

Fairwind

Forth Corinthian Yacht Club Spring 2026

Commodore's Briefing



Welcome to the new season and a new Fairwind. I would like to express my thanks to John Hunter, who edited the newsletter for many years, and

to Philip Leith who has agreed to take on this role.

At time of writing we are 6 weeks away from lift-in on 11th April and can expect the levels of activity in the yard to ramp up dramatically after a grey winter, which hasn't been particularly conducive to outdoor work. However the Harbour team have continued to make good progress in servicing moorings and have replaced another 4 sinkers with railway wheels as part of our resilience improvements.

We have welcomed a number of new members over the last few months and are looking forward to their joining in sailing activities. As a Council we are keen to encourage sharing of information and plan a new members briefing session on 15th April. We have also been invited to an RNLi Water safety and Lifejacket clinic on 28th March courtesy of our friends at Royal Forth. For anyone keen to try sailing with existing club members please use the FCYC Racing & Cruising WhatsApp, as there are frequently spaces on board clubs participating in racing or our

Photo Competition Winner



I took this photo on our first CIC to Burntisland. It's a great photo of Iain's boat with everyone piled in eating lunch. Also great to see Iain having fun as the time before we went out on his boat together was a race night, there was horrendous weather and I'm pretty sure everyone placed bets I wouldn't be back. To me it was a very special day, as it was the first time we managed to get over the Forth & back. It was lovely to win the prize of best photo as I am sure I drive everyone nuts taking pictures but it's lovely to have the memories to look back on. *Kerryanne Joyce*

hugely popular cruises-in-company.

Talking of which, having enjoyed the hospitality of various clubs over recent years, we plan to offer a meet at Granton for these clubs on Saturday 11th July. Details to follow but please aim to be there if you can. And we have our final social meeting of the winter season, 'Not really Top Gun at all' also at RFYC on 25th April. *Peter Douglas*

Fairwind image above by Felix Jarvis.

MEMOIRS OF A SLAVE-DRIVING PIRATE CAPTAIN

Tom Brady

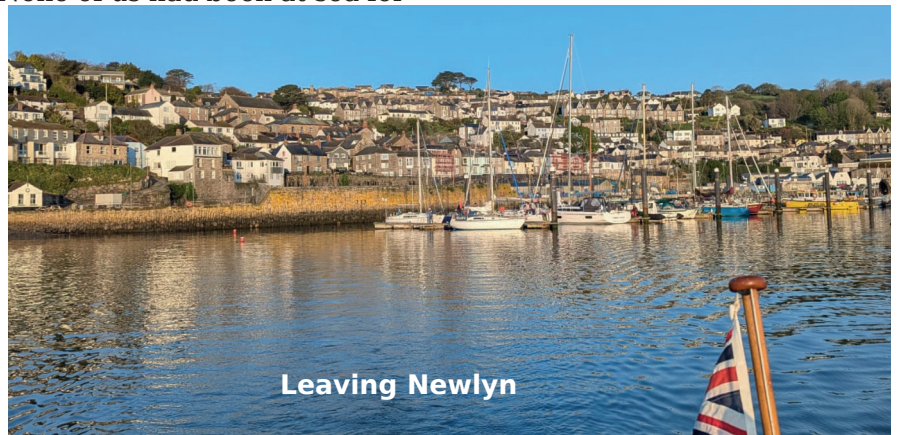
"It is better to journey than to arrive," my Ma always said. She'd be right in most cases with the exception of the overnight train from London to Redruth. Those seats felt as though they had been designed by a man with a grudge against the human spine - note to self: don't be mean, book a sleeper cabin next time.

Still stiff and half-broken from the journey, we reshaped ourselves on the platform before being greeted by Guy, the boat seller, a cheerful whirlwind of a man who bundled our bags into his beloved VW van (reminding us to close the doors gently) and whisked us toward Falmouth Harbour. There, tied patiently at the quay, lay our floating home for the next several days. Safety checks were carried out with varying degrees of seriousness, the boat was provisioned with the usual essentials - fuel, Cornish pasties, and booze (only to be

opened in an in an emergency) - then a few obligatory selfies were taken before casting off.

None of us had been at sea for

arrived promptly. Andy, turning the colour of a startled cuttlefish, attempted a brave smile before losing a heroic



at least six months, and it showed. Sea legs are not things you simply remember; they must be earned again the hard way.

My instinct had been to head east, sail anticlockwise around the south coast, and singing old Vera Lynn songs as we passed the white cliffs, but the weather had other ideas. For two or three days the wind would be stubbornly on the nose, forcing us westward instead. My crew, were delighted: "the more scenic route," they insisted, though I knew it would add more miles to our already impossible task of returning to Edinburgh in 8 days.

Our opening leg, from Falmouth Harbour to Lizard Point - sixteen nautical miles - welcomed us with a confused, lumpy sea that tossed the boat about a bit. The first case of "mal de mer"

battle with his Cornish pasty. Over the side it went. This, we decided, was going to be an entertaining voyage.

Once past the Lizard we still weren't feeling any love from the sea, so the decision was made to alter course and head for Newlyn Harbour near Penzance, where a good night's sleep beckoned. An added bonus would be rounding Land's End in daylight the following morning. Rested and somewhat recharged we set off again, gliding past Mousehole (or Mowzel as the locals say). The Penlee lifeboat house looked hauntingly silent as we passed - a reminder of how unforgiving these waters can be, though on that morning the sea showed us only kindness.

What a day to be alive! The sky wheeled with Manx shearwaters, their sharp wings skimming the swells as we passed between Land's End and the Runnel stone marker setting our course north-west for Waterford for 128 nautical miles steering well clear of the restless tides of the Bristol Channel before shaping a



longer run toward open water. The sail from the Cornish coast toward Ireland is one I hope to never forget: the sea shone a deep emerald green, the wind filled our cruising chute in all its splendour, and the boat surged ahead at a steady seven and a half knots. With the crew in high spirits and the horizon wide open before us, I remember thinking - what could possibly go wrong?

Ninety-eight miles into our passage, leaving the shipping area of Lundy and entering the Irish Sea, we left Wexford fading astern on our port side. The forecast had darkened with every update: a deep southerly low was tracking north, intent on escorting us all the way home.

The question hung in the cockpit, heavy as the lowering sky - do we press on and try to outrun it, gambling on catching the tail of the gale, or bear away for shelter and make a dash for Greystones in County Wicklow, riding it out with the small comfort of being back in the mother country? Better to be safe than sorry. We altered course and slipped into harbour a mere ten minutes after the pub had closed - a small but telling omen that perhaps our run of good fortune was ebbing like the tide below us. In hindsight, the closed pub was a blessing; the following day would demand clear heads, steady hands and an iron gut.

When we left Greystones, the mood had shifted. Sailing north past Dún Laoghaire, across Dublin Bay and by Howth - the sailing grounds of my teenage years - was nothing short of magical. Familiar headlands and harbour lights stirred old memories, yet this time I was no longer the boy watching boats from the safety of inshore waters. I was the one heading miles offshore, compass set to 022 degrees, ninety-eight miles southwest of Stranraer, bound

for the Mull of Kintyre.

As it turned out, the gale proved surprisingly considerate: instead of racing ahead as we had hoped, it slowed just enough to greet us a few miles southwest of the Isle of Man. The whole experience lasted I think 12 hours, we sailed on a broad reach, wind blowing force 7 and stronger over the right shoulder with a small bit of head sail surfing down waves at over 8.5 knots. Shining a head torch into the night we could see the endless torrents of rain were horizontal, the boom more like a gutter pipe emptying its contents over an utterly sodden Neil, we all looked miserable. If only we had a diesel heater! When the going got tough the autohelm called it a day, leaving us to hand steer through the gale which wasn't an easy beat. I'm not sure what the collective term for waves are but I'd describe this lot a pack of murderous waves who were trying to climb over the back of the boat whilst there malicious mates attacked from the port side trying to push and shove the boat into a beam on position before performing their *coup de grace*, what happened next was quick. With the slave driving pirate captain at the helm and the music a pumping and the crew resting I was hit by a big bad wave forcing the boat to broach and go over on its ear, the sail I think hit the water, the cockpit cubbies emptied their contents, phones and speakers over the guard rail down to Davie Jones locker, that put manors on me, I needed to pay more attention to the waves not the wind! The poor owl crew down below didn't know what hit them. We continued hand steering through the dark night hyper focused on the compass to keep us on course.

"The darkest hour comes just before the dawn." When daylight finally broke, we were

relieved to feel the wind easing at last. With the sea settling, we shook out the headsail and hoisted a reefed main as we closed the coast near the Mull of Kintyre. After a night marred by fear and discomfort, the simple act of sailing in warmer light felt like a celebration of being alive. Morning demanded a proper beginning - a heroic, fry-up, lovingly prepared by the pirate captain himself cooked with love at an angle of 45 degrees and devoured with grateful enthusiasm.

We slipped past magnificent Islay and into the Sound of Jura, where several pods of pilot whales surfaced and rolled in the grey water ahead of us. Steering onward toward the islands of Luing and Scarba, we approached the infamous falls of Corryvreckan - a place both awe-inspiring and deeply unsettling. Here, fierce Atlantic tidal streams, sometimes exceeding ten miles per hour, surge over a submerged 130-metre basalt pinnacle known as the Old Hag, twisting the sea into violent standing waves and powerful eddies.

As we crept past the worst of it under cover of darkness, the stern began to snake from side to side as though it had ideas of its own. The rudder kicked and shuddered in our hands, alive with the force of disturbed water beneath us, and for an uncomfortable stretch of time there was the queasy sensation that we were making sternway instead of progress. Only when the turbulence finally softened and the black water behind us smoothed into something resembling a sea again did we breathe properly.

We pushed on through unsettled water and into the long reach of Loch Linnhe - a magnificent corridor of water stretching some fifty kilometres, plunging to depths of over 120 metres. On either side, the Highlands rose in brooding layers, and ahead the

great mass of Ben Nevis revealed itself between shifting veils of light and cloud. It should have been a triumphant glide through one of Scotland's finest waterways.



Instead, halfway along this majestic passage, the engine began to falter - first a hesitant stumble, then a splutter, and finally silence. Fuel starvation. Out came the tools. A fresh fuel filter coaxed the old workhorse back into life, though only just, and we nursed it along in a wheezing limp mode towards Fort William. With admirable loyalty, it carried us right up to the pontoon before dying definitively, as if satisfied it had delivered us to safety.

The culprit was almost certainly diesel bug - years of dormant sediment shaken loose by our earlier knockdown and swept forward into the fuel lines. What followed was less heroic. I removed the fuel line and primary filter and attempted to blow back towards the tank. The result: a red face, empty lungs, and absolutely no movement. After stripping down the tank cartridge, I tried again. This time the blockage yielded reluctantly, expelling foul, stringy lengths of sludge that looked disturbingly like endless strands of sausage meat. Each breath produced another offering until, finally, the line ran clear.

With a sleep deprived brain, I replaced the primary filter and water separator - only to commit a masterpiece of fatigue-induced incompetence by fitting only two rubber O-

rings instead of the required three that came with the pack. That small omission would soon come back to haunt me with an engine that stalled with stubborn regularity most of the way through the canal.

Transit through the canal should not be a hurried affair. With the steady procession of boats and the succession of locks that must be negotiated, most crews allow a minimum four days for the passage. Somehow, whether through good timing, it was pretty quiet we managed the journey in just over two. Hence the name "slave driving pirate captain"!

Yet speed is scarcely the purpose of travelling this remarkable waterway. It is not a route to be conquered, but one to be absorbed. Whether drifting through by boat, pedalling along the towpath,

We paused there for a freezing swim, jumping into the dark, peaty water surrounded by Highland silence and vast skies - an experience both bracing and strangely timeless. It is the sort of memory that fixes itself firmly in the mind and hopefully never fades.

Next time, we have promised ourselves we will traverse it from east to west and take as long as we are permitted - stretching each mile, each lock, each quiet anchorage into something unhurried and fully savoured.

We eased into Inverness and said our farewells to Niall, who needed to return to work. There were handshakes that turned into hugs, the obligatory photographs on the pontoon, and then he was gone - suddenly the crew reduced down to two pressed on without him.



Tom, Niall and Andy

or trusting to "Shanks' pony" between the lock gates, this is a place that rewards those who linger. Everyone, at least once in their lifetime, should pass this way slowly enough to feel it rather than simply see it. A true marvel of beauty and engineering.

The stretch between Fort Augustus and Drumnadrochit was particularly unforgettable.

Lines were slipped and we cleared the final gate at Clachnaharry Sea Lock, easing out into the broad sweep of the Beaully Firth. Once beneath the bridge and into the wider expanse of the Moray Firth, our attention sharpened. The charts were freckled with shallows and sandbanks, and this was no place for complacency. Depth

sounder watched, bearings checked, we shaped a course eastward, bound for Peterhead - some ninety to a hundred nautical miles ahead.

We passed Fort George and Cromarty without incident, the coastline etched sharp against a generous sky, the place to ourselves seeing only a single boat flying a French flag. For a time it was sublime - steady progress, easy seas, and the quiet satisfaction of miles slipping astern. But as we worked our way between Fraserburgh and Rattray Head, the wind faltered. Worse still, we found ourselves punching a foul tide. Our speed over the ground dwindled to a dispiriting single knot. The same stretch of pale beach lingered off the beam for what felt like an eternity, as though we were sailing on a treadmill - working hard, yet barely advancing - while the North Sea reminded us, gently but firmly, who was the real captain.

Diesel bug reared its ugly head once more, starving the engine of fuel and threatening to silence it altogether. Between that and the forecast of strong southerlies dead on the nose as we rounded Rattray Head, the decision was made - reluctantly and with a heavy heart - to leave the boat in Peterhead until the weather was in a kinder mood.

Before locking up, I wrestled yet more "sausage meat" from the tank - those foul, stringy remnants of diesel bug clogging the system - then turned my back on her and caught the train home. It felt, sadly, like we abandoned ship and gave up (well we did).

With my trusty crew unavailable the following week,

I returned alone to Peterhead to complete the final leg - just 110 nautical miles as the crow flies. A modest distance on paper, but this time it would be single-handed. The thought of a 24-hour solo sail didn't trouble me nearly as much as the engine's unpredictability and the minefield of creel pots that litter these waters - more than jelly fish it feels like: some marked by crucifix-sized crosses and fluttering flags, daring the propeller to come too close.

For a while I kept a vigilant watch for creel-pot buoys, marked and unmarked alike, threading a cautious path through what at times felt like a drifting field of obstacles. Eventually, however, the darkness made avoidance more a matter of hope than skill, and I accepted that some things lay beyond my control. The sea settled into a steady rhythm, the miles slipped quietly astern, and - armed with a new phone full of podcasts and coffee strong enough to trot a mouse across - I found myself savouring the quiet vulnerability and profound solitude of the journey.

Above, the night sky opened in a spectacular sweep of stars, while below, the boat carved glowing patterns through the water. Each movement of the rudder trailed luminous "rooster tails," the swirling wake sparkling with bioluminescence as though the sea itself was alive and speaking. Night sailing is always a spiritual experience for me despite my disinterest in anything religious.

Onward I sailed, south bound and buzzing with content, with the reassuring knowledge that Stonehaven lay within

reach should the shit hit the fan. Thankfully, nothing hit the fan as I rounded Fife Ness, passing Anstruther and shaped a course for home. My greatest satisfaction was simply returning safely - bringing both the trusty Sadler 29 and a head full of fresh memories back with me, along with the certain promise that many more adventures still lay ahead in this fine vessel.

Lessons learned:

Be concerned when the seller tell you he has never cleaned the fuel tank only using diesel bug treatments. In my experience, the only real safeguard for a long passage is a thorough tank clean. It's astonishing how much hidden sludge and sediment is dislodged when the sea turns rough, sloshing through the lines and threatening to starve the engine at the most inconvenient moments.

In the roar of a full gale, put the phone and speaker away - study the sea in all its moods. Perhaps next time, allow myself a to linger a little longer, to savour each moment rather than always rushing it. On this occasion I genuinely had to hoof it.

A heartfelt tribute to my crewmates, Andy and Niall: steadfast in their courage, unfailing in good humour. Two very robust companions whose presence made every challenge not just bearable, but memorable. I'd sail to the moon and back with these two.

Engineering Dumbo

Brian Pennycook

I joined the Corinthians in 1984, at which time there were no pontoons and no "Dumbo" to get us to our yachts on the moorings. All members had their own dinghies of varying shape and seaworthiness, which

was originally bought as a mother ship for Dinghy Sail Training. The club, at this time had six Toppers, which were named after six of the seven dwarfs from the Snow White Disney Fantasy. The story goes that our

them were fitted with Lister two cylinder air cooled engines, which are hand started. They were also very solidly built. The earlier engines, and Dumbo had one, were fitted with mechanical gearboxes and over the years this caused many breakdowns and head scratching as we learnt how to fix them. The engine however was very reliable, but hand starting them was an acquired skill, which for some reason never gained popularity with some members.

When Paul Lough donated a brand new 20HP Yanmar 3cyl engine, it was obvious that Dumbo should be the recipient. All we

had to do was remove an old engine, make up some new engine mounts and some ancillary items and 'pop' the new Yanmar into place. Easy.

It turned out not so easy however. Dumbo's rigid engine mountings unlike most boats are on a one piece internal steel "chassis" which also includes the propshaft assembly, and removing this chassis was simply not realistic.

The answer: the Yanmar, which luckily was physically smaller would need to be fitted into the space between the original chassis legs and suitable mountings



Brian at work on the old engine.

they launched, normally, from the Middle Slip and left on their mooring while they sailed. There was an alternative method: members could pay for and get the use of the Royal Forth Club Launch for an agreed fee for the season.

I can't remember exactly when the launch we all know as "Dumbo" was bought, but it was purchased from the MOD when "HMS Claverhouse" an RNVR base in Granton Square was closed in the early nineties. It

new, to us, launch was to be named after the seventh dwarf, but there was some confusion, the trainees decided otherwise and so the name "Dumbo" was born.

The pontoons arrived in 1995 and for the next 25 years Dumbo, later joined by "Wee" Dumbo also became the Committee Boat and the DIY Club Launch for access to members boats. These boats, built by Viking Boats, were very common in Navy circles and nearly all of



Dougall putting up the Dumbo tent.

fabricated.

The Yanmar was hung on an overhead block & tackle,

manoeuvred until the output shaft from the Yanmar gearbox lined up accurately with



Dumbo's propshaft and then numerous measurements were taken between the existing chassis and the proposed new engine mount positions. From these measurements a design was arrived at, steel plate was ordered, cut to shape, welded and drilled to fit the existing chassis and painted. These plates were then bolted to the chassis, the engine lowered on to them and final adjustments made to the mounts to achieve 'perfect' propshaft alignment

With the exception of the water cooled exhaust, which by necessity was all new, it was now just a case of modifying and connecting the ancillaries, fuel, water, electrics etc. check everything, test run the engine, wait for lift in and hopefully, if well looked after, another 30 years of "Dumbo-ing".

My thanks to Sandy Lamb, past club member now moved on to other hobbies, for his help with the design of the engine mountings and 'Racetrack Holes'. Paul Lough, Andy Stampton, who built the engine box and all the club members who got roped in to help, when 'curiosity' drove them to visit Dumbo in the freezing 'Operating Tent' at the north end of the yard.

A welcome to all our new members

A warm Corinthian welcome to everyone who has joined the club over the last year. We have had 19 new members, some bringing boats to join our fleet and others who are keen to sail and perhaps one day have their own vessel.

Our new members represent a broad range of ages and experience from folk who have

done some serious sailing in the southern ocean to people with limited experience but keen to learn.

Will existing members remember to welcome our new members and if you need crew, please put a shout out on our WhatsApp Cruising and Racing group. Let's encourage everyone to get out on the

water. We are a participation club, so the best way to meet others and become part of the club is to turn up at talk events, take part in workparties and involve yourself in the *Cruise in Company* trips. Don't be a wall flower!

Daniel Prince

Membership Secretary

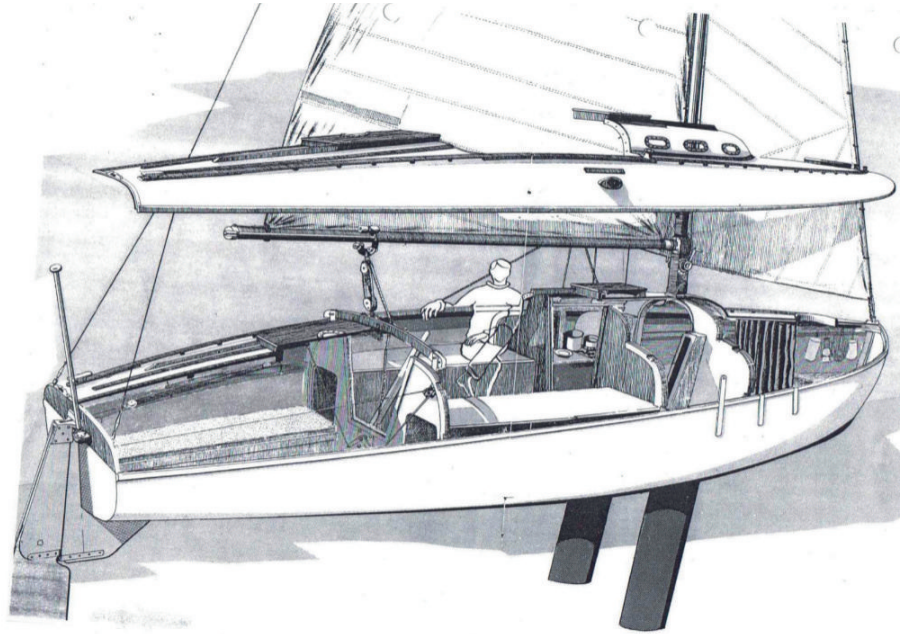
My Boat - JOHARA

Ted Baker

Johara is a 1967 Atalanta 26 built by the Fairey marine company on The Hamble. During the war they had developed a hot moulding technique to produce strong light aircraft such as the Mosquito from wood. These boats were hot moulded from double diagonal 2.5mm agba (a North African hardwood) strips. Four laminations for the hull, three for the deck. The hulls were baked on laminated frames at around 100 degrees centigrade in an autoclave (a steam pressure oven) using a high temperature curing waterproof glue, Resorcinol. This gave a strong light hull. The design is attributed to Alan Vines, Charles Curry and Uffa Fox.

The idea was to produce a light, versatile trailer-sailer, capable of family cruising and offshore passages, that could be trailed to different parts of the country and used rather like a caravan on the way to sailing grounds.

The layout, as shown has a centre cockpit with 2 berths in the rear cabin and 2 in the saloon. The Atalanta has twin



cast-iron drop keels of just over 200kg each, which when retracted slot into two open-topped keel boxes in the cockpit floor. This gives good drainage with the keels up. She has a draught of 18 inches (460mm), fully down 5' 9" (1750mm). The keels can be fixed down if required, or left free allowing them to swing back if in contact with an obstruction. They are individually controlled so they needn't be at the same depth.

The keels protrude enough from the hull to keep her level on a hard, flat surface. She also has a lifting transom mounted tiller and a whipstaff tiller, so that the tiller is operated in the vertical position.

She has a large, deep cockpit, which gives good protection from the weather and is safe. There is headroom under the coach roof of 5'9".

Johara is the first boat I have owned. When I bought her in 2021 she was on the Isle of Harris. It was quite an interesting journey to bring her back to the Borders! Johara had been taken to the Outer Hebrides from London in 2014 and had remained under cover until I bought her. The previous owner said it had never stopped raining long enough for him to get her ready for the sea. On her return to the farm, a closer inspection revealed some rot in the rear deck and the mast was beyond repair.

The Atalanta Owners Association is a great source of





information and are very helpful. They also collect spare parts from abandoned boats around the country. Luckily there was a mast available in the Lake District, which had been in a garage for 40 years and was in perfect condition, even the bronze masthead light still worked!

As Johara is one of the few varnished boats, the Association was keen for us to keep her that way. Being rather naive about the upkeep of wooden boats, I agreed it would be a shame to paint her. It then took the next 2-3 years for me to rub her down, re-varnish her, repair the keel, soft spots etc.

We farm in the Scottish Borders near Duns and our nearest harbours are Eyemouth and Dunbar and I thought getting a berth would be straightforward.

This proved to be totally wrong and I would have to join a 2 year waiting list. I started to look elsewhere and luckily, I found the Forth Corinthians, who not only were able to offer me a berth but at a price which was realistic for us. Last season was my first and I was made very welcome. People were happy to help and give advice. I learned a lot about tides and about the traffic congestion



getting in.

Although work and family commitments meant we didn't do as much sailing as I would have liked, we managed seven or eight trips including one cruise in company. Hopefully this season I will be more organised and get more sailing in.

Falling In

How to Win the Wooden Spoon

Winning the Wooden Spoon is not easy. Most of our members make a good effort to qualify for this coveted trophy so you really have to work hard to earn it.

For example, I recall some years ago setting off on a beautiful summer evening from Granton on passage to Orkney. With the fading light it

got a bit chilly so I went below to get some warmer kit, only to find I had brought a bag of dirty washing with no oilskins or cosy layers to be found. Still I managed to keep warm with extreme layering of dirty clothes. When berthed in Kirkwall I made haste to Jewsons to buy nice cheap day-glow builders waterproofs for the rest of our holiday and passage home. I thought I

might have a good chance of winning 'the Spoon' with this effort but alas it was not to be.

Not so long ago I had an annoying leak above my chart table. I tracked it down to the bolted through halyard clutches on the coach roof. I removed them all, ten in total, and rebbed them with a good sealant. Stood back to admire my work before re-



reiving the halyards only to find I had refitted the clutches back to front. Bollocks! After giving myself a good talking to I started the job again. I thought I might have had a good chance of earning the Spoon with this entry but alas it was again not to be.

More recently, I was helping Ken bring his H-boat Hi ya Wizz under the crane. I went to the foredeck to sling a rope ashore, while Ken put the brakes on to stop. I lost my balance and I automatically leant over to lean on the (non-existent) guardrail only find myself air born and flying head first into the harbour. I remembered while swimming to the ladder that racing H-boats don't have guard rails!

(In slow motion this looked a bit like the famous scene when Del Boy tries to lean on a bar hatch which was not there). This event seemed to be well noted by members and at last I earned myself the coveted Wooden Spoon.

The moral of the story is if at first you don't succeed keep on trying. *Frank Martin*

Harbour Rescue

I was down on the pontoon on a lovely summer's afternoon. Suddenly there was shouting coming from somewhere in the harbour. The shouting had an urgency and I made out 'Man overboard!'

It was hard to see where the shouting came from or anyone in the water. Fortunately William spotted the person and we made haste to Wee Dumbo, with Dan also on board. At this point I still couldn't see the person in the water but the others could and we motored over quickly.

The casualty was clinging to the stern of their boat and fortunately was wearing a life jacket. They were unable to pull themselves aboard despite having deployed an emergency ladder. I

think the difficulty was that the ladder (being flexible) was going under the hull so the angle was all wrong to climb it.

Dan and William swiftly transferred to the boat and hauled the poor sailor up by his breeches to safety. Lessons learnt (1) wear a lifejacket even in harbour (2) flexible emergency ladders have limitations (3) casualties can be hard to spot, even in the most benign conditions and lastly (4) wear a strong belt, it's something to grab should you go overboard. *Daniel Prince*

A mildly embarrassing tale of a seaworthy dog

Since the club is collecting stories of sailors who've ended up in the water, I thought I'd offer one on behalf of someone who was known as my faithful four-legged crew member—my dog Dylan, who accompanied me on many outings over much of his life.

He'd taken a couple of unexpected dips into the drink during his sailing career, but one incident in particular stuck for its comedic value (albeit at Dylan's expense). I was carrying my

dinghy along the pontoon and turned a little too quickly while getting it ready to row out to my boat. Unfortunately, Dylan chose that moment to heel close behind me, and the end of the dinghy acted like a catapult, sending him airborne into the sea.

He was in utter shock, paddling indignantly, and I grabbed him as soon as he swam close enough—hoping desperately that no one had witnessed the scene.

Sadly, secrecy was not to be. Two club members happened to be watching the pontoon camera at the time and took great pleasure in accusing me, quite cheerfully, of dog cruelty.

Dylan was a little sheepish after the episode and, understandably, never trusted my dinghy quite as much again. *Dougal Burnett*

Flying Off a Fifteen

It was probably a mid life crisis which led John D'Arcy (my long time racing mate) and me to move to the Flying Fifteen class from our past success (NI Championship in Ruffian 23!) Neither of us were really man enough for a machine which would take off at a moment's notice. We didn't do very well in



Dylan putting up with things.

Belfast Lough regattas until one day - to the surprise of both of us - we were heading towards the line IN FRONT! The excitement was too much for John (crewing) whose feet slipped out of the foot belt and he went backwards off the boat. I looked around and he was floating, waving me towards the finishing line only a 100m away. Go for it! he shouted. But of course I couldn't - you have to finish with the same number of crew as you started with. I went back to get him. He was furious. Not sure whether it was with me or himself. *Philip Leith*



The anchorage at Sines. Fuel berth to left.

JG's Grand Day Out

9th December 2014. A fine day for a cycle - and where better than out along the canal to Linlithgow. I was a bit nervous at first as the bike had pretty firm slick tyres, but it seemed that the towpath was just frosty and frozen puddles could be easily avoided. That was the risk analysis done. No danger.

Somewhere past Winchburgh I suddenly ran into freezing fog and at the same time the path became a bit rutted and narrower and frozen. I should have slowed a bit more, but as I thought of that, the front wheel slid to the right and I came down to the left, all in slow motion. But there was no way of stopping as I walloped onto the edge of the bank and went head first through the thin ice. That was a wake up, I'll tell you. At least it wasn't too deep - just mid-chest height and somehow I managed to haul myself up and out. Luckily there

was no one about to witness my folly. I stood on the path and just laughed at myself. Unluckily I was 15 miles from home, soaked and frozen. So, I stripped off, wrung out what I could and gingerly set off home. *Jim Glass*

It was my fault, but really his

In Sines, Portugal, where we were anchored off the marina, Philip and I decided to go onto a pontoon for a short break, mostly to get water but also to get fuelled up. It was a lovely windless morning and we slowly motored up to the fuel berth. I was in my usual place at the stays, on the outer side of the lifelines. I stepped ashore but unfortunately took the bow rope to the stern. This pulled in the bow, pushed out the stern, and, when the skipper tried to come

ashore with the stern line, my bow line tripped him up. In he went. As difficult as I find it to accept blame, it was definitely my fault. My excuse is that his instructions are always so contradictory. He is not a natural teacher. And he did not look at the pontoon before stepping on to it. I was transfixed in horror by his looking everywhere except where placing his feet!

He said that as he was going in he thought, don't let my head hit the pontoon ... he had no life jacket on. No-one else saw what happened so there was no-one around who could have got him out. Lucky. And he was able to keep his deck shoes on when he pulled himself out.

Anyway, he was very plucky about it and, in 'Swallows and Amazons' style, proved himself not to be a duffer. *Christina Leith*

To Lochboisdale with Shirley

Philip Leith

'Abracadabra', my GK24, had been repaired after the Dutch 'incident' and after a season around the Solent a new job took me across the Irish Sea and up to Belfast Lough where I

moored. A new partner and a pregnancy was beginning to impact my lifestyle but the single man's ethos was not yet stamped out. Thus I found myself with two London mates

off for a month to the north. Big Geoff, originally from Edinburgh, was a plumber (who taught me those skills) and Dave was a photographer originally from Yorkshire who was, sad to say,

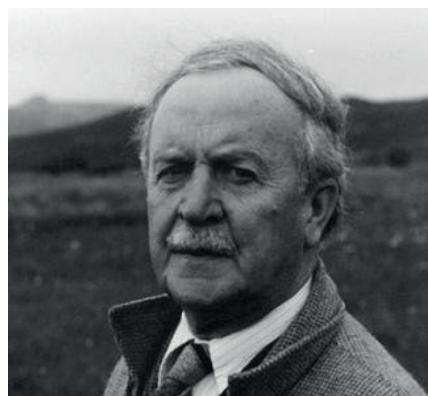
much better looking than either Geoff or me. More of this later. We left Carrickfergus early on a July morning and made our way up to the Crinan Canal - I probably didn't know then about the conveyor belt which runs from Belfast Lough to Gigha when you get the tide times right. The Crinan was interesting. A Dutchman taking home a cabin cruiser he had just bought caused chaos in the first lock and I had to explain to the crew that it was a skipper's duty to use the most vile expressions towards other boat owners in tense situations. They said that they, too, would follow suit if they were ever a skipper.

In those glorious days of the 1980s when a man could leave home and be uncontactable until he found a red telephone box, it took me several days to find one. The news wasn't good. The night we left a doctor was called to the pregnant partner but all turned out ok. The news was not good because for many years after this incident it was referred to as just one example of my failings - leaving a heavily pregnant woman to go off with mates.

We made our way after Crinan to Tobermory. We had towed a fibreglass dinghy all the way behind us and it was a total nuisance - continually breaking free - but necessary. We were at the start of the period where inflatables took over and were probably the last towers of a hard shell dinghy on the west coast. Good sized inflatables cost a fortune (which I didn't have) in the 1980s and we needed some means of getting ashore: there were few pontoons on the west coast and Big Geoff and Dave were over 6 foot each. We anchored almost everywhere and rowed ashore. My alcohol intolerance was starting at this point and the dinghy was useful so that I could leave them drinking in some pub and - when shouted for - go and collect them.

In Tobermory Dave bought a poetry book by Sorley McLean. Gaelic on one page and English translation on the other. He brought it out as we were going past Ardnamurchan and said he was going to learn a few of Sorley's poems. Hold on! we said. It's not Sorley, it's Shirley - that's the Gaelic pronunciation. He didn't believe us, but we continued for the rest of the trip to ask for a reading from 'Shirley'. Eventually he accepted that Shirley McLean was an icon of Scottish culture.

Our goal was Lochboisdale and we stopped off in Coll and then Castlebay before arriving at our destination. Big Geoff's brother lived a morose life there with his family (I never saw him smile) and Geoff for some unexplained reason wanted to stop off. The brother had built his house himself - even making the concrete blocks - in his spare time. Geoff and I viewed the plumbing: every joint a compression fitting. We sucked in our cheeks and thought, expense! Geoff's other brother was a consultant on Harley Street. Geoff persuaded us to give a couple of days to help the brother put the



Shirley himself

covering on a Nissen hut.

One evening Dave and I took the dinghy out. Dave told me about his butcher neighbour in Yorkshire who had a young wife. Every evening the butcher would have a couple of whiskys and fall asleep. The young wife would then fling stones up to

Dave's bedroom window. When Dave told her he was going to go to art college in the coming autumn there was havoc: the young wife pleaded with Dave's mother not to let him go. You can imagine her response. And, probably, Dave's life with women had not been much different after that.

We left the morose brother and started to return. To Canna then down past Iona and onto Scarba. The weather had been reasonable for our whole trip but visibility here was not good. My navigation was always a bit haphazard but the secret is never to let on to the crew that you don't really know where the rocks are, and there are plenty of them in that area. Getting over to Scarba it was cold and damp as well as foggy, but a warm blast of new mown hay off the coast told me that we were not too far from the goal. Dave left us to go back to London. The smell of the coconut oil he used to develop his tan was not particularly missed.

Geoff and I went back down the Crinan and had a great sail down to Campbeltown - a good beam reach with all reefs in and the sun shining. A fishing boat even came over to see us bouncing down past Carradale. Then Campbeltown where torrential rain fell for the first time in the trip. Then back home to Belfast Lough.

Dave called a few weeks later. He had been at a party he told me where he met a very good looking girl from the Hebrides. He told her all about the trip and how he found the landscape stunning. And, he said, he discovered this fabulous Scots poet whose work he loved. Shirley McLean, he told her. There was a pause and she said, "Do you not mean Sorley McLean?"

He said the sought romance did not go further. A poem by Dave on the topic of Shirley McLean and some pictures of the trip later arrived in the post.

Glass Eye

Another irreverent look at his own—and the club's—activities by Corinthian Jim Glass.

What a fabulous year 2026 has already become. At the time of writing we've had incessant rain and north easterlies. Work on the boats in the yard and on the moorings in the harbour has ground to a halt. Daily, the pontoon threatens to break apart. But look on the bright side: by the law of averages we're going to have an excellent summer, right?

And things are looking up already as we've found a new Editor for Fairwind. A conscientious fellow, though one with a reputation for being a stickler when it comes to punctuation. I shall attempt not to tread on his toes ... are ellipsis OK?

I can now cast my beady eye over the whole of 2025. Sadly, I usually find the things that have stuck in my mind are the things that have annoyed me most. This may be an age related phenomenon. I may have to take myself along to Ye Old Inne at Davey Mains on a Monday to find some other grumpy old men to discuss this proposition with.

An example: before the FCYC Christmas party rolled around, we invited entries for the prestigious Photographic Prize. Do you know how bad these were? People couldn't even be bothered to straighten their horizons, or worse, they don't know how to. And they send things in that are 420*360 pixels. Clueless. Surely a case can be made that this is bringing the club into disrepute. I blame our membership secretary for being too lax. Weed them out! On a sunnier note, we continue

to have some excellent winter talks. Tom Louth's talk, "Electric Motors for Yachts; a Cautionary Tale" in early 2025 was certainly food for thought. It was only when we sailed to Anstruther for the muster that I realised he doesn't actually have an engine on board. Or maybe he's between engines. Anyway, Tom skilfully sailed out of said harbour with its narrow



entrance straight into the wind which didn't delight everyone on the Sailing Cruising Scotland Facebook page. An outrage and liability according to some. As was wisely pointed out, engines are a recent addition to boats; sails have been around just a bit longer. Though I do think I'll keep mine. And I'd advise FCYC newcomers to sailing to do likewise.

Another thing that's irking me is the state of the west harbour. The current license to develop the harbour runs until July 2026 and specifies the construction of a stone revetment ... with "backfilling of the land protected by quay

wall stone revetment." We can all see too clearly the "backfilling" without any wall however, resulting in a rapidly infilling west (and east?) harbour. Luckily those eagle eyed marine regulatory authorities are onto it. Aye, right.

One activity I have started is digitalising the FCYC archive, and I've now added a few old newsletters to the website. This fascinates me, but no one else. They're full of nuggets such as, "Lunches and High Teas can be had providing you order them. This is a facility you the members wanted. Why not use it? The meals are wholesome and good value for money." I like the wholesome part. And this gem: "To all members: Remember your Club is like a battery, take everything out of it and give nothing in return and it goes flat." This is exactly the sort of wisdom that needs drilled into our membership as one ex-

Commodore (unnamed) may very well observe. We've had quite an influx of new members which is of course a great thing, provided they can be schooled in Corinthian ways and can absorb good practice. Like being respectful to their elders. And not coming up with bright ideas. All straightforward enough. But one thing that particularly grated with me became apparent shortly after lift in. Boats, on their moorings with fenders dangling over their sides! So unsightly and not at all ship-shape. Un-Corinthian I'd call it. I point it out to my good Lady Vice. She looks at me as if I'm daft. I

point it out to a young fellow council member. He also looks at me as if I'm daft. We'll see who's daft - I think I'm beginning to detect a correlation between fender-dangling and subsequent misadventures of various kinds. Just saying. Get it sorted! Smarten up!!

One great thing that has brought us together is the increasing use of our WhatsApp chats. Unfortunately I can also see irksome issues here that really need rectified, or my

mental health will suffer (note: mental 'ealth is a thing that back in the day was ignored unless it was actually a headache - often the result of the previous evening). And that's not just the few boat owners who will have nothing to do with social media.

No, the problem is once again a lack of discipline. Shocking, I know. The Racing and Cruising chat was originally intended for information for people attending FCYC events - crewing, briefings, that sort of

thing. Instead we get people just putting nice cruising photos up - recently placed there in the middle of an important chat about handicaps was a picture of a dog on a beach! And, and, and... it was from the Rear Commodore! I fear the battle is already lost. If you've been affected by some of the issues we've raised here, please seek help. And don't buy a boat.



A note from the new editor: I've published a bit, but taking over from John Hunter as editor has been more than a challenge. Colour! Layout! Desk top publishing! Typography! Software (Scribus)! Hopefully things will improve as I get the hang of it. The Autumn issue will be published after Lift Out, so you have plenty of time to create from your own ideas (if the editor is not already pestering you). We are looking for stories of trips, boatwork you've undertaken; what's interesting about your boat; controversies - fender etiquette, should women be allowed on boats? (just joking Christina!); racing tactics to pass onto new members. Anything which will entertain the readership. Don't be sending images of boats far off in the distance - get near. Pictures need a story, too. If you want feedback before you put finger to keyboard, email the editor at fairwind@fcyc.org.uk Entertainment is all.