

# **THE HISTORY OF WESTON SAILING CLUB**

1952 to 1977

Compiled

By Barbara Hutton

## Contents

Chapter Four – Home Sweet Home .....	3
Chapter Four – The Fleets .....	20
ENTERPRISE .....	20
MIRROR .....	24
1968 FLEET POLICY DECISIONS.....	26
HORNET .....	28
UNICORN .....	29
SOLO .....	30
CONTENDER .....	32
LASER.....	34
OPTIMIST.....	34
Chapter Six – Day by Day .....	37

## Chapter Four – Home Sweet Home

After travelling the world with the 505's, we now return to Weston and the problem that concerned everyone - the provision of some sort of Club premises.

Following the temporary H.Q. at the Sun Hotel in Weston Lane immediately after the founding of the Club, the first real home was the pound near the old Rolling Mills with an Anderson Shelter for storing gear, but no accommodation for people. Then in 1954 the Council published a plan to develop the shore into a wonderful seaside area with football and hockey pitches, an athletics track and pavilion, a bathing pool, restaurant, bandstand, small games area, boating lake, children's play area, a woodland park, a model yacht pond and facilities for a sailing club. In preparation for this grand scheme, the Club was moved 200 - 300 yards downstream to a site near where the Old Seaweed Hut had been.

Once more a pound was fenced in and levelled using gravel from a local cemetery, 10 lorry loads of it; the lorry loaned by J.P. Marks and Sons and the muscle power provided by Frank Morris and Bert Drought and cadets D« Prince and J. Morris. During the season an old ex-army hut in Bishops Waltham was bought for about £60, dismantled and transported to Weston Shore, but on close inspection it was found to be in poor condition and the sub-committee in charge decided that it should be burnt. Frank and Bert thought it could be saved, so that winter they spent hours and hours renewing parts and preparing it for erection. Then with the help of George Gray and Andrew Stout, they laid some foundations, put up the hut and members at least had a roof over their heads.

Bert Drought obtained 2 pieces of topmast from a very old J Class yacht and made a flagpole, then he and Frank Morris put a tabernacle in front of the club house, erected the flagpole and decorated the base with a compass rose. Two old cannon barrels, which had been the corner posts in the ground at the Weston Arch near the Sun Hotel, were borrowed on a long (very long) loan from Southampton Corporation and mounted on wooden carriages; these were made by Frank and Bert from a copy Frank took with the help of the Curator of the Tudor House Museum.

The hut was pretty primitive, no water, no electricity, no gas, no drains or showers, and objections were made to its use until public loos were installed further down the shore, but thanks to Frank and Bert who had done the major part of the work and provided a lot of the materials themselves, it was better than nothing. But when it was apparent that the super sea-side facilities had disappeared into the Council's files, and the number of members had increased it is not surprising that there was an urge to find new premises.

It happened by chance that Alan Haggard heard that Middlesex County Council, the owners of Netley Convalescent Home and grounds, wanted to sell them. Alan approached Alderman Matthews and suggested that Southampton Council bought the Home and let W.S.C. have part of the grounds for new club premises. The Council did buy it and began to



Jumpaheads waiting for the tide to come in



View from the Bridge

plan a big public development with restaurant, car parks etc. In 1959 Alan continued his campaign for W.S.C. when as the newly elected Commodore of the Club, he was made chairman of a sub-committee empowered to start negotiations with the Council. The following resume written in the summer edition of the 1961 Gybe-Ho tells us what happened

'Negotiations were opened with the Corporation and the situation placed before the Club who were faced with the alternatives of occupying part of a building as tenants of the Corporation or endeavouring to obtain a site and provide its own buildings. The Club was almost unanimous in its wish to provide its own buildings. After this decision further meetings took place with the Corporation and the Club's wishes were made known, and as a result the Corporation agreed to develop the area for sailing and lease a site to the Weston S.C. for the erection of a club house and boat pound and asked that the plans be developed with close consultation between the Club and the Corporation. Whilst the Corporation have not yet started planning, committees have been formed from within the Club to handle the new project and the financing thereof. As a result of the deliberations of these committees it became apparent that the Club would have to be built in several stages owing to financial limitations....

The minimum requirements would be a club with bar for counter meals and drinks, lavatories, showers, changing rooms and pound space. This would involve an estimated expenditure of some £5,000.

(Gybe-Ho 1961)

It was understood that the Corporation would prepare the pound, lay the drains and an access road and provide a starters<sup>1</sup> hut.

It had been appreciated even in 1959, that negotiations and building would take some time and agreement had been reached with the Corporation to put a temporary extension onto the existing pound, also, a year later, permission was given to erect a changing hut alongside the main hut. Efforts were also made to amass a building fund by investing any surplus club funds in Premium Bonds, and running various functions such as the Cadet Christmas Party and Draws to make a profit. There was also a steady profit from the catering service and that good old stand-by a Jumble Sale. But there was disagreement among the members of the Committee (then the Council), some of the long-standing and founder members, who although not very active sailing, still wanted to keep the Club as it was, and the newer members who were keen to improve both the facilities and the sailing, particularly the dinghy racing. The result was lack of co-ordination of the efforts put into planning the future, and there was little progress to be reported to the A.G.M. 1961 by the development sub-committee

'.... The Southampton Borough Council's provisional offer was for a one acre site, the position of which was not entirely satisfactory to the Club ....

.... we would plan on being at our present site for at least two more seasons.'

(Minute Book 22.11.61)

The situation remained much the same until Eric McGill, who had joined the Club in 1960, was taken along to see the possible site by Harry Smallwood. Eric was enthusiastic about the idea and made some sketches and an estimate of costs, he also allowed himself to be persuaded to stand as a candidate for the Committee to be elected at the 1962 A.G.M.

That year the Committee voted in, was far more representative of the Club than ever before as it was elected by postal votes; previously nominations had been taken and voted on by the few members who were prepared to put up with the cramped conditions of an A.G.M. in the hut. In subsequent years the A.G.M. was held in a room in an hotel, hired for the evening, until the occupation of the present club house provided suitable accommodation. At the first meeting of that new Committee Eric McGill, the Vice-Chairman, was made convener of the development sub-committee because of his interest in the proposed move and his specialist knowledge. The terms of reference were...

'To press on with all possible speed with negotiations and general plans for the proposed removal of the Club from the present site to a new site at Netley.

To consider as far as possible the facilities required at the new site and the costs involved.

To investigate ways and means of obtaining special grants and similar financial assistance over and above such funds as may be raised in normal ways by the Finance sub-committee.'

(Minute Book 5.12.62)

The new Committee under the enthusiastic and able leadership of Harry Smallwood, as Chairman, supported by Les Hawkyard as Hon. Secretary, and encouraged by the Commodore Alan Haggard, soon got down to the job of planning what and how. Mac comments that at the time...

'on the strength of the club's financial resources and income, the whole idea of a new club house was quite ludicrous.'

Money was of prime importance and although the usual ideas of dances, raffles, jumble sales, treasure hunts etc. were very valuable, they involved a few people in a lot of hard work and did not bring in enough, quickly enough, so Mac thought up and launched a scheme to bring in 'big money', - this was the Subscription Rebate Scheme. Members were sold registered and numbered certificates; cost £5 each, which entitled the holder to a discount of 3/9d. (or 3.75% interest) on his or her annual club subscription. The maximum permissible investment was £100. Mac comments that a surprising number of members bought the full quota, but the bulk of the money came from those buying about 5. The idea of the scheme was put over by means of special meetings, drawings and an 8-page brochure entitled 'All Together Now', which was sent to every member; it had been produced by Mac working in the evening on his firm's photo-copying machine.

'All Together Now' explained the situation to members as follows...

'The Southampton Corporation plans to extend the shore road and the promenade northwards towards Woolston and this will



sweep away the club's present place. However, the Corporation is being most helpful; it has offered us a fine one-acre site at the north end of Netley Park and it has undertaken to rebuild the sea wall, provide a slip-way and hard, clean up the foreshore and build a starting-box - altogether a very generous offer indeed. What we have to do ourselves is to build a new club house and put up a fence around our site.'

The S.R. Scheme was explained and the attractions of a beautiful new club house enumerated.

'.... a pleasant setting of grass and trees, better foreshore and slipway.  
.... it (the club house) not only provides for sailing needs - it is suitable for social gatherings and there is no reason why it should not be used all the year round ....  
.... good changing rooms are provided and I draw your attention to the showers and lavatory accommodation, the absence of which is such a disadvantage at our present place. Hot water will be provided, so there is no reason why members should not sail after the end of the normal season - knowing that a hot shower and a warm room will be waiting for them after a sail on a cold winter day.  
.... Finally, I am sure that the move to Netley with the better facilities which are envisaged, will result in a big increase in membership; my own opinion is that the club will quickly reach the 400 mark and may well go up to 500 members. Weston can, therefore, become a very big club and that will bring a great many advantages - larger classes, more classes, more competitions, more activity all round.'

(All Together Now 1963)

The S.R. certificates sold slowly at first, but after more 'prodding' and a masterly performance by Mac at the 1963 A.G.M. when he had all the answers ready to convince the doubters, members did support the scheme and nearly £3,000 was raised in this way. The idea was to set aside a sum for redemption of certificates each year from 1965 onwards, choosing which, by means of a draw. Repayments took longer than was then anticipated and it was June 1973 before the Committee minuted

'The last of the S.R. certificates has now been redeemed.'

(Minute Book 14.6.73)

The other source of financial assistance organised by Mac was a Ministry of Education grant. This could be as much as £1 for £1 put up by the applicant if the Ministry was satisfied that the project was for a properly constituted organisation with some funds available. Mac did convince the Ministry and achieved better than £1/£1, but it involved an enormous amount of work and letter writing. The plans had to be redesigned, the rules of the Club rewritten and passed and the Club built up generally into a viable organisation.

With the plan for raising funds underway, Mac started on a publicity campaign both to attract new members, whose subscriptions

would "be very useful swelling club funds, and to bring the Club to the notice of the public generally. Mac wrote reports of the activities for the local newspapers, frequently mentioning the plans for new premises at Netley Castle; also the Committee accepted the offer of a free stand at the 1963 Southampton Show. The original allocation was only a small stand, but it was found that it could be expanded considerably and dinghies under full sail were displayed, a 505, an Enterprise, an OK and a Mirror, together with trophies, a plan of the sailing area and photographs. Harry Smallwood and Charlie Clifford had made the Mirror from a kit bought by the Club, during the Show it was raffled to the public by enthusiastic helpers and made quite a lot of money for the Building Fund. One side effect of having a stand at the Show was described by Gybe-Ho

'.... Some ingenious person had written 'WESTON SAILING CLUB' in international code flags above the stand. (Sunday's racing was started with a shirt and a pair of trousers - it seemed to work just as effectively as the Blue Peter).

(Gybe-Ho 1963)

Mac commented that the publicity and money raising events certainly brought members close together and club spirits and morale improved enormously.

During 1963 and 64 negotiations continued with Southampton Corporation, as Mac says

'.... we stood high in the estimation of Southampton Corporation. Furthermore we were very fortunate in that certain members of the City Council were very keen on sailing facilities in general and Weston Sailing Club in particular. .... But it was the Corporation's intention to set up, at some later date, a public pound alongside the club pound and WSC would be required to manage this on behalf of the Corporation. We readily agreed to this proposition.'

The idea was to have a flexible division between the two pounds until it was seen how many berths satisfied the respective demands; members probably did not realise that until 1973 when we took on the lease of the adjacent area and extended the present club pound, the proposition was always a possibility, it certainly complicated the planning. For instance, the club drainage and water supply would be dependent on the position of public lavatories, and if there was a free car park for the Corporation pound why should the Club have to pay rent for their car park area. But at the same time it brought advantages as the Corporation again generously offered to be responsible for the making of the two pounds, the slipway and a starting hut, as well as the entrance road.

The new site, although belonging to Southampton, lay within the County area and nothing could be done without the approval of the various departments of Hampshire County Council; this still applies. Press cuttings tell the story of the added frustrations.



'Because they consider the area so attractive members of the Hampshire Planning Committee decided yesterday to seek more information about Southampton Council's proposal to establish a small boat sailing centre and open space at Netley. They deferred decision on the application which includes a car park, boat pound, club house and public lavatories on 10 acres of land adjoining Netley Castle, Abbey Hill.'

(Southern Evening Echo 4.4.64)

'Hampshire County Planning approval is still awaited for the development of the waterfront and foreshore at Netley Castle . as a sailing centre

....

The whole scheme will extend sailing facilities both for the club and non-members. The only thing standing in the way is the difficulty of getting planning permission.'

(Southern Evening Echo 9.4.64)

'Why is it taking so long to finalise arrangements for the proposed new Netley Castle sailing centre, Councillor Mrs. L.A. Ironside asked at yesterday's meeting of Southampton City Council.

Councillor J. Hardie explained that the proposed new centre was outside the city boundary and there had been many difficulties ..... "We have been pressing for this for a long time" he said.

"But it had to be remembered that they were dealing with another authority".'

(Southern Evening Echo 15.8.65)

By September 1965 just as most of the delaying factors had been resolved, with the whole scheme approved in. the Corporation's estimate for 1966, with a Ministry of Education grant of £3,000 promised, and club funds in a good state, the blow fell. Because of the shaky state of the national economy, the Government of the day put a 'squeeze' on both Ministry grants and capital expenditure by local authorities; the move was delayed yet again.

There was nothing for it but to make the best of the very inadequate facilities at the old site. Mac wrote to the Town Clerk pointing out how there had been a steady influx of new members, (there were approximately 200 members and 80 boats in 1965) attracted by the prospect of the new premises, and to give them something reasonable for the 1966 season, he requested permission to extend the pound yet again and to put up another hut for changing, explaining that

' .... As you know the Netley scheme has been talked about for a very long time now and ordinary members, who do not appreciate the problems involved, are becoming rather fed up with the delays. The above proposals, however, might keep them happy a little longer. '

(E. McGill - correspondence)

Agreement was reached with the Corporation on terms of an annual tenancy and the pound was extended to its final size of approximately 100 x 15 yards. Mac borrowed a site hut to use as the men's changing room, which released the small hut loaned by Harry Smallwood for the ladies, giving them more room than the previous curtained-off corner, although they did have to share it with the rescue boat engine.



SPEAKER'S HOUSE

S.W.1

March 17.66

My dear Mr. McGill,

I now enclose  
further correspondence from  
the Minister.

I am glad to  
have helped.

Best regards  
H. MacKinnon

Speaker

Ken Andrew, one of the new 1965 members described conditions in the hut to me as follows

'The club house was approximately 28' long by 15' wide, entering through a door about halfway along. On wet and stormy days this had to be accomplished with speed and hunched shoulders for a steady stream of rainwater poured onto the steps leading to the door. Inside the brown lino covered floor was indistinguishable from the half inch or so of muddy brown water brought in by shoes and wet suits. There was a counter some 6' long, behind which the "ladies of the kitchen" served. Water was brought in from the local garage " by club members in two large wire encased plastic containers; it was heated by calor gas, washing up done in a small hand' basin, frying on a calor gas stove, with lighting also taken from a calor gas bottle .... The men's changing room was another hut festooned with sails and spars inside its roof, and muddy gravel on the floor, no heat or lighting - many used to drive home in wet suits during the frost-bites.... The toilets for all were in the public block 100 yards away.... Attached to the building on the seaward side was an open "bridge", the height of the eaves, supported by stanchions and entry afforded by a companionway type ladder.... The Officer of the Day stood on his "Bridge" open to all weathers save that the front rails were filled in with a flag holder board, which allowed three painted boards (as flags) to be dropped or raised. The flag halyards for cloth flags were tied onto the rails nearby, they were flown from the tall crosstreed mast which defined the starting line.... If the wind was offshore, those on the "Bridge" had an additional hazard during the colder months that of near suffocation by the smoke and fumes from the potbellied stove in the club house below. O.o.D.'s could get their own back some days, generally an open meeting one, by not stamping on the "Bridge" floor to give those in the club house warning of the firing of the cannons.'

I gather Committee members were also in danger of suffocation from the stove during winter Committee meetings and it was the duty of the first to arrive to light it; all the Committee members were expected to bring wood with them to "feed" the stove.

Despite all the difficulties the Club continued to attract members, the financial resources grew, Jim Warren kept up the publicity campaign and the optimism and spirit of camaraderie did not flag; this was greatly helped by the ladies of the kitchen, who provided food and friendliness, and turned in a big profit each year.

Mac continued his efforts, trying to negotiate an interim arrangement with the Corporation, and he re-opened the S.R. scheme to boost finances. In March 1966 the 'squeeze' eased and the Club was notified that the Ministry of Education grant was now available; but restrictions on local authority capital expenditure remained. Mac wrote to Horace King, (now Lord Mowbray King) then speaker of the House of Commons and M.P. for the Weston area, to enlist his help. After much correspondence, in January 1967 the development sub-committee were at last able to report that at a meeting with the Corporation





The new Clubhouse under construction 1968



Public Lands committee, it was agreed in principle that the Club could proceed. In April, after much work on costing, detailed drawing, proposals and counter proposals, the Corporation approved an expenditure of £5,000 on a limited first stage of the Netley Sailing Centre, which would let the Club establish itself on the site.

In May a letter was sent to all members

'Forget the disappointments of recent years; the Club is virtually on the move I .... You will agree that although some improvements can possibly be made later, the standard of amenities ultimately available to members will be very largely determined by the original design and construction of the new premises. It is also obvious that the amount of money available must be known before final plans are drawn up and decided upon and the contracts placed. Your development committee feels that to have another £1,000 would considerably improve our position.... '

(Club Records)

Once again the S.R. scheme was recommended to members and on the strength of the extra £s the Club would put up, Mac negotiated an increase in the Ministry of Education grant. Placing contracts and the final details, including persuading the Corporation to change the site of the club house from an area that was found to be very boggy, to the present situation, did inevitably take longer than hoped.

There was £13,000 to spend and Mac found that it was impossible to get one contractor to do the whole job for that amount, so he broke it down to a number of separate contracts. His own firm negotiated with the Corporation to construct the boat pound, slip-way and entrance road, and to lay the foundations and drains of the club house on a 'no profit' basis. The club house itself was put up by Vic Hallam Ltd., Southern Electricity Board put in the electrical installation and a local plumber the necessary plumbing, club members fitted and finished the inside. In this way the whole job was done within the amount available and at a cost to the Club of £4000.

In February 1968 it was possible to say that a start had been made and club members were warned that voluntary efforts would be expected from them -

1. Collecting from the beach all large stones for use in the sea wall.  
These big stones are dangerous for dinghies anyway.
2. Making all internal fitments in the kitchen and changing rooms - work tops, cupboards, seats, lockers, coat hooks etc., etc.
3. Internal and external painting of the club house.
4. Laying paving slabs and turves. '

(Club Records)

By May the foundations and main structure of the club house were





The Netley site complete and in use





completed and the voluntary labour moved in. Inevitably it was a small percentage of members who did turn up regularly; Mac comments that he cannot hope to remember the names of everyone who contributed in one way or another, but there were outstanding efforts by people like Harry Smallwood, chairman since 1963 Larry Marks, Don Mould, Jim Wishart, Colin Steele, Tony Young, and Kay Button, Treasurer since 1963; Phyl Bound told me how the Ladies held a 'Sewing Bee' to make the curtains, and a group of members from the Basingstoke area, John Davies, Jim Warren, Ray Phillis and George Jones, who were not near enough to help in the evening work parties, prepared all the kitchen fittings at home as their contribution towards the club house. Most of the equipment was given and enough bits and pieces of furniture to provide the bare essentials. How many current members recognise the B.O.A.C. Melaware crockery!

Needless to say there were snags during the building, work continued all summer so much so that one committee meeting ended.

'Due to shortage of members present at the meeting, as the others were working on the new club house, the meeting was declared closed.'

(Minute Book 27.5.68)

Ken remembers an earlier meeting being held in an unheated builder's site caravan, but by the end of September it was nearly ready and the Corporation agreed that the official tenancy should start from 1st October 1968.

Mac admits that he had not really foreseen in 1962 what he was letting himself in for and at times it did seem an almost impossible task, personally he says that he has derived a tremendous kick from succeeding and seeing his predictions of a thriving club of 400-500 members materialise. It is certain that without his drive and persistence to go for the best possible, Weston S.C. would not have "the much admired and envied facilities that we now have on Abbey Hill; there might have been a reduced plan put into operation, or it is quite possible that the Club would have disintegrated altogether, as in 1962 it was at a low point.

To complete the story of our home, work continued clearing and tidying up, bits of the old site were incorporated in the new. The cross-treed mast that had marked the starting line and came originally from a J Class yacht, is now in front of the club house by the sea wall and the club burgee is flown from it. The old flagboard that had kept some of the bad weather off the O.o.D's was turned into the shield on the front of the starters' hut, soon to be redundant again when a new, super starters' hut, is built. The Ladies changing hut was used as a Bosun's hut for storing the rescue boat engine and bits and pieces, until in 1972 it too was replaced by the present boat house, which provides covered storage for the boats and removed the rescue boat operators' task of having first to manhandle the engine (now engines) onto the boats before going afloat. The old Ship's guns and their carriages were also moved and are now under the starters' hut. The club house itself was sold to the Education Department of the Corporation and is now used by the Southampton Schools Sailing Association. At first the starters' hut at the new site was a walk-in building on the ground, then suddenly one weekend in 1971 a working party of the



The Bar end of the Clubhouse. Completed 1974



The new Starters Box. Completed 1977

biggest members of the Club hoisted it up onto stilts to tree top level and the O.O.D's were back to ladder climbing to perform their duties.

Development plans continued, already by 1970 car parking was becoming a problem on sunny summer weekends, and Mac once more opened negotiations with the Corporation for a bigger car park and boat pound and also for a second slip-way, at the instigation this time of the committee chairman, Derek Ide. Much paperwork passed to and fro with Mac trying to obtain terms most favourable to the Club; the negotiations were eventually completed by Gordon Henry, who also 'inherited' the task of organising the job. This was done partly by working parties of club members and partly by contract and with the invaluable help of equipment owned by Larry Marks. Since then we have not only benefited from having more than a foot allowance between boats, but also from knowing that there will never be a public pound next to ours. 'While building the second slip-way (or beach access to give it its official name) a wash down area was added behind -the starters\* hut, providing a facility enjoyed by few clubs; before it had been possible to wash the boats on the slip-way, but this tended to cause bad jams as it was the only access to and from the water, and those waiting to hose down boats queued in the water.

For some years there had been discussion about the desirability of applying for a Club Registration Certificate, i.e. a bar licence; members were not keen on the idea with only one general clubroom, but when it was found possible to raise a loan from a Brewery which would enable an extension to be built onto the club house at the same time as installing a bar, approval was given. During the summer of 1973 Derek Laverick and Ted Grimmer made enquiries and negotiated a loan, and as Hon.Secretary I went through the legal procedure of applying for a Club Registration Certificate, which was granted in December 1973. In the winter following, despite a series of gales, the walls were 'pushed out' and the lounge and bar added. The work was done under the supervision of Gordon Henry, who was also responsible for the plans and the negotiations for building permission; most of it was done professionally, but by club members who gave a lot of their time and professional advice free. Ian Henry was the builder, Jack White the interior fitter, Dave Smith the adviser on decor and Derek Ide re-vamped the chairs, other club members helped with the work generally. When sitting comfortably in the club house one should be grateful to Derek, because he was the one who had earlier bought the low chairs to replace the original motley collection of furniture, he raised the money by appealing for donations from club members. Fortunately, there have always been people with faith in the Club and the support was immediate when the Commodore, Tim Hockin, circulated a letter to all members.

'Due to continually rising prices during the building period, the final cost to the Club has exceeded the original estimate, so that the present financial situation forces the Committee to consider ways of raising £1,000 to carry us through the next few months ....

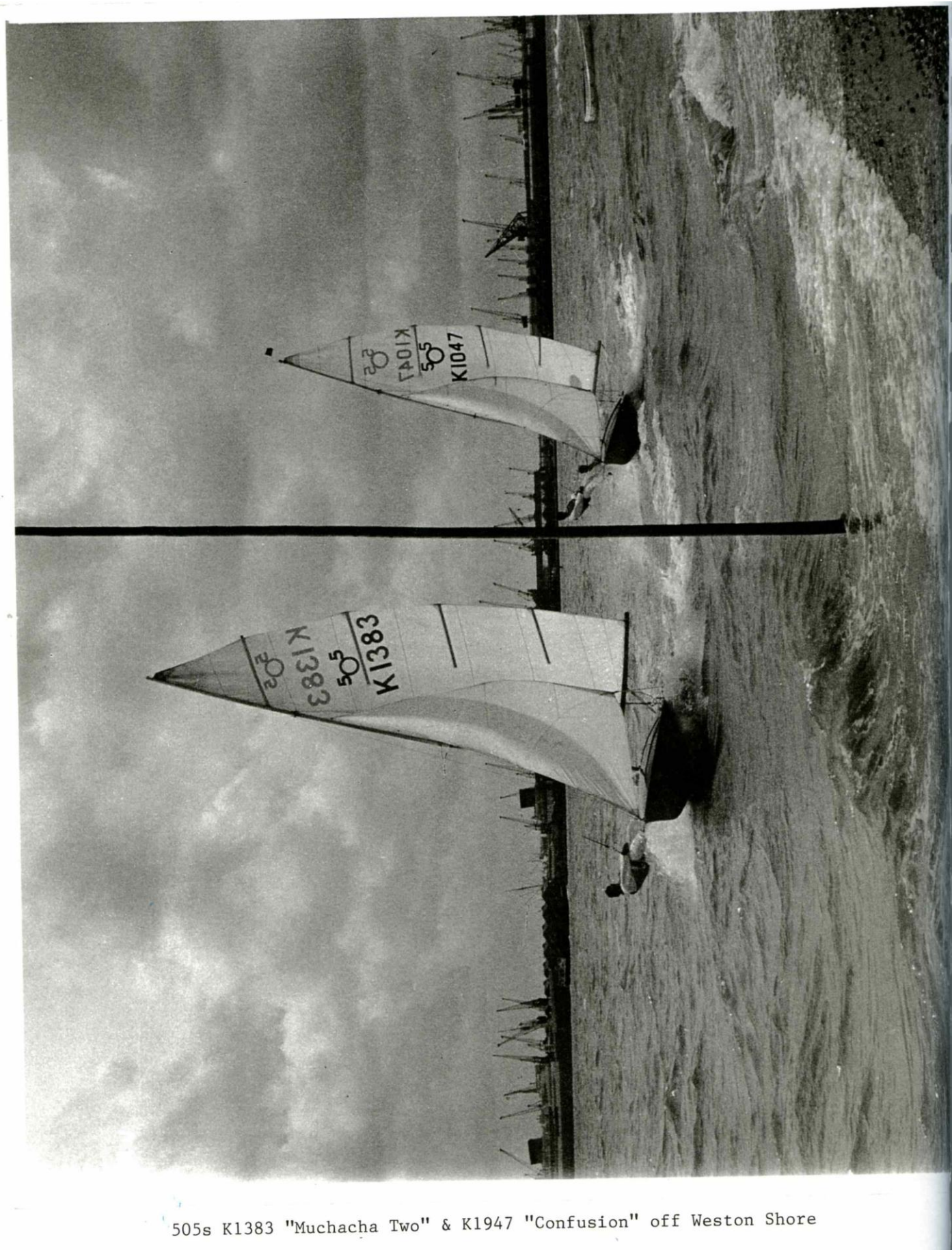
Rather than borrow expensively from outside....

I appeal to those members who feel they can, to pay their Subscriptions and pound rents for 1975 now.'

(Circular letter 18.5.74)

During his term of office as Rear and then Vice-Commodore with responsibility for the club house and pound, Gordon Henry gradually improved facilities by organising such things as an extractor fan in the kitchen, a sink in the men's changing room for washing wet suits (with the aim of preserving the hot water for the showers), more filling in the pound to improve the muddy berths, the shelves and pigeon-holes in the entrance hall as well as improving the appearance of the entrance with the Honours and Officers board, and now the work on a new starters' hut, which may be completed by the time this is read. Gordon carried on the work started by Mac, bringing it all to fruition and providing us with a very comfortable and practical home. We are eternally grateful to them both.





505s K1383 "Muchacha Two" & K1947 "Confusion" off Weston Shore

## Chapter Four – The Fleets

To return to the prime interest of the Club - boats and sailing. Each year during the life of the Club there has been a programme of events arranged to be sailed from Weston S.C. At first it was a mixture of races, cruises and trophy events, then fewer cruises and some novelty races, until the present pattern of Series' of class racing and Open Meetings gradually evolved. During the first years there were both cruisers and dinghies, so that for some events the cruisers would provide both rescue services and carrying capacity for family supporters, they would also have their own races. Listed in the past programmes have been such events as the "Picnic Cruise", "Cruise S.W.S.A. Calshot", "Treasure Hunt", "Sail Stretcher", "Early Bird Handicap", "Class Race Jolly Sailor", "Easter Bonnet Race", and "Seamanship Race", as well as points racing, although Colin Steele comments that several of the listed novelty races turned into normal races with no novel twists. Before the days of wet suits the season was from April to early October, this was extended in 1965 to include a Frostbite Series and in the 1970's to start in March and continue until the end of December. Yet even with an extra three months compared with 1977, "to prepare boats for the coming season, there was still the need for the annual comment such as

'Let everyone make up their minds that their boats will sail during the second half of the season. The pound doesn't need weighing down.'

(Gybe-Ho 1961)

In 1960 the active fleets were the 505, Enterprise and Jumpyhead, with class starts also for Darings and Weston Sharpies. The successes of Larry Marks and Keith Paul in the 505 fleet have already been referred to, and there was also considerable activity among the 'home' fleet.

'In the absence of Keith Paul and Larry Marks, lesser mortals have enjoyed the heady wine of a transomless horizon. The points Series is being hotly contested between John Adams, Peter Button and the recently rejoined Roy Ironside. Bob Sutton and Ivan Phillips revel in lighter conditions and are always a force to be reckoned with. The September Open Meeting .... it was noticed with pleasure, that every £00 in the Club was out racing.'

(Gybe-Ho 1963)

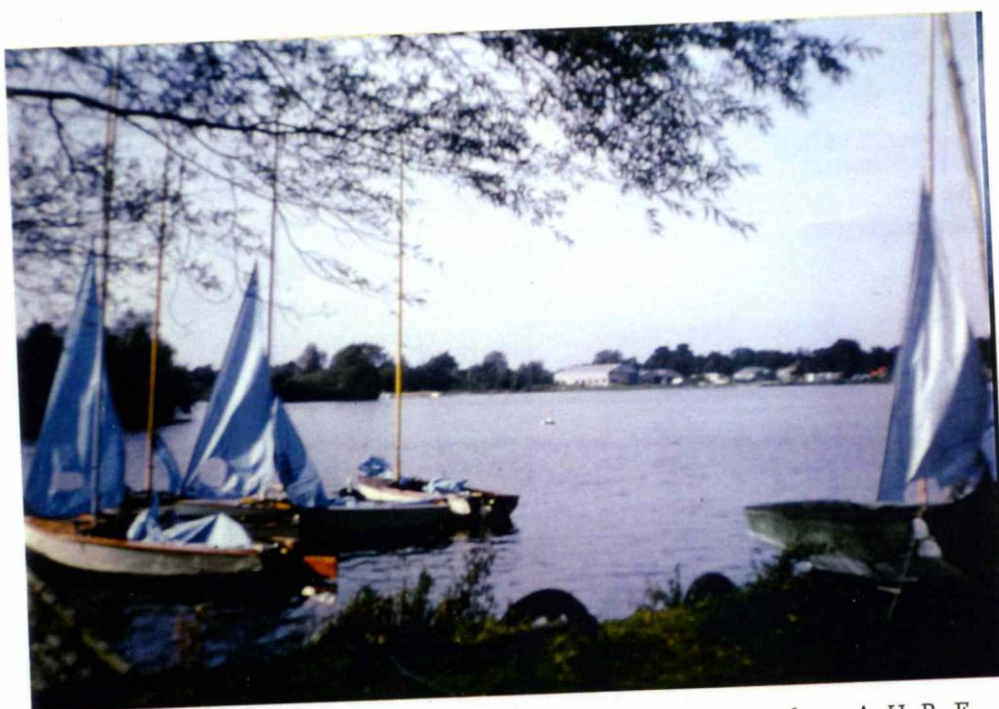
### ENTERPRISE

In 1960 the interest in Enterprises was also growing steadily and there was a fleet of 12 when Bowen Jenkins, the Captain applied to the National Association for a Fleet number: No.47 was allocated. That same year the Enterprises held a successful open meeting in July, for which G.J. Tilling and Son (until 1972 a well-known yacht chandlers in St. Michaels Square), donated a challenge cup. Known as the Tilling Trophy it has been raced for annually since then at the Enterprise Open Meeting. In 1961 team racing was popular, for 505's v. Porchester, and for Enterprises v. Hythe S.C. and the Atomic Weapons Research Establishment S.C. The A.W.R.E. away matches were sailed on a gravel pit at





Enterprise 6720 "Giggles/Plop Two" owned first by Les Hawkyard & then Ken Andrew



The lake at Burghfield venue of the annual match v A.W.R.E.

Burghfield and provided completely different conditions from our home waters, such as beating through a channel 20 feet wide and 100 yards long. There must be many memories of 'ghosting'<sup>1</sup> round the islands of the gravel pit, or as in May 1961 when it was blowing hard Les Hawkyard wrote.

'.... I leave you to imagine what it was like sailing around and occasionally in the lee of small bush covered islands with gaps here and there making funnels for gusts and eddies. At one moment I was becalmed, another dinghy was passing me ten feet to leeward with a fair breeze and two others ten yards ahead were fighting for survival. The race only lasted forty minutes, but most of us, especially the old 'uns were exhausted ..... When we reached the shore after the joy of hearing the finishing bell, with only the mildest interest in our placing, we were greeted by our ladies and supporters who informed us that they had not been entertained so well for ages. Such is life! '

(Gybe-Ho 1961)

Larry Marks and Keith Paul had taken part in an earlier match at A.W.R.E. having been offered the use of boats by Peter Rogers and Charlie Clifford, Keith wrote of it

'Despite the weather five boats and a crowd of supporters went. Three races were organised and courses were set around the many small islands of the gravel pit. Larry Marks and I managed a first and second in each race which must prove something. Perhaps the 505 is a good training boat for the Enterprise.'

(Gybe-Ho 1961)

Peter Rogers may also have been proving something when he borrowed "Confusion", Keith's 505 for the M.N.D.S.F.\* race and won the pennant. There has always been a willingness to lend each other boats and friendliness between the Fleets at Weston, long may it continue.

Enthusiasm in the Enterprise class was maintained with several boats regularly travelling to local Regattas in Southampton Water and Portsmouth Harbour. There were also impromptu cruises, a family weekend at Swanage and winter social get-togethers. By 1963 "the Fleet had increased to 30 and it has remained one of the larger club fleets since then with spells of great activity interspersed with times when hardly a blue sail was to be seen.

Enterprise owners have played an important part in the running of the Club, Don Harvey was Hon.Sec. 1954~57 and Committee Chairman 1958-61; Leslie Hawkyard Hon.Sec. 1960-61; Leslie Gardner Committee Chairman 1961 and 62, followed by Harry Smallwood 1963-69. As Sailing Sec. there was Don Palmer in 1962, then Denis Faithfull 1964 and 65, succeeded by Dave Edgell 1966-69, and Jack Deans 1970 and 71. Ken Andrew was on the Committee from 1968, becoming Vice-Commodore in 1972 and Commodore in 1975. Other active members of the Fleet have been David and Peter Rogers, they later changed to 505's, Charlie Clifford, Roy Willis, Ray Phillis who changed to a Hornet and then a keel boat, Jim Warren, also now a keel boat sailor, Don Mould, Tony Young until he changed to a Unicorn, Dereck Laverick and Stan Hutton until he became a Horneteer. Alan Moody has been with the Fleet for all the years he has

\* N.M.D.S.F. - National Mission for Deep Sea Fishermen.



Two of the early Mirror Fleet. M793 "Pied Piper" J Miles



Mirror Southern Area Championships 1975 at Weston



been with the Club, Lea Swift joined in 1970 and Pete Seaman, a novice to racing in 1971 was keen enough to become Fleet Captain and proceeded to enthuse the other helmsmen so that he handed over an active Fleet to the new Captain, Simon Snow, in 1975. In 1964 there were two lady helmsmen racing regularly, Janet McGill and Gwen Binfield. They were both usually to be found among the leading boats and in 1976 Gwen won most of the Enterprise trophies.

In 1961 the Committee was again considering the future development of the Club and the possible adoption of new classes, because as was then thought

'The Club is about to take big strides forward with the projected move to Netley Castle ....

The most obvious gap at the present time is at the lower end of the scale - i.e. for a boat having less performance than an Enterprise. Such a boat would be suitable for Cadets and for novices of more mature years. It might also fill the bill for older members who still want easy and fairly dry sailing.'

(Gybe-Ho 1961)

For a few years there was a serious attempt to build up a Fleet of O.K.'s, as the boat to fill the 'gap', and there was discussion about forming another building syndicate under the chairmanship of John Hilton. An Open Meeting in 1963 attracted 25 entries, but in 1961 there were only 12 O.K.'s in the Club and the following year, with even fewer, they were once more in the Handicap Fleet.

## MIRROR

It was at this time that the number of Viking red sails began to increase, several Mirror 10's had joined the Club during the previous two years, sailing in the Handicap Fleet, so that there was a nucleus ready to take over the class start vacated by the O.K.'s, and also to hold a Mirror Open Meeting on the date provisionally booked for the O.K.'s. From then on the numbers increased steadily, both in the country as a whole and at Weston, until in 1974 the Committee felt that there was a danger of the Club being inundated by Mirrors and a limit of 70 was set. Each year since, all the places have been taken early in the season and a waiting list formed, so that numerically, it is the biggest of the Club Fleets; perhaps it is a good job that they never do all take to the water at the same time.

Like the Enterprises, there have been ups and downs in the activity of Mirror Fleet. The Mirror is a multi-purpose boat being suitable for racing or cruising, it is excellent for novices young or old and is an ideal 'second' boat for the keen racer of another fleet to have, to take the family for a ride now and again, so it is inevitable that the owners will expect to use their boats in a variety of ways, and there will always be a group who are keen on racing, another only wanting to potter and some who never actually get around to going afloat at all, despite good intentions.

The first Fleet Captain was George Gibson, he encouraged members to get out on the water and also to take an active part in the affairs of the Club. The Mirror Open Meeting in 1966 was also the Southern Area Championships with 22 entries: it was won by George's son Richard in "Mojo" Mirror 984. After a few years George was not

Happy with the policy of becoming primarily a racing club and he left to sail elsewhere. During the next few years under the captaincy of Brian Masters, the standard of racing improved, Keith Thatcher and his wife doing particularly well. Three club boats entered the 1969 National Championships at Sandbanks, Poole, the Thatchers were the highest placed in the twenties out of an entry of some 150; Ken Andrews entered "Clickety Click" Mirror 66, thinking that at least he would be sailing in the oldest boat, (there were already about 18,000 Mirrors built) but he was wrong.

In 1970, the Thatchers built themselves a new boat, and also moved away from Southampton, Nigel Shaw bought the old one 11011 and renamed it "Doodles". Nigel's father Ray, was persuaded to become the Fleet Captain and for four years the whole family were involved «in building up the Fleet and encouraging Weston Mirrormen to use their boats and preferably race them. They personally telephoned every member of the Fleet and then organised groups of people who lived in the same locality to improve communications; they arranged Teach-ins during the winter and practice sessions afloat in the summer, when experienced racers crewed for helmsmen new to racing. Finally they were responsible for the organisation of the Mirror Southern Area Championships of 1975 when the limited entry of 100 was easily reached. This was the biggest Open Meeting ever held at Weston and with fine weather and a good wind was enjoyed by all those on the water and also the supporters on shore.

Weston is known as a good club for families, it should also be known as a club of good families, particularly in the Mirror Fleet, for following the five Shaws came the six Whites. With four children father Jack had a choice of crews when he first joined Weston, but since then there have been various combinations of crews and boats which have brought all five onto the water regularly, and with wife Freda as a well-trained 'back up' on shore, Jack was obviously well qualified to take over from Ray Shaw as Fleet Captain. One of Jack's first decisions was to offer to stage the 1976 Mirror Cruise Rally for the National Association; the Club Committee approved the proposal and preparations began. It turned out to be an excellent week that proceeded without hitches, because Jack and his Committee had thought out the details thoroughly. There were cruises up and down Southampton Water, races (by request), an evening of Western and Country dancing in the field, which was nicely rounded off for the visitors by the sight of Q.E.2 sailing up to the docks with all her lights blazing. Another evening there was a disco and at the final evening's get-together, the campers spontaneously collected a donation towards a wind vane for the Club as a memento of their visit, a truly memorable week.

Racing among the Mirror Fleet has always been keen, and dominance by one boat has not usually lasted more than two seasons, with the boat taking pride of place not always being a newer one. Following the Thatchers, Nigel and Judy Shaw won all the trophies until John and Ann Ward joined the Club with "Varoomshka Two", then John bought a Hornet and Ann crewed for me which was the start of "Chaos's" spell of leading the Fleet, and continued when Lisa Marks took over from Ann. John and Martin Child joined the Club in 1975 with "Childs Play" and sailed straight to the front of the Fleet in the Summer Series. Both the White family boats were usually near the front of the Fleet and it was David and Deborah in "Yellow Belly" who took the trophies for the end of the season. David then spent the winter

"building "Y.B.11" and in 1976 the only discussion was "who will be second ?"  
"Y.B.11"<sup>11</sup> was also successful at Open Meetings winning at Hythe and Hardway.

## 1968 FLEET POLICY DECISIONS

When the Club moved to Abbey Hill, the Committee had to discuss not only the problem of completing the club house and pound, but also that of the future sailing policy. One major decision taken was, that winter storage would not be offered to members with keel boats as had been done at the old site. It was felt that the slipway and pound trolley ways were not adequate for heavy boats and with no off-shore moorings the opportunity was taken to make Weston S.C. a purely dinghy club. There had been a certain amount of friction each year under the old system, when the dinghies wanted the berths and the cruisers were not ready to be put back in the water. In 1962 it had been minuted that the cruiser owners were forbidden to take down the fences to improve the access, and there was always argument about who had left the rubbish in the pound. It was a logical decision but as some of the cruiser owners had been members of the Club for many years, a few having moved on from dinghies, they were very disappointed that cruisers would no longer be catered for and they left the Club with some ill feeling, and subsequently founded the Weston Cruising Club. Two founder members, Ivan Morris and Bill O'Brien, both of whom left because of this decision, comment that on hindsight it was the best solution as both groups now have the facilities that suit them.

'W.S.C. have a well-respected dinghy Club and we at W.C.C. have our mixed bag after all. Us old timers now in our leisurely time of life can potter about and leave the competitive side to the younger enthusiasts.'

(Ivan Morris)

Bill O'Brien later re-joined the Club.

But with the cruisers gone, there were still other decisions to be made. For four seasons the starts had been 505, Enterprise, Mirror and Handicap, already in November 1968 the Committee was worried that

'.... the Handicap section was rapidly increasing which would, of course, be a detriment to the Club. A long discussion ensued on how to stop this happening with various suggestions being put forward. Finally, it was agreed that the members at the A.G.M. be allowed to air their views on this subject, it being pointed out that the view of the Committee was to encourage class racing and new members with class boats to join the Club, it was felt that a limitation should be made on new members with handicap boats but that the discretion of the Committee be used.'

(Minute Book November 1968)

There was an airing of views at the A.G.M. and finally the points put forward by the Committee were accepted. A month later a sub-committee was formed and asked to look into the facts and figures and recommend a policy. The points which must have been discussed had been well put seven years before, in an article in Gybe-Ho when the move to new premises seemed imminent -





Hornet 1051 "Crassus" Derek Ide



Unicorn National Championships 1971 at Weston

'.... The sponsoring of a new class or classes of dinghy is a matter of considerable responsibility for the Committee. Some members of the Club will be encouraged to push out the boat - literally - and that pioneer must not find himself alone? he must be backed up by the arrival in the Club of other boats of the same type. The Committee, therefore, has to select very carefully so as to ensure that the new class is likely to achieve some popularity, that it is reasonably within the financial reach of a fair number of the members, and that it is a suitable boat for the Club's sailing water. The Committee must also safeguard the position of the present main classes so as to ensure a continued healthy growth in those classes.'

(Gybe-Ho 1961)

## HORNET

Already in 1967 there had been a request from three members of Millbrook S.C. to provide class racing for Hornets as they were interested in joining Weston. The request was not granted but the three; Derek Ide, Mike Chalk and Paul Wills did join the Club and sailed in the Handicap class, as they were not satisfied with the racing at Millbrook, which was also in the throes of moving and deciding future policy due to the development of the Container Berths overrunning their club house. At much the same time another group of Hometeers, Peter Williams, Alan Wright, Charlie Hutton, Brian Clark and Joe Coomer, disagreed with the policy for dinghies at Warsash S.C. and also joined Weston. With such a nucleus it was an obvious choice to give the Hornets a class start and this the sub-committee recommended for the 1969 season. It was also recommended that

'In addition to the four classes there shall be a Handicap -or Menagerie - Class, but the number of boats in this class shall be restricted to 20% of the total number of dinghies attached to the Club .... At the commencement of each year the Committee shall nominate types of dinghy in the Handicap Class as "Development Types". These shall be "types which, in the opinion of the Committee, fill any gaps in the "Club Classes" and which are likely to be popular with members ....

When there are 6 No. dinghies of a "Development Type" actively racing in the Handicap Class the Committee shall nominate that type as a "Club Class" and shall organise class racing for it, and the Committee shall be empowered, if the Committee so decides, to waive the 20% rule in order to facilitate this development.

On the other hand, if a "Development Type"<sup>11</sup> fails to reach the required number, the Committee may replace it by another "Development Type" in the following year.

In the event of one of the "Club Classes" falling below 6 No. dinghies, or if the class should cease to be active in class racing, the Committee shall cancel its status as a "Club Class" and the remaining dinghies of that Class shall be included in the Handicap Class in the following year.  
(Minute Book February 1969)

This policy had the desired effect and since then the Club has "been primarily one for class racing. In 1972, just before the pound was extended, when there was a waiting list for class "boats it was decided not to accept any more boats into the Handicap Class, thus rescinding the 20% policy, unless they were really of the "Development Type", this proviso allowed the introduction of Lasers.

Since joining the Club in 1967 the Hornet Fleet has grown steadily, but for some reason Hornets are rarely to be seen in any number on the water, despite keen racing among those who do turn out regularly. Derek Ide had a successful spell from 1972-74 sailing "Crassus" with Roger Crates as crew; he won most of the club Series'-and was among the leading boats at the National Championships, and he won the Corvette trophy, a knock-out boat-for-boat competition run by Hayling Island S.C. Then Derek fitted out a Quarter Tonner and returned to keel boat racing.

Weston helmsmen have had successes in Hornets but not when they were members of Hornet Fleet 68. Colin McKenzie was both World and National Hornet Champion, before changing to 505's and then joining Weston S.C. Dave Pitman was the National Junior Champion in 1969, sailing Alan Wright's boat "Spartacus", with Alan as crew. Alan again lent his boat, and crew (Mike Lynch), to Dave to enter the 1974 National Championships, this was the beautiful "Great Bear", which has not only won many of the club Series\*, but would also take the Prix d<sup>1</sup> Elegance. Of the other original Horneteers at Weston, Paul Wills won several of the National trophies, he has now teamed up with Mike Chalk to sail a 505. Charlie Button solved his crew problems by marrying Joy, but they have finished the 1976 season by selling their Hornet. Peter Williams, after some memorable sailing in "Dead Sexy" with Liz Lynch as crew, seems to spend more time up mountains than on the sea these days, and Brian Clark and Jo Coomer both moved away from the Club.

The Fleet increased by both new members joining with Hornets and club members changing class and becoming Horneteers, like Stan Hutton and son Neil, who shared helming and crewing in "Shillelagh", and younger members Gareth Hardwick and recently Adrian Williams. In 1974 and 75 there was some good racing against Hornets over the Water and several members of Hythe S.C. did join Weston, so that it seemed that at last there would be large club turn outs regularly, but in a very short time they all disappeared back to Hythe. It remains to be seen whether the new Fleet Captain, Bay Youlden, can encourage Weston Horneteers to sail more often.

## UNICORN

At the same time that the Hornets were establishing themselves, another syndicate was set up to build a new type of catamaran called a Unicorn. Four existing club members built together, and six members of Petters S.C. formed another syndicate down the road. Each group had its own ideas on how to build Unicorns and ideas were shared, but rarely accepted by the opposition. John Wright, Tony Young, Bob Button and Jock Neeson were the Weston syndicate, mainly ex-505 or Cat sailors, and Colin Mottram headed the Petters one.

As so often happens after 18 months of building, some of the prospective helmsmen had found other attractions before the boats were completed, two had married, one emigrated, etc.; also it was necessary to have six boats sailing at Weston to merit a class start, so Colin and Graham Yolland joined the Club to help establish the Fleet. Soon new members decided to try their hand with a Unicorn and bought boats built by the syndicate, among them being Mike Lilley who became the first Fleet Captain.

Although the basic Unicorn had been successfully campaigned and raced for two years before the Weston boats were on the water, the development of the rig and sails must be attributed to club members. John, Tony, Colin and Graham Hutchings experimented with a Needlespar mast with controlled bend and a Eatsey nine batten sail, these improved the Unicorn's performance and helped club members maintain the record of successes at Open Meetings and Championships that they had already established in the first two years of the Fleet; several times Weston boats finished 1st, 2nd and 3<sup>rd</sup> shuffling the order between them. In 1971 the National Championships were held at Weston and were won by Graham in "O Me Go", with John in "Fingers" second; Graham won again in 1975, with John taking the even years, 1972, 74 and 76. 1973 was the one year when Weston boats did not dominate the Unicorn scene, their place being filled by Stone S.C. The second triennial European Championships were held in 1976 and were also won by John, with Colin second. John had already gained experience sailing against German helmsmen when he travelled to the Ammersee and took part in an A Class catamaran week in 1971 and won first prize; he returned the next year with Graham but was not so successful. Also in 1971 John in "Fingers", and Tony in "Sundance", took part in the "Two of a Kind" races on the Steel Company of Wales lake at Margam, which they won.

Many of the newer members of the Fleet soon found that stardom rubs off the experts and in a very short time helmsmen such as Tony Kirby, Tony Saunders and Derek Birmingham have reaped the benefit of racing against Champions and have become competitive both at home and away.

These successes may come as a surprise to some members who are not aware that a big proportion of the Fleet travel around together to Open Meetings, and are only conscious of the Unicorns being conspicuous at Weston by their absence on the water, so that the frequently 'empty' first start is regarded by other helmsmen as an extra warning time rather than the first class start. But once accepted as a class the Club has encouraged the Fleet, and it has come a long way since the "Whoopee Float Sailors" first crossed the line seven years ago.

## SOLO

At exactly the same time as the Unicorns, the Solos were also going through the stage of being a 'Development Type'. It was probably Jim Warren who was responsible for their introduction to the Club, and backed by Ted Grimmer, he encouraged other members to buy Solos so that enough boats were sailing regularly in 1971 to merit a class start. Some of those who joined the Fleet in the first two years were Ed Butler, John Gordon, Fred Ginn, John Davies, Chris Averis, Tony Willis, Dave Smith, Nigel Tarrant, Ron Potter and Bob Greenaway. Ted was the first Fleet Captain and he organised their first Open Meeting, held jointly





Two of the Solo Fleet



Two of the Contender Fleet

with the Unicorns in May 1970, a time when both classes were still in the Development stage; there were many visiting "boats, some from as far as Exmouth, but it was the Weston helmsmen who took the prizes, Ed Butler 1st., Nigel Tarrant 2nd. and Bob Greenaway 3rd.

Tim Hockin, a former Merlin National Champion, joined the Fleet for the 1971 season with "Puff 'n Go" and won most of the club series', often with Ron Potter close behind. Tim also took part in the National and World Solo Championships which were held at Hayling Island that year, he finished 5th in the Nationals and 11th in the Worlds. Tim commented that he liked sailing a Solo very much because it was a good surfing boat. In 1975 Nick Holt in "Glass Onion" had a very successful season and made almost a clean sweep of the class prizes, although Fleet Captain Bob Greenaway could beat him in heavy weather; then Nick bought a Laser and competition was open again.

Since their introduction to the Club, the Solos have been a good steady club Fleet, perhaps without any great distinction but they have maintained their numbers at between 20 and 30 boats despite the competition of new single-handed classes. Anne Norfolk, the only lady helmsman in the Fleet in 1976, took over the job of Captain from Bob, and hopes to maintain or increase the interest in Solos at Weston.

## CONTENDER

With both Unicorns and Solos promoted to class starts, the Contender was accepted as a 'Development Type\*. This was a relatively new boat at the time, developed more in Australia, it was not widely sailed in England, but Dave Pitman had already become one of the leading helmsmen and enthused about them so that several people in the Club decided to buy boats. Helmsmen soon found that it was not as easy as Dave made it look and it was not until Peter Mills and Dave Rate joined the two regulars, Dave Pitman and Mike Hartley, that the class really got going at Weston. Active racing encouraged a steady stream of members to persevere and discover the thrills and excitement of single-handed trapeze sailing in a monohull; the Fleet was given a class start in 1970 and by the next year had built up to 15 boats in the pound. Mainly because of the standards set by Dave Pitman, the other Contender sailors at Weston were able to improve and this was reflected in the Championship and Open Meeting results of the last three years, \*when invariably, to the dismay of others, they carried off the majority of the prizes. Dave had already won the National and European titles in 1971, 72 and 73, and in 1970 he achieved the treble of National, European and World. Several times Dave was accompanied by club mate Mike Hartley, one of the early helmsmen who had persisted sailing this difficult boat despite a slight disability, Mike won the prize for the over 40's. In 1976 Geoff Whitfield, in his first complete season in Contenders after graduating from a Mirror, competed in the National Championships at Hayling Island and became the National Junior Champion, finishing 5th overall, a very good performance for a 17 year old; 1st had been Dave, with Keith Paul 2nd. Keith, who had returned to sailing at Weston after his long spell in F.D.'s, seemed to spend much of his time close behind Dave in 1975 and 76. In the 1976 season, it was the Contenders that had the lowest turn out in club racing and the Sailing Committee decided that for the





A crowd of Lasers



Optimist National Championships 1974 at Weston

1977 season they would "be started in the Handicap Fleet. The low turnout was possibly due to the regular helmsmen sailing away from home a lot of the time and because several of the Fleet were building new boats. Once these are on the water the Fleet should pick up again and could then oust one of the other Club Fleets, regaining a class start.

The acceptance of the Contenders as a club class in 1974 increased the number of starts to nine. It was a decision reached after much discussion in Committee and it was also agreed that nine was enough (the flagboard would not take any more), so that for the foreseeable future starts should remain as a maximum of eight classes and a Handicap. This was to leave a way open to see if any newly developed boats would be suitable for our conditions and appeal to our type of membership.

## LASER

The introduction of the Laser is a perfect example of what can happen; it was a class growing very quickly in the country, so was given a limited number of berths in the pound. During 1975 and 76 it had been tried out by club members (John Haskell tried three), some found it was not the boat that they were looking for and changed classes again, but now under Mike Brimley's captaincy, there is a keen nucleus who sail very regularly and for 1977 they have been promoted to a class start because of the large proportion of the Fleet racing regularly.

## OPTIMIST

Anyone who has been counting classes through this saga of the Weston Fleets will realise that no mention has been made of the class in the ninth start, it was of course the Optimist - yet another single-hander! There was such enthusiasm after borrowing the six boats belonging to the Optimist Class Racing Association during the first Cadet Week in 1972, that many parents decided to follow John Harrison's example and encourage their 7-15 year olds by building or buying Optimists. Throughout 1973 the Spies' were a familiar sight bobbing about performing various manoeuvres under the watchful eye of John or another Optimist parent, sedately ensconced in "Nanny Op", the rescue boat. They soon learnt to handle the boats and the tactics of racing and were ready for their own Series' and were given a class start in 1974. By the September of that year they had improved boat speed so much that ten Weston helmsmen won prizes at the National Championships out of an entry of 70+ including some boats from Club Nautique du Havre. These championships were held at Weston and were superbly organised by Marion, the Fleet Captain, and John, with Tim Hockin and the mini-fleet of the Royal Thames Y.C. motor launches in charge of the racing. Unfortunately, three of the six races had to be cancelled owing to extreme gales, but still everyone went home happy.

During the summer of 1974, the Harrison family had been to the World Optimist Championships at Silvaplana, in Switzerland, and established contact with European Optimist clubs, a contact which vastly increased their knowledge about making Optimists go faster. They have generously done their best to pass on this knowledge to the rest of the Weston Fleet, by organising intensive courses at 'camps'

and mixing instruction sessions with club races. Simon Harrison obviously benefited enormously and in 1975 was selected for the British team and sailed in the World Championships at Aarhus, Denmark. He finished 39th and then went on to win the British and Open Championships later in the season. In 1976 Simon was again chosen for the British team, with his brothers Matthew and Philip and Martin Hutchings also doing very well in the selection races, but as the World Championships were in Turkey, only the first five boats were sent; Simon finished 35th. It is not generally realised that there are over 106,000 children sailing Optimists in the world, of "these Britain has 1,600 whereas France has over 15,000 and Sweden over 111,000. That puts our Weston Fleet of approximately 30 boats in perspective and makes one appreciate the competition that the three Harrison brothers faced to win the West European Team title in 1976, they also won the National Team prize which they had previously won in 1974

The Fleet naturally fluctuates from year to year as some helmsmen become too old for the Class or decide that they are too big for the boat and move on to another class. Ian White was one of the first of the original members of the Fleet to move and after a season in a Laser, changed to a Unicorn, John Greenaway became a regular Solo sailor, and Rod Holt, after a brief try in a Solo, bought a Laser. Andrew Parkman became an active member of the Mirror Fleet and both David Walker and Penny Brabham raced Mirrors some times, and Ken and Bruce Francis intended to race regularly when the family bought a Mirror. But at the same time there is an influx of keen new helmsmen, particularly after each Cadet Week, ready to join in and compete against the 'old stages' like Nigel Brabham, Keith White, Martin Hutchings and the two youngest Harrisons when they are at home, all members of the Fleet since 1973.

It is very necessary to have an enthusiastic parent as Captain, and it was not too difficult to persuade Robin Richards to take over from Marion, as he already had two helmsmen in the family - Mark and Ben. One hopes that in due course there will be others to take Robin's place and keep up the flow of trained young helmsmen or just to pass on the enthusiasm for sailing to those who after a try in Optimists find that they do not like being on their own, so that they can be encouraged to start crewing.





Phyl Bound takes time off from cooking to watch the boats launching



## Chapter Six – Day by Day

Activity afloat must of course be backed up by a sound organisation ashore, which inevitably involves a few people in a lot of hard work.

..... To be continued in the next instalment.....