



# 31½/2

## THE WILSONIAN SAILING CLUB MAGAZINE

Number 3

August 1977

WILSONIAN SAILING CLUB  
HOO, nr ROCHESTER KENT

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"31½" is the newsletter of the Wilsonian Sailing Club. It is called "31½" because the Club headquarters, the barge "WILSONIAN" is moored in the River Medway almost exactly halfway between fairway navigation buoys 31 and 32

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## FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

The unique feature about our Club is without doubt the barge "WILSONIAN" which has served us well since she was purchased as the barge "TUNA" and converted by the Club's founder and benefactor some seventeen years ago. But boats do not last for ever and the repairs needed on her last overhaul have reminded us that in due course we shall need to consider her future. In addition, she now provides the only headquarters for a Club which is considerably larger than that which she was intended to serve. So should she be replaced? Or should we be thinking of developing the Club on the shore? To answer these questions, and others, your Committee appointed, some months ago, a Future Development Sub-Committee, and the sub-committee's report has just been received. The sub-committee considered a number of options, including rebuilding the facilities on the existing barge, buying a second barge, moving elsewhere on the river or amalgamation with another Club, but concluded that the most desirable options were to replace "WILSONIAN" with another, larger, vessel or to make provision for a shore based Clubhouse. But do we need either? Overnight use of the barge at weekends has fallen to the point where it is used by some 2% of the potential users. That means that 360 or so subscription paying members are subsidising the weekends of the dozen or so regulars. And could we support a shore based clubhouse without a large "social" membership? Why not air your views in "31½" before the Committee spends your money.

At the time of going to press there were just four Mirror spaces and two other spaces left in the dinghy park. If any member will not be using his space for any reason it would be helpful if Pat Hewett could be told so that the space can be put to good use. A list will be put up on the race box for those taking their boats on holiday who are willing to permit others to make temporary use of their boat spaces during their absence.

In the last edition, I mentioned that Bob McKay was likely to be moving and invited volunteers to take over his duties as House Secretary. I am sorry to say that nobody seems to want to become House Secretary, and that Bob McKay has already taken up his new job in Portsmouth. We will muddle along as best we can, but if the beer runs out, or there's no paper in the loo, the first complainant will be assumed to be applying for the House Secretary's job.

There has also been a remarkable absence of volunteers for the Chief Duty Officer duties mentioned in the last edition. But it's not too late. If you can offer your services for one of the vacant dates: (24/25 September and every weekend from then until the end of the season) I shall be pleased to hear from you.

The Sailing Secretary has asked me to issue a reminder about the hazards of buying unmeasured boats. If there is a certificate, make sure it is in the name of the person selling the boat; if not, check with the Class Association before completing the purchase. If there is no certificate, make the purchase conditional upon a certificate being granted. Full details of how to obtain a valid certificate for an Enterprise dinghy are on the Enterprise Class noticeboard on the barge - by kind permission of the Association Yearbook.

Mr Edward Brice, who lives in Hoo Lodge, has asked us to ask members to drive slowly over the track around Hoo Lodge. Fast moving vehicles tend to throw stones from the track on to the grass and this is causing damage to Mr Brice's lawnmower.

May I please remind you that the Club's Annual Dinner and Dance will be held at the Bull Hotel, Birchwood, Swanley on Friday 28 October 1977. I realise that the date is almost three months away, but if you do not put a mark in your diaries now, you may have made other arrangements by the time the next edition of "31 $\frac{1}{2}$ " comes out in October.

Colin Lemox, Mirror Class Measurer, has changed his address. He is now at: 124 Markfield, Courtwood Lane, Addington Surrey; telephone: 01-651-1956. Please amend page 4 (pink) of the handbook.

*Helis Barton*

## THE CABIN YACHT STORES

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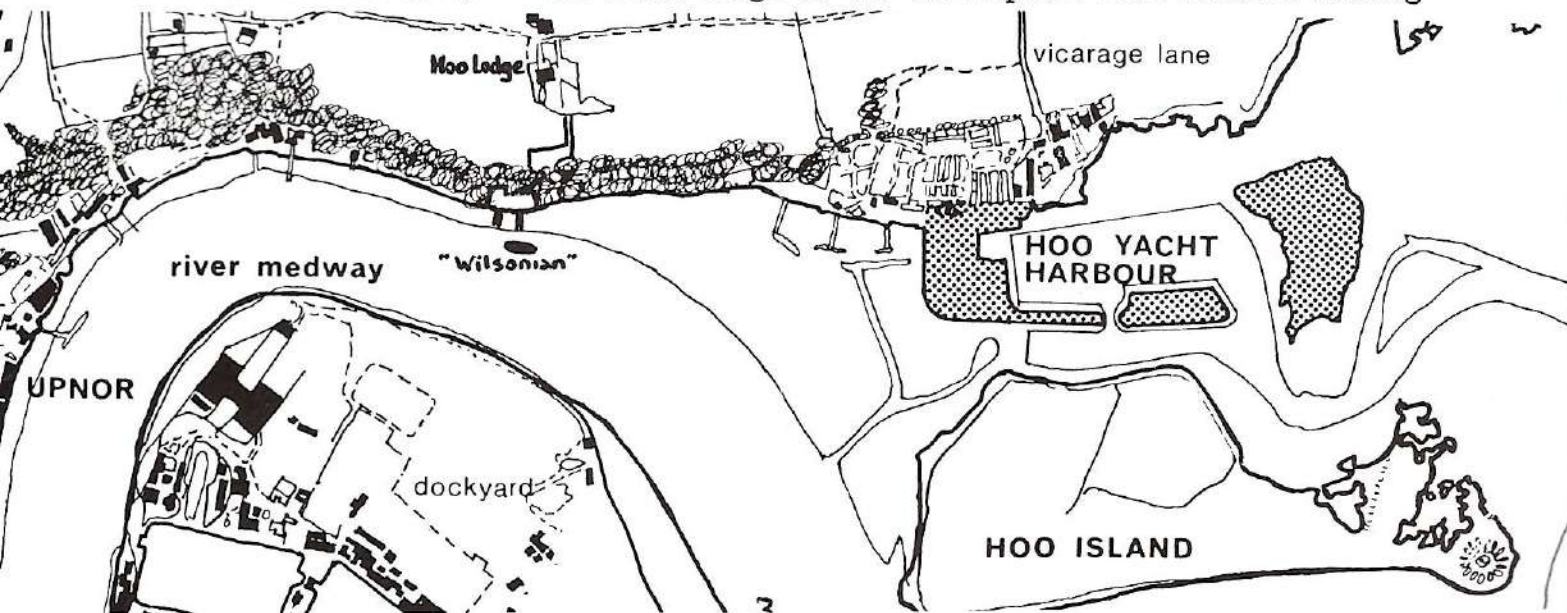
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# THE NEW HOO YACHT HARBOUR

The character of the Medway as a relatively uncrowded river for amateur sailing could well be changed if ambitious plans for a new yacht harbour at Hoo succeed. The harbour, for which outline planning permission has already been granted, and for the first stage of which detailed planning permission has also been obtained, will be a phased development with an ultimate capacity of 2000 pontoon berths. The spectre of 2000 extra boats on the river conjures up visions of the Medway as a kind of marine equivalent of Hyde Park Corner, with scarcely room to sail a straight course, yet alone tack against an adverse tidal stream. But would it be so bad? And would all those extra boats make very much difference? Would we derive any benefit from the facilities that the yacht harbour would provide? Will it affect our membership figures or the areas in which we can sail? The answers to many questions such as these can only be speculation at the moment but the plans are sufficiently well advanced for us to hazard some guesses. So let us first look in some detail at what is proposed.

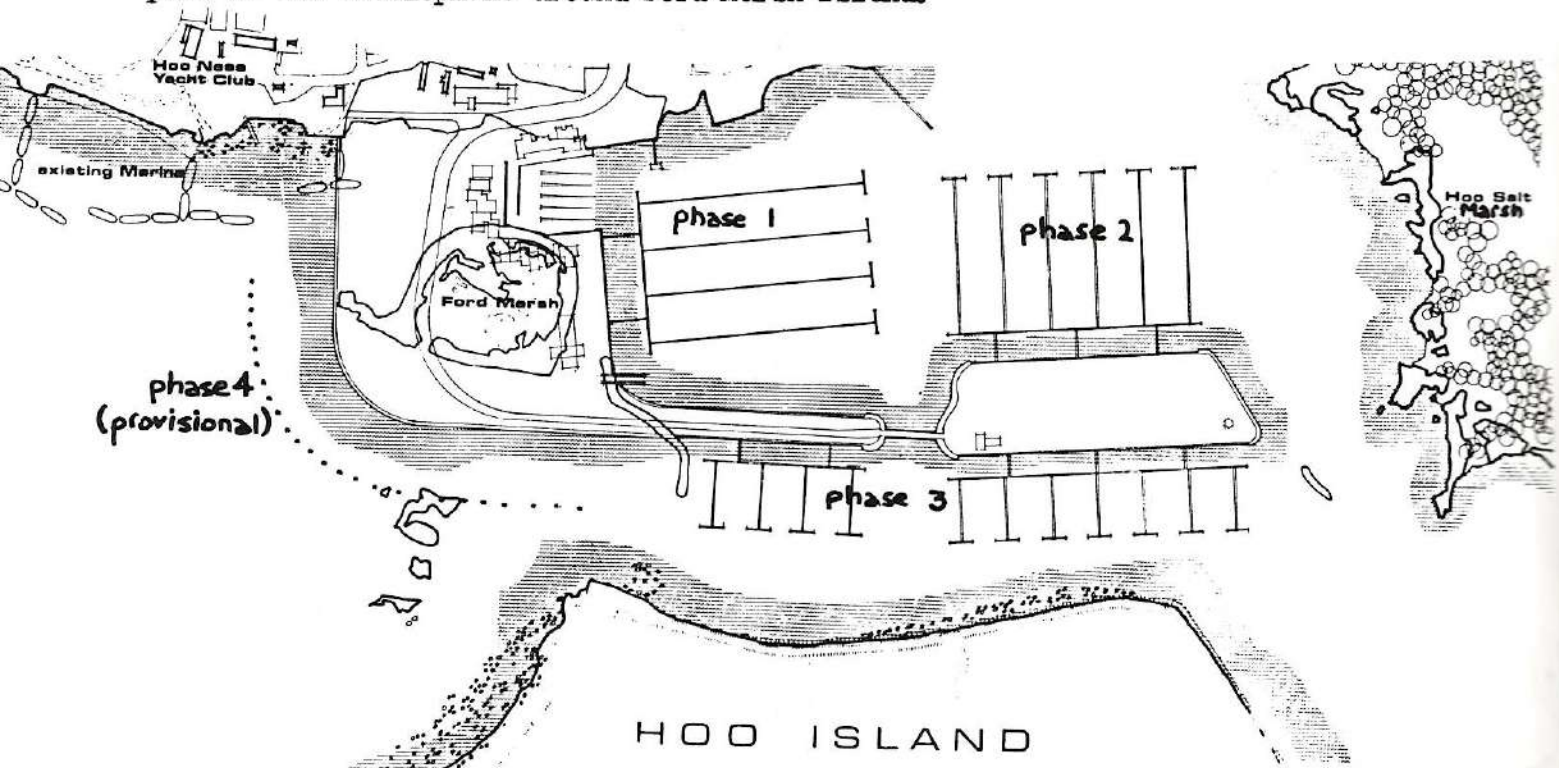
The Hoo yacht harbour will be constructed by the Hoo Marina Company. It has to be accepted that nobody would embark on a development of this kind unless there was a prospect of profit in the long term. Equally you would not expect the enterprise to make a profit unless it provided the kind of facilities which potential marina users would be willing to pay for. So it is reassuring to find that the consortium behind the company contains a useful mixture of yachtsmen, businessmen and yachtsmen/businessmen. They include Robin Knox Johnston, Robin Aisher, Walter Brice and John Chiswell. Knox Johnston is a master mariner famed for his solo global circumnavigation in "Suhaili"; Aisher is a Director in the Marley plastics group and apart from his other business interests was Chairman and Team Manager of the Olympic Yachting Committee. Brice is a local farmer, businessman and former High Sheriff of the County who is also a member of two local sailing clubs and owner of "Spinaway C", a 78 year old Thames barge now used as a barge yacht, but which takes part in barge races, and indeed sometimes wins them. Chiswell is Managing Director of a group of companies associated with Penton Hook Marina and was a founder member of the National Yacht Harbour Association. Between them, there should be no shortage of expertise, business acumen and interest in preserving a pleasant local environment.

The new harbour will be constructed in Hoo Creek, just downstream of the existing marina. The diagram below shows its position in relation to the Wilsonian SC. The 2000 berths will each provide 2 metres of water at low tide, and the material dredged to provide the depth will be pumped to bunds on the Eastern end of the site to form a new island which will eventually be landscaped and provide shelter from the seaward side. The first stage of the development will involve filling



in part of Hoo Creek between the shore and the small mud patch known as Ford Marsh Island and then extending this peninsula by building a narrow isthmus to the east. The sheltered basin thus formed will provide the first 480 berths. The second phase will involve the construction of a second, narrow island between the new eastern island and the isthmus and a further 480 berths on pontoons running to the north. The third phase will provide a similar number of berths in the channel between the new isthmus and island and Hoo Island (more about this later). The fourth phase is somewhat further ahead and is dependent upon the successful completion of studies on the feasibility of providing a further 600 berths to the south-west of Ford Marsh island, that is to say between the new yacht harbour and WSC.

Apart from the berths, which like most modern marina berths would have mains electricity and water points, the plans promise a wide range of facilities amounting, in effect, to a small village, with chandlers, provisions shops, pub, restaurant, launderette, and a seamanship school. The small square area in the top left corner of the basin to be constructed in phase one is a "hard" and launching ramp. This will permit the launching of small boats at any stage of the tide - a facility not available at present on our bank of the river and provide mooring for fishing vessels. This will be the focal point of the marina. Car parking will be provided for 2000 cars and the parking space will be available in the winter as hard standing for boats brought ashore. There will be a boat lift. A new bypass road is envisaged which would take traffic round the north and east of Hoo village and this route would probably also be used by the lorries bringing in the 33,000 cubic metres of material that will be needed to construct the first part of the development around Ford Marsh Island.



So how will it affect us? Well, it seems clear from the large diagram above that the distance between the phase three berths and Hoo Island will restrict the use of Hoo Creek for navigation. Although space will be left, the deep water access to the yacht harbour will be from the east. Shallow boats will be able to use the west entrance at high tide, as they do now, but the narrow channel would seem to restrict its use for sailing boats to those occasions when the wind is abeam or abaft the mast. Tacking in this space would not be on. The facilities will be useful for us. Having chandlers, restaurants and bars within easy reach of the club could even make the club more attractive. But what about all those boats? Suppose they all decided to sail at once. Never fear. If experience with other marinas is any guide, most of them would spend most of the time tied up.

A recent article in "New Society" suggested that in one South Coast marina, about half the boats only put out once in the course of a year, and many did not go out at all. Would we lose members? Probably not. Marinas are not for dinghy sailors. The existence of a public launching ramp might prove attractive for those who want to trail and launch, but this is hardly a viable alternative for the man or woman who wants to participate in club activities and racing. It might affect our neighbours. There must be a number of non-racing cruiser owners on moorings upstream and downstream of the barge and on the other side of the river for whom the prospect of a berth accessible without the need for a pulling dinghy would be attractive - if they can afford it. Marinas are not cheap. Even now the cost of a year's dinghy park space at WSC would scarcely buy you two nights in a marina in many parts of the South of England for a medium sized yacht. For those who prefer to mix slight discomfort or inconvenience with cheaper facilities, the existing trots will stay, and so will the existing Hoo Marina - which dries out at low tide. If it catches on, therefore, (and there seem to be few marinas which have not - and this one will be nearer to London than many) it is likely to attract richer non-sailing sailors. The majority of the boats which actually put out will join the river near the power station and will hardly affect club racing if they travel downstream. The Medway is devoid of many facilities for sailors. Let us welcome the project for its advantages. Let us hope that the disadvantages will not affect us too greatly.

Acknowledgements to Mr Andrew Brice of Marina Services Ltd and the Hoo Marina Company for providing the information on which this article is based.

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## RNLI BRANCH NEWS

Pete Matten

Some of you will be aware that the Royal National Lifeboat Institution have a 44 foot Waverly Class lifeboat at Sheerness, together with an "Atlantic 21" inshore craft. This epistle is not meant to introduce the hardware; it is designed to introduce members of the WSC to the fact that we have our very own RNLI branch, called the Estuaries Branch.

This small section of the RNLI looks after the area from Higham to Allhallows and is extremely active in its fund-raising activities. Functions range from Barn dances to Darts matches and last year raised over £2000 for the institution. In comparison with the cost of a new lifeboat (£100,000 to £200,000 each) and the annual upkeep costs, the £2000 is only a drop in the ocean.

The backbone of the Branch is provided by Dick and Barbara Andrews, of Brompton Farm Road, Strood, who are Chairman and Secretary respectively and keep the other 13 members of the Committee in line. All the Branch's functions are held in the Medway peninsula area, in various halls as well as in the headquarters of the Allhallows and Medway Yacht Clubs. We know that the WSC cannot offer similar facilities, nevertheless it would be nice to see a few more WSC members at our "do's" this year. Most of the functions require ticket entry and these can be purchased by telephoning one of the numbers below. Our motto is "Value for Money" and, believe me, that is what you get - in addition to having a good evening supporting a worthwhile cause.

A list of the functions will be placed on the barge noticeboard. If you would like more details of our 1977/78 programme, or have any "constructive" suggestions please leave your mark at the bottom of the list and I will contact you. I look forward to seeing a lot of you this year as supporters of the RNLI, rather than as reasons for its existence. Tickets for the following events can be obtained by ringing Medway 251207 or Medway 77140:

Grand Ball at H.M.S. PEMBROKE, Chatham - September 23rd  
Halloween Dance at Allhallows Yacht Club - October 29th

# TRAINING

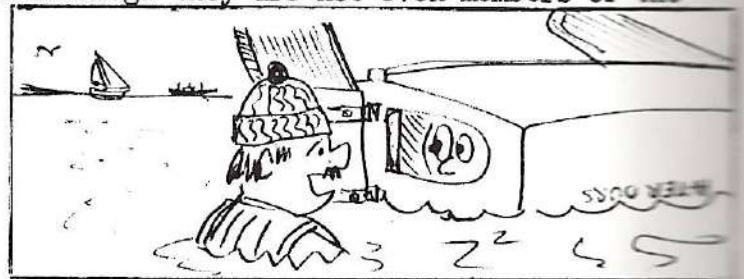
Ray Blyth reflects on the elementary training course for children held at the Club from 25 to 30 July

I am writing these notes having had a week to recover from what was an eventful, and on reflection, enjoyable course. Unfortunately I was to miss the first two days (Ed: see note below) though I was able to spend the evenings and mornings on board. We started the course with a possible 19 children, but measles and a broken arm reduced that to 17 and when I returned to the barge at 8 pm on the first day I was greeted by 17 very lively kids and some very weary instructors. We had a fire drill (all the kids mustered on deck in about 20 seconds wearing lifejackets and without serious injury to the instructors) then we persuaded them to go to bed.

I was awoken the next morning at 5.45 am by what seemed to be an attack from the whole Sioux nation. I did not venture out of my cabin (fear is a terrible thing). Lesley Molyneux tried in vain to stem the uprising but had to beat a retreat: the kids were awake. The following night unspeakable horrors were promised if they got up so early again. This seemed to do the trick, but I did have to encourage instructor Ron Whitney out of his cabin on the next morning as I seemed to have frightened him more than the children.

The recreational events were very successful; a trip to Upnor Castle, a bonfire and barbeque, and a treasure hunt (organised by Peter Goodchild). We also had a swimming race with all the pupils in sailing gear. The teaching programme went very well considering the age range (8 - 16) and I am sure that within the group there will be some excellent sailors. My thanks to Keith Lennox, Tim Bolton and David Blyth for their very good rescue boat work, to Helen Blyth for organising the catering and to all the ladies who worked so hard in the kitchen. Special thanks to Geraldine Musters for organising the course and to all the instructors and helpers, particularly Suzanne Allen and Ron Whitney who gave their time although they are not even members of the Club.

We all learned a lot from this course. I will forever know my transom-flaps as "panic-flaps" which is what they were called by one pupil who thought that their primary purpose was to permit the helm to talk to his crew when the boat was inverted.



I think that most of the children enjoyed the course and some of the younger ones have already said that they want to come again next year, even the not-so-terrible twins who think I am a slave driver. So all you instructors and potential helpers had better start your keep fit exercises.....

## EDITORS NOTE

Ray Blyth's modest reference to his absence from the course for the first two days requires an explanation. He and Hal Marshal have been teaching blind children to sail at Dalton House School, near Sevenoaks. The BBC programme "Nationwide" recently built a "Miracle" dinghy and having used it in the programme offered it to a worthwhile organisation to be suggested by viewers. Ray applied on behalf of the school and his suggestion was accepted. The boat was handed over by the Duke of Edinburgh and Ray's two days were spent being filmed in the boat with some of his pupils after the presentation. The programme was shown on 29 July.

Well done Ray and Hal.

## MIRACLES

And talking of Miracles..... we hear that Brian Matthews achieved fourth place in the 1977 "Miracle" Nationals at Eastbourne. Congratulations, Brian. If you have some time to spare, perhaps you would come and show me why your Miracle goes faster than the Editor's Fireball!

# RACING AND FLEET NEWS

## SOUTH KENT RACE

Robin Musters

The morning of Sunday 26 June was one of the finest for many a day and the weathermen promised us force 3-4 from the Northwest. The race date is carefully selected so that with lightish winds you should catch the ebb down the river and the flood back. This year low water was at 1412 at the South Kent Buoy, which (for those who have not yet found it) is a mile this side of Sheerness.

Forty boats of all classes started at 1100 with a good force three straight up their transoms. A few boats were in trouble straightaway: David Musters's top mast section broke, dramatically reefing his new Laser sail. The other Laser was among those who started on Starboard tack and later gybed back on to Port to establish a lead by the corner of Hoo Island. Reaching along the Hoo Island shore gave the faster boats a chance to pull out. Past Folly Point they got their wind clear. Blowing almost directly against the ebb between the forts it built up a nasty chop, but from here it was almost a continuous plane to the South Kent Buoy, which the leading Laser reached at about 1215. Peter Bolton, who was lying second, tipped over in anticipation of rounding and sailed past the mark under centreboard! Once round the leaders were relieved to find the wind was not dead ahead and they eased off a little to get out of the still powerful ebb tide. It was left to the Johnstons in "Gullfoss" (Marauder) and Mark Goodchild leading the Enterprises in "Goldie Three" to harden up tight, slightly lee bowing the tide to make Sharp Ness in one tack on the way back. Ray Blyth was leading the GP 14's in "After Ours" and not far behind Brian and Daryl Matthews in "Eggbeta" (Miracle) were revelling in the fresh conditions. Two Fireballs were first home: Tony Mason and Alan Wilkinson in "Gemini II" just a second ahead of Paul and Kenneth Heckel in "Promiscuous". They were followed by the Marauder, two Larks two seconds apart, the two leading Enterprises and then "Eggbeta" who won the South Kent Cup on corrected time.

### RESULTS

- 1 -EGGBETA (Miracle) Brian and Daryl Matthews
- 2 -BOTOMIKE (Enterprise) Michael Blake
- 3 -GOLDIE THREE (Enterprise) Mark Goodchild

## MIRRORS

by Christopher Stevens

The season has seen a very loyal and consistent turn-out of Mirror "regulars" but it's good to see that they are now being joined by some we haven't seen racing so often before. Bigger turn-outs mean more fun for everyone and even if you feel you are unlikely to be at the front of the fleet, you'll certainly find others in the same position to match your skill against. Since the last issue of "31½" the Spring Points series has been decided: 1st - Tavi Too (C. Stevens and Mark Bew); 2nd - Rondo (Ray and Molly Fryatt); 3rd - Rollocks (Colin and Keith Lennox). 9 boats took part. We have also raced at Hoo for the Annual Bounty Trophy. Seven boats turned out on a cold and blowy morning and claimed 5 of the first 6 places in the morning race which was sailed over a long and gruelling course. Conditions in the afternoon were if anything even more unpleasant and our team suffered from retirements due to the cold and to capsize. Rollocks went on to finish first and at the end of the day we had an overall lead over the Hoo Ness Yacht Club. The return match is at WSC in the autumn. Some 25 boats took part in our Open meeting on July 10th; a useful number, but not high when we consider that it included visitors and there are nearly seventy Mirrors in the Club. A fuller report of the open meeting and of the Mirror Fleet Day will be written for the next edition. Don't forget that there is still opportunity for you to make your mark in the Summer Points series, or the Autumn Cup as well as in the programme of Autumn racing to follow.

# JUBILEE REGATTA

reported by Robin Musters

The highlight of what must be the coldest June on record was our Jubilee Regatta. When we planned this last Autumn, we little thought just how many other Jubilee festivities there would be, nor that such a weekend in June would be so cold and blustery. Don't get the impression that the Regatta was a non-event: the 83 members who took part got some absolutely first-class sailing. It started with a steady force 4 - 5 on the Sunday and by the time it came to the Novelty race (admirably devised by the Goodchild family) on the Monday afternoon, it was blowing Force 7 from the South. Half the competitors went out with reduced sail, while others elected to "walk" the course. Those who went afloat with their soggy question paper seemed to have the edge, but at least one of the "walkers" got a prize. Sixty members were present at the Jubilee supper on the barge that evening. On the final day the wind moderated to Force 5 again to give brisk racing and get everyone back in quick time for the prizegiving. As well as pottery prizes, trophy winners and their crews received plaques specially engraved for the occasion by Roy Court.

## RESULTS

<u>Enterprise</u>		<u>Handicap</u>		
1	GOLDIE THREE	Mark Goodchild	I. A. B. M.	Sam Brookes
2	MICHAELANGELO	Michael Adkins	MORE FUN	Robin Musters
3	MYSTERY TRIP	Gordon Belcher	GULLFOSS	Roger Johnston

<u>GP 14</u>		<u>Mirror</u>		
1	AFTER OURS	Ray Blyth	TAVI TOO	Christopher Stevens
2	BIN	Mike Doherty	MOJAC	Charles Clement
3	MOVE IT	Roger Ransley	RONDO	Ray Fryatt

## GP 14 jottings

Richard Jordan

Our team racing event with the SEGAS Sailing Club was very successful. This involved twelve boats, six from each club. Spinnakers were not allowed. The weather was changeable, not to say a bit wild at times. The event was sailed from the SEGAS club at Gillingham where the organisation and hospitality were superb. I have asked whether they would be interested in making it a twice yearly event, one match at each club, for a perpetual trophy and we await their answer with interest.

We now have a fleet of 39 boats, but sad to say, we cannot muster more than ten for any one race, mostly less than that. Perhaps somebody could come up with a bright idea as to how the situation could be improved. On August 20/21 we are holding our GP open meeting. It is already clear that we can expect entries from some other clubs. But it is essential that our own fleet supports the event fully with as many boats sailing as possible - even for the one day. For events of this kind if you want a crew or a helm or if you are willing to lend your boat to another member, please get in touch with me or Mike Doherty.

On July 17th we were hosts to the Hampton Sailing Club in a team match in the series for the Dunhill trophy. The boats were all kindly loaned by club members. An excellent day was had by all and the result was a win by Hampton by quite a small margin. Many thanks to Robin Musters who organised the event and acted as Race Officer, and to Helen, Gill and June for providing the eats.



# Medway Yachting Association

A report on the Medway Regatta  
held on 21-24 July 1977

Mixed weather spoilt what would otherwise have been a superb Medway Regatta this year, though maybe we were expecting too much after the sun of the last two seasons. For those of you who do not know, the Medway Regatta is organised by the Medway Yachting Association, the local association of sailing and other water sports clubs on the tidal part of the River Medway. It is a superb piece of organisation with races for dinghies, keel boats and cruisers starting at Upnor, Gillingham and Queenborough over four days, - this year from 21 to 24 July. The final race on Sunday afternoon is not part of the Regatta series, but is in aid of the RNLI. The Regatta is accompanied by a full social programme at various spots on the river, including discos, Tramps' suppers, Candlelight suppers, Jazz nights, a sunset ceremony at Upnor Castle, and this year on the Friday evening a spectacular firework display from a pontoon on the river opposite the Medway Yacht Club. In previous years, there has been an "at home" on the barge *Wilsonian*, but in view of the variety of other events we did no entertaining this year. The barge was as usual the headquarters for the large rescue boat fleet, however, and generous extensions to the normal opening hours ensured that thirsty sailors and rescue boat crews were able to slake their thirsts without the threat of a call of "Time".

But, you may well ask, what about the sailing? It is pleasing to report that the many *Wilsonian* members who took part in the Regatta did quite well, and some did very well indeed. David Scott and his wife Pat managed to win the *Enterprise* series, and Chris Stevens the *Mirror* trophy, crewed by Mark Bew, who gallantly made way for his father Barry in the last race when the extra weight gave Chris the edge in the windy conditions over his nearest rival.

The outstanding event in the Handicap classes was that of Graham Newton and D Levey in their *Pacer "Stewball"* who won the *Pacer* series. Indeed the Regatta provides one of the few opportunities for members of the Club Handicap fleet to pit their wits and skills in class racing instead of against a mixed bag of boats in club events. This proved a bit demoralising for the *Wilsonian Fireballs*, the best of which, sailed by Tony Mason and Alan Wilkinson could only manage eighth position overall. The four WSC Graduates put up good performances with several individual seconds and thirds. Incidentally there is no truth in the rumour that Roly Spurgeon and Peter Goodchild won the prizes for the best tramps costumes at the tramps' supper by going in their everyday clothes.

## COMING EVENTS

The Junior Handicap is after the holidays on 4 September; helms must be under 18 on the day, but crews can be any age. The final training sessions for the year are on the weekends of 10/11 and 16/17 September. If you are interested in intermediate or advanced training, get in touch with Ray Blyth (Oxford 3291) for details. Our next long distance race for the Leigh Trophy is on Sunday 18 September, and for those of you who prefer a really long race, that is also the day of the Medway Yacht Club's Medway Marathon Pursuit race - entry forms by the race box notice board.

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Members are cordially invited to write to the Editor to air their views in "31½" or to provide articles of interest to Club Members about holidays, sailing hints, or the best places to eat, buy chandlery and so on. Closing date for the next edition-  
30 September 1977.

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FOR SALE Wet suit top, new, made from a kit (Aquaequipment) but unused. 32" chest, height 4'11" - 5'3" - Peter Bolton (Meopham 813029)

Small ads are free to members. Just send your copy (for sale, wanted, swops etc) to the Secretary. Last date for ads for the next edition - 30 Sep.

CREW WANTED for "Snipe" dinghy. Please contact Ian Dewey at 92 The Drove Way, Istead Rise, Northfleet, Kent. Telephone Southfleet 3721