

The Silhouette Owner

No. 435 December 2002



*The Journal of
The Silhouette Owners International Association
The Association for Silhouettes and Cruisers*

The Silhouette Owners International Association

Association Officers

President

Neville Povey OBE
01372 452719

Vice Presidents

Frank Bartlett
0151 327 8246

Tom Eaves
01822 853431

Peter Derry
01248 410705

Mary Jones
020 8641 2063

Flag Officers

Commodore

Frank Haddon
01753 663371

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Regional Groups

South West Group

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01752 702535

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020 8641 2063

East Midlands Group

Sec. John Clawson
01636 612122

Anglia Group

Sec. Elizabeth Letzer
01263 768804

North West Group

Sec. Ken Hooson
0161 7480785

Hon. Secretary

Barbara Heald
18 Bitterne Way
Lymington
Hampshire SO41 3PB
01590 673606

Hon. Editor

Mark Juggins
4 Upr St. Helens Rd
Hedge End
Southampton
02380 402112

Hon. Tech Adviser

A Tucker
15 Wrensfield
Boxmoor
Hemel Hempstead
01442 253775

Committee Members

Charles Bissaker 01384 292597
David Milner 01636 78331
Mike Bolton 01752 778836

Denis Heald 01590 673606
Anthony Eden 0115 989 2199
Ken Hooson 0161 7480785
Denis Heald

Sail Registrar

Internet Address www.soia.org.uk

E-mail address info@soia.org.uk

Editors email (Temporary)

johnclawson@compuserve.com

Librarian

Clive Cummings
125 Manor Lane
Sunbury Mdx TW16JP
01932 886524

Commodores Review



As I said in my last ramblings I was not expecting to be afloat until early next year.
Well! Surprise, surprise. We floated last Friday - and it was not a cruise to the Med. It was a burst pipe under the floorboards upstairs and we were soon afloat downstairs.

Ho Hum, Water, water everywhere and not a drop to drink. (It was now time to broach the Bonded booze) Up bottom boards and pump out the bilges, and the first mates' not a happy bunny as we can't get the decorating done until after Christmas.

Congratulations to John Clawson for the grand job he is doing with our magazine. Well done John! Re. The scorch marks! Slow down John you're moving too fast for a man of your age!

A Merry Christmas and a healthy and happy new year to you all.

Our cover picture shows S111 185 Antares with Denis Heald rounding the Mewstone on a passage to the River Yealm (*I think - Ed*)

A minute with the Secretary



For the Ladies.....

We are the lucky few. Not for us the nervous racking of brains to find a suitable present for a husband; nor need we fear the appalled silence, or gulp, before pretended enthusiasm when we give an unwisely chosen tie! We can be sure that husbands will receive with rapture anything that is in any way connected with the passion of their lives, their boats. If I am not too late - here are a few suggestions for this year's Christmas, to suit all pockets, large or small!

1. A Yachting World diary - will keep any husband happy for the next twelve months as it is packed with useful information.
2. Reed's Almanac - if you can afford it.
3. Annual Subscription for any Yachting Magazine. He will be certain to insist on having these in any case, so it is a wise economy of family money, after all you might have bought him something utterly useless!
4. Toweling Scarf - he may look askance at this but will welcome it on a wet passage.

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Letters to the Editor - Letters to the Editor - Letters to the Editor

Dear Ed,

May I add my two-pennorth as they used to say in the North of England on the matter commented on by John Greengrass. John Greengrass letter comes - as his writings always do - like a breath of fresh air on the continuing saga of racing rules. When we first sailed in the rally my son and I knew nothing of the rules apart from start and finish lines. This meant we enjoyed friendly racing (or so we thought) and only once did we glance off another craft during all our races. Then, after one race, we were told by a committee member who shall be nameless, that we must protest as we lost a race through someone else not obeying the race rules. I forget whether we did or not but my son told me only last week, "That is when I lost all interest in racing. The whole point for him was "friendliness and fun". Winning was great, but like disaster, one should treat those two impostors just the same! When the Silhouette becomes an Olympic class, I for one would learn the rules backwards, until then as they say in Australia - lighten up man.

Regards to Silhouetter's everywhere. **Keith Rymer.**

Dear Ed

I was given a lovely wash in warm soapy water when I got home from Plymouth, leathered off, all the loose boards taken out and my bilges cleaned and dried - gosh, I felt better. All that nasty salt can do harm to a girl's complexion, you know. But I ramble on, how about you my dears? Dumped in a corner somewhere? Left until next time you're required to take "master" out. And what about that engine? Nasty noisy smelly thing really; it's only needed to get "them" back for opening time; we are perfectly capable of getting back in our own time, aren't we? Still, I suppose it deserves some care really; at least a wash out to get rid of the salt and a wipe around the ornaments.

Now, about Plymouth. What about your monkey on the stick/ Did he/she do their homework property, did they find out about the buoy's positions or just hope you weren't first so that they could follow someone else - and what about that start line - well I ask you, what a fiasco. I heard tell that some of "them" only took you as an excuse so "they" could attend the super social events. All we got was the pleasure of sitting in cold salt water all night. Ah well, such is life.

In a way I suppose I'm fortunate really. I've been put away for the winter in a nice dry shed and my beds and sails taken indoors. I imagine quite a number of you still have work to do. I don't think there are any more rallies but I suppose there's weekend sailing when the weather's nice. O, that's all for now. Best wishes for the winter. I look forward to meeting you all again next spring. **Ann Esstoo**

Interesting Breaks from Silhouetting.... by John Greengrass

In Brixham, Trinity Sailing run three old Sailing trawlers dating from 1895 for two day to seven day cruises. The smallest, the **Golden Vanity**, at 53 feet, takes up to seven passengers plus crew, the largest the **Leader** at 105 feet loa.. is the oldest dating from 1895 and taking twelve passengers.

Picture shows
the

Leader.



The sailing grounds depend upon time and the weather, but short cruises would be along the Devon coast, the longer trips from the Scillies to the Baltic. Cost of course varies, as do the passengers.

I've had the pleasure of cruises on both of these boats, the **Golden Vanity** carrying only four of us in doubtful weather from Brixham to Mevagissey calling in several places en-route and sailing around the Eddystone Lighthouse.

In the **Leader** we sailed via Alderney, Sark and Guernsey to St Malo. Friends of mine sailed to the Scillies in the **Provident** – 95 feet loa

The point with these cruises is that most people have never sailed before. With my cruise in the **Leader** I enjoyed the company of a very friendly mixed group consisting of a senior Scotland Yard fellow, an “old lag” three teachers, an I.T. specialist, a young lady doctor (and there's a story for the memory), a neurotic divorcee and two 12 year olds. You can join in “sweating and tailing” and follow the navigation or sit on the deck with a good book.

Messing was around a large square table in the saloon – seventeen places round. Plenty of good plain food, wine extra from the ships locker. One superb memory for me was sharing the wheel going through the *Swinge* off Alderney at about 14 knts. The smaller **Golden Vanity** was more basic e.g. no showers and more joining in with the chores; I didn't miss the hairdryer.

However for all that it was still a real memory trip that will last for years. Even special diets are catered for and on the **Leader** or **Provident**, the bunks are nearly three feet wide and six foot six inches long. In all a super holiday, note ladies sleep in the starboard section and men in the portside. If anybody would like a brochure or more information telephone Trinity sailing in Brixham on 01803 883355.

As a final comment you'll make friends. I met a Corribee sailor from Oxford named Tony. He comes down to Plymouth once or twice a year for a few days sailing in my boat **Tuppence**. This has a good side and an obverse flip to the coin. He loves cooking, food presentation and believe it or not washing up. I sail the boat etc.

Where it goes wrong is he's an obsessive washer up from a hard water area. Everything is roughly, then thoroughly washed and thoroughly rinsed. My water tank, around fifteen gallons, doesn't last more than couple of days. He will use half a cupful of Fairy Liquid in the small “cruiser” sink, the result - bubbles from the floor, no the bilges, to the cabin top. The cutlery drawer gets soaked, cushions wet and it takes ages to remove the bubbles; yet he never remembers it the next time we go out. Will there be a fourth time I ask myself, even for the pleasure of his company.

Anyway as a means of widening your experience this is the sort of break I would recommend.

Extract From: The wind Calls The Tune.

Sent in by Keith Rymer (I don't know the authors name. Ed)

We were lying on our bunks below trying to decide on our course of action. The wind seemed, if anything, to have increased and had backed a little to the south-west. The seas now tumbled more heavily and heaped up in stupendous confusion. When we looked out of the little portholes, we saw only the blue sky above or a foaming valley stretching away below us, as we pitched for a moment across the backbone of some huge monster of sea. But there was nothing we could do so we turned back to continue a shouted conversation above the noise.

Suddenly, in a weird hush, we heard a slight warning hiss high above the boat. The cabin darkened. The sequence of events during the next few moments will for ever remain unknown to us. We remember only a fantastic roar and a deafening, stunning bang. Charles was hurled out of his bunk on the port side into the cabin roof opposite, together with the radio and a mass of loose clothing, cans, and bedding.

Everything went dark as night, and water seemed to fill the cabin. We remember thinking only, "This must be the end," when we found ourselves in a heap in the starboard berth. A second later, with a loud sucking noise and another tremendous bang, we saw light again. We watched the water fall down from the cabin roof drenching everything. We heard it swilling about heavily from side to side. The little boat had righted and resumed the old familiar dance on the surface of the sea.

Slowly we sorted ourselves out and in stupified amazement, shaking violently with shock, scrambled out into the open cockpit. We imagined everything, mast, sails, and gear would certainly be gone, and we could hardly believe our eyes when we saw everything dripping, but in place. It is not easy to reconstruct what happened. This is what we think. In an ocean gale there are always individual seas bigger and less stable than their fellows. They are sometimes called freak waves, built up to huge dimensions by some peculiar combination of wind and sea. They are the ones which "get out of step" and pile up high above the confusion until with a tumult of breaking foam they burst. Woe betide any luckless victim in their path.

The Nova Espero was the victim this time, the top must have formed an arch over us, thus shutting out the light. A moment later, swept along under the curl of the breaker, we were turned almost over. That we were flung into the cabin roof bears out our belief that we were capsized to such an extent that the masthead was carried down beneath us to within a few degrees of vertical. There she must have paused until the weight of the keel restored equilibrium, and she suddenly snapped back the way she

went over. Probably if she had rolled completely over and came up the other way we would have found less water inside when we bobbed up afterwards, as the only opening where water could enter the cabin was the partially opened hatchway. If there had been a smoothly continued roll over, there would have been no pause, when upside down, to allow the water to enter as it did. The Nova Espero has narrowly escaped destruction several times in her short life, but how she survived this punishment and came through unscathed we cannot imagine. We do not like to think what would have happened if another hideous wave had followed the first. Nevertheless, after that great wave the worst was over. It still blew a gale and the seas were high, but they did not seem quite so dangerous. "

And they do this for fun?" Keith Rymer.

Not another one Denis !



(This is the second of a series of articles by Denis Heald.)

S III – REBUILD

Any sketches, measurements, materials, sizes and much of the text refers to Mk III Silhouettes, but a great deal of the information will also be useful for work on Mk II Silhouettes, especially G.R.P. ones.

Part 2 –. - WINDOWS

If your boat has the original windows and rubber beading it will almost certainly leak!

If you wish to retain the boat as original then you will have to replace the windows with some sort of beading (Claytonrite), but preferably using thicker windows - 5mm. Personally I prefer polycarbonate but it is quite expensive, and the correct beading for the thickness of the windows. When fitting the windows you must cut the beading 2" longer than you think after fitting into the hole for the side windows, and 1" longer for the small front ones. This is necessary so that there is not a gap.

The 'join' in the main bead should be at the top of the window and in the key bead, at the bottom. You will need a special tool to insert the bead. If you are unable to get one I can lend one to you. Also some soap solution helps the job along.

'Bolt on' windows are the other solution, and this is the method I prefer. After removing the old windows you can save a lot of difficult painting time later if you take a little time now to clean up the edges and a couple of inches round on the inside of the window holes. Give them a couple of coats of whatever you choose to paint the inside of the boat. Make patterns 1" bigger all round the window holes. Either get the windows cut, 6mm thick, or buy the material and cut them using a jig saw which should be considerably cheaper. Leave the paper backing on the windows until the final fitting to stop the plastic reforming after the jig saw blade and to protect the surface. Draw a line 1/2inch from the edge of the windows and drill every 2 1/2 to 3 inches with clearance holes for pan head s.s. bolts and nuts (no washers). I use 4mm x 1 5mm but the choice is yours. Carefully place the windows and drill the G.R.P. top and bottom about halfway along the window and loosely fasten, then one each end similarly. When all the window lies flat drill all the other holes and check that all the bolts are long enough because on some boats the G.R.P. varies in thickness considerably. If any are short you can countersink as necessary with a rose bit.

Now remove the backing paper and fit the windows using a good quality transparent silicone sealer. Choose a cool day, put a little silicone on each bolt before insertion. You need someone inside the boat to screw on the nuts, then tighten evenly but not too tight.

Remove all the surplus sealant and clean up with white spirit. Make a drink for our little helper inside the boat but no prizes for guessing who that is and you are one step nearer a watertight boat

Part 3 next month

THE SILHOUETTE OWNERS INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION.

The Minutes of a National Committee Meeting held at the BAWA Club, Bristol on the 5th October 2002

The meeting was opened at 12noon.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr Frank Haddon, Commodore, Mr Pete Derry, Hon.Treasurer, Mrs Barbara Heald, Hon. Secretary.
Committee Members: Mr Charles Bissaker, Mr David Milner, Mr Tony Eden, Mr Denis Heald. Mr John Gordon SW. Commodore, Mr John Clawson.

1 WELCOME - the National Commodore, Mr Frank Haddon welcomed everyone to the meeting

2.APOLOGIES were received from Mr Neville Povey, Mr Frank Bartlett, Mr Tom Eaves, Mr Mark Juggins, Mrs Mary Jones and Mr Colin Robinson.

3.MINUTES of the last Committee Meeting were published in the April issue of the SOIA Journal. Mr Tony Eden proposed that we take them as read, seconded by Mr Dave Milner and carried unanimously.

4.MATTERS ARISING: the Secretary had two apologies.

1) To Mr Bevan Summers who did not receive notification of the meeting. The secretary had not realised that he was the new Commodore of the Solent Group and should have been invited to the meeting as their representative.

2) To Mr Peter Derry who queried the Minutes of the April meeting. I disputed this at the time but on reflection it was my mistake for which I sincerely apologise. However, Mr Derry tabled an amendment for the A.G.M. which those of you who were present know was heatedly discussed, and finally rejected. The original proposal by Mr Denis Heald should have read: The office of Rear-Commodore be abolished, the Regional representatives could send their reports to the Secretary by post, thus enabling us to reduce the numbers attending Committee Meetings

3) The Treasurer stated that the deficit of £956.00 was an estimated deficit for the year ending 31.10.2002.

The proposal that the size of the National Committee be reduced was not made for financial reasons, Peter thought that for the reduced membership total the Committee was too large in numbers.

5 COMMODORE'S REPORT: Mr Frank Haddon said, "Owing to an unforeseen business commitment I was unable to be at the National Rally in Plymouth. Although Heather and I spent an enjoyable weekend at the Rutland meet, my report did not make it to the Journal. Either our Editor 'lost' it or more than likely he could not read my writing. (my printer had given up the ghost at the time.) One more regret is

that I put the boat to 'bed' for the winter on the 24th as the weather and tides were right. A piece of sad news to relate: The demise of a Silhouette. After helping Dennis Lynch and myself to retrieve our boats and put them away for the winter at Paynes yard at Emsworth, Mick Polly was homeward bound towing 'Three M's' at around 7.30p.m. During the journey a cyclist came out of the dark, in front of him. Mick swerved to avoid him and unfortunately lost control, turning car and boat over - both a write off. I am pleased to say Mick was not injured, both he and the cyclist were unharmed. Well, once again the season is over, how time flies! We of the Solent Group have been lucky with the weather on all our jollies and no doubt you will hear about them from Clive in the Journal. Our season finished with our Annual Barbecue in the pleasant garden of Mary and Mick Polly. as usual a good time was had by all. Let us hope the winter is not too hard and that Spring comes early so that we can get those boats afloat again! Take care, especially if you are trailing.

6. HON. TREASURER'S REPORT

Peter distributed copies of his estimated Income Expenditure Accounts for the Financial Year ending 31st October 2002. He said that in view of the fact that his proposals to reduce costs had been presented to the A.G.M. were rejected he felt concern that no alternative proposals had been voted upon. The current assets at present total £2886.98 and he estimated that by the end of the Financial Year they would be reduced to £2226.00.

7. HON. EDITOR'S REPORT: - in the absence of Mr Mark Juggins the report was read by Mr Dave Milner.

- i) Apologies for not attending. Family crisis
- ii) Following on from what I said at the A.G.M., it turns out that the local printer / copier service I use is still for sale, hopefully as a going concern, but the new owners might have other ideas. One problem is that the current owner, having lost interest in the business, has refrained from spending money on the more important issues such as maintenance of their machines, leading to breakdowns and delays. I think that a move to another printer is on the cards whether or not they sell up.
- iii) I have made several enquiries to local printing businesses which offer a better standard of finished work. This would allow a return to issues that could contain photographs where appropriate. Two of the printers had minimum orders far in excess of what we need, and the third was just over twice the price of our current printers. The search will continue for a while I believe, but higher charges are probably unavoidable.
- iv) At the Rally, several members, and they know who they are, promised articles and the like, but so far nothing. The latest issue has almost cleaned me out of anything printable. It has

been suggested that I go through older issues and that may happen yet.

v) One suggestion that was made was to ask the membership, via the Journal, as to what they want and expect from the Association and also what they would like to see at the National Rally. It would be easy to do but I do wonder as to the response, 5% perhaps.?

vi) This is the longest report I have ever done its more fun this way

After this report there was a discussion concerning rising printing costs and lack of copy, although there did seem to be some articles which had gone 'astray'. There was also concern over the lateness of the Journals. This was a particular problem with regard to the A.G.M. Mr John Clawson promised to ring Mark with regard to publishing costs and an offer of help if it is needed.

8. HON. SECRETARY'S REPORT.

Mrs Barbara Heald reported that there was good news and bad news. First the good news. For the last couple of months we have had a steady stream of new members from the Internet. The bad news is that they are all paying £13 for membership-presumably the £2 joining fee is not mentioned. I corrected the first few but it is not worth the effort and postage involved so now I let it ride but it is a loss of revenue. I have complained before about the lack of communication to the Secretary from Flag Officers and Committee members. I read the dates for next years National Rally at Plymouth in the East Anglia News letter!

I may not be on the E-mail but I have a telephone and answering machine. Please do use it - I need these up-dates all the time if I am to do my job efficiently.

After this report Mr John Clawson said that he feels it is most important that the Secretary be on the E-mail because of the number of enquiries. Messrs Dave Milner & Tony Eden promised to help with some of these queries.

9. NATIONAL RALLY REPORT - given by Mr John Gordon, S.VV. Group Commodore. The report was read, then the Committee dealt with the points in order

- a) The Rally made a loss of £293.52. mainly from the Dinner and Dance at The Moat House. The National Committee recommended that the Friday evening of the Rally be a Prize-Giving Dinner to be held at R.P.C.Y.C. Tickets to be sold on a first come first served basis. This was proposed by Mr Denis Heald, seconded by Mr Frank Haddon and carried unanimously. Mr Peter Derry proposed that the R.P.C.Y.C. Commodore be invited as guest of Honour instead of the Lord Mayor. This was seconded by Mr Denis Heald and carried with one abstention.

b) Board System for Racing. The National Committee strongly prefer the 'set' courses in the book, but ultimately the decision is with the Race Officer.

C) There is no objection to the change of time starts.

d) Car Parking for Battery Crew Mr Dens Heald proposed that the Battery Crew be reimbursed for car parking. This was seconded by Mr John Clawson and passed unanimously.

e) Passage Race - it was recommended that one buoy should be used, and the Committee boat for start and finish.

f) The National Committee approved the reinstatement of the Prize-Giving Committee. To consist of the Principal Race Officer, National Commodore, Local Commodore and Mrs Mary Jones.

10. REPORTS FROM THE GROUPS.

A) East Midlands - Membership has remained static since the last report, however we are continuously on the look-out for new members. In spite of our small membership the meetings at Farndon have been well attended. Plenty of sailing has been achieved this summer with our group managing to go to most of the organised gatherings around the country. Three of our leading crews went to the N.W. Windermere week with David winning the points races. Rutland Paints had reduced entries this year, but those who did not come missed an excellent week-end with good weather for once. Although we lent our 'star man' to the Solent Group we still gained second place. Probably the best sailing most of us have ever had was enjoyed by those who turned up for the Essex cruise in July organised by the East Anglia group. Four of our boats took part.

Alf took his 'new' S Ill to Holland once again and entertained the Dutch with his particular talent of whistling. He had reported that every time he goes to the Netherlands he enjoys it more and the sailing is good too.

4.

Numbers were down for the National Rally this year but we managed to put up four boats plus John sailing in some of the Handicap races in Quintus. Although the winds were light and variable all our boats managed to win trophies including the Transom Trophy for the first time since 1994. David was unstoppable in the Mk II section and Alf came a brilliant second in the Ill's. In all we won 10 trophies between us. (pause for applause!) Our last group sail was last month on the Southern Broads where we had four boats out of the nine attending. Good weather and fair winds meant we had some really good sailing with nearly as much drinking time (well David did) The week-end came to an end on Sunday evening. Once our boats had been retrieved we finished off an excellent few days with a party in the trailer park to celebrate Cohn Campbell's birthday. Those who did not come missed a great time. Roll on next season. Solent Group - had a good season although there are only two Silhouettes. One of them, David Kuschel in 'Joanna' can outsail everyone! There was an excellent barbecue at the home of Mick and Mary Polly and there is a laying-up supper next month.

S.W. Group - Mr John Gordon said he was very proud of all the S.W. members in organising the Rally this year. Many people had done jobs they had never done before and enjoyed the experience.

The laying-up Supper is on the 12th October and there is a visit to the Pantomime on 28th December.

Next Year the National Rally will be from Saturday 16th to Friday 22nd August 2003. NW. Group - no report.

11. Items for the next Meeting.

12. Date and Venue for the next Meeting - 5th April & 4th October 2003 at the B.A.W.A. club, Bristol.

13. A.O.B.

i) Mr Peter Derry requested information as to why the motion to reduce the size of the Committee was rejected. The Secretary explained that the Meeting had become totally confused by all the Rule changes involved and although there were many alternative suggestions none of these were actually put to the vote. Nevertheless the meeting was aware of the need for economies. It is hoped that Journal costs may not rise, Mr John Clawson has ideas about this, and Mr Peter Deny promised to look into the cost of a 'medal' instead of glassware, as these would be cheaper. Mr Nigel Baring did propose that each local group paid the expenses of their representative at the National Committee meeting. The Treasurer felt that this was a matter for the groups themselves rather than an executive decision as not all groups could afford it, and it might prevent people from attending the meetings.

ii) Mr Charlie Bissaker has agreed to act as Publicity Officer.

iii) EVENTS FOR 2003 MAY - (probably 2nd week) - Windermere Rally JUNE 15th -16th - Rutland. International Paints trophy. August 16th - 22nd - National Rally at Plymouth. . There being no further business the Meeting Closed at 3.15 p.m.

(Cont from p4) A minute with the Secretary

5. Spare Battens - if you are 'crew' you are the one who usually inserts the battens and you may have been mystified as to how they fall out! Spares mean that you need not confess obviously that another has been lost.

6. Anemometer - to measure wind force and speed. Designed to give pleasure during summer sailing and winter golf!

7. Log & Speedometer - for racing enthusiasts.

8. G.P.S. - so that he will never be lost at sea.

9. Mobile 'Phone - no more excuses about wind and tide which made him late for dinner!

If you must buy something to wear - check our website for entry into our Supa - store. I hope you will find my shopping list useful. Make quite certain, however, that your husband understands that YOU have wider interests. Do not for one moment let him believe that you would like a non-stick frying pan when you are longing for one of those things that are 'a girl's best friend'!

Barbara .M .Heald .Hon. Sec.

Welcome to our new members. Full details in next issue

My first Boat.

A voyage of discovery!

by John Clawson

I can still remember the first time I saw *Nina*. She was leaning against an old shed in a yard near the, by then, almost derelict north end docks in an area called Litherland in Liverpool. Litherland was a place that you wouldn't want to be wandering at night let alone spending your time leaning on an old shed. There was an old disused sausage factory on the right and a lift bridge over the canal on the left. There wasn't much more to Litherland except an old cinema where the Kelly brothers murdered the cashier in the '50's. *Nina* was in a yard almost under the bridge stanchions and it was pure chance that I happened to see her. She caught my eye immediately. She was long and slender and for her age she had a surprisingly clean bottom. I could see myself doing a bit of voyaging in a boat like that. The man in the yard told me she had come off the "Saxonia". She was a 30-foot clinker built lifeboat and had been converted into a houseboat – not very professionally I must say – a bit Heath Robinson- but still, it was love at first sight. I was bewitched. I had to have her. So, after some discussion (much

persuasion) with Sue, my wife, I (we) bought her and I took her to a place about 30 miles up the canal called Haskayne. This was to be her new home. She was going to be happy there – I could tell. She was moored just outside the Ship Inn, which made me happy, and she enjoyed bobbing up and down waiting for her skipper to stagger back to her on Friday and Saturday nights.

Thinking about her now I suppose she was a good sound boat when I first bought her but, after her second sinking, I started to have trouble with the big converted lorry diesel engine. Anyway the sinkings are another tale so, on the occasional Saturday afternoons I set to work. I was going to restore her. It would take some time, mind you, but just wait until she is finished. (how many times did I say that in the Ship Inn?) Now then, although I can wield a hammer quite professionally, as anyone who knows me will tell you, my DIY skills could only be described on a school report as 'enthusiastic – He tries his best' but ahead I went. I painted over rotting timbers, I fitted new decking with palates and I got a

big metal pipe, which I slipped over the stump of what had been the lorry gear stick. She had no clutch so it was a case of wriggle, wriggle, crash, bang into reverse and then the same into forward gear (if it would go). A horrible noise, but love is blind, she was still my pride and joy.

One Spring day, after being Captain for about 3 months, and after sitting on her poop deck letting the 3 or 4 pints digest on many lovely Saturday afternoons with the engine ticking over nicely and with that great smell of wood, water and diesel wafting across the rubbish on the towpath, eating my steaming hot meat and potato pie smothered in brown sauce, bringing back memories of days gone by, shipping in the South China Seas I had a thought Yes a thought. I would give Sue a lovely surprise. A cruise up the canal.

No, not for her, for the kids. It would give her a rest. We had four young children then. John who was 7, Rachael who was 6, Victoria who was 5 and Matthew who was the baby.

I would take the three oldest children next Sunday for a leisurely cruise up the canal and Sue would have a rest, just her and Matthew at home.

Funnily enough Sue didn't seem very enthusiastic at first but once the kids got to know and they managed to persuade her it was a good idea, she eventually caved in and said Ok.

So, the preparations. The children had their carry out packed ready to go the day before, on the Saturday. The sandwiches and pop were all packed up, anoraks, wellies, jumpers – no lifejackets in those days, in fact no marine equipment at all. Towels, spare clothes etc etc. Thank goodness Sunday arrived at last and 3 very excited kids and a more and more apprehensive looking dad got into the old light blue Morris Oxford estate LV6666 and set off the 20 odd miles up to Haskayne.

Surprisingly I managed to get the three kids onto the boat without incident and they sat quietly – waiting – I fired up the engine on the second go after squirting a good dollop of Quick Start up her exhaust pipe, let go the warps, took the tiller under my arm and with a crash, bang, crunch, wallop on the gear stick maneuvered her away from the bank into the murky weed filled waters of the Leeds Liverpool canal and off we went, belching black smoke, doing our bit to pollute the Lancashire countryside, on our voyage of discovery.

My intention was to set a course for Parbold, a little town some 15 miles away and near the first lock we would encounter but not go through. I thought at 4 knots about 8 hours with ½ hr for lunch plenty of time to have a lovely day and get back in time for tea. Oh that life be so simple!

It all started about 30 seconds after cast off. "Dad can we have our sandwiches now", so 5 minutes after leaving the mooring, everything had been devoured, the pop drunk, not a morsel of food left. . Next it was – "dad are we nearly there" – "dad I'm bored" – then it started. Pandemonium - I still think there was something in the pop. You know hash pops or something I knew nothing about. Anyway they're up on the roof deck – "Hey be careful". Into the engine, little fingers, "hey watch it now, be careful", then they are down below decks. Shouting, shrieking with laughter "For goodness sake, do you have to make such a lot of noise?"

Then My God -its gone quiet. Too quiet. Now what's happening down there? A quick look through the hatch and its paint and varnish all over the place. On anoraks, on legs, on hands. On faces Oh no! Sue will go mad I rush down the companionway nearly breaking my neck on the way down – now stop it – be good kids.

The ship is steering herself. Bang – into the bank she crashes. I leap back up on deck to grab the tiller. John jumps onto the roof deck for a better view. Crash – into the opposite bank she goes. Splash. Where's John? "Rachael where's John?" Oh no, he's in the water – I grab a boat hook. I prod around with the thing then I see red Oh my God is it...

It can't be... blood No thank God it's not It's an old plastic bag, but I have never forgotten the end of a boathook can do a lot of damage to a floating casualty

I manage to hook him round his trouser belt – I can't swim and neither can he. So I am struggling to get him up on the boat when then there is an almighty crash and the sickening sound of splintering wood – we've hit the swing bridge. Victoria sits on the hatch cover, looking startled, and then she starts to sob.

Rachael with great presence of mind passes me a hammer (my children have known from a very early age that a hammer is my preferred tool.)

I manage to restore some sort of order, I get John aboard. I now need to get off the boat to open the swing bridge.

The boarding plank is slipped over the side and the kids and I go ashore, John still dripping wet, and the three of them still covered in paint and varnish.

I take a marlin spike and am about to bash it with the hammer to moor the boat to the bank whilst I swing the bridge across. Victoria gets back on board. I'm just about to hammer the marlin spike into the soil when I see Rachael and John with their backs to the huge bar that is attached to the bridge.

Once started it can't be stopped, they are moments, seconds, off being crushed to death. I yell.

Bang, the hammer crashes into my knee instead of the spike, I let go of the mooring line and leap forward and push them out of the way. (I still see that moment in my mind when I allow it to wonder) Meantime Victoria is now captain of the boat, she doesn't appreciate the moment, she is still sobbing – and by now I am as well, almost. I talk to her quietly, as quietly and calmly as I can. "Vicky, just push the tiller love, just push the tiller". She leans over to do it but slips over, bangs her head on the tiller and falls into the cockpit and starts yelling. Luckily the bang of her head has pushed the tiller over and the boat heads for the shore. I manage to grab the bow line, and spend some time consoling Victoria whilst I make the boat fast.

At this point I decide to call it a day. After order has been restored on board and I have surveyed *Nina* for damage, very little and all cosmetic, I manage to swing the boat around and head back to Haskayne our homeport.

Not without incident. On the way back Rachael rips her anorak and Vicky cuts her knee. Little John won't change out of his wet clothes and we are chased by two barking vicious looking Alsations along the towpath for about a mile. After the voyage is over and I have parked *Nina* in her spot we

pile into the car and head for home. The children can't stop talking all the way home and even though we didn't get that far in a day, it's surprisingly late when 3 very tired, exhausted but happy children and one totally knackered father arrive home.

Sue couldn't believe it when she saw us, I was limping up the path with a huge lump on my knee and in some pain, the children were still covered in paint and varnish and John was soaking wet. Rachael's clothes were in tatters and Victoria's now smiling face was covered in tear streaks. After the children had told their mum their version of what happened on that day she wouldn't let me take them out again on my own. (she did relent a couple of years later when she let me take our son Matthew caving).

What a voyage though! Nina taught me many things whilst she and I were together She sank three times but only due to filling up with rainwater, she was sound as a pound really and I managed to refloat her on all three occasions. I enjoyed that boat and I think after I progressed to sail sailing I have the same feeling for my first yacht, which, of course was an S11. There have been many voyages of discovery in my S11 but they're another story.....