



SANDHOPPER CLASS
BRITISH ASSOCIATION

Thorpe Bay Yacht Club and Maylandsea Bay Sailing Club

Sandhopper Newsletter

www.sandhopper.org.uk



the best of
Summer
2010

CLASS CAPTAIN

Diary Dates

PRIZEGIVING

Saturday November 13th

CHRISTMAS DRINKS

Wednesday December 8th

NEW YEAR SANDHOPPER QUIZ

January (date TBC)

Don't forget to check the noticeboard for the latest diary dates!

I hope you enjoy this newsletter, and that it reminds you of another great year's sailing, as well as setting you up for those winter jobs!

The nationals this year were the largest attended to date with thirty-two boats. I would like to thank our sponsors, including **Heineken, Hyde Sails, West Systems, Hi-Tec and Paul Spratt**, who all contributed towards the fabulous prizes.

On the water, thanks to **Steve Hopper** for lending his rib to watch over us with David Hopper at the helm, **Geoff Appleton** and his magnificent race officer crew and TBYC support boats and crews. Off the water, to **Alix Dell**, our social secretary, **Jo** our caterer for a fantastic nationals dinner attended by ninety-four smiling faces, and **Tony Padbury** for producing the results. Tony has written elsewhere in this edition about the racing, which was enjoyed by all in some testing windy conditions.

We have had two new boats launch at Thorpe Bay. **161 Aeolus** and **162 Tripod** both are in white and are looking to chase some good results. This brings our fleet up to 37. **Number 10 True Blue** has changed hands as is now regularly racing at TBYC. What is great to see is the forty-year old boats competing neck-and-neck with the new ones which is brilliant for our one design class.

Over the winter months we will be having talks on such varied subjects as sail set, racing rules, boat speed and maintenance, so keep an eye on your e-mails for details. If you are not in the e-mail "loop", please let me know at barryduce@yahoo.co.uk.

Thanks to all of those behind the scenes who constantly help out on and off the water, helping to make the class the envy of the rest of the club. I'm looking forward to the winter boat park banter whilst we try to find things to do on our boats.

See you at our Christmas get-together.

Barry SH39

A GREEK ODYSSEY

(OR, FOUR MEN IN A BOAT... WITH APOLOGIES TO JEROME K. JEROME)

Upon arrival at Preveza airport in beautiful sunshine we embarked for the Southern Ionian port of Levkas. Disembarkation turned out to be at a taverna, a form of establishment we became quite familiar with during our trip (they sell alcohol)!

Seafarer *Leisure*
representatives greeted us with an abundance of friendliness and proceeded to explain the week's itinerary and the many dos & don'ts of cruising as part of a flotilla.

The term "flotilla sailing" can mean many things. In our case, the flotilla leader, one Graham, held a briefing around 9am, giving a weather forecast and informing people of the destination for the end of the day. With two experienced Greek Isles sailors on board we were left to make our own way there each day. The advantages of being part of a flotilla include having a berth for the night, places at a taverna reserved for you, and having engineers on hand if something were to break down. It did.

We had originally been promised a 47' Bavaria but due to some problems with the vessel we were persuaded to accept a 44' model instead. Not a problem: "Philip" (or Dave as Barry insisted on calling her) was a superb boat with twin wheels, two heads, four cabins (whew, what a relief!), a large stateroom and galley together with an impressive chart table fitted out with GPS, two radios and a repeater. After a good meal at the taverna we bedded down for the first night, only to be woken by a fall of rain.

Stumbling around in the dark, closing hatches was my introduction to life onboard a boat. If you leave the hatches open during rain or high winds you end up with a wet bunk! I think it was Barry I grasped in the dark, but no-one's owning up.

Leaving the next morning after a quick foray to the supermarket where Spratty and I stocked up with victuals – beer, gin, tonics and lemon - oh, and some food - we entered the Levkas channel which leads to the Southern Ionian Sea. They gave me the helm (what faith) and I proceeded to take the boat down this waterway accompanied by several other vessels. Gaining the open water we hoisted the sails and sailed to Skorpis, an island owned originally by Aristotle Onassis. His family still reside there, and landing is forbidden. As we dropped anchor for what was to be the first of many pleasant lunches, we heard the sound of bells as a herd of sheep were rounded up. Next came our first swim in the Ionian Sea, pure blue and very transparent, you could see the bottom easily. Barry seemed to undertake the task of preparing lunch every day. His speciality is tuna mayonnaise with onions, tomatoes, bread and, you've guessed, lots of beer and G&Ts.

During the afternoon's sail we visited Nidri on Vlikho before reaching our destination, Little Vathi where as promised Graham, Mary and Chris were on hand to direct us to a berth. Some of these small ports have a supermarket and showers but not all of them. Barry had



a theory that not showering for a week kept the mosquitoes away, but he was covered in bites!

Dinner that night was enhanced by meeting up a couple called Aimmee Stammers and Ian, who had signed up with another company who by chance were berthing at Little Vathi that night. They, with very little experience, had ventured out in a 32' Bavaria, which greatly impressed us all. But, I suppose sailing with Barry on a regular basis hardens you up for anything!

We departed this next morning with Frikes as our evening landfall. A terrific day's sailing, stopping at Sivota for lunch, more swimming, beer, food and banter. Let me tell you that the Barry and Spratty show went on from breakfast until lights out, a week of banter which had Martin and I in fits. I was unaware of their musical tastes but not any longer. Their iPods were in constant use, and I must confess to being very impressed with their knowledge of 80s and 90s music, particularly Barry's Bruce Springsteen impression!

After lunch, boys being boys, it was decided to run a line from the port stern to the

starboard stern in the water and jump in to be towed along at 4-6 knots. Now a rush of blood to the grey head persuaded me I too could do this. Big mistake! I must have swallowed a good amount of the Ionian Sea before they took pity on me and put the boat into wind, allowing me with Spratty's help to flop aboard. Barry later opined that he wasn't that bothered about me but was concerned what Hannah might do to various parts of his anatomy! Later that afternoon we realised that we had lost all electrical power. We had no instruments, engine or windlass, but luckily the sailing was fine and when we reached Frikes were able to contact the support crew and a replacement battery was ferried out to us, enabling a normal berthing to be accomplished.

Our electrical problem was not however, solved with the battery. An electrician was summoned and he bypassed the isolator switch. This left us able to depart the next day on time for Eufimia. This morning we visited Vathi, a larger town and port, eventually anchoring at Ay Andreas for lunch, a beautiful little bay with crystal clear water, where Martin and Paul took the opportunity to



snorkel.

The wind had been stronger than on previous days. Your correspondent had helmed during the morning, clocking up in excess of 10 kts. As you might imagine there was an element of competition, with Martin coming out on top.

During our usual meal of tuna, gin and tonic, we had noticed the sea outside had taken on a decidedly choppy aspect. The forecast had been for F5 later in the day, but when we reached the open sea it was really blowing

—
F5 had been optimistic! All hatches were closed tight, everything down below stacked away and the spray hood put up. Sailing was not an option, so for an hour and a half Martin steered into the wind for us to eventually reach Eufimia.

On the way we had noticed several boats running for shelter. Looking out over the stern, the swells were enormous. Berthing was not easy.

Manoeuvring a 44' boat in winds over 40mph into a space no wider than the boat requires a high degree of seamanship, which "Jolly" duly delivered.

A quiet day at sea on our way to Kioni, stopping for lunch at Fiskardho on Cephalonia and rafting up again with a stern line to the shore, leaving us with the option of hauling the dinghy by hand along the stern lines or using the brand new outboard to get ashore. Kioni is probably the largest port we visited with plenty of restaurants, bars and a bank.

Using the outboard that night, upon returning with not a little alcohol consumed, Spratty and I decided Barry needed more practice with the dinghy and resolutely refused to let him aboard the boat by pushing him away at every opportunity. Controlling the motor (which wasn't easy as he somehow ended up with the water outlet emptying into his shorts pocket) the dinghy was spinning round with Barry having to duck the various stern lines to avoid decapitation. All three of us were helpless with laughter by the end.

Friday was what is referred to as a "free day", meaning go where you want, so we'd agreed to rendezvous with Aimme and Ian for lunch at Port Leone, which Barry and Martin had visited before. Surely enough, they appeared shortly after we had dropped anchor and we proceeded to partake of Barry's lunch.

After lunch we went ashore and wandered round an old, deserted olive farm with a press and vats, which must have been part of a monastery in the past.

Having said our farewells to Aimme and Ian, we set sail for Kalamos, where George owns everything. He helps you park your boat whilst giving you the big sell for his taverna - it wasn't bad actually, we had a great night and I had some *baklava*, a Greek dessert, which is to die for!

Saturday, our last day, dawned with the sun conspicuous by its absence and plenty of cloud cover which, inevitably, dropped its moisture content on us; I was OK steering under the bimini! The rain ceased and we reached **Ay Athieu** for lunch, having sailed via the Dhraggneres Islands.

After lunch, reluctant to berth earlier than necessary, we nosed over to watch 40 or 50 Oppies racing with ribs in attendance. Martin then helmed up the Levkas Channel with sails up, parking us more or less where we had started out from a week ago. We hit Levkas town, where, as all Mediterranean countries do, everyone promenades up and down the main road on a Saturday night, and we ended up in a kebab joint, whose choice that was I shall keep secret until the end of time!

Next morning we departed for home, sorry to leave but having had a terrific week, which I, for one will always remember.

Tony Padbury



“I learned about sailing from that...”

by David Johnson
SH150 'Little Wing'

I've never felt so out of control of a situation I had inadvertently placed my life in, and very unfortunately that of a dear friend.

It was a rapid but surprisingly tranquil realisation of the futile nature of the situation. What had been our trusted buoyant companion, was now no more than the barrel that so many comic strip shipwreck survivors cling to, a spiralling demise of fun like a very large balsa wood plane hitting a heavy immovable object. Crash, and then calm.

Darrell broke the calm. “Okay - which side do we swim to?” “Neither,” I replied, “we stay with the boat till it sinks, then we swim.” My God. The awfulness of this had, no pun of course, sunk in with those few words.

It had been an exciting previous few weeks; I had been on holiday, ridden a tough cycling event in the Pyrenées on my race bike and felt fantastically fit and on fire for some sailing at Burnham Week. We had a new spinnaker, pushed out to the class maximum dimensions, like a huge straining black Wonderbra, ready to be unleashed on a surprised fleet of rival but compatriot Sandhoppers.



The Thursday morning's forecast had been for strong winds, but from the North West, which would mean a struggle only when our course took us west up the River Crouch. We had set off from the mooring at Thorpe Bay with more than enough draught off the port quarter to speed us to the Shoebury boom, where we took the inshore route through the gap near the beach. It was gusting quite considerably, so

great care was required to thread through the gap, leaving enough space to windward but not snagging any of the snagable bits on the rig against the harsh, unkempt iron structure of this vast dissolving relic.

On the other side I always have the feeling of passing through a lock gate into some forbidden seascape. Indeed that, is the whole nature of Foulness Island and the hidden sands that hold it clear of the water, creating a unique geography only replicated in Scotland and Australia. Ideal, then, for blasting out ordnance and recovering the bits afterwards. I hoped they were not firing.

I had checked on activity on the gunnery ranges the night before with the bridgekeeper at Havengore, and been assured that we would have no problem. However, a vehicle on the sea wall seemed to have other ideas, as it flashed its lights vigorously in our direction with its occupant waving dramatically and pointing the other way. It took no further warning and we immediately went about heading back for the gap in the boom, whilst clearing the image from my mind of a 25mm cannon shell zinging through the “zero” in our sail number.

Getting back through was pretty tough on a beat, making sure we climbed well above the gap, so we could free off a little and squeeze back. I called the range on my mobile, to be met with the reply that the range had just closed. What the issue was about I will never know, but we were a bit spooked, quite delayed and should have turned back, but, we all know that feeling of pressing on. We pressed on.

Back through the boom we made the bridge in good time, and got through, still with a hefty amount of breeze making light work of passing beneath the raised behemoth ferro-concrete structure, carrying plenty of way into the towering lee and then suddenly back out into the voluminous warm blasts of air. It's

amazing how the note through the boat changes in the small wavelets in Narrow Cuts, almost like school children clapping. We really sped through, following the withies to stay in the channel and going from reach to a fetch as we powered along in flat water, at the top of the tide, still on the same tack that we had originally left the mooring. We would be in Burnham in no time. So I phoned Mike - the yard manager at

Rice and Coles - to ask for a haul and scrub as soon as we arrived. Fabulous things, mobile phones. I was later to find out exactly how useless they can be, and how fortuitous that call was!



As we left Narrow Cuts, we started to bear away a little deeper downwind and decided to fly the spinnaker as far as the bend in the Roach. Some very dark clouds were building to the west, but looked as though they would, given the wind direction, pass behind us as we travelled east. We had flown the kite in these wind strengths before, and it would be good practice for the weekends racing if it blew hard. There was a lot of pressure in the spinnaker and I could sense the feedback from the tiller that we were at the upper ? of our speed and power, but it was so exciting, and speed was our friend in these wind conditions.

I briefly glanced astern. A rooster tail hosed up from the rudder and I could see the dark clouds getting darker but passing away slightly to the south, and then bright, brilliant lights like flares. Nine flares, nine flares travelling towards us, low and very fast. The Red Arrows, bright red and proud, with their brilliant white nose lights, magnesium pinholes in the dark, boiling background, tricolour tail bands flashing past straight and level at below 500'. Would they have seen us, and maybe thought, 'Wish I was sailing today. Red Leader, smoke on, go'!

Yet still we hung on to the spinnaker. Why? Because we had flown it before in these wind strengths and it was just such a thrill, and of course, we could douse it in a well practised moment. The small but hugely significant fact I had forgotten was that we had flown the old Lonton & Gray spinnaker in these conditions. That was much smaller, by perhaps a metre and a half across the shoulders, only just as black.

We were planing on the aft sections of the hull now, bow high, and there was a continuous skimming sensation, with no lull in the fetch, like in a following sea. I had found myself steering deeper and deeper downwind, feeding

the main, just to avoid broaching and keep some sort of rudder authority. I realised we should be dousing the spinnaker, very soon, as we were sailing precariously by the lee, the boom straining against the cap shroud and leeward spreader, the spinnaker sheet clew alarmingly clear and to windward of the forestay, threatening an uncontrolled gybe.

It was a quick look over at the sea wall, and seeing the grass pressed down hard that made me shout to Darrell. "Okay, let's dump the Kite." I eased the guy just clear of the forestay and Darrell made to duck below the boom to the sheet clew, but the most enormous blast of warm air pushed us with intimidating force. We heeled, just too much to catch it on the rudder. Rudder and keel cavitated and we teetered in the breath as well as the lap of the Gods, and skidded wildly up to windward on our gunwhale.

The tiller was round my ears, the boom hit the water, effectively sheeting in the main, and the aft end of the cockpit filled with at least twenty gallons of water as we travelled sideways. Darrell clambered up to windward on the horizontal hull side, a whole horror film of distilled fear in his face.

"Let go the sheet," I shouted, just as the spinnaker sheet went burning through Darrell's hand. 'Little Wing' danced upright, and I let go the spinnaker halyard, only to watch it jam with the kite filling on about 15' of halyard. Another gust and we went over again, and I knew precisely what would happen.

We sank, bow down.



It had taken all of thirty seconds since losing control, yet all went calm, apart from the rain. We had been in a squall and lost ourselves in the foolish thrill of never, ever, going that fast in a Sandhopper.

We clung to 'Little Wing', part useless, part liferaft, but stuck in the middle of the river at the top of the tide on a rainy August Thursday with no-one around. The hull rolled all over at first, trying to find some sort of buoyant equilibrium, but then settled vertically, bow down, with only the last 2' of transom clear of the water, that we both, sat or could lean on with our upper bodies out of the water. Swimming was out of the question, I had heard of fatalities where crew had attempted leaving a stricken yet floating boat only to drown whilst attempting a panic led swim. The boat's flares were in the forward buoyancy chamber 16' underwater and my mobile phone went "zap" and shorted.

cockpit just held the side deck underwater. We even had two high capacity bilge pumps onboard, but they would just have circulated water from boat to Roach and back again.

It started to rain again, but I still felt calm, Darrell was starting to shiver, but was in good spirits. We were sure things would work out OK. We just had to stay calm. So we started shouting. As loud as we could.

We had broached just where the high tension electricity cable runs across the Roach, but drifted further downriver, level with the defence establishment on Potton Island. Maybe someone would hear us on the other side of the sea wall. I suppose "Help" seemed appropriate, so we screamed together. As though our lives absolutely depended on it. But no comforting cry came back.



'This is not good', I said in my calmest of voices, 'but we are going to sit here, until someone comes along in another boat, or the tide turns and then we'll consider swimming'. I knew the second option was at least a couple of hours away, and that, by that time, we would be very cold indeed. The water was remarkably warm; it was the wind chill that worried me, as the squall had brought rain with it. "Have you got a hat?" "No," replied Darrell, "I don't suit them!"

Sometimes there is magic at play in the world. There must be, because at that moment, my kit-bag bobbed up from where it had been trapped. I knew I had two fleece hats, which we squeezed dry and stuck on our heads, looking ridiculously like idiotic garden gnomes without their fishing rods. But we were warmer.

There was absolutely no point in trying to get the boat upright and bail it out. The volume of water in the

It started raining heavily, I could taste my sun lotion as it ran down my face mixed with salt and fresh water. Now I was feeling cold. This was miserable, really really miserable.

Then a fishing boat appeared. In the distance, just rounding the bend at Cliff Reach, motoring hard through the flat water, and by now strong rain. Would anyone know how quickly relief replaced despair? He drew closer and we started to wave, but his speed stayed the same, and he would pass us to the south.

Had he seen us? We waved harder, as if that would make him see us more clearly. It was only as he drew level with us that he came to a stop.

Incredible.

We had been in the water about 40 minutes, but within seconds we were on board, sat in the solid wheelhouse, out of the cold and with the promise of hot tea. Hot sweet tea, maybe with three spoonfuls of sugar. I don't normally take sugar, but the sweet tea tasted like something I really needed. I could hear in the background "Thames coastguard, Thames coastguard" with the name of the fishing boat and details of the situation. I couldn't thank the fishing boat skipper enough.

Very soon the Burnham inshore lifeboat attended and we were under tow, with a lifeboat crew member, stowing the main, jib and spinnaker and pumping the bilges on 'Little Wing', and soon enough alongside the crane at Rice and Cole boatyard at Burnham on Crouch. Thank goodness we can rely on such a sturdy organisation as the RNLI when you engage in idiocy and the sea lets you get away with it.

Ian at the yard carefully pumped out our sad looking little vessel, while the rest of the lads mercilessly took the pee. In fact, I'm sure Michael's surname is Taker! Soon 'Little Wing' was ashore, pressure washed, and the sails stowed.

We left the yard to shouts of 'Dive, dive, dive' and 'fire tubes one and two', but we were safe and warm and heading for the pub, to consume enormous amounts of ale.

The next day I had the spinnaker patched up by Ian Gray, bought a new pole, waterproof VHF radio, new flares stowed to hand, and a bow buoyancy bag, and we were back in action for the weekend.



We lost a definite first place on Saturday to Peter and Brian in 'Blue Jacket' by eight seconds on the last leg of nearly four hours of racing, by not covering and thinking I knew best. But Sunday and Bank holiday brought us the two first-places that restored the confidence of being back in the saddle.

It was an epic and truly 'Close to God' experience, in what would normally be a lovely safe narrow tidal river. I've re

run the whole thing back in my mind a hundred times, and know how stupid it was to carry full sail in those conditions, with no waiting guard boat, no communications, and flares that were stupidly stored.

Oh - and a lack of reserve buoyancy volume up forward and no camera!

David Johnson

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S...RESULTS...RESUI

from the Sandhopper Nationals

The **2010 Sandhopper National Championships** opened with an unforgiving 25mph southwesterly, but twenty-nine boats signed the declaration sheet and battle commenced.

Amongst the contestants were two new craft. "Hairloss" or **Aeolus**: is this a passing reference to the man at the sharp end and the innovative and controversial Tripod?

The first race saw previous champion **Chris Clarke** with **Dan Henderson** taking the lead with current champions **Sand Star** and **Bluejacket** keeping her company. This order prevailed throughout the two rounds, giving Chris and Dan a well deserved first. This race went without incident but plenty was to follow in the next. The wind increased slightly in Race 2, testing the crews, and with Race Officer **Geoff Appleton** achieving a speedy turn-around Race 2 quickly got underway. This time **Sand Star** took an early lead with **Martyn Eyre and Paul Spratt** in **Aeolus** chasing her and **Paul Clarke and Toby Speller** in third place yet again. With two lap races giving boats little time to impose themselves on the leaders, this turned out to be the finishing order. This race saw the three retirements, one of which was **Phil Crawford** whose spinnaker disappeared beneath the keel necessitating the cutting of his halyard and an early bath. The rigours of the economic downturn played a part in an incident whereupon **Dave Johnson**, looking to fill his order book collided with **April Fool!** A nice touch David, passing your card to **Ian Stobart** as you parted company!

The third race saw the emergence of a pattern with **Sand Star** and the two new boats together with **Bluejacket**, a proven fast boat, establishing a dominating presence at the front of the fleet. **Peter Thompson and Steve Hopper (159)** led throughout followed by **Bluejacket, Tripod and Aeolus** with this being the finishing order.

Sunday brought lighter winds and some sun with the newer boats continuing to lead the fleet, which had increased to 32 Sandhoppers, the highest ever turnout for the Championships. **Robin Foster-Taylor's Tripod** jumped into an enormous lead which they held to the finishing line. **Chris Clarke** in **Sand Storm** threatened to upset the dominance of the newer boats but dropped back to 4th, with **Bluejacket** second and **Sand Star** third.

Race 5 started with one eye on the clock as the previous race had endured two general recalls and the schedule had fallen somewhat adrift. **Sand Star** fought back from 4th at the end of the first round to take the gun and the Championship. **Aeolus** was second and **Martyn Binnendijk and Gordon Sanders** in **Squiffy** posted a third - their best performance - and **Chris Clarke** another 4th.

The weekend's sailing was thoroughly enjoyed by all contestants and further enhanced by a well-attended dinner on Saturday night, with Maylandsea members joining us.

Tony Padbury



Final Places	Boat	Race 1	Race 2	Race 3	Race 4	Race 5	Discard	Total
1	159	2	1	1	3	1	3	5
2	154	3	4	2	2	6	6	11
3	161	4	2	4	5	2	5	12
4	162	5	5	3	1	33	33	14
5	12	1	7	5	14	5	14	18
6	11	8	6	12	4	4	12	22
7	41	6	8	6	9	3	9	23
8	17	9	10	8	8	7	10	32
9	160	12	3	9	11	14	14	35
10	39	10	14	10	7	15	15	41
11	46	18	9	7	21	10	21	44
12	14	13	12	33	6	16	33	47
13	32	14	13	11	16	11	16	49
14	151	11	11	17	12	20	20	51
15	15	16	33	19	10	8	33	53
16	38	21	20	13	13	9	21	55
17	43	15	16	14	19	12	19	57
18	25	20	19	21	20	13	21	72
19	18	19	17	20	17	33	33	73
20	10	22	15	15	23	33	33	75
21	35	17	33	33	15	17	33	82
22	153	25	18	16	24	33	33	83
23	21	23	23	25	22	21	25	89
24	27	24	25	23	26	18	26	90
25	158	7	33	33	18	33	33	91
26	150	26	22	18	27	33	33	93
27	23	27	21	22	28	33	33	98
28	26	28	24	24	30	33	33	106
29	24	33	33	33	25	19	33	110
30	152	29	26	26	32	33	33	113
31	33	33	33	33	29	33	33	128
32	19	33	33	33	31	33	33	130



One sunny Thursday at the beginning of September, Mike Hopper and I decided that we really ought to take advantage of the fine weather and go for a late afternoon outing in our much under-used Sandune (S30).

The day was ideal – warm, light cloud and a Force 3-4. Good weather for a relaxing (and hopefully uneventful) outing in a Sandhopper and a chance to evaluate the result of our recent mast-rake changes.

When we arrived at the club we realised that we had a visitor.

At Maylandsea, we often see common seals basking on the rear deck of a moored Sandhopper, especially boats situated in the main channel and this season we have, on several occasions, found evidence of a visit to our boat. We all rather like having seals in the creek and they are a delight to see in the water, as their pretty heads pop up above the surface. The occasional mess, they leave on a boat is easily cleaned and, so far, it has been a small price to pay for a “close encounter” with nature . On one occasion, at the back of the fleet on a day of light airs, I confess we stopped “racing” to watch what we assumed to be a mother and her pup.

So we were neither surprised nor alarmed to see that **Sandune** (perhaps living up to its name and colour) was occupied by a large seal and we rowed out to the boat hoping that we would get a closer look at the beast before it took fright.

As we drew close, we realised quite how big it was! Wikipedia says up to 130kg and I suspect it was all of that. It (and I must call it so, as I have no idea of its gender – any budding marine biologists in our ranks?) was singularly unimpressed by our approach and clearly felt that it enjoyed squatter’s rights to its sunny spot.

We realised that a frontal approach was fraught with danger (to us) so Mike rowed past the boat and closed on the stern from the rear of the animal (which is definitely its least attractive quarter!). As we came closer, the seal barely glanced in our direction and I was nervous, lest it decided to reverse off the deck. Had it done so, it would undoubtedly have sunk the tender and

us with it! Neither did we want to spook the animal so that it fell into the cockpit from where extraction would surely prove stressful for us all!

But no worries on either score. It didn't budge and despite enthusiastic shouting and waving from the humans, it just continued sunbathing! We thought about poking it with an oar but , candidly, we lacked the bottle to escalate hostilities in this way. So we rowed to the bow and I climbed up on to the front deck. Still no reaction from the beast and only as I walked to the mast, rocking the boat violently from side to side, did the huge creature eventually decide that "enough was enough" and slid forward effortlessly in to the water.

And so our visitor was gone, leaving behind only some smelly reddish hair and the digested remains of some small crabs.

We had a great sail around Osea Island and were left to reflect on the joys of Blackwater sailing. We look forward to more seal encounters, preferably on the water or on someone else's boat!



One couple had the fright of their lives when an uninvited guest - a whale - boarded their sailboat, reports Dutch newspaper *De Pers*.

The pair was at the sailing off the coast of Cape Town in South Africa. The local Coast Guard reports that the animal probably felt threatened by the presence of an "object" in its habitat. The couple are aware of no harm.

The mast was completely demolished and parts of the deck were destroyed.

Full story (in Dutch) and pictures:
<http://bit.ly/9d8JcK>

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Available Colours:

MEN'S

(as pictured clockwise)

Dark Chocolate

Warm Grey

V-Lite Blue

Taupe

Burnt Orange

Navy

Available at: www.wetsuitoutlet.co.uk

Back in May and over a family meal, my father-in-law Peter Blomfield announced that since his crew of some 20 years, John Evans, was moving to Rutland and his 77th birthday was approaching, this season would be his last with Talitrus and that he would be retiring from racing.

My immediate reaction was that if we went halves on a new one I could maintain it and Peter would still have a boat to sail whenever he felt up to it. His surprisingly quick response was 'yes!'

My wife Jane holds down an important fulltime job, a part-time board position, was halfway through her first year of a BSc and runs the home and family. But we had previously agreed that come 2012 the degree would be finished, the house much quieter and we would start racing together again. That racing would be in a Sandhopper, so I would simply be getting a head start.

My late father bought 'Sandstorm' (S12) in about 1974 and I remember collecting her from Margate with him. I sailed her quite often then, but had not sailed a 'Hopper again properly until this year. Once the decision was made I was lucky to be invited to sail several different boats and I used this time to assess their layouts. Tripod is different to all of them and from that you may draw your own conclusion!

An early decision was to simplify the mainsheet. I didn't like sheeting in and then having to pull the traveller to windward in order to centre the boom and wanted to avoid if at all possible. Other classes have adopted an end of boom bridle or split mainsheet to centre the main and simultaneously reduce leech tension, why not the Sandhopper too? There is no maximum boom length in the rules and so an over length boom would make it all work. The mainsheet would need to drop to the middle of the cockpit floor and as a result I specified extra timber in that area in order that I could safely secure a tower and centre main cleat. I learnt that the area around the mast was prone to lifting owing to all the turning blocks

the tripod story

SI62

secured on the top of the tank and so I specified extra strengthening there too.

Once the bare shell had been ordered I thought about features that other boats used that would work well on a Sandhopper. Twin poles are not uncommon and are used together with guy take-up lines to obviate the need to clip the guy to the pole. More complex to be sure but much easier for shorter, particularly female crews when the attachment point to the mast is 2m high.

When Tripod arrived and was parked on the drive I spent a lot of time sitting in her (to the amusement of many!). Working with a blank canvass was a perfect opportunity to plan my ideal layout. I decided to split functionality between those controls that need to be accessed when hiking and those when you are either not hiking or the crew is standing. On each side of the combing I placed the genoa + mainsail cunninghams and kicker, and in the centre a single pole up line and twin launch and pole down lines.

Unfortunately there doesn't seem to be a single yacht chandler anywhere with a wide selection of boat fittings. This means a high degree of organisation is required. I kept a tally of expenditure by Peter and myself on a spreadsheet and used different tabs to list and total most of the parts. I shared the spreadsheet and lots of other documents and photographs with Peter by using a free 'dropbox' application that automatically synchronised the dropbox contents across multiple computers, including my iPhone.

The last 5% of fitting out seems to take as long as the previous 50% and we only had time for three brief sails before the Nationals. You can read about the Nationals elsewhere but suffice to say that we very happy with our speed and pointing in all conditions, culminating in a win in race four.

Because I wanted my own layout, I had no other boat to copy and this approach does take time. I aim to keep Tripod for many years and wanted to get it right the first time if at all possible. Having said that, following the Nationals I made a snagging list of 23 jobs and minor modifications... it sounds much worse than it is!

Why Tripod? Tri means three, and the Sandhopper has three keels. However, the name is not original, as **Frank Coppins** first used it many years ago. Anyone remember him?

Finally, I would like to thank **Charles Devenport** for his valuable input, culminating in crewing for me in the Nationals; **Chris Purdon** and **Chris Boshier** for making brilliant one-off parts, **Steve Hopper** because he is a font of all matters Sandhopper and is always prepared to share his knowledge; **Pete Thompson, Jolly** and **Martyn Eyre** for letting me sail with them, and not least **Jane** for her forbearance!

Robin Foster-Taylor
Tripod – SI62





FINAL FLING



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