

# NEWSLETTER

## JULY 1999



*Just what had I acquired? "Blackbird" before the start of restoration work*

### FROM THE HIGH CHAIR

After last year's hectic time for the committee, this year has been like a flat calm. Even so we have met and considered the arising matters. One of these was raised by the SYC and concerned Yawl prizes. We have decided that for the time being any 'old boat' finishing in the first 3 overall will not qualify for an 'old boat' prize. Perhaps this is a matter that can be discussed at the AGM to get a definite view of the members' wishes.

As the Yawl rep on the SYC Sailing Committee it would be helpful to know if any member has concerns or comments on the general SYC sailing organisation. Remember if you don't ask you don't get.

After many years Nick Walker our secretary has decided to lay down his pen and retire. Nick has done an immeasurable amount for the class during his time and I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for his commitment to the class. Hopefully we'll see more of him on the water in future. Meanwhile Tim Bass has volunteered to take on the position now he has 'retired' to Salcombe.

This year we are once again team racing against Seaview YC on the IoW (more later). Last time we went a great time was had by all. Please tell me if you're interested as we need a minimum of 18 sailors.

Happy Sailing,  
Malcolm

### Y14 BLACKBIRD

It was one day in October 1996 that Alec and I pulled a dirty and dusty 'Blackbird' from her lair in East Portlemouth where she had been for many years. The old shed had to be cleared out and along with 'Blackbird' I acquired a selection of spare booms, spars, rubbers etc. and an old cadet dinghy with no mast!

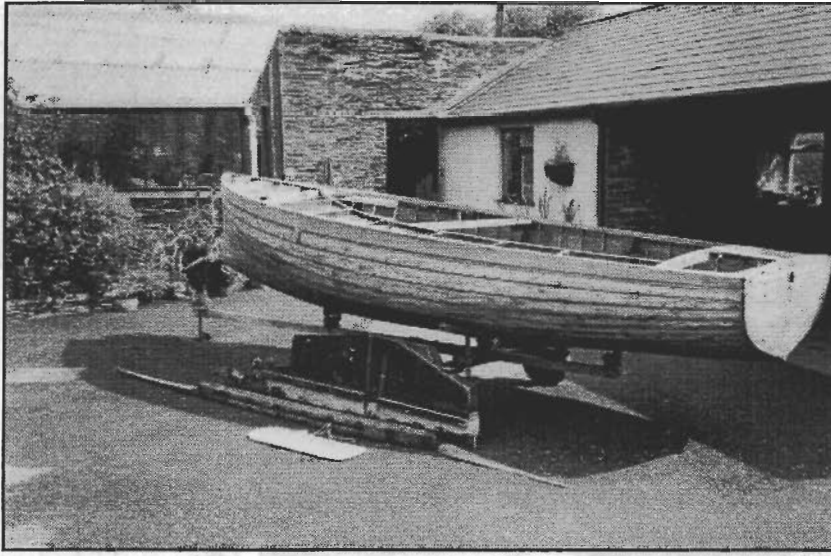
One arriving home, I had an immediate problem of where to put her, as the garage was full of Y65 awaiting her winter re-paint. A neighbouring farmer let me store her in what I took to be his barn, imagine my consternation when a month or so later I had a panic phone call from another neighbour who told me an irate developer had been visiting the barns he had bought and found them to be full of rubbish! He was going to pull everything out into the yard and burn it! I was round there like a shot to rescue dear old Blackbird from a Viking's funeral!

Y65 had by this time gone to Stephen - after all one Yawl is quite enough, and the time had come to do something about Blackbird and to find out just what I had acquired.

She had been fitted out by old Jim for giving sailing lessons and had seating for about 10 youngsters! - being built before the days of buoyancy bags she had 'watertight' (?) compartments fore and aft and an enormously heavy centre board case with an iron centreplate the like of which I have never seen. All her fittings were either galvanised iron or brass, cleats were used for all her controls and an enormous toolbox was fitted under the deck full of rusted solid pliers, screwdrivers etc. It all had to go!

The demolition began and off came the deck - all delaminated, out went the bulkheads, the thwarts, the brackets - we had to get down to the bare hull. On her side, off came the ballast keel and out came the centrebox screws. Sounds easy? You had better believe that the struggle with impact drivers, hacksaw blades and enormous screwdrivers was truly heroic! Most of the screws were removed in parts, but eventually the box was out and the scraping and stripping of paint started.

As this laborious task went on it was found that more and more of the planks were cracked and nearly all the nails were loose - daylight shone quite freely through the bottom. The old pine planks were in a bad way.

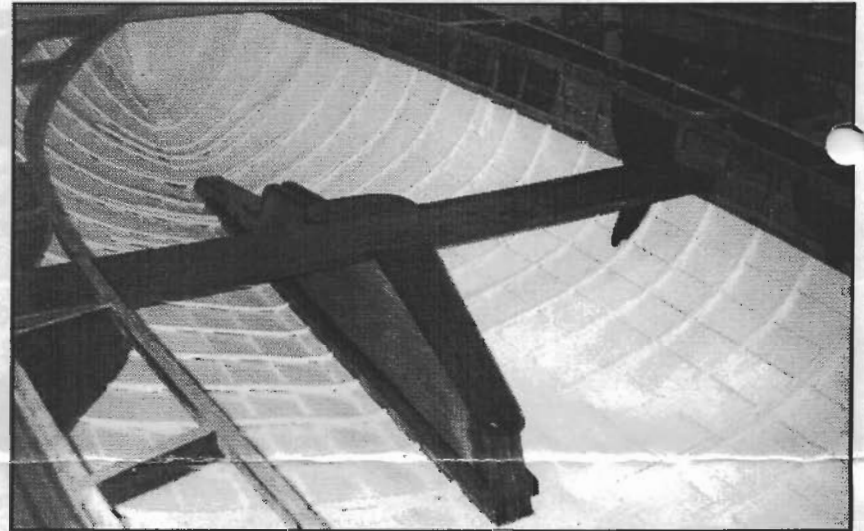


*Stripped down to the bare essentials*

*and continues ...*



*Reconstruction begins...*



*... but the name's the same!*



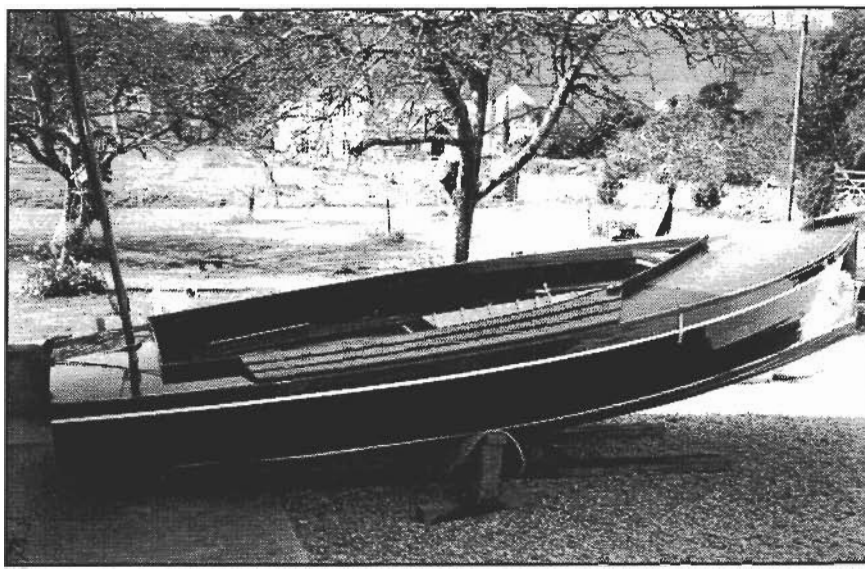
Jim Stone was summoned to give his opinion and he started by replacing the worst plank which had a split wide enough to put your hand in! Stripped down to bare wood inside and out and with a new plank fitted all work ceased. We had decided to move house! It was November 1997.

Our new cottage at Kellaton had only a small garage, too small for a Yawl, and so the following spring a new garage was specially built, which was

completed in August '98 - a new palatial home for 'Blackbird'.

During the move I again had nowhere to put the old boat and Tony and Robert who had sold us the cottage very kindly stored her for me in Kingsbridge.

It had become apparent at this stage that Blackbird needed completely refastening if she was ever to float again,



*Finished at last!*

and while I was contemplating this grim task I met up with Scratch who by chance said he had just had his boat Epoxyed and this could be the answer to my problem. A visit to Anton Fitzpatrick at Dittisham convinced me that this was the best solution for Blackbird and she was duly booked in for the treatment.

Back in her new abode, Jim was again summoned to do the necessary and fit the new box, re-deck and finish the boat off. We had managed to obtain the old workbench from Goodshelter and this was a solid piece of mahogany - it had a few nail holes and one end was soaked in oil but Jim reckoned there was enough wood to make the new centreboard box, somehow very appropriate.

I obtained from Alec the ballast keel he had removed from 114, you may remember that he fitted a bronze one and got himself disqualified from the Regatta as he had jumped the gun and bronze was not allowed at that time - when it was approved he fitted one to 150 and called it L'Eagle! This iron keel had been drilled and fitted for a short gasket so this was ideal. Alec also got for me a new bronze plate - things were coming together. I had two superb sheets of Brunzeel for the decking which Alec had thrown in with the boat and bits of wood and rubbing rakes etc. I got from John Moody.

By January 1999 it was nearing completion and the glueing, screwing and clamping finally came to an end and painting and varnishing followed. Finally one fine day in April it was pushed outside and the masts fitted and fittings which had been obtained from all over the place were screwed on.

During the rebuild we had discovered a number of interesting things. Firstly the plate and centrebox seemed far too far forward, a fact confirmed by measurements taken from a number of different yawls. The new box was fitted with the pin some 9" further aft than the original - I reckoned that she must carry a lot of weather helm and must have been a handful with her old paddle shaped rudder. We also discovered a slot in the top of the stem as if a stemplate had at one time been fitted, was she I wonder ever sailed with no bowsprit? Other amusing asides were the deck beams which James had fitted which, never one to waste wood, had been fashioned out of an old window frame! These were left in place as were as many of the other original features as possible including the wonderful solid brass "inkpot" into which the mizzen is stepped.

Thursday 22nd April she was towed down to Yalton and launched quietly in the pouring rain! - and yes, she

floated! Great day and I felt very proud as Jim and Tristan towed me down to my mooring.

That next Saturday 24th April, Jim and I went to the line for the last race of the Spring Handicap Series - the old boat sailed beautifully and as we ran down to the Yalton mark past old James's boathouse Jim said to me, "I wonder if Old Jim's watching us". I like to think that he was, and that he would have approved.

Was it all worth it? As Nick Walker said to me, "Somebody had to do it and I guess you drew the short straw". I think I drew the lucky straw, and the answer to the question is YES!!!

On her aft coaming she carries a brass plate which reads:-

Blackbird

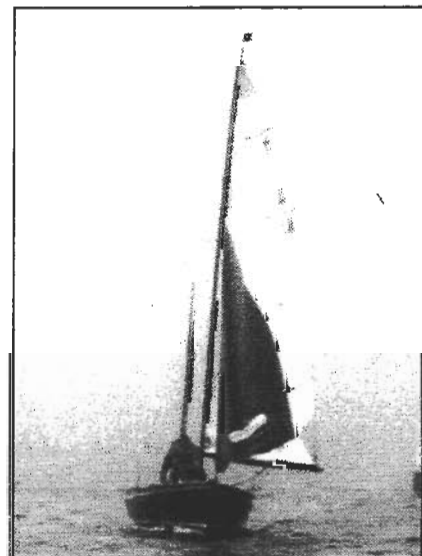
Built by James Stone 1939

Restored by Jim Stone 1999

Acknowledgements:-

First to Jim who did all the skilled boaty work, then to Tony who came regularly to see and encourage and who gave me some useful bits, Jon who made the patriotic jib and mizzen, Barbara who made endless cups of coffee and was really very tolerant!, all those wellwishers who enquired over the months how things were going and lastly, but not least, to Alec for letting me have Blackbird and making the project possible.

David Gay



*Back in the water - with crew*

## SEAVIEW YACHT CLUB VISITS

### SALCOMBE

13/14 September 1997

A return match against Seaview was organised during a very sunny and typically Salcombe weekend some time ago. 5 teams plus spectators participated in a team/fleet race on the Sunday and 10 of the older pre 141 yawls were borrowed for the event.

Having nearly beaten Seaview on their home ground in their Mermaids, it was not surprising that Salcombe comfortably triumphed in the more difficult conditions of Salcombe. Unfortunately we were less lucky in the impromptu rowing race in the Regatta boats!

I would like to thank all those who took part but more especially those who lent their precious craft for the occasion. Thanks also to those who supported our friends from Seaview in the pub, the bar and generally throughout the weekend. Thanks also to Brian and Sylvia who laid on great food for the whole occasion.

### Seaview Yacht Club welcomes us again

A further invitation has been given by Seaview for us to join them again for the weekend of 18/19 September 1999 for a few days of sailing and fun.

They have organised 2 dinghy races on the Saturday where we need 6 helmsmen for their Seaview one design dinghies. Dinner follows in the Yacht Club. 2 Mermaid races on the Sunday will require a team to comprise 6 boats each with helm and 2 crew.

We had a splendid event some 3 or 4 years ago and I am sure this can be made even better this time. We have generally been offered accommodation with Seaview members so the weekend can be one long and inexpensive party.

Anybody interested should contact Malcolm Squire on 01548 843681.

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## DRAGON BOATS

For the second year the Yawlie crew won the Rotary organised Dragon Boat Race during this year's Festival weekend. After qualifying for the finals as 8th fastest (out of 8 finalists) the crew easily overcame the other 7 crews and won the final by 3 lengths in a record course time.

The charity event raised money for Devon Air Ambulance and other local charities. Our team raised a creditable £620 thanks to generous sponsors.

The team will be training hard all winter in preparation for next year's event!



*The winning Yawlie 'Drunken Sailors' dragon boat crew after successfully defending the trophy.*

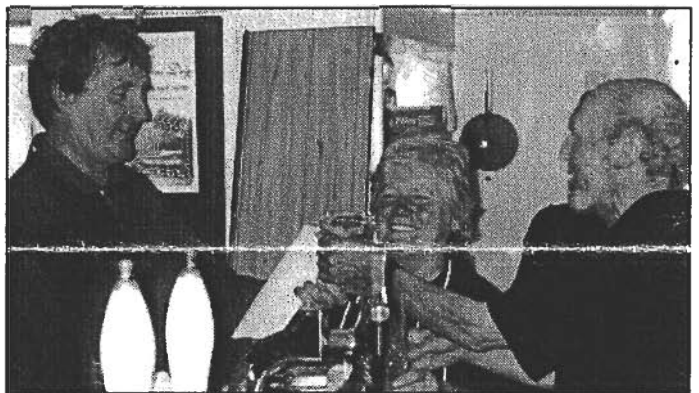
## GOODBYE AND THANK YOU ...

Those of you who have been to Salcombe this summer will no doubt have heard the sad news that Brian Chegwyn has decided to retire from his job as steward of the Yacht Club bar. He and Sylvia have now taken on the (hopefully) less arduous task of looking after the ICC bar in Island Street.

Brian and Sylvia have been absolutely wonderful to us Yawlies for many years. They have run cocktail parties and suppers for us, even in Regatta week - and cleaned up afterwards!! They have served us quick and excellent lunches to get us back on the water during Open Meetings. Brian has always opened the bar early for the thirsty ones after sailing - he's even crewed in races and still opened up at 4. They have both endured a lot in order to provide for us - always with a pleasant smile.

Nick and Judith Rowell, without whose intervention Brian and Sylvia would not have returned to the Yacht Club, came up trumps again and organised a collection and presentation to express our thanks. A considerable sum was collected from those members we were able to contact, and a presentation was made to Brian and Sylvia in their new abode last month, with a glass or two raised in their honour. We will miss them very much and wish them well in the future.

Our thanks to the ICC for allowing us to visit for i occasion.



*Nick Rowell (Y74) making the presentation to Brian & Sylvia.*

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## SECRETARY'S NOTES

### NEW YAWLS

Michael Webster proudly brought down his beautiful new yawl 163 in May. He and the builder Lawrie Smart duly won the weekend's racing.

I understand that two new yawls have been ordered from Mike Atfield for next season.

### NEW OWNERS

Susan Openshaw has sold Y104 to Alastair Harrison, and Glyn Morgan has sold Y83 to Rob Adams.

### ANNUAL REMINDER!

Don't forget to pay your subs - still £10 for full members and £2 for associates.

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday 3rd August at Salcombe Yacht Club, 8 p.m.

### REGATTA WEEK

Sunday 1st - Friday 6th August

### TOWN REGATTA

Monday 26th - Friday 30th August

### OPEN MEETING

August 28th/29th/30th

### COCKTAIL PARTY

Sunday 29th August, 7.15 p.m.