



# 31 1/2

## THE WILSONIAN SAILING CLUB MAGAZINE

No. 1 - March 1977

WILSONIAN SAILING CLUB  
HOVE, KENT

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"31 $\frac{1}{2}$ " will be published in the last week of March May July and October. Contributions should be sent to the Secretary to arrive not later than the first day of the month in which the magazine is published. Advertisements are free to members.

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### *A Signal From The Commodore*

Just the right moment to launch Volume 1 number 1 of your new Club magazine with the first breath of Spring warmth in the air and the weather almost dry enough for that final coat of varnish. Membership renewals for the new season are at a record high and prospects for another fabulous summer on the river have never been so good. In writing these notes, it is proper that I should look ahead and predict that this second season of our consolidation will see us all the more firmly established in our new pattern as a Club with respected and valuable training facilities and with an ability to host small open meetings in a manner which provides long remembered enjoyment for our visitors.

These new activities are built from the firm base of keen and dedicated Club racing, for the simple reason that any dinghy club gains and maintains its momentum from the spirit of competition sparked off when the starting flag drops. There's no apology here to those of you who have only cruised or pottered so far. Let me assure you that if you have enjoyed your cruising then you can more than double that enjoyment by having a go at the racing game.

Everyone faces their first few races with trepidation - don't worry, you will be among friends. So take the plunge (metaphorically speaking, that is) and join the power house of the Club on the starting line.

Sam Brookes

If all has gone according to plan, you should be receiving this copy of the Newsletter and some amendments to the club handbook - including the all important sailing programme and duty list - at the same time. Please delete Rule 18 from the Club Rules on page 14 of the handbook and discard any pages which have been reprinted. The duty list has been compiled taking into account, so far as possible, the preferences expressed by Club members when renewing their membership for the current season. Please make a note of when your weekend duty is scheduled and if for any reason you find that you will be unable to attend on the appropriate day, change your duty with some other member and let the two Chief Duty Officers know about the swap. On some weekends towards the end of the season, there are at present no Chief Duty Officers on the list. In those cases, please notify the Secretary instead.

The amendments to the handbook include a revision of the Club's byelaws. Most of the changes were made to improve the wording or to take account of the fact that there is usually a Duty Officer at the club when the barge is open, but there are one or two changes which you should note in particular. There is now a requirement that dinghy park spaces are not allocated to boats which are not adequately insured against third party risks. Before the end of this season, the Committee will be asked to consider a further amendment specifying the minimum cover, probably £100,000. Members wishing to change boat classes now only need to seek the approval of the Sailing Secretary. The previous requirement to seek the permission of the Secretary has been dropped.

One of the changing features of sailing over the past few years has been the increase in the amount of formal training. All around the country, professional training establishments offer courses of all kinds and at all

prices too. The Royal Yachting Association, in one of its more useful moments, applied itself to the problem of setting syllabuses and standards and the Medway Yachting Association, representing clubs on the Medway, soon took up the task of making sure that training of the appropriate kind was available in the area. It is good to know that our Club was one of the first to start providing formal sail training - at a fraction of the cost of the professional schools. The range of courses available this year is described in a later page in Geraldine Musters's article on training.

For your convenience, we hope to erect within a few weeks a "lollipop" on the Dockyard bank of the river to mark the other end of the start line. Though the official transit will still be the marks by the race box, the new post should prove an asset to those members who have difficulty in seeing right across the river!

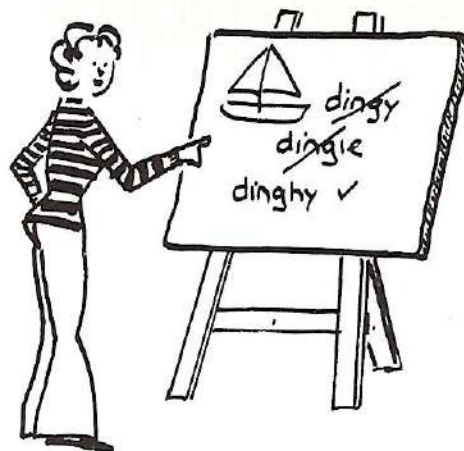
Social events in the next few weeks include evenings for the GP14 and Enterprise fleets and for the Handicap fleet. Other members are of course welcome to come to these occasions. For further details, see "Dates for your diary". You may care to note that we have already made a booking for the 1977 annual dinner which will be held at the "Bull" at Birchwood (Swanley) on Friday 28 October. I hope that gives you enough warning.

Finally, can I point out that we are a bit short of volunteers to act as Chief Duty Officer. May I please appeal to some of the more senior members of the Club to volunteer for some of the vacant dates on the duty list. I will be happy to explain on the telephone about what is involved.

*Leti Brown*

Geraldine Musters tells you about

## SAIL TRAINING



There will be an RYA elementary course in May on the 7th and 8th and on the 14th and 15th (the course takes two full weekends). Anybody interested in taking part should contact Ray Blyth at 27 Beechy Lees Road, Otford, Kent in writing. This applies equally to those members who have spoken to Ray about the course. The cost will be £10 - which includes accommodation on the barge and food.

We are planning a children's RYA elementary course at the club for the week 25th - 29th July. It will be residential so parents who have children who would like to take part must be sure that the young person is able to cope on his or her own for a week. Parents wishing to enter their children for the course should also apply to Ray Blyth as soon as possible, please, so that we can arrange to provide the right number of instructors. The probable cost for the five days will be £12 - including, as before, food and accommodation. Any instructors or competent parents who can help on this course, whether for the whole week or just for a day or two will be very welcome; will they please also get in touch with Ray. We will also need some helpers on the domestic side of things.

For the children's week, we would like to have Mirror dinghies for all instruction so if you don't have one of your own, please see whether you can borrow one for your child for the week.

For more experienced members who want to widen their knowledge and develop their sailing skills, Intermediate and Advanced courses are planned for September. Those who want to do the rescue boat handling section of the advanced course will notice that the sailing programme provides two Saturday afternoons in April for rescue boat training.

In order to carry out our training programme without overburdening the present instructors we would welcome some more members coming forward and qualifying as instructors. The following RYA instructors courses are scheduled in the Medway region:

April 16-17 and 23-24 at the Medway Yacht Club  
June 18-19 and 25-26 at the Royal Engineers Yacht Club  
August 1 - 6 at the Royal Navy Sailing Association  
September 17-18 and 24-25 at Sheppey Yacht Club

There will be a Senior Instructors Course at our club on October 1-2 and 8-9.

Applications for all instructors courses should be made to the Regional RYA Coach: Colin Palmer - , Rainham, Gillingham, Kent.

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## FOR YOUR DIARY

FRIDAY 25 MARCH

Pre-season club cheese and wine evening at Hayes, at 8 pm. (£1)  
Please let Bob McKay know if you intend to go (Maid.)

TUESDAY 29 MARCH

Social evening for GP14 and Enterprise classes at the Rochester Cruising Club, the Esplanade, Rochester at 8 pm. Donald Forbes of Musto and Hyde will be giving a talk on sail tuning.

SUNDAY 3 APRIL

THE START OF THE 1977 SAILING PROGRAMME

THURSDAY APRIL 14

Handicap Fleet social evening in the Buttery Bar of the Black Eagle public House at Polhill (on the A21 north of Sevenoaks) commencing at 8 pm.

# In defence of the irror....

You may recall that in the experimental edition of the Newsletter which appeared at the end of last season, there was an article called "The demise of the Mirror" which was rather critical of the non-racing Mirror owners. The article has produced three quite different responses, which we are printing. The first is by Chris Stevens, the Mirror Class Captain. The second is an extract from a letter written to the Secretary by Roy Hurr, who has recently left the club but still sails a cruiser on the Medway. Thirdly, there is a note by Pat Hewett who takes the opportunity to try to solicit some additional recruits to the handicap fleet.

## MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE SHORE

by Christopher Stevens

We seem to have read rather a lot lately about the decline of the Mirror fleet and yet there will be at least 66 of them in the dinghy park this year - surely nobody believes they're just going to remain on the beach all Summer?

First of all, we are not alone in having a big fleet but a comparatively low racing turnout - for one thing not everyone thinks of racing when they first get a Mirror! For some, just sailing the boat at all is challenge enough. If that's you, don't be put off by the crush on the beach just before the ten-minute gun; it's amazing how quickly it clears after the start and there'll be plenty of room on the water for you. By sailing when there's racing, you can watch other boats to see how things are done; there'll be people at the Club to help you if you need it and other Mirrors around ready to offer advice if you want it!

But Mirrors do race and have a lot of fun doing so, and what's more, contrary to the impression you may have gained the class hasn't been quite unnoticed in the prize lists for Club events, nor have WSC Mirrors failed to keep their end up in matches with Hoo and Thamesmead or at the Medway Regatta. And those who take part in Mirror races are not all very experienced helms by any means. A characteristic of the

class is the number of people who, having tasted success in a Mirror, move on to other classes which hold out temptations of every sort to woo them.

The Mirrors who raced last year know the Class is very much alive and if the rest of you can only get on the water sometimes, we'll soon give the lie to any suggestion of decline. Let's have some real support for our first Open Meeting on July 10th and don't forget there's the Mirror Fleet Day where the competition will be rather less serious.

So, if you haven't raced before, give it a try one day. You don't have to wait for the novices' race in June - get some practice in first! The Mirrors who do race regularly will be only too pleased to have you join them and you'd be surprised how much and how quickly you learn by sailing competitively with other boats. Don't be daunted by the rules; the basic ones are simple enough and don't feel that if you can't get down every Sunday it's not worth entering. A single race is a beginning and if you do get a bit more ambitious, you'll find that none of the Sunday series races is so long that you have to write off all other activities to stand any chance of achieving a place at the end.

# a potterer replies

Dear Peter

..... The article on the "demise" of the Mirror struck home hard with me; because in all the years I have been sailing (including, as you know, some years as the proud owner of a Mirror) I have raced only twice. This in spite of a very great love for sailing and strong agreement with the author's view that racing is the safest way to sail a dinghy. Why then did I confine myself to pottering? The reasons may possibly be of interest to you because they are probably typical.

(i) Crewing problems: racing is possible only if one has a regular crew prepared to give sailing priority and to go out whatever the weather.

(ii) The delights of pottering: believe it or not, the Medway is a fascinating and sometimes quite beautiful river both upstream and down from Cockham reach. I have spoken to several racing enthusiasts and found that they neither knew nor cared about anything other than the position of the buoys! On this basis, a provocative comment (which, of course, I never make) might be that racing would be far better off on a pond; perhaps the delights of Medway sailing are better reserved for potterers?

(iii) Competitive sports - such as dinghy racing - are great fun so long as there is no "needle" in the competition. To some sailors, however, winning matters. I and many others find this attitude uncomfortable and embarrassing. Are we so eccentric, do you think?

Roy Hurr

## THE POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE

Pat Hewett (Graduate 2595)

With the apparent increasing lack of interest in the Mirror dinghy in the Club, at least as far as the percentage **turn-out** in the racing fleet is concerned (out of a fleet last year of 70 boats) it might well be that some owners are interested in another class.

By this, I mean a class which is a trifle more sophisticated, somewhat faster (but no hairier), slightly longer and a class that holds the interest perhaps more than their present boat; all this, if only their attention could be drawn to a few facts. Bear in mind dear "Mirror" owner, that the club has a flourishing Handicap fleet, and that among the other classes, we have the following boats, all suitable as a step "up" from the Mirror and giving good, fast, safe sailing and racing;

NATIONAL GRADUATE:	Portsmouth Yardstick (1976) 103	-	nine in the club
PACER	Portsmouth Yardstick (1976) 107	-	six in the club
MIRACLE	Provisional Yardstick(1976) 104	-	six in the club.

The GRADUATE was designed by Dick Wyche in 1952. It is 12'6" long and has a beam of 4'8". It is a hard chine centre board dinghy carrying 90 square feet of sail. The 19' mast is deck stepped and the complete boat weighs 185lbs. It is made of marine ply or GRP and sail numbers are approaching 2700.

The PACER was designed by Jack Holt in 1969. It has a length of 12'7" and is also 4'8" in beam. It is a multi-chine dinghy with a floor stepped 18'8" mast. It carries 83½ square feet of sail (or 99 square feet with a genoa). Weight is about 160 lbs.

The MIRACLE was designed by Jack Holt as recently as 1975. It is 12'9" long and has a beam of 5'2". It has a multi-chine hull and the floor stepped 20' mast carries 95 square feet of sail. Weight of the Miracle is 150/160 lbs. It is made of marine plywood and in hull shape is a first cousin to the Pacer.

As can be seen, all three boats are in the 12' odd bracket (give or take an inch or two) and all provide in the right weather good, exciting sailing. I do feel that if we could expand our fleets of these classes by virtue of Mirror owners coming over to them, everyone would benefit: - the Handicap fleet by fielding larger racing fleets, and the ex-Mirror men because of a keener application to racing.

I am sure that any owner would be pleased to help the newcomer to the appropriate class in any way.

# COMPETITION RESULT

In the experimental edition of the Newsletter which was published in November, we asked people to submit their ideas for (a) the most apt and original name for a Club magazine and (b) a cover or letterhead design. We received four entries in part (b) which were also entries for part (a) of the competition and one additional entry for part (a). The names, and the people who suggested them were as follows:

COCKHAM MESSENGER	- Andy Inwards		
MEDWAY MAINSHEET	- Ken Hewett	MAINSTREAM	} Bob Skene
MASTHEAD	- Stanley White	The WILSONIAN MAGAZINE	

The entries were assessed by the General Committee at its meeting in January and they decided that Stanley White's entries for both name and design were the best of the bunch. The Committee was, however, slightly disappointed that none of the entries combined the two qualities of aptness and originality to the extent that had been hoped. They therefore considered another suggestion which had been made anonymously (and contrary to popular belief, the Secretary had nothing to do with it) and decided that the newsletter should be called "31½".

Why "31½"? Well, that well known landmark (or should it be river-mark) the barge "WILSONIAN" lies almost equidistant between navigation buoys 31 and 32. You may not like it, but you have to admit that it is apt, and original. Congratulations to Stanley White, who wins a racing flag and a burgee; and many thanks to the three other entrants. The cover for this edition of "31½" was drawn by David Hollingum, who is a commercial artist.

## Speedy transport for the jet age —

This is a picture of a Hovermarine rigid side-wall hovercraft which has been undergoing trials on the Medway in preparation for the possible introduction of a hovercraft service between Strood and Sheerness and possibly Southend. The sudden arrival of a 30 - knot hovercraft could well cause a certain amount of embarrassment on our start line but don't get too worried; there are still a number of problems to resolve before the service gets off the ground. One of these, it seems to your editor, is the small problem of finding people who would want to travel between Strood and Sheerness.



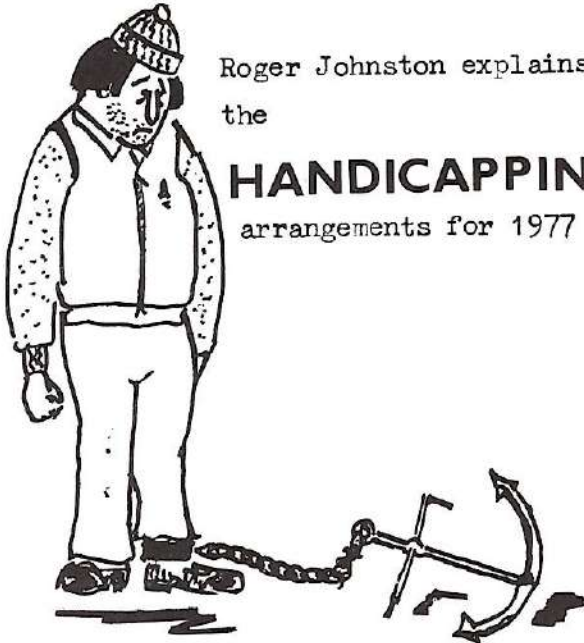
## BUOYS ....

Club members who read their newspapers and yachting magazines will know that the International Association of Lighthouse Authorities has been working to reduce the number of different buoyage systems in use around the world from over thirty to, - well anyway, to something less. The result is not too bad. In future we shall have only two systems, (though one of them is a combination of two existing systems - the Cardinal and Lateral). What does this all mean to us? Well, so far as your editor can see, the BLACK (odd numbered) navigation buoys in the river will soon be painted green, and at night they will have green flashing lights. The Medway Ports Authority hopes to complete the work in the next two or three months.

Roger Johnston explains  
the

## HANDICAPPING

arrangements for 1977



The handicapping system for Handicap Class racing this season will include provision for the adjustment of handicap numbers based on actual performance of types of boats. This is in line with RYA recommendations for operation of the Portsmouth Yardstick Scheme.

To explain how the system will work, a reminder first of the basis of the Portsmouth Yardstick system. The Yardstick numbers, issued each year by the RYA, are divided into three categories. First, Primary Yardsticks are issued for well established classes such as Graduate, Laser, Solo and Wayfarer. These numbers form the foundation of the scheme and, as such, are not normally subject to revision. Secondary Yardsticks are issued for the majority of the remaining classes. These numbers are less well established and are subject to revision as actual experience is built up. Most of the types of boat in the handicap class

not mentioned above are in this category. Finally provisional numbers are issued for new classes where information available to the RYA is limited. Consequently these numbers are more likely to require adjustment as the season progresses.

During the 1977 season, we intend to assess on a weekly basis the actual Yardstick numbers being achieved by each type of Boat in the Secondary and Provisional categories. However, the Yardstick Numbers used for calculation of results will only be changed at the end of the Spring and Summer Points series. This will hopefully avoid unnecessary changes resulting from unrepresentative results, for example during periods of very light or very heavy weather. The Yardstick Numbers in use at any one time will be posted on the class notice board so that all members are fully informed.

Copies of the RYA publication YR2/77, which describes the Portsmouth Yardstick scheme in detail, will be available at a cost of 80p from the club bar.

and the Sailing Secretary (Robin Musters) writes about the **PROGRAMME** for 1977

### Rescue boat and race officer training

Several members have asked to be instructed in these duties and two Saturday afternoons have been set aside, 23 and 30 April. Starting at 2 pm., you can spend half an hour being shown all about "Bluebird", the club rescue boat and its engine and practice manoeuvring her yourself. You can then come up to the Race Box and be put through your paces as Race Officer or Assistant.

### Handicap racing

In addition to the annual adjustment of the Portsmouth Yardsticks, based on returns from clubs all over the country the RYA have this year increased all Yardsticks by 20%. There are two reasons for doing this:

- (a) to keep the very fast boats with very low yardsticks within the Langstone tables (which range from 60 to 190);
- (b) to provide finer graduations, i.e. 20% less of a jump between whole numbers.

New Yardsticks for 1977 are:

Fireball	103	GP 14	119
Lark	112	Solo	122
Laser	114	Miracle	123
420	115	Graduate	124
Wayfarer	116	Pacer	126
Enterprise	118	Mirror	146

Full details in RYA publication YR2/77

### Saturday racing and cruising

Informal handicap races have been arranged on certain Saturday afternoons at the height of the season as an experiment. All classes will race together, starting at 3 pm. If you think that it is a good idea to take advantage of one of those fine Saturdays, come along.

We have also arranged a cruise per month on 18 June, 16 July and 6 August, especially for those not so interested in racing, or who have never explored the creeks and islands of the estuary. The first two will start at Midday, but on 6 August, the tide suggests a 10 am start. Destinations will be decided on the day; victuals should be taken.

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Members considering large orders are asked to let the Club Secretary know so that we can make up joint orders for £100 worth of goods wherever possible.

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## SMALL ADS

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of humour. Apply: Martin Smith,  
Chatham. Tel: Medway

FOR SALE: Quadrant life-jacket with  
zip front suitable for child 6 - 10 stone.  
Good condition, £5. Apply: Tim Bolton  
Meopham. Tel: Meop.

WANTED Mirror mainsail or similar suitable  
for use as a storm sail on an International  
Moth; preferably with a full length bolt  
rope. Tim Bolton,  
Meopham. Telephone Meopham

BABYMINDING: Janet Brewer, of  
Plain Road, Marden, Kent (Telephone:  
Maidstone ) would be interested  
to hear from any other mother willing to  
engage in some reciprocal childminding  
on Sundays

WANTED Good editorial material for a  
promising new magazine. Features, cartoons,  
photographs etc. for the next edition of  
31½ should reach the editor by 1st May 1977.

FOR SALE MIRACLE dinghy No 329. Factory  
built with extras; launching trolley, cover,  
roof rack; buoyancy aids and wet suit: £400  
E.Glover Frindsbury, Rochester