



REEF KNOT

The Newsletter of Wells Sailing Club
No 2 - Spring 2000

**W.S.C. MILLENNIUM
GROUP PHOTOGRAPH**
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From the Commodore:-

Dear Members

I started writing this on December 30th 1999, just before the New Year celebrations and just after Christmas. both of these occasions should be happy ones when families and friends get together, presents are exchanged and parties thrown.

It is immensely sad that William Cracknell is no longer with us. His untimely death has cast a huge shadow over the whole period and will do so for some time to come.

Wells Sailing Club is well known for its special ambience, its family feeling. The Cracknell family has contributed to this unique atmosphere for many years and I am sure will continue to do so.

I would like to extend to them our deepest sympathies and I know that the thoughts of all members of the Club are with them.

I would like to welcome Alex Watson, James Case, Tricia Blakesley and Martin Read as new members of the General Committee and to thank those who retired for their past contributions.

As we move into the 21 st Century, we do so with two basic targets for the immediate future. Firstly, and of prime importance, we aim to replace Miss Judith, she has served us well for more than 20 years. We are making various approaches to funding organisations and the Sailing Committee is seeking a suitable replacement.

Secondly, we hope to refurbish the interior of the Clubhouse to make it more user-friendly. the House Committee is gathering information and ideas on the way forward.

Having stated our material targets, I would like to end by quoting Rule 2 from the Club Handbook.

'The object for which the Club is formed is to promote and facilitate the sport of yachting and to organise racing for small boats.'

Some of us have found various reasons not to sail in the past: too late, too early, too windy, not enough wind, raining, crew not available, company for lunch, sore elbow, sore leg, sore brain, mackerel running, not enough opposition, etc. etc..

The only way to have opposition is to turn up and sail.

Best wishes for the coming season. See you on the water.

Hopefully

John

**The Commodore and Committee
Look forward to the pleasure of your
company at the**

FITTING OUT SUPPER

**The usual splendid meal will be served
cost £6.50
sign up on the Clubhouse noticeboard
or
ring Terry on 01328 710270
by Sunday 15" April**

STOP PRESS

WELLS/FROSTBITES TEAM RACE

Results:

Frostbites 24 Wells 49

SOCIAL PROGRAMME 2000

| | | |
|--|--|---------------|
| Sat 22 nd April | Fitting Out Supper | 19.30 |
| Mon 24 th April | Lunchtime Snacks | After Sailing |
| Sat 13 th May | BSOA Open Meeting Supper | 19.30 |
| Sat 20 th May | WSC & BSSC Cruising Weekend Supper | 19.00 |
| Sat 10 th June | Frostbites Early Eve. Supper | 17.30 |
| Sat 1 st July | Viking Single Hander Open Meeting Supper | 20.30 |
| Sat 22 nd July | Harvest of The Sea Supper | 19.30 |
| Sat 29 th July - Fri 4 th August | European Sharpie Championships Amstelmere, Holland | |
| Sat 19 th August | Old Sailors Night | 19.30 |
| 21 st - 25 th August | Junior Sail Training Week | |
| Fri 25 th August | Prize Giving & Barbecue | 18.00 |
| Mon 28 th August | Regatta BBQ | Lunchtime |
| Sat 16 th September | Last Night of the Proms Supper | 19.30 |
| Sat 21 st October | Laying Up Supper | 19.30 |
| Sat 25 th November | Annual Dinner & Dance | 19,30 |
| Sat 16 th December | Christmas Party | |
| Tue 26 th December | Boxing Day | Lunchtime |
| Mon 1 st January 2001 | New Year's Day Draw | Lunchtime |

We hope that by publishing this list in advance, Club members will note the dates in their diaries and come along to support functions throughout the year. Details of each function will be published in the Clubhouse nearer to the date. Any member who would like more details, but is unable to get to the Club can telephone Terry Angles on 01328 7 10270.

Sailing Secretary's Report:-

The days are starting to get longer, a sure signal that we should be turning our attentions to preparations for the new sailing season. Members will soon be looking forward with anticipation to what lies ahead as the season approaches such as, that perfect shake down race, that cracking start and that sense of achievement which comes with completing that close fought and exciting race. '

Other things, we tend easily to forget such as:- the muddy part at the bottom of the slipway, that perished tyre, the fickle winds, doing the 'centipede' as "Redwing" emerges from another winter, tacking through the quay in blustery Westerly's, and running aground just before that all important start on one of those skinny tides.

Our aim this year is to encourage more boats and members onto the water and Martin Read has taken on the role of Sharpie fleet Co-ordinator. Rumour has it that Martin is prepared to take drastic action and get the guitar case out if his efforts to persuade Sharpie sailors onto the water don't have the required effect! This season, Mike Bushby will continue with his efforts to swell the numbers of the Handicap fleet on the water (Knowing Mike, he will probably use the guitar case as a paddle!).

Last year, the concept of running mini series, multi

races and offering courses specifically designed for single handers worked very well and feedback from the fleet was encouraging. It is Mike's intention to build on this concept and we look forward to seeing more single handers etc. participating as a result.

The members of our sailing committee have this year taken on specific areas of responsibility, such as the maintenance of Miss Judith, sailing tackle and equipment, repairs to the East Quay garage and securing our boundaries. We will be holding a number of work parties in the forth coming months to carry out some of these jobs, please try to come along and assist if you can.

The fixture list for the season has now been finalised and we have included details of the first few weeks racing of sailing for easy reference. The Tommy Thomas Weekend will be on the 29th April 1st May and has been made into a mini series with 2 of the 3 days to count. The Sharpie Open Weekend will be held on the 13th 14th May and we are expecting a good turn out for the Viking Open and Phantom Invitation meeting on the 1st 2nd July. Junior week will be slightly later this year and commences on 21st of August.

Look forward to seeing you on the water shortly.

Chris Hardy

| Wells Sailing Club - Fixture List 2000. | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------|--------|-------|------------|----------|---------|----------------------|--------------|
| Day | Date | Tide | | Start Time | Class | | | Race Officer |
| | | Height | Time | | Handicap | Sharpie | All - comers | |
| Saturday | 8-Apr | 8.6 | 09:31 | 08:30 | | | RNLI Pennant | C.Hardy |
| Sunday | 9-Apr | 8.4 | 10:11 | 09:00 | | | Herbert's Rum Bottle | |
| Saturday | 15-Apr | 8.0 | 16:54 | 15:45 | | | MDSF Pennant 1 | R & N |
| Sunday | 16-Apr | 8.3 | 17:45 | 16:30 | | | MDSF Pennant 2 | Richardson |
| Saturday | 22-Apr | 8.2 | 09:15 | 08:00 | | | Rubber Duck | |
| Sunday | 23-Apr | 8.0 | 09:45 | 08:45 | | | Easter Egg | R Curtis |
| Monday | 24-Apr | 7.8 | 10:18 | 09:15 | | | Cox Tankard | |
| Saturday | 29-Apr | 7.0 | 15:35 | 14:15 | | | | |
| Sunday | 30-Apr | 7.5 | 16:30 | 15:15 | | | | J.Gibbs |
| Monday | 01-May | 7.9 | 17:17 | 16:00 | | | | |

TOMMY THOMAS MEMORIAL WEEKEND
(Mini Series, 2 of the 3 days to count, daily prize giving)

Three Days Out, Two Days Home by Günter Daubenmerkl

The prevailing westerlies in our latitudes keep us Germans well at bay; and it needs the imagination of an Erskine Childers and the spleen of a Kaiser to make German crafts move west out of the German Bight, our "Wet Triangle" as it is called. However, that what you cannot get easily you want most; and so it came that England has always been my preferred cruising ground in the years when I owned a small cruiser.

The "Waarschip" which I sailed was a Dutch 24 ft. plywood clinker light displacement construction, a truly seaworthy boat. She could (and had to) be sailed like a dinghy and she had on the other hand all disadvantages of a dinghy: low headroom and the basic accommodation of a somehow bigger grown daysailer: a couple of bunks and a single-flame cooker.

Being a modern boat she had a fin keel which helped a lot to her performance, but demanded a lot of ingenuity when mooring her in the drying harbours of Norfolk. Hung from the quay in a network of ropes slung under her fore and aft she had to be prevented from falling over when the water went. It was not recommendable to move too much aboard at low tide but fortunately there is no harbour along the coast where thirsty sailors cannot find a watering hole nearby to spend those odd hours.

As Wells lies approximately on the same latitude as the Elbe estuary there is no great difficulty in finding the English coast: Follow the Frisian coast until Texel and then head straight west as the Angles, the Saxons, the Danes, and all the other Continental tribes did when on an outing for some pillage (only to be subsequently seduced by England's beauties to stay a bit longer).

To make the 300 miles passage in decent time you have to sail day and night for three days, normally "uphill" against the usual westerlies; whereas the way home can be covered in two days. Of course, there are no marinas or mooring buoys, where you can spend a night or weather a gale spread over the North Sea, and the only chance to cook some food when it becomes a bit rougher is to heave to. On the wind life on a 24 footer, especially in a blow, is cut down to a minimum and resembles much to living in a space capsule.

Within the last fifteen years GPS has revolutionised navigation and has become an outstanding safety factor at sea: The machine will tell you, not mind storm, darkness, or fog, where you are. On the other hand, however, it has corrupted the art of navigation and has

taken away the thrill of an accurate landfall after three days at sea. For me it has always been a special moment when I, after a three hours watch, entered the new position in the chart and watched the course line creeping slowly towards the harbour - another twelve or fifteen miles by dead reckoning, and the new pencil cross whenever possible verified by taken bearings of lighthouses, buoys and oil rigs, or by the observation of a shipping track.

And the North Sea is full of all sorts of vessels and objects. Even if you feel like the only boat at sea during day time you will be amazed how many lights will appear around your boat as soon as the sun sets though not just as many as in Burnham Market at Christmas time. Those night watches are magical hours when you sit at the tiller on your own, the binnacle light in front of you and the mate sleeping in his bunk down in the cabin. Just you, the dark shades of the sails, the occasional crest of a wave shining white, the odd lights of a trawler in the distance, and the star-lit sky above your small world.

But it is not always like this. Sailing west normally means sailing into the wind, the boat heels over, jerks, and surf is blown across the deck. No stars in the sky comfort you any longer. The crests of the waves grow and become threatening and give the one or other blow to your tiny craft, and the tattletale sound of the halyards adds to your feeling of uneasiness. But you drive the boat through the black night and don't go down for a rest (down there waits the seasickness), but wrapped in layers of warm clothes and oilskins, you wait anxiously and tired for the first pale daylight.

The whole situation changes when fog covers your boat - and fog is a quite normal hazard when crossing the North Sea. Your world is reduced to a circle of a couple of metres radius, and you never again feel so alone and lost. Your eyes and ears start playing tricks. The wet cotton wool swallows the sounds, and you stare with alert, ready for an emergency manoeuvre, into the direction where you hear (or think to) the engine noises of a ship or its fog signals. It needs some self-confidence in your navigation skills not to panic in these moments.

But as soon as you see longshore fishermen work their pots and the first land birds visit your boat, or the offshore breeze carries a scent of fresh mown grass all discomfort is forgotten. The coast is close by. It climbs slowly over the horizon; you identify the tower of Blakeney church and the typical shape of the East Hills,

you position the fairway buoy and know by the sailing fishing boats that there is water enough for your boat to enter the harbour. The courtesy flag flown in your shrouds is, even in an unified Europe, reward enough for having crossed the North Sea (in spite of car ferries and planes) in a prehistoric way. You crossed the North Sea relying only on your boat and the wind. Apart from some oil rigs, shipping lines, buoys, and light houses nothing has really changed since Vortigern invited the Angles and Saxons some 1550 years ago to come across the water and help him against greedy cousins.

Günter

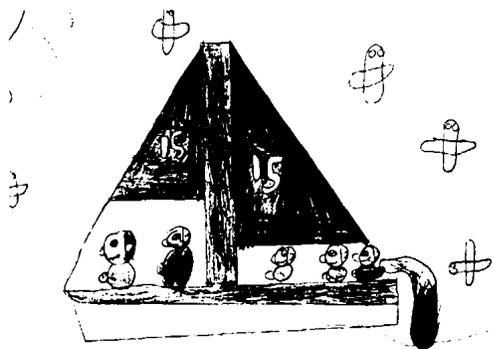
The Woods Family's Sailing Experiences

LAST SUMMER by Thomas Woods (10)

Last summer during my holiday in Wells, I went out one day in Blue Peter at high tide for the first time. Granny and Mummy came in Marsh Molly, our other boat, and took some pictures of me. It was really fun and now I go out to sail in the quay with William canoeing and our friend Katie in her Topper. I am really looking forward to coming to the sailing course next year, I have been going to Brancaster for sailing lessons for the last two years. I like going up to East Hills in Marsh Molly, but I am hoping to tackle to task of sailing in Blue Peter on my own, more often.

MY SUMMER IN WELLS by William Woods (9)

Last summer I went on holiday to Wells for four weeks. I went with Thomas, Charlotte, Granny, Mummy and some of the time Dad. We have a sailing and rowing boat called Blue Peter. We also have a Stiffkey Cockle called Marsh Molly. I have a canoe called Red Dragon. At low tide me, Thomas and Katie from the Shipwrights go sailing in her Topper, our dinghy. At high tide me and my family sail Marsh Molly up to East Hills and round to Holkham beach. One day it was really hot and we sailed round to Holkham beach and sat eating out picnic watching the Sharpies racing. I really enjoy sailing and canoeing and am looking forward to being old enough to come on the sailing course with Thomas.



By Charlotte Woods - Aged 6

CRUISER NOTES

There has been an increase in the number of Club members sailing both open day boats, of the Drascombe, Cockle and Oyster type, and yachts of various classes. Although the Club does not have a cruising fleet a number of Club members completed enjoyable coastal passages from Wells last year.

Several members actively supported social and racing events organised by the Wells Cruising Association, culminating in a 30 mile race around the buoys for The 'Wells Golden Cockle. This was a joint race for members of the Association and the Brancaster Staithe S.C. Richard and Carolyn Marks did an excellent job as O.D.'s, patiently waiting until all the yachts had finished, despite their parrot being seasick! The race was won by Tony Cross in **Concorde** for B.S.S.C., with **Ardea** coming second for Wells, on handicap.

The new season has already got off to an enjoyable start with a get together and supper at B.S.S.C. at which a number of yachtsmen described previous voyages completed. We look forward to the visit of the B.S.S.C. cruisers to W.S.C. on May 20.

Peter Terrington

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EDITOR'S NOTE:-

Many thanks to all those who have contributed to this issue. Do please keep sending me your articles, if possible either as a Word document or as a rich text file (.rtf), on disk or by e-mail.

You will see Ed has kindly sponsored this issue and we are looking for sponsors for future issues to cover the printing costs. Please let us know if you would be prepared to help.

Jean Terrington
Tel/Fax 01328711126
E-mail Jean.Terrington@farmline.com

TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM CRACKNELL

Andrew and I have been asked to write a little about William's life, in sailing and in his connection with the Club. It is difficult to sum up a life in so few words particularly when it is for a person who is so much part of the fabric of ones life and for whom we had so much love and admiration, a brother one could look up to without feeling competitive. So close to the event it is difficult to celebrate his life when one feels such a deep sadness and incomprehension at his tragic loss.

As with all those who crewed him we were made to feel very special, not simply that the race results were so good but because when in a boat with William his confidence rubbed off. One felt that whatever situation arose he would be up to it which always made sailing with him an enjoyable experience.

William's love of sailing naturally led on to his career in boatbuilding which was to be the core of his adult life, it was what he loved and excelled in. He continually amazed us with his skill and his humble accounts of his feats of building.

Lorraine assures us that he was no saint, but, in a vain attempt to balance the sadness, one remembers only the happy times. We hope that this will bring pleasure, some may remember the events described and for others we hope it will bring to mind their own happy memories of William and of sailing at Wells.

William's first experience of sailing was in father's Sharpie being given lifts back from the starting hut and special outings to the East Hills. His first experience at the helm was probably in that Sharpie. However, his first time in command of the boat was in a Cadet father had bought two *Moonstone* and *Moonshine* to teach us to sail in. His teaching techniques were reminiscent of the time he taught us to swim (in that case he had contrived a mud slide into a deep pool of water). In our first lesson he put us in one of the Cadets with instructions on which ropes to pull we were then shoved out from the sailing club slipway into an incoming evening tide. There wasn't too much wind but enough to capsize us midstream. The Cadet is fitted with lifting handles on the foredeck and William and I took it in turns to hold onto the one that was above water until we were rescued by Tom Dack in a dinghy. William having been generous with my

time on the handle was the more waterlogged, Tom cured this by holding him up by his feet to let the water drain out.

Inspired by this early experience William and I went on to sail the Cadets and subsequently our Heron *Lazy Trout*, 1208, in which we successfully raced for several seasons. In one season we won all of the handicap trophies which Myrtle French presented to us in a cardboard box.

As we grew the Heron was exchanged for *Matilda* Lightweight Sharpie 2, which we sailed for several seasons mostly with Robert Dominy as third crew member but also with various others. The third hand should have been the mainsheet man but rarely fulfilled his duties as William liked to keep control of the boat in a hands-on fashion rather than through instruction, I don't believe that Robert was ever allowed the mainsheet while we were actually racing!

One of Andrew's childhood memories is of William confidently taking him out in the Lightweight, without a third crew. He was so small at the time that when William had finally persuaded him out onto the trapeze he found that his arms were too short to reach the handle to get back in.

The Lightweight Sharpie was not the most stable of boats and I have many memories of looking up from the water to see William perched on the side of the boat, perfectly dry, even after the more spectacular capsizes.

Early on William demonstrated his skill at helming a twelve square metre Sharpie in a European Championships at Brancaster Staithe, In one race everyone chose to start on starboard tack, William confidently set out on port, and crossed the whole fleet, we held the lead for the next few buoys but were passed by Tony when heading for the sea mark (he did have the advantage of knowing where it was!).

At about this time William went away to Woodbridge to start his boatbuilding apprenticeship at Whisstocks, however he still came home to Wells every weekend to sail.

After the Lightweight William moved



onto Enterprise sailing with Andrew as crew in which he was equally successful and once again, during one season's racing, swept the board of all but one of the trophies. One of his competitors at that time was Lorraine Mitchell crewing Jean Oliver in Nonny Mouse, a boat that William surveyed for Jean before she bought it.

William would often sail a race or two in the North West Norfolk Week series and was dubbed 'super skip' by the Saunders who asked him to helm their Enterprise *Black Bananas*.

William then bought *Albatross*, K8 with David Emerson and rebuilt it to a quality for which he became renowned in all his work. They sailed the boat to victory in its first race on the water despite having some teething problems with the mast in early trials it bowed outside the shrouds!

Towing K8 back from an open weekend in Lymington William was involved in a terrible accident in which the boat, in collision with another car was thrown from its trailer and severely damaged. The mistake had been his. Maybe to remind himself of his vulnerability and the ease by which these mistakes can be made he fixed a piece of the smashed boat's chine to his workshop door. It stayed there for the rest of his life, and was chosen by Lorraine to be one of the items to be buried with him.

One of the great surprises of William's sailing career was not on the water but at an Annual Dinner. After we had all eaten he, without prompt, stood up and began a speech, in fact a mini prize-giving, of his own. He had made or bought all of the trophies and awarded them for events that the recipients would rather not have had mentioned. The speech showed William to be perceptive and funny to a degree that nobody had ever been aware of before.

William sailed with David in *Albatross* or the 'Albert Ross' as he called it for several seasons, including traveling far-afield to Europeans and Nationals. Lorraine began crewing William and eventually, David sold his share of the boat to Lorraine.

William and Lorraine were married in 1988 and continued to sail together, successful despite their light weight. Lorraine did not feel up to crewing in big competitions and Andrew or I crewed for these. Andrew was asked to crew in the 1991 Europeans at Brancaster. He was attracted to a blonde girl who was crewing John Balls in *Whimbrel*. He asked her if he

could have a kiss on the condition that he won the next race, she agreed and William obliged by winning that race. Andrew got his kiss.

William and Lorraine's determination to start a family and, despite early difficulties, to their pride and everyone's delight Emily was born. Soon plans were afoot to build a house in Wells and their second child, Matthew, appeared on the scene, a miniature version of William.

Despite being so busy in his home life William still managed to tit in the occasional sail. As successful as ever he was always up with the leaders when he did.

After several seasons of intermittent sailing William decided to enter the British Sharpie Championships in Wells. In one memorable race we were over the line at the start, there was not much wind and a good tide, as we came round for a second attempt we hit the start mark. Coming round again William observed that the whole fleet had sailed in toward the shore and were now some distance away. Unflustered, he set out on the opposite tack. We reached the first mark several lengths ahead of the next Sharpie. We didn't win that race, but, as Paddy Spink in *Anna Marie* neared the finish line, now almost a leg ahead of us and the rest of the fleet William commented 'If I've built that boat right the mast should snap about now!'

William's last race was sailed with Sally in the Europeans at Brancaster in *Marionette*, K58 another fine example of his skill in Sharpie restoration. I will always remember Sally excitedly ringing me up to tell me not only how well they had done but also by how many places they had beaten Richard and Robert. She went on to say that she had felt unfamiliar with the boat and how much William had helped her, 'You'll never guess what he did' she asked, I guessed at the most unlikely possibility, 'Put the jib pole out for you?' '...Yes!', she said, 'I dropped it, so he just grabbed it out of the bottom of the boat with his spare hand and stuck it through the clew eye. I couldn't believe it!'

This account appears to skim lightly over William's life it does not tell of his determination or the tireless hard work behind all of his successes. William was a thoughtful man with simple values to which he adhered. He was sought by many for his advice and for the enjoyment of his good humoured approach to all aspects of life.

Ben & Andrew Cracknell