All was well for a while, although there was a moment when the anchor broke free from its bed and tried to gain access to the forecabin through the hull planking. Then we noticed water being sprayed about in the cabin!

Two of us went below, I recall using a bucket and bailing directly in to the sink. We were off Bournemouth at the time, I thought: "I reckon I could swim that".

We made it to Poole, beached her on Davis's slip (at Sandbanks then) and waited for the tide to fall.

Patched-up *Nomad* continued to entertain and amuse us through that summer of 1973, until the following winter that is – but that's another story!

JW



A Salutory Lesson

After much to-ing and fro-ing, we managed to sell our little motorboat, *Rosella*. That was largely due to Matt Greatbach, for which we owe many thanks.

The purchaser lives in Portsmouth and, unfortunately, his car had no ball-hitch at the time. So it was arranged that we would deliver the boat by road to him at a fishing club in the upper reaches of Portsmouth Harbour at about 14:00 on Sunday 26th October, 2025.

Julie and I set out that Sunday morning and all was well until we passed junction 7 on the M27. Julie heard some rumbling, so we stopped and saw that something was not right with the starboard trailer wheel - it was leant at an angle: **Whoops!**

We drove very cautiously along the M27, off at J8 and in to the bell mouth of a private drive. We stopped and unhitched so we could push the trailer completely off the road. On pushing the wheel came completely off its axle: completely off, disconnected, not attached at all!

Fortunately, we had brought our small trolley jack with us, so we were able to raise the trailer and put the wheel back on. We were then able to push the boat out of the way. There was no way of securing it in place, so we called the AA.

While we waited, we called the purchaser and explained the situation.

Eventually the AA recovery vehicle arrived and the trailer winched on to it. We drove in convoy to the fishing club, arriving about 18:30 and unloaded the boat and trailer. The AA man set-off for home (in Taunton!).

Rosella's purchaser paid in full but we returned a fair sum, going halves on likely cost of the repair to the axle, etc. We have not heard from purchaser, so assume that he is content and making his own arrangements to affect the necessary repairs.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Have your road trailer serviced regularly, particularly if it immersed in sea water at every launch and recovery, as we have had to do. This I failed to do over 6 or 7 years of ownership: *Mea Maxima Culpa!***
- **Whenever possible drive in the left-hand land of motorways and dual carriageways and listen carefully for strange noises.**
- **React quickly and inspect closely should anything be seen or heard.**

I was extremely fortunate not to have caused a major incident on the M27 at a very busy time.

Will Parke

PLEASE NOTE: The illustration above is an AI image and not a true representation

You Row Girl

By Amy Sparks



First night row – 2025 Amy – right

Four Women • One Ocean • 3,000 miles! Rowing 24 hours a day for up to 55 days

In under 230 days, *You Row Girl* will set off on a 3,000-mile Atlantic crossing aboard their 8.64-metre rowing boat, *Mermaid*, which is expected to take 40 to 50 days. The team of four women includes Poole Yacht Club member Amy Sparks, alongside Hebe Hemming (UK), Ruby Scholten (Australia) and Charlotte Porter (New Zealand).

The team is rowing in support of two charities: CoppaFeel! and Women in Sport. CoppaFeel! is a UK charity educating young people on breast cancer signs and symptoms, with an 24H fundraising event - April 2026

emphasis on early detection. Women in Sport ensures women and girls of all ages have equal opportunities to take part in sport and remain involved throughout their lives.

You Row Girl is built on stepping outside comfort zones and embracing new challenges. Ocean rowing is new to all four

Sunrise row in Poole Harbour



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women, all in their late teens and early twenties, Hebe and Amy raced on the Women's World Match Racing Tour, often against Ruby and Charlotte, who also represented their countries. The team has experience across dinghies, keelboats and campaigns including The Ocean Race and the World Match Racing Tour. They are now swapping sails for oars.

Learning a new sport has been both demanding and rewarding. Charlotte states: *"There is so much about ocean rowing that aligns with sailing and many skills are transferable. There is also a huge amount to learn about optimising the boat. That is what makes this challenge exciting. We are learning as much as we can."*

March marked a milestone as all four athletes were finally based in the same country. Ruby relocated from Australia and Charlotte from New Zealand, joining Amy and Hebe in the UK, allowing full commitment to training and boat preparation. Most weekends are spent at Poole Yacht Club working on Mermaid in the yard, completing training courses, fundraising, or training on the water. Amy explains they must complete a minimum of 120 on-water hours before the start in La Gomera, Canary Islands and be fully competent with systems including water-maker, autopilot, para-anchor, drogue, solar panels, and electrics. They aim to exceed requirements to be fully prepared.

The crossing from La Gomera to Antigua is expected to take 40 to 50 days. The team will row on a two-hour on, two-hour off system, 24 hours a day, with two rowing at any time and a third in tougher conditions. Rest periods are for sleep, food, hygiene, and maintenance.

The race will test every aspect from weather and sleep deprivation to equipment failure, nutrition, and capsizing risk. Hebe says, *"The mental challenge is huge and we are working with a psychologist and strength coach to ensure we are physically and mentally prepared."*

Around 40 teams in solo, pairs, triples, and quads will take part. The race is fully unsupported, with no external assistance beyond daily sat-phone call safety checks at sea.

Ruby says *"Poole Yacht Club is ideal for training. We are so grateful for the support from members who visit and engage with our team and who spend time assisting us."*

Team You Row Girl, training in Poole Harbour



The team brings diverse backgrounds: Ruby is a nurse, Charlotte a physiotherapist with a paramedic diploma. Hebe is a boat builder and Amy a financial adviser.

The campaign relies on sponsorship and donations to reach the start line. All funds raised, including proceeds from the post-race sale of *Mermaid*, will be donated to CoppaFeel! and Women in Sport. The team has been actively fundraising, including a recent 24-hour rowing erg challenge in April, where they rotated continuously and collectively covered 292,040 metres.

They are currently aiming to raise a further £60,000 to reach the start line.

There are several ways to support the campaign:

- The 250 Club: Sponsor 250 miles of the row with a £250 donation. Your name or logo will be displayed around the cabin hatch.
- Flares Package Sponsor (£597): Support essential safety equipment, with branding on the side of the boat.
- Oar Sponsor (£984): Sponsor a set of oars and have your name or logo displayed on both sides.
- Sponsor a Mile (£100): Have your name featured on the team website for each mile sponsored.
- Platinum, Gold, Silver, and Bronze packages: Further details available on the team website.
- Supporters can also contribute by following and sharing the journey on social media or donating via the campaign's JustGiving page

The best way to follow their progress is via Instagram and Facebook at *You Row Girl*, or through their website: www.yourowgirl.com, where live tracking will be available during the race.

For enquiries please contact: info@yourowgirl.com



Charlie learns about art in miniature and meets a second-generation miniaturist with a passion for painting nautical scenes

Peter Hayton: The Longest Four Minutes!

I thought I'd let you know about an interesting time Ann and I had in Shepton Mallet at an antiques fair, where I did a demonstration of painting a miniature and had an interview with Charlie Ross from Bargain Hunt.

We got there early and the day started well – they told us to have a look around because they weren't ready for us to film. I must admit it was fascinating looking at all the antiques in massive halls and a hundreds of stalls outside, I don't think I've ever seen a fair so big. Bargain Hunt were actually doing six episodes for the series at the same show!

While we were wandering and browsing, we saw the film crew with the Bargain Hunt teams and TV crews. I'm sure you've all seen the programme Bargain Hunt.

Then the time came to do the interview. We laid out mum's Poole Pottery and miniature cats and dogs, and then laid out other miniaturist's work and some of my miniatures, then my paints and the painting of a nautical scene I was going to demonstrate on.

It was time to start. Firstly Charlie wanted to know about the Poole Pottery my mum had painted and how did that involved me. Mum had been a painter for Poole Pottery and we used to walk down to the pottery from school and wait for her to finish. Charlie said they had a lot of Poole on the show over the years and asked if that was where all my art talent came from. I explained that when mum retired she took up miniature painting. I grew up with all of this and that's what really got me

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into miniatures.

Also a chance meeting with the artist, Eric Kincaid, who said, when I told him he should be showing in exhibitions after seeing his amazingly detailed work that he brought into our workshops to put into print. *"He would do it if I did"* and put his hand out for a handshake. Well that's a contract as far as I'm concerned, so there was no backing out on this one! A story, which Charlie found highly amusing.

Charlie went on to look at all the miniature examples from different artists and was surprised how many different types of paintings there were. He said that when he first started he thought there were only portraits that were miniatures, I replied: *"That was way back in the 1500s, nowadays anything goes, so you can paint in almost any medium, and any subject"*.

Charlie talked about the marine miniature and how the seas had been built up for the painting. He showed a lot of interest and it was lovely talking with him.

I was very nervous driving to the filming, having never done anything like this before. I wasn't really sure what to expect and I was told it was only going to be a 4-minute interval in the show, but filming will take a bit longer! It actually took well over three hours to make four minutes of screen time!

Charlie Ross and the team were absolutely brilliant at helping me to relax and look normal, not an easy thing for me.

First of all, I showed him a breakdown with a series of pictures of the various stages of how a painting was done and

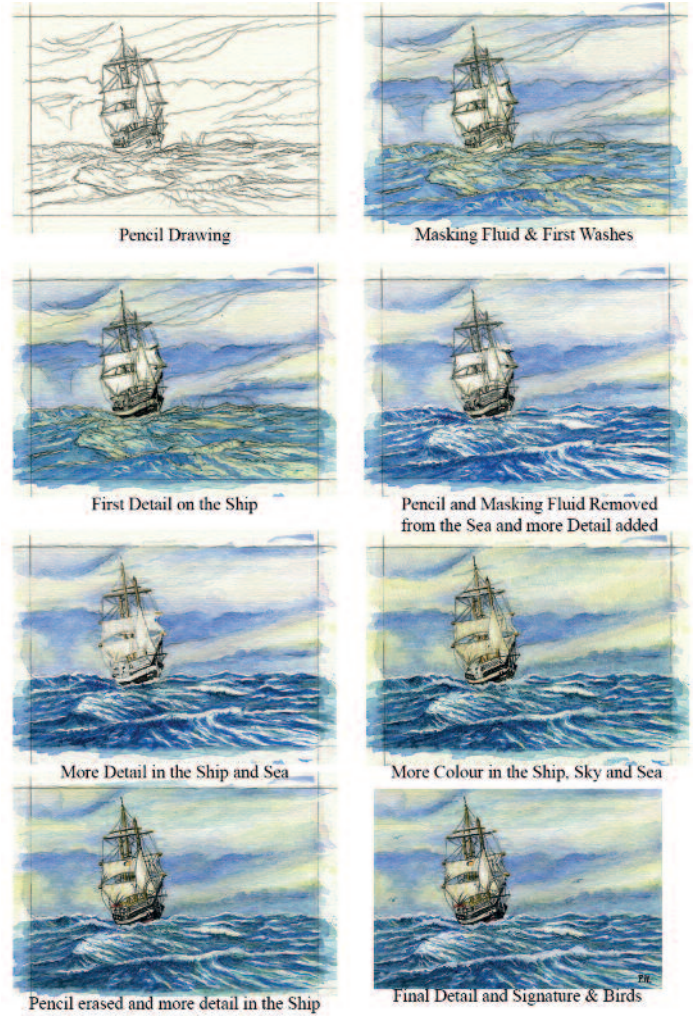


then he said: “I’d love to see you doing some painting”.

I started painting the dark parts in the waves. The painting was of Pelican, from Weymouth, easting down in the English Channel; she had all the topsails folded because the seas were pretty rough. It was a good fun painting for him and he was very surprised at the amount of work that went into such a small area of the piece. He thanked me and that was the end of it. I’ve no idea where the time went but was shocked to find it had taken over three hours.

I have to say it was very disconcerting when you’re busy painting close-up with a magnifying glass and there’s a great big BBC camera right by your ear studying every move you make, you have to get it right because you don’t want to look a plonker on the telly do you? It was one of the most unnerving parts of it all. Nonetheless I enjoyed it far more than I thought I would.

If you ever get asked to do a programme and they say it’ll only be for four minutes please be aware that it will take a lot longer to film. The BBC crew were very good in helping and advising me with getting all the questions right. There was a script but it ended up being a bit ad-lib, which made life much easier, and helped me to relax.



The Ian Wall Memorial Trophy goes to:

Ian Aitken

The Ian Wall Trophy is awarded to a person, or persons, who are involved with Cruiser Racing, either within PYRA or at Poole, or both, not for silverware for themselves, but to enable us lot to go Cruiser Racing.

This year we have awarded the Ian Wall Trophy to Ian Aitken. Ian has been Cruiser Racing Captain for several years. His dedication to the cause has seen him doing his duty and, sometimes, not being able to race himself.

The two Ians were rivals and friends, they shared cradles and their enthusiasm for MG27s knew no bounds. Despite their friendship on-the-water rivalry was there and the competition helped to hone the skills of them both in GP14s and MG27s.





Commodores' Challenge

By Fraser Burnet – Main Trimmer



The morning after Boxing Day brought a cold, unsettled breeze across the course, with enough pressure to make every manoeuvre count. From the outset, it was clear the racing would be decided through control rather than distance – particularly in the pre-starts.

The Commodores' Challenge is built on that premise. Two Elan 333s, crews from Poole and Parkstone Yacht Clubs, and no opportunity to rely on anything other than execution.

As soon as we hoisted the main I knew it was going to be a difficult one for both teams with gusty winds up to and slightly above 20 knots.

After winning the toss, we began from the starboard end and established control early. In the first pre-start, with red sails to leeward, we secured the inside position and forced them up to windward. They repeatedly tried to come down over us despite being the windward boat, and each time we held our line and called it. On the third attempt, the gap closed to inches – their port quarter almost level with our beam – before they were finally forced to disengage. A protest flag followed shortly after, reflecting just how tight the exchange had become.

Upwind, the racing remained just as compressed. At one of the early windward marks, they approached slightly ahead but only just laying the mark, forced high from the pressure applied in the final approach. They rounded with minimal margin, and in doing so gave us an opportunity – our tighter line and better exit allowed us to gain immediately, reducing what had been a small deficit.

They held the advantage onto the first downwind leg, but the difference was marginal. From the trimmer's position, that phase became about small, repeatable gains. Cleaner kite handling, more efficient trim, and sharper coordination through the drop meant we were able to close distance incrementally rather than in one decisive move.



“Keep it building... little by little”

By the time we came back upwind again, the separation had almost disappeared. The approach to the windward mark became another high-pressure moment – both boats converging at speed, barely laying it, carrying the momentum of the previous leg into a single point.

Just before the mark, the engagement turned into a luffing battle. Positioned to leeward and slightly behind, we began to push them up, increasing their angle and loading the boat, looking to force an error or even a broach in the stronger pressure.

“Up... keep bringing them up”

The response was immediate. They held control well under the pressure, managing the load and avoiding any major mistake. At the last moment, they bore away sharply with four tonnes of Elan surging across our bow by the smallest margin barely clearing the pulpit. Escaping the worst of the situation. Protest

flags shot up but the umpires ruled no penalty on either boat. With the risky move, they gave away the inside line.

We carried slightly more speed and held the tighter approach, turning that positioning into control at the mark. It was a small but decisive shift – typical of the racing throughout – where advantage didn’t come from one large gain, but from a sequence of well-executed moments.

That pattern held across the series: pressure in the pre-starts, discipline upwind, and incremental gains through handling and positioning. The racing remained close throughout, with multiple protests reflecting just how fine the margins were.

The final result: 3–0 in a best-of-five series – came from that consistency. Two identical boats, minimal separation, and a day where control was built through moments like these – tight, technical, and decided in the smallest spaces on the course.

It was a fantastic day and we were all elated to bring the cup back to Poole again after just a break of one year.

The top two pictures by David Harding (sailingscenes.co.uk). Pic left by Nikki Curwen, this one of the team and trainers by Sarah Burnet



The Team

- Helm: Devon Green
- Main Trimmer: Fraser Burnet
- Jib Trim: Annabelle Topping and Ellie Grier
- Pit: Jake Waters
- Side Deck: Ben McAvoy and Olie Du Valle
- Mast 1: Lottie Eyre
- Mast 2: Enzo Latter
- Bow: Mason Green
- Reserves: Woody O’Farrell and Ella Bernard

Of course many other children were involved with the training.

WLYC 24 Hour:

a day and a night on Marine Lake

By Mark Champion



First run in 1967, the West Lancashire Yacht Club (WLYC) 24 Hour race is exactly what it sounds like: a relentless noon-to-noon dinghy marathon on Southport's Marine Lake, where the winner is the team that can keep the boat moving and rack up the most laps.

For many dinghy racers it's a fixture circled in the diary months in advance. The sailing is only half the story: tents, marquees and caravans line the shore, a Friday-night mix of live music, drinks, reunions and banter sets a festival mood before the first gun even sounds.

The format rewards teamwork as much as boat-handling. Crews take turns to keep a GP14, Enterprise or Firefly circulating around the clock (although a handful of hardy souls have attempted it solo). This year PYC fielded a team of 11, consisting of members from across array of fleets: GP14s, R19s, Hobies, Lasers and Handicap, with our youngest team members being Lucy Griffin and Jenny Clarke. Most of our sailors completing four stints as helm or crew.

Alongside strong local entries were teams from universities

across the country and clubs from far further afield.

At midday on Saturday the fleet launched into a downwind start, spinnakers snapping open as boats began a clockwise lap of the islands. PYC kicked off with Andy Macgregor and Sarah Agnew in some seriously gusty conditions. Over the next 24 hours Marine Lake delivered the full range: sunshine and squalls, warm spells and sharp chills, clouded twilight and proper darkness, even a thunderstorm. Add to that a mix of winds that seemed to try everything in between.

The Formula 1-esque crew changeovers are handled as boldly as each team dares. The outgoing pair sails up to the wall and hands controls straight to the next crew as they jump aboard – sometimes without the boat coming to a full stop. At least one changeover was completed with the spinnaker still flying!

By mid-afternoon the reality of the challenge begins to sink in: after all that effort there were still more than 20 hours to go. Sunset brought the next reckoning, as sleep had to be grabbed wherever the changeover rota allowed. Some made



it to beds; others snoozed in camp chairs beside the lake, listening for the call to kit up and head back out. Huge shout out to Lucy G who had not only never sailed a GP14 before or sailed in the dark but managed to keep the boat upright when a nasty squall hit around midnight with serious thunder and lightening. The team could only look on questioning “who was in Loco parentis?” She went on to sail 3:30-5:30 with Jenny who had again never sailed a GP or at night.

By morning the team, despite a few capsizes, had managed to keep themselves in the top half and were still keen to keep to their goal of top 20.

Next came the Ladies Race and Lucy again hugely stepped up to take it on with Kirstie. The team were super proud of them coming 6th.

When the clock finally hit midday on Sunday, the first boat across the line became the “first finisher” – but not necessarily the winner. Placings depend on the lap tally, and each team completes one last circuit before peeling off to recover, pack away and, for some, point the car towards a long journey home.

The race has a few “races within the race” and the team were 12th in the fastest 14th lap (Toby and Kirstie), 14th in the fastest lap after 20:00 (Toby and Jenny), 16th in the fastest lap after midnight (Magnus and Mark), 20th in the fastest lap on PYS, as well as our amazing result in the Ladies Race. We

finished 26th overall, with a team where only four members had any real GP14 experience.

Events like this don’t happen by accident. Sarah and Aaron Agnew deserve special recognition for pulling the team together – providing a boat, sharing experience and, above all, injecting the enthusiasm that kept the team running for 24 hours. PYC has already entered two boats for the event in 2026. We will have one team sailing a GP14 and another team sailing a Firefly. The Firefly team’s goal is to encourage more novice and youth sailors to come racing. This team will also be aiming for the coveted “best dressed boat” this year won by Toddbroccoli (a team from Toddbrook SC in broccoli suits). We are planning the theme of Poole Pirates.

When asked for their memories the team said:

“Emma Griffin’s Chill after coming off the water”

“Cake!” (Thanks Elaine, Kirstie and Tracey)

“Broccoli”

“Lightening lightening, very very frightening” (sorry Lucy)

With entering two teams this year, we’d love to see more members get involved. It’s an amazing event, one of Yachts and Yachting top 50 events in the world! So get in contact with Sarah Agnew if you’d like to know more.





Grebe



Subtle Alchemist



Dave Peters 1935 – 2026

Whilst he will be familiar to many as a staple at Sunday lunchtimes, Dave's sailing story reaches back well before his membership at Poole Yacht Club began in 1963. With a ready grin and a big laugh, he was probably familiar to more than those who knew him.

Memories of a bomb landing in the street outside his home in Bournemouth, and aerial dogfights over the sea defences during WW2 predated an education that – due to the vicinity of the Southern Railway Servants Orphanage to the country's largest mosque at the time – meant religion was an early fascination.

His stock was impressive in its reach across an empire too: his Grandfather was tailor to the King of Siam, his mother of Scottish descent was born in South Africa. His Welsh father served with the army in India for a time and the diaspora of his extended family reached New Zealand. Two aunts visited in his youth, one of whom only spoke Welsh and had to be translated by the other in to English.

His working life began with an apprenticeship with the Signals Research & Development Establishment in Christchurch and, after a period of National Service he continued at SRDE. Later, he moved to A&AEE at Boscombe Down becoming Principal Supervisor of the workshops and 60 craftsmen, where he remained until retirement. This encouraged the workshop to move to an outbuilding at home, where anything and everything could be (and was) made or fixed for pleasure instead.

The then rugby-playing Dave met Jenny in the early 1960s, and despite her initial rebuffs they bought a house together in 1971 and married the following year: they hosted famous (or infamous?) parties at Yaffle Wood throughout the years, and brought children in to the world there too: the roots went so deep they never left.

Young Dave taught himself to sail on an abandoned International 14 he'd fixed up and subsequently crewed with friends in yachts. About the time he met Jenny he replaced his first yacht with *Ada-May*, a ketch-rigged Cornish fishing boat. After she was lost in a storm off her mooring they acquired *Grebe*, a 20ft yacht built for the Commodore of Parkstone in 1910, that had formerly been managed by a paid hand.

The only racing venture in her was a win in a Swanage race one year, otherwise she gave them years of fun as a cruising boat, but she was eventually also lost off a mooring in a storm as Dave watched helpless from the old clubhouse. This was the week-long gale in which Ted Heath's yacht was also sunk. In the aftermath Dave freedived on the rocks she foundered on to recover as much as he could.

Musetta, a Westerly 22, was their first fibreglass vessel, allowing the young family to enjoy leak-free sailing, and she was a perfect crèche for days afloat out of Poole. Subsequently *Saranesa* (a Westerly Centaur) allowed them to head off on longer adventures, eventually reaching the Isles of Scilly when the kids were old enough to be useful.

These sub-tropical islands were somewhere he'd flown over with his work at Boscombe Down and had aspired to visit years before – in the days before maps on a device in your pocket, the aerial view was all he had to go on other than the rather



intimidating charts: the bonus of a berth in the 'new' PYC marina made it all the more civilised.

As he retired, bigger boats followed - the Moody 31 *Solway Ranger*, which he and a couple of friends delivered from Hartlepool in the dog days of his employment (and which shed coal dust for years afterwards), and then *Subtle Alchemist*, the Southerly 115, which helped usher in the new century.

This last was their 'mobile 1 bed apartment' and in it he and Jenny sailed, not just back and forth to Scilly, but destinations ranging from South Brittany to Holland, and charters in the Grenadines and the BVI's allowed us this glorious view (right) of him too!

She was also the only boat he renamed, referencing a line from the Rubaiyat of Omar Khyyam: whilst poetry might initially seem unlikely, he was interested in everything. In the Rubaiyat, the 'subtle alchemy' of wine turns the leaden metal of life into gold, a metaphor he relished.

In the time after working he also pursued 'club politics' and served on the Committee for many years, eventually as Commodore too. During his tenure he was part of the harbour-wide agreement to inaugurate the "Millennium Keelboat Regatta" in 2000, which is now a biannual staple of the South Coast racing scene now known simply as "Poole Regatta".

Embracing the spirit of glasnost, he was also closely involved in the invite that was required for the visit of the St Petersburg yacht *Diana* and her subsequent peers in the 90's, the friends made then resulted in a return invite to Russia, and the formation of heartfelt trans-continental friendships.

Dave was always keen to highlight the difference between a past Commodore and an ex-Commodore, and time's winged chariot has ensured he is finally both. His enthusiasm, humour, and passion live on though: Jenny continues to give her time as Poole Regatta Secretary and Owain and Tamsin both pursue successful careers in the marine industry.

So raise a glass to a lost treasure. He'll be missed but well remembered.

Owain Peters



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