



TOGLINE

The Quarterly Journal of the Trent Offshore Group
Formed and constituted, 26th September 1991



SPRING NEWSLETTER 2017 (

Auxiliary:- Any object, animate or inanimate, in the way when not needed and missing when it is.



Here we go again.. That time of the year when I try to produce the second TOGline which I hope you all still enjoy.

You will find that we are somewhat short of Sailing experiences from our

membership, so I decided to take a step backwards into history, remind everyone about the story of Trent Offshore Group and how it came into being. It may just be of interest to new members.

Norman Allen, first Presiding Master and one of the prime movers, provided me with the story. I persuaded Norman to do it and got my own back for Norman landing me with editing TOGline 12 years ago... I broke down his writings into six parts initially and have abridged it somewhat to fit into one article. It shows how starting from small beginnings, we have grown to a membership of around 120 – maybe not all active members, but nevertheless, all prepared to support us. Arthur Wood, our Deputy Presiding Master, is probably our longest-serving member. (correct me if I'm wrong!) Please keep going Arthur.... Time moves on and the Caribbean has been added to the "Places wot we have known". There have been expeditions from Tenerife and from Normandy (Caen, my first introduction to TOG in 2002). This year, Majorca and a circumnavigation of Scotland. It's a shame about the Welsh expedition, but we do ask a lot at times from our skippers...and they do have families and businesses in many cases. We say it regularly, but I make no apology for repeating the mantra that we owe so much to our skippers. They give up so much of their time for our enjoyment. Thank you so much, one and all.

Anyhow, enough of this introspection...

I hark back to the America's Cup and the preparations for the competition soon to start in Bermuda. We have a slight disadvantage, since we are still sorting out the boat, whilst several other competitors are tuning proven designs. Ben Ainslie is such a driver. He seems to push and push – quite a mercurial character by all accounts. To win, I suppose one must have that drive and killer instinct.

The statistics are mind-boggling. The "sail" is the size of a 747, is solid and requires hydraulic power to operate the sheets and the foils. The "grinders" build up that pressure for the hydraulics and I read the New Zealanders are using bicycles instead of pedestals! The thought of leaping off a bike to race across a trampoline to get to the other side....one mistake and at 60 m.p.h., a slip could be somewhat dramatic. Yeeehah! Good luck to the whole crew.....!

As we move into the exciting stages of our year, let us bid a warm welcome to our new Presiding Master, Andy McWilliam. We know of him from the social side of TOG. He continues the line of august Masters who have preceded him – Norman, Keith and Neil. It is a demanding position and we wish Andy well for the future. Council will support you as loyally as we have supported our Presiding Masters. Finally, to everyone out there, please let me have ANY articles on sailing, past and present – it all helps to keep us informed and remind us of why we are members.

Happy Sailing and fair winds to you all.

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**(Presiding Master's Musings
Spring 2017'**
by Andy McWilliam

The 2017 sailing season is underway and I had the privilege of leading it off. Presumably, to christen my new role as TOG Presiding Master. 'Carte Blanche'

an Oceanis 37 from Fairview, Hamble-le-Rice, was presented, and returned, in splendid condition. What a superb 3 days of sailing it was; the account of which can be read right here, courtesy of Neville Buckle – First Mate.

Such clement weather would be most welcome on the forthcoming North of Scotland Sailex to the Orkney Islands departing Oban on 13th May, under the lead direction of distance mariner, Alan Mortimore on 'Eloise'. I have the honour of skippering the 2nd vessel 'Highlander'. Sadly, one or two people have had to withdraw from the program, which will still run. Graham Wassall hopes to join the return leg, along the East Sutherland coast and through the Caledonian Canal. All this depending on TOG being lucky with the elements. Plans B, C, D, E and F are sketched.

June 15th sees two Oceanis 37s operate from Port Hamble for the Sailing Skills weekend Sailex under the capable leadership of our new Social Secretary, Paul Burghart.

The 'Welsh Wonder' sailex scheduled for August has been cancelled as a no skipper could be attracted. Maybe next year.

Mallorca wins this year's prize as the most sort after sailex, as three boats will be sailing from Palma Bay, debajo de la direccion de 'Capitano Bond', affectionately known as Dave.

I'd like to extend thanks to Professor Neil Macfarlane, whose role I now perform, for 5 years of fantastic stewardship. Equally if not more so, I'd like to thank John Bryant without whom Expeditions would not have been so brilliantly mastered, and also to Paul Ratcliffe for keeping membership records straight and bringing in the subs. Keith Stedman has taken over from Paul. Skippers have taken over from John, but John continues to provide the IT guidance (booking form etc.) and timely advice.

I'd love to ramble on just now, but that steely Mrs May has called a GE and that makes us busy; too busy.

Thank you to all members for supporting TOG's 2017 program, and please give your support to the Social Program as it unfolds during the year. In February 2018, we return to Greatham valley for the Annual Dinner Dance and Awards.

Happy sailing
Andy



A Long Weekend in the Solent
by Neville Buckle

That's what it was billed as in TOGline, but it was too short because of almost perfect conditions.....

Skipper Andy McWilliam did

a first class job in the organisation of the sailex. We should all be grateful to the TOG Skippers who are now doing the organisation of the Sailexes.

Thursday

After various e-mails, it was decided that the four of us would travel down together, That is:- Andy McWilliam, Gareth Broome, Nev Buckle and Dom Rouse who kindly agreed to drive. We left at 2p.m on the Thursday negotiating the inevitable hold-ups.

It was decided that Nev and Gareth would get out at the large Tesco at Hamble, to do the victualling.

Andy telephoned our 5th crew member Stephen Wilcox, who was travelling from the Bristol area and conveniently 10 min behind us, so he agreed to meet us in Tesco. We had not met before, but explained that we were the two good-looking guys hanging around the bananas. One wearing a pink shirt, the other a black T-shirt. How could he not identify us? We all made our contribution to the shop, then Stephen drove us to the Marina, We loaded the gear the onto the boat, had a check round and off to the Pub,

Friday Morning

After the changeover from Fairview, Andy nominated Nev as mate. He then had a plan to circumnavigate the Isle of Wight. We slipped moorings, set sail and headed into the Solent on a West-going tide. Arriving in East Cowes, we moored to a vacant pontoon and had lunch of Ginsters pies + trimmings, on deck in warm sunshine. As the tide turned to east-going, we slipped moorings and motored out of the river Medina into the Solent. With light winds, we set sail heading east but the high-pressure winds were fickle so we started to motor. As we got nearer Portsmouth, the wind increased so off with the motor and a terrific sail towards No-Mans-Land Fort. Here, we altered course heading for Bembridge. On sighting St Helens Fort, we slowly approached the anchorage in Priory Bay, dropped the anchor and set the anchor alarm. A perfect evening and a well-deserved drink. Andy made the evening meal, previously prepared by Mary. After putting the world to rights, we retired, expecting sweet dreams in the totally calm conditions. During the night, the anchor alarm sounded a few times, but all was fine. As the tide turned, the large cargo vessels making their way to the Solent created a gentle rocking motion from their wash.

Saturday

We woke up to a glorious day. Blue sky, sunshine, but not much wind. We had breakfast, and then saw the sea mist rolling in, leaving just St Helens Fort visible. We had a discussion, checked the forecast, then noticed the mist thinning. It was decided that Plan A would be used.

Head towards Bembridge East Cardinal, then alter course, keeping inshore away from the shipping lanes towards St Catherine's Lighthouse.

The visibility improving all the time, we felt a cooler wind as the mist cleared to give an excellent view of St Catherine's. A wonderful sail, with fantastic views of the south-west coast of the Isle on the way towards the Needles. Having made such good progress, it was decided to anchor in Compton Bay, just off Freshwater Bay to have Lunch - "Ginsters pies". (again - Ed!!) Weighing anchor, we sailed past the Needles towards Bridge buoy where we turned to make our way through the Needles channel on the east-going tide.

The consensus was that we should spend the night in the Beaulieu River so as to not to be fighting a west-going tide up the Solent on Sunday morning. Accordingly, we anchored in Alum bay to have tea and cake before having a wonderful sail taking our way towards the Beaulieu river entrance. Having identified the leading marks, we dropped sails and motored in very slowly over the bar, on low water. Onwards to a suitable mooring buoy, where the boat was secured for the night. Relaxed and watched the sun go down over Beaulieu before having a delicious meal prepared by Stephen.

Sunday

Once again, a beautiful morning. After breakfast, it was decided we should go up the Beaulieu river with the rising tide to Bucklers Hard. As we came back down the river, we were somewhat concerned that a Police launch had followed us both ways. As we approached the Solent, he passed us and went on his way. Phew!!

Once in the Solent, we set sail heading towards Southampton Water, but the west-going tide was getting the best of us. Andy decided to motor-sail and move inshore to enable us to make way in the weaker tide. Once safely in Southampton Water, we moved out of the main Channel and did some boat-handling and man overboard operations. I must say the man was very patient and didn't get upset at the time spent in the water (just a bucket and fender).

Having anchored and had lunch, ("Ginsters "pies - Andy had said they were good for lunch), we made our way back up the Hamble with what seemed to be all the boats in the Solent. Gareth made a superb job of reversing into the berth.

This was one of the best week-end sails I have had, with southerly winds, sunshine and excellent company.

As I mentioned in the Editorial, I am somewhat short of items for inclusion in this edition (many thank for yours, Nev,) so thought I might include the story of the birth of TOG.

There may be new members who are not aware of the beginning of the Group and may be interested in the history. Shortly after I took over as editor of this publication (???), I persuaded Norman Allen, our founding Presiding Master, to tell the story as he remembered it.

The result was a six-part mini-series in TOGline of which this is a somewhat abridged edition. Happy memories may be stirred....

I hope you enjoy....



THE TOG STORY or HOW DID IT ALL HAPPEN.....?

by Squadron Leader Norman Allen, (Rtd). First Presiding Master. (Obit).

The first stirrings began with the Toothill School,

Bingham, Activities' Week Programme for 1983. It was in the days before we became obsessed with blame and the concomitant litigation and the school used the last week of the Summer Term to despatch its pupils all over the place to take part in a wide range of activities. Some went fell walking, large numbers went on sponsored visits to Bingham's West German twin town (where they white water rafted amongst other things!); there were French language weeks in France, practical courses in mountaineering, canoeing, dinghy sailing, angling and, for those who were happy to stay at home, courses in music, drama, literature, historic buildings, handicrafts and household maintenance. The programme was not embedded in stone and year by year some activities were wound up and replaced by others of new found popularity.

One of the Physical Education (PE) masters at that time was a former RAF Physical Training Instructor (PTI) and a keen dinghy sailor named Brian Hill. Brian owned a Laser and belonged to the Retford Argonauts SC where he sailed with his sons and their chums. He hankered, however, after bigger boat sailing, such as that which he experienced a couple of times with the Royal Air Force Sailing Association, (RAFSA), and he hoped that he might get some of the senior pupils involved as well. To this end he decided to charter some yachts on the Norfolk Broads (which he knew quite well from family holidays) for the Activities Week of July 1983 and he placed a note in the school's Easter Bulletin asking for assistance from parents with sailing ability. I was away sailing with RAFSA when the Bulletin came out, during the last week of term, but my middle daughter, who was a keen sailor, found my RYA/DoT YM Certificate in my desk and took it in to Brian with the words "Is my Dad any use to you?"

That was it. Little did we realise what we had started.

That July, Brian chartered four 26 foot yachts of pre-war vintage (without motors to keep the costs down) and selected crews from amongst a host of volunteers in the VI form and the next two senior classes. We were a bit short of afterguard but made do. I was lucky because Christine, (the daughter who'd landed me in it), had sailed with me on a number of occasions and had crossed the Channel to Cherbourg and the Channel Islands three times. The other skippers were Brian, Mike Lawrence (a fellow student of Brian's on the Newark Tech's RYA DS Course) and a PE master from a nearby school. It was a

splendid week even though at night four out of the crew of six had to camp ashore, as each craft had but two berths (and a remarkable collapsing roof that was pushed up on stilts for night use). The boats were a bit decrepit - to say the least - but everyone enjoyed themselves. At a meeting upon our return the Toothill Flotilla was created and recognised by the school with myself as Commodore, Brian as Administrator, an afterguard list of two parents and four VI formers and a crew list of 14. **That winter, the work started** in earnest. Brian and Mike Lawrence continued with their evening classes and enrolled on the Coastally Course at Newark under Capt. David King (more about David later) and talked one of their co-students into joining a proposed Easter Navex. His name was Ken Merryweather, who has since become a TOG legend. This Navex was the forerunner of the Easter Trainex that still continues some 22 years later. I chartered 'Black Arrow', a RAFSA OOD 34 racer with a dagger keel and a draught of 7' 6". It was an exciting sail: the weather turned very unpleasant after Weymouth - Cherbourg - Alderney and a cross Channel return was abandoned once after seven hours of 'character building' before we ran for Cherbourg. Suffice to say that in the week, we covered 351M with flat calms and sunshine at the beginning and F8 gusting 9 and rain in rough seas at the end. My report comment was laconically expressed as "all members of the crew benefited from the various exercises and all achieved a significant increase in logged sea time". Looking back I don't know why they didn't mutiny and take the ferry home!

Meanwhile Brian had been in touch with Gaerloch Charters and had arranged to hire three yachts out of Rhu on the Firth of Clyde for the forthcoming Activities Week. Our first Flotilla was underway and on 14 July 1984 three vessels were formally taken over; (a Moody 33 skippered by Brian, a Silver Countess 28 by Mike Lawrence and a Seal 28 by Peter Foss, the flagship as it had a wonderful STAND UP chart table with a belt to stop you falling backwards on a starboard reach. Many of you will pass comment on the 'short' LOA of the vessels. Cruising yachts dating from the 50's and 60's were broader than modern yachts and had a higher top hamper: the Moody's main cabin was cathedral-like in spaciousness. Three VI formers sailed as mates (Liz Hammond, Stuart Watts and Andy Jackson), all three having been on the Broads expedition whilst Liz and Stu had "enjoyed" the Easter Navex.

There were many amusing episodes but the most publicised was the saga of Mike Lawrence and his brand new, new style, lifejacket and harness. He signed for it from Gaerloch Charters and walked out of the office after putting it on. An hour later I met up with him and asked, innocently, why he still had it on. "I can't get it off" he yelped. Brian arrived on the quayside soon after. He and I tried everything but to no avail. "You'll have to sleep in it" said Brian "the office is closed and we can't miss the tide at 0545" Mike was a bit perturbed at the prospect of sleeping in it and possibly finding someone who could free him at our next port of call. "We'll go to the yacht club. They'll have some tools" I suggested.

Well, we went through the magnificent entrance doors of the Royal Northern and Clyde Yacht Club with Brian holding the long end of Mike's harness rather like a dog lead. I signed in and went into the bar and explained our predicament. I can still picture it now: poor Mike flat on the floor with four members tugging at the straps and his limbs - all to no avail. Eventually another member had the bright idea of pouring oil into the front centre lock: there was none. RN and CYC members are not that easily deflected, however, and olive oil from the Dining Room was produced. A brief tug of war ensued and suddenly there was a loud click and the participants fell over. Mike was free!

Various pictures spring to mind from re-reading the expedition report. There were no electronic instruments aboard: it was truly nostalgic to go back to streaming a log and depth sounding by hand. Of course there was no Decca or RDF but there was VHF fortunately. We lost Mike Lawrence and 'Silver Spoon' halfway through the week on our passage to Tarbert from Inverary: last in line coming down Loch Fyne he left the green fairway buoy to starboard at the Otter Spit and grounded on the sandbank on a falling tide. His radio comment was "I knew my colour blindness would catch me out sometime!" We passed him next morning, after spending a pleasant evening in Tarbert, as he approached the harbour entrance. Such stories abound in the expedition report. I called up Peter Foss on the VHS when we were anchored in Millport Harbour, Great Cumbrae. "What are you doing with those binoculars?" "I've lost my glasses overboard and am trying to read the chart with the binoculars upside down" came the reply. Anchored off Dunoon the heads of "Columba" seized up. I still have a picture in my mind of Liz Hammond with the wood panelling off the back of the compartment with the pump in pieces (and scraping away the muck of ages) muttering "it's a good job my Dad's a plumber."

For the first time out as a flotilla at sea, our log reads well: 195M and two hours night sailing. We had made Bute, Great Cumbrae, Arran, Loch Fyne, Tarbert and Dunoon. The last night's social said it all: "can we go again next year?" The die was cast. The Toothill Flotilla had really arrived.

The next marker in the Flotilla's progress was the 1985 Easter Navex. I chartered 'Black Arrow' again: the crew loved her because she was so fast downwind. Weather was gusty and wet for the first part of the week but faired up later. We had decided to concentrate on navigation once more: readers should bear in mind that DECCA and RDF sets, although installed throughout the RAFSA fleet, were still a rarity on private chartered vessels so this was a further opportunity to gain proficiency in the use of these aids.

We went into every nook and cranny from Gosport to Weymouth and from Weymouth back to Bembridge and thence Langstone harbour. In the crew were Brian Hill, Ken Merryweather and Mike Lawrence with Stuart Watts and Liz Hammond (both now at college) and the Mate was a chum of mine from RAFSA. It seemed we called at some 10 harbours/anchorages and achieved 158M. Navigating some of the tighter entrances such as

Bembridge or Beaulieu with a draft of 7.5 feet provided interesting exercises.

The Summer Sailex that year was well up on numbers (unfortunately some applicants had to be turned away), and five yachts took part. As an innovation each yacht was made self-accounting: a pupil purser was appointed and given an imprest by the Administrator (Brian Hill): if the money ran out then the crew would have to cough up. Amazingly the system worked like a dream. Those pupil pursers were a tight fisted lot!

It was an exciting week as the weather was not kind. Midweek, snugly anchored up behind King's Cross Point, to the South of Lamlash on Arran, in a full gale, Brian radioed me up to say that his Mate, Liz Hammond, had temporarily trapped a finger in the anchor cable whilst releasing it from the hawse. She was now free but the finger was swelling up. There was absolutely nothing that we could do that night (other than put a splint on it which Brian had done) as it would have been suicidal to launch a dinghy. In any case the nearest township from the shore was Lamlash, some four miles away and the rain was now torrential. We got her to a doctor in Tarbert the next morning: she re-appeared on the pontoons with her left hand heavily bandaged and splinted because she had fractured one finger in two places.

My expedition report summed it up. "The week's sailing had been hard but enjoyable and in great contrast to last year. This year has seen no sunbathing, very little motor sailing and a lot of sail handling. As a sail training exercise the week could not have been bettered." That year we had enlisted another adult trainee, Don Stevenson, and amongst the new influx of school members were the young Rob Ellis and Beverley Allen, both of whom were to prove loyal and useful members, and eventually office holders in TOG.

Total strength of the Flotilla was now five adult skippers, three adult mates, two VIth form mates and 22 hands (including one adult). The Toothill headmaster was well pleased with our progress and accepted office as Honorary Commodore. To reflect his increased secretarial and financial responsibility the RN administrative title of Captain of the Fleet was purloined and Brian's Administrator title was dumped. In addition my legal position was clarified by County Hall and I became the first non-staff member to be given command of any school expedition – answering directly to the headmaster and, through him - County Hall. What had I done!

The next Flotilla expedition was the Easter Trainex of March/April 1986. Our yacht was the two year old 'Skyflash', a Jeremy Spencer OOD34 and just replaced as RAFSA's No. 1 racer. My comments at the end of the report read, somewhat euphemistically, "the weather was inclement throughout the week but this failed to dampen the crew's enthusiasm. Throughout this report one reads the words 'cold', 'wet' and 'blustery' until the fourth day out which reads:- "By now the crew had become inured to bad weather and the forecast of F8 to F9 met with little comment. Reefed well down, 'Skyflash' set sail (from Cowes) to Yarmouth on the ebb tide." Mike Hall, a co- student of Ken Merryweather, joined the

crew, having obtained practical experience sailing in the Humber: he later became an invaluable member of Council for eight years. Also joining as purser was Mick Sylvester (a parent) who brought a deal of panache to the post as well as instigating the Easter Trainex's "No 1's Cocktail Party" at 1800 hours on the middle evening of the week. Our total mileage was just over 70M but my closing comment summed it up. "The Mate, Brian Hill, was diligent and enthusiastic throughout a trying week..... and is to be congratulated on doing so well on his first time out in this capacity: a very stiff rudder, that needed a lift out, proved a nuisance all week; near gale force winds prevented us from mooring at the Folly Inn up the Medina; a couple of hundredweight of hail was deposited into the cockpit in a severe squall off Newtown; a worn genoa gave up the ghost in another sudden squall and entering Beaulieu River with a yacht drawing 6.5 feet in murky weather and a breaking sea gave him a good introduction to navigation on the hoof!"

Preparation for the 1986 Clyde Sailex started just after Easter with growing excitement in the School. To widen participation in running the Flotilla, a governing body was instigated called the Skippers' Council, to which all those who had sailed as a skipper were entitled to membership. This was an important step because, in a sense, we now had a form of corporate governance. One early result was the design of a badge (the Toothill hunting horn in dark green on a yellow background), which led to the manufacture of some burgees and later some embadged school sweaters which were allowed to be worn as school uniform (imagine what a cachet that was). It was also decided to introduce the rank of boatswain, so that a moderately experienced pupil could take over the running of the deck, leaving the mate more time to be introduced to practical navigation. This system worked very well and saw the progression of youngsters from deckhand to boatswain and then mate in the VIth form

Two new faces appeared on the 1986 Clyde Sailex Skippers' list, courtesy of Mike Hall: Bob Adam, another Hull sailor of some years' experience (who held office on TOG Council as Pilot from 1992-2003) and David Brettle, an ex RNSA Skipper (and Expeditions Master of TOG since 1991). Mike Hall sailed as a mate as did Don Stevenson, promoted from 1985, and his namesake, a new member of the school staff, Mike Stevenson. The Sailex covered the Clyde extensively from Lamlash northwards and on the fifth day we had the first of our annual races, conducted from the Flagship under Portsmouth Yardstick Rules. Ken Merryweather won! The weather was much better than the previous year, the wind remaining a Westerly F3 or 4 for most of the week. Our total mileage was 195M.

The Easter Trainex of 1987 saw our first RYA practical Examination. It had been arranged for Ken Merryweather to be examined on Wednesday 15 April by the RNSA General Secretary for his Coastal Skipper in 'Skyflash' with the crew of Brian, Mike Lawrence, Mike Stevenson and Mick Sylvester. I stayed ashore as etiquette demanded. It was a disaster. They departed at 1320 from JSSC Gosport and returned at 1730: the test

had had to be abandoned because of dense fog which showed no sign of clearing, and in fact did not clear until the late Thursday forenoon, when we departed for Yarmouth. Leaving Yarmouth at 0400 on Friday we flogged across to Cherbourg with very little wind in over 16 hours. Not to be disheartened we pressed on to Alderney the next day, thence to Poole, Cowes, Folly, Wootton Creek (the Royal Victoria Yacht Club Moorings) and finally back to Gosport. We covered 264M and clocked four night hours.

The 1987 Clyde Sailex was the biggest yet. We chartered seven yachts from Gaerloch Charters ranging from the flagship 'Hippokampus' (an Admiral's Cup OD45) to the modest Sigma 292 ('Greensleeves' yet again). The afterguard list continued to grow. David Smith, parent and part boat owner, joined us as a mate. Bob Adam brought a neighbour and Hull sailor, Rod Connah, also to join us as a mate and Lester Brookes, the owner of a Sadler 32 based at Saltash, joined us as the Skipper of 'Greensleeves'. Amongst the school element, VIth formers Rob Ellis was promoted to Mate of the flagship and Mark Loughram to be Lester's Mate. All seven boatswains were school members and one adult joined: Liz Hammond's long suffering father, Keith, who was promptly nobbled as a purser! Because of the size of the Sailex, Ken Merryweather was made Rear Commodore of the three smaller and slower yachts ranging from a Sigma 292 to his own 'Verity' (a Bolero 36).

However, we visited eleven ports or anchorages from Campbeltown in the South to Lochgillphead in the far North and covered 192M with two night hours. 36 school members sailed as boatswains, pursers or hands and two sailed as mates.

This Sailex was really the end of the Flotilla's initial stage. From then on the number of expeditions would multiply and the opportunities for VIth formers to sail in adult crews would greatly increase. What had started off as a one off Broads sailing holiday had blossomed into a sailing club of some 70 members where many of the adult afterguard were poised to qualify as RYA Coastal Skippers and whose student afterguard were gaining experience that in turn would qualify them for the award of our own practical Day Skipper Certificate. Our younger members were experiencing an activity that few schools, even those on the coast, could hope to emulate.

The social side of the Flotilla also began to flourish. Already a number of the skippers and mates had become firm friends and met up at regular intervals, excluding the term time meetings of the Skippers' Council. It was from the VI form membership that the suggestion for an Annual Dinner came about. The first Dinner was held at the 'Ossington Hotel', Newark in the late autumn and members from Year 11 (the old Vth form) were also included. It was a most successful event and was the precursor to the TOG Dinner of the present day.

The 1990 Scottish Sailex had ended well but rumblings of discontent re-commenced after our return. The problem with recounting the story of this many sided fracas is that, to my knowledge, the records appear to be lost whilst the Minute Book of the Skippers' Council

presumably rests somewhere in the School archives where it should have been placed upon the eventual, but drawn out, demise of the Flotilla in the mid '90s. I have no papers save Flotilla Expedition Reports which relate to particular sailing events and these have been the basis for the earlier chapters of this history. The laws of the land are such that libel actions can be pursued at will and it would be a foolhardy scribbler who risked that with no contemporary written evidence to fall back on.

During the Autumn Term we had a small number of increasingly fractious meetings of the Skippers' Council which revolved around the four topics of finance, personnel, logistics and organisation. Basically we were split between those who wanted the Flotilla to be a proper sailing club, with an elected committee and officers, and those who wished it to remain primarily a school club with but peripheral adult events. I very much favoured the latter option and could see no reason for change when the total adult membership (as at September 1990) was only 22, of which 10 had sailed as a skipper and were members of the Skippers' Council anyway. As in any organisation there was a mixture of ambition and desires: I certainly would have liked our financial affairs to be more open but such things as subsidies to adults and to pupils had never been discussed and historically were the prerogative of the Vice Commodore; there were some who had ambitions to office and thought that a wider electorate than the Skippers' Council would be useful to that end; there were some who wanted to attract more adults interested in learning to sail and would have liked the Easter Trainex to reflect this... and so on and so on.

The wrangling stopped for the Annual Dinner, which was referred to in the last chapter, but directly the 'festive season' finished it started all over again. By the end of February I had had enough and decided that if I was to be involved any longer with the Flotilla it would be on my terms: I was fed up with the disloyalty of some skippers, with the desire of others to turn the Flotilla into something that was never intended and, in particular, I had become disenchanted with some of the activities of the Vice Commodore (Brian Hill). I took the bull by the horns and invoked the common procedural practice of using "chairman's action" to sack the Vice Commodore and to re-appoint him as Rear Commodore (Dinghies) responsible for basic training. At the resultant meeting I explained that the VC position could be an opportunity for the Council to elect an officer, if that was their wish, although the exact terms of reference would have to be agreed later. Far from helping matters this merely caused more trouble. Whilst some dissidents were partly mollified by this action, and were willing to ratify it as it would be a slight step towards club status, Brian most certainly was not and refused to serve. Furthermore we had addressed only one item of concern and there much to go.

I had tired of interminable meetings and the concomitant bickering of a minority so I wrote to the Headmaster (in his position as Honorary Commodore) and resigned my post. I walked away with Ken Merryweather, Mike Hall, David Brettle and,

surprisingly, Mike Lawrence who was a particular chum of Brian, all Flotilla skippers. In addition Bob Adam informed Brian that he would stay for the 1991 Scottish Sailex, in order to further his skippering skills, and would then leave and team up with us (which he did). Joining us were long standing adult mates John Ellis, Nigel Williamson and Bob Wright, student afterguard members Rob Ellis, Bev Allen, and Peter Besson and newcomers Arthur Wood and Jon Lyons.

We took no one with us from the 47 strong school membership as there was no desire to exacerbate the situation further. Of the 22 adult members of the Flotilla 14 had walked away. At an informal meeting of most of the secessionists in March, prior to the Easter Sailex that had already been booked with RAFSA, it was decided that we would form a new club dedicated to offshore sailing. What to call it? As those involved came from four counties and boring titles such as The East Midlands Whatever were non-starters, we were stuck. Plumber suggested the word 'Trent', as being a good name for a waterborne club covering most of the East Midlands, and then came up with "we could call it the Trent Offshore Group. That sounds nicely ridiculous!" Someone else said "TOG for short.....not that it means much." About six months later Terry Wogan launched his own TOG club! That's how we got the name.

Surprisingly the disruption, for that is the only word that sums up the disengagement of two thirds of the adult membership, had caused little aggravation with the majority of those remaining. It was ironic that in terms of years of service none of the skippers had served anywhere near as long as those leaving, with the sole exception of Brian Hill. The Easter Sailex went ahead as planned in 'Sea Eagle'. My crew consisted of Windmill as mate, Rob Ellis as pilot, Pete Besson as bos'un and purser and four pupils from the school, the two sixth formers acting as watch leads. It was an early Easter but the weather was very favourable as we set off on 27 March for East Cowes-Poole-Braye (Alderney)-Yarmouth-Hamble (with dinner in the RAFYC)-Bembridge-and back to Gosport: a distance of 285 miles with 10 night hours. It was a fitting swansong to our involvement with the pupil membership of the Flotilla.

In keeping with a desire to keep personal animosity to a minimum it was decided by David Smith, Lester Brooks, Ken Merryweather and me that the planned SWAILEX to the Scilly Isles from Plymouth should go ahead in May. Consequently the three yachts that had gone to Brittany and the Channel Islands the previous year departed Plymouth on 11 May with a determination to enjoy ourselves to the extent of keeping crews as planned and thus preventing a 'them' and 'us' attitude. Our itinerary was to Fowey, Newlyn, Penzance, Hughtown (St Mary's), St Agnes (for an unforgettable overnight stop), Newlyn, Penzance, Falmouth, Fowey,

Newton Ferrers and back to Plymouth. We covered 334M with two night hours.

The first all TOG sailex took place 13-20 July 1991 from Dunstaffnage. I skippered a Moody 376 and Ken took a Moody 31. We had variable weather conditions but covered 263M visiting Tobermory, Loch Sunart, Muck, Eigg, Loch Harport, South Uist, Tobermory, Salen, Oban and back to Dunstaffnage. We did have one incident that caused a minor hiccup in Tobermory when my daughter Bev, along with Rob Ellis and Pete Besson got bored sitting aboard in the rain and decided to enact a burial at sea in the harbour where we were at anchor. It created chaos because some idiots thought it for real and alerted the Harbourmaster.....I needn't go on!!

Once the Summer was over, the TOG members formally met on 26 September to create the new club when a constitution and the first standing orders, having been devised and passed around to all members, were accepted. Recognising that TOG was a cruising club it had been decided to dispense with flag ranks ashore using them to denote seniority for command purposes at sea. Accordingly the chief admin officer/chairman/buck stopper, was to be entitled the Presiding Master and his number two the Deputy PM. I was asked to take on the job and Ken became DPM. The other Council posts created and filled at that meeting were: Expeditions Master (David Brettle, Treasurer (Pete Besson), Training Master (Mike Lawrence), Administrator (Rob Ellis), Chancellor (Mike Hall-responsible for fund raising and social affairs) and Spare Hands John Ellis (who became Administrator on the expansion of Council when Rob took on Public Relations) and Bev Allen (who became the editor of a quarterly newsletter the following January, the forerunner of this august publication). A badge, designed by David Brettle and Bob Adam was agreed and Bob, who became Boatswain, undertook to produce our new sweaters in time for Christmas! We were now established with no outside pressures and were our own masters. The preamble to the constitution that has not changed to this day was to be our light and guide.

"To provide offshore sailing experience to members of the Trent Offshore Group (TOG) and to train members to relevant Royal Yachting Association (RYA) standards".

Norman left us on 23rd October 2014. His long service to sailing was recognised by an award made by the Princess Royal, President of the Royal Yachting Association.

His drive and determination to make a success of TOG has brought us to where we are today. Long may we continue to live up to those ideals embodied in the early flotillas... Fun for all.



13th to 27th May 2017 a 2 week Sailex

SCO17 Scotland - The Best of the North. Lead Skipper Alan Mortimore

Starting near Oban with a plan, weather permitting, to sail north passing Skye and up the west coast of Scotland round Cape Wrath to the Orkneys. To spend several days in the Orkneys before sailing south down the East coast of Sutherland to Inverness and back to Oban via the Caledonian Canal. An opportunity of a lifetime. There may be opportunities for people to sail for just the first or second week if they are flexible on timings and there is a balance of people between the first and second week

Estimated cost for this trip will be **£790** for the full two week duration and **£400** per week for members allocated a place on either the first or second week of the Sailex

1 berth remaining.

Sailing Skills - Long Weekend

- **Thu, Jun 15, 2017 4:00pm Sun, Jun 18, 2017 5:00pm**

- **SSW17**

- Sailing Skills Long Weekend - Details to be provided later - planned location the Solent. **Lead Skipper Paul Burghart**

Member cost £185 per berth

Welsh Wonder 2017

- **Fri, Aug 11, 2017 4:00pm Fri, Aug 18, 2017 5:00pm**

- **PEM17**

Withdrawn

Spanish Jaunt - Palma Majorca

- **Sat, Sep 9, 2017 4:00pm to Sat, Sep 16, 2017 10:00am.**

- **MAJ17.**

The Spanish Jaunt - Lead Skippers Dave Bond and Paul Burghart.

After a couple of very successful years in Croatia, this years "Warm Weather Trip" will be a Spanish Affair. Many of us have been around the Island (of Wight!) but the aim of this trip is to circumnavigate the Beautiful Spanish Island of Majorca.

The Boats will be from Palma Marina, which is next to the airport, so transfer times will be just a few minutes! We intend to charter a couple of 2016 Beneteau Oceanis 41.1's (a bit like the one shown below). Also, currently there are a couple of new 2017 Hanse 415's available. Boats in Majorca do tend to book up rather quickly so members are urged to make their bookings asap to enable us to reserve the boats and also to avoid disappointment.

Likely cost for the boats will be in the region of **£625 - £660** per person assuming 5 crew per boat, this price includes outboards, towels and linen and boat cleaning upon departure.

Flights will be booked separately and at the moment seem to be **£240-260** return.

Fully booked.

End of Season Sailex - Bring a friend.

- **Thu, Oct 5, 2017 4:00pm Sun, Oct 8, 2017 5:00pm**

- **EOS17** Details to be confirmed **Lead Skipper Dave Bond**

Member cost £185 per berth

All these events are detailed on our web site - see the sailing page reference -

<http://www.trent-offshore-group.co.uk/sailing-programme/>

Bookings can be made by following the link at the top of the sailing page. Further information from any TOG Council Member or myself.