

NEW TO SQUIBS!

Nigel Grogan suggested to me that Jono Brown would be a great person to approach for a Squibble article because he had chosen to move to racing a Squib after great success in other keelboat classes. (Honour board at the end of the article!) Jono asked that I posed some questions (seen in italics) and he'd do his best to reply which he has done brilliantly. Many thanks Jono.

LinkedIn gives planning and law as qualifications and career. Plus sail coaching in Barbados and for the RYA. How relevant has this all been to your sailing career?

Coaching was helpful for my own sailing, mainly because showing other people how to learn and improve effectively helps you look inward and identify your own weaknesses.

The first questions must be to trace from the beginning. Where, when, what boat did you start sailing in. A fair conclusion from your family racing crew is that you were born into a sailing family?

I learnt to sail and race on the Norfolk Broads in an Optimist, then Topper and Laser. My family sailed and travelled to Norfolk most weekends until I was sixteen, then we moved to the Royal Burnham Yacht Club and I started helming the RS Elite (very badly for the first few years) alongside the Laser.

Was there an immediate attraction to racing? How soon did you start helming?

I first helmed an Optimist when I was five or six years old on Wroxham Broad (Norfolk Broads YC). There is a fantastic sailing school at NBYC and getting into racing was normal there, but not in a pushy way as everyone just progressed through the stages at their own pace and had fun.

Squibs. Why? This is what Squibbers will want to know. Burnham connection must be part of this.

There's a strong fleet at Burnham with regular and competitive racing available. This was a big attraction but I'd already had my eye on sailing a Squib for a while before Chris approached me to sail with him. In a similar way to the Dragon, but not many other classes at all, I think the magic of a class like the Squib that has been around for decades is the depth of knowledge you get amongst the sailors about the intricacies of the boat. This makes the learning process fascinating and it isn't something you get with many of the newer keelboats, some of which can be great fun to hop on and have a blast around but maybe aren't as interesting in other aspects.

The learning process is the main reason I enjoy sailing and makes the Squib so appealing as it's such a tough nut to crack. It's amazing that, with what seems like a relatively straightforward boat at first sight, you see people sailing them completely differently and still making them go fast.

It's unique and positive for the fleet that the oldest boats are so fast and yet there's a great looking new Rondar boat. These will be at least as fast but also nice and easy to sail (or easy for a Squib maybe).

How did you team up with Chris Dunn?

I've been incredibly lucky to have the opportunity to helm keelboats from a young age by sailing with my parents, then I struck gold again when Chris asked if I would helm his boat, *Squiggle*. This has been brilliant as he is already a fantastic crew (2nd 2012 Gold Cup, 1st 2014 Gold Cup and 5th at the 2011 Nationals all with Micky Wright), but he also understands that to win races you have to put the effort in behind the scenes by rigging and tuning the boat. He understands the boat

inside out and he's certainly the driving force behind it. I'm so grateful as he makes my helming look a lot better than it is.

How competitive do you find Squibs?

I'm finding the Squib very challenging and it's great fun that you always seem to feel like you can get more out of the boat. The fleet sailing is different to the Dragon where you have to really get your elbows out and be very forceful with people. This is a necessity because otherwise the pros take advantage and try to bully you, which is a shame as we're on holiday and there for fun! The Squib fleet have absolutely top sailors and it's been refreshing to find that everyone throughout the fleet seems to have a competitive but fair approach.



Photo: Tim Horne

What will you need to reach the very top level?

We already have a top boat and crew so I'll keep watching and learning from everyone else to make sure I can steer well and point the boat in the right direction. I think you need a few years in the boat to have the same feel for it that the top sailors do, therefore patience is needed too.

How do you find boat preparation and tuning?

Chris' boat prep is impeccable and we are always changing settings to try and make the boat faster. Tuning is difficult in Squibs, it's like there's a gearbox but the gear numbers are all mixed up and you're blindfolded so you have to keep changing things until you think you've found the next one up and the boat starts shifting along.

Tips?

I'm not good enough to give Squib tips yet! Generally, I'd say watch other people and always think you can learn something from everyone. Experiment lots because finding out what doesn't work is crucial to knowing what does.

Jono Brown



photo : Barry Searle

Before Squibbing:

Dragon

Régates Royales Cannes / French Nationals 2016 - 2nd overall and 1st Corinthian

Régates Royales Cannes 2018 - 1st Corinthian

International Dragon Derby La Baule 2018 - 2nd overall and 1st Corinthian

Edinburgh Cup / UK Nationals 2017 and 2018 - 2nd Corinthian

Grade 1 Grand Prix San Remo 2018 - 1st Corinthian

Open International de Deauville 2017 - 2nd overall and 1st Corinthian

RS Elite

UK National Championships - 1st in 2008, 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2015

Cowes Week - 1st in 2014 and 2015

Cowes Week 2015 - 1st overall Team Trophy (with Squib team members Malcolm Hutchings /Andy Ramsey and the Grogans)