

## FIRST REFLECTIONS ON CHOOSING TO RACE SQUIBS

One of our many reasons for retiring to Waldringfield on the River Deben was the opportunity to relive our youth and resume dinghy racing. We met racing GP14s but our recent involvement in dinghy racing has been as a taxi, rescue boat crew and coach as our children progressed through junior and youth sailing.

Our first decision was which class, (Waldringfield Sailing Club sensibly still run fleet racing in classes). We wanted to sail together, so the choice was Lark, RS200 Wayfarer, Dragonfly (the local one design) or Squib. We rejected the RS as too exciting and the demographic was far too young, we couldn't drag a Wayfarer up the beach and Larks were being superseded by RS. We were tempted by the Dragonfly, but having spent 15 years repairing and restoring wooden boats for a living, it seemed like a poor choice for retirement.

This left the Squib, the demographics within the fleet looked closer to our age, and with a mix of men and women sailing. We were slightly wary of a keel boat, having not much enjoyed our experience with Flying 15s many years ago, but the attraction of not capsizing and the enthusiastic welcome from the sailors convinced us to give it a try. We had a number of test sails; members were very kind and generous with their time. We learnt that the Squib is nothing like our previous experience of keel boats, it was comfortable to sail, and it felt more like a dinghy when sailing, more responsive and definitely more fun than anticipated.

We decided to take the plunge and buy a Squib. We received lots of advice about which numbers to buy and which to avoid and which were best. Needless to say, the advice wasn't completely consistent and we weren't entirely sure that the keel shape would be the limiting factor to our racing. We looked at a few boats and eventually bought a boat from the widow of a club member. It was lovely to be able to keep the boat sailing on its home river. We are proud owners of *Whirl'n Dervish*, number 812. The boat came very well equipped, and we have even managed to repurpose some old sails for garden chair use! *See below.*

Again, our fellow Squib sailors were generous in their help, support and advice. Our first race was not a great success, as we found, the first issue was avoiding the sticky Deben mud. We have slowly made every rookie mistake when it comes to rigging the boat, and have found most of the mud banks on the river. We have also learnt that local knowledge can be unbeatable on the River.

We have joined the regular scrubbing sessions, which are invaluable for informing antifouling choices and bonding with fellow sailors whilst wading in cold water. We also realised that we needed to find a way of antifouling the underside of our keel. We couldn't find any proprietary device so we decided to build one. First Phil built a wooden cradle from a template of the hull, (our road trailer has a single beam and nowhere to bolt on a jack). The tricky bit was sourcing a jack with sufficient range to lift the keel high enough to allow access to rub down and paint. The solution was the U head screw jack which fits into an Acrow prop and is used in construction. A friendly local metal fabricator built a purpose made stand to support the screw. A friend who is a structural engineer cast an eye over the design. First use of this homemade device is best described as tentative, but it worked a treat, and didn't cost a fortune.



We have slowly modified the controls on the boat, with a bit more purchase to suit our sailing and in particular the vertically challenged crew, (although the spinnaker pole is still out of reach). Other improvements include re-enforcing the trailing edge of the rudder with sapele and glass fibre (although we still haven't got the drawings from the RYA). We have considered new sails, but our children were quick to remind us of the rule we made for them; they were only allowed new sails when their sails were the limiting factor in their racing. We are definitely not at that point yet.

It was great to attend a couple of training events, a lecture by Nigel and Jack Grogan on rig set up and a day at Oulton Water which included the opportunity to get out on the water with top Squib sailors, and the invaluable chat in the clubhouse afterwards.

Our sailing has been very limited this year by injury and personal circumstances, but after 2 years we have made real progress. We are very pleased that we have bought a Squib, the racing at Waldringfield is close and competitive and we are not always at the back of the fleet, and we can see those at the front. We have made new friends and really appreciate the encouragement and sharing of knowledge within the fleet. We might even progress to an Open Event, before much longer.

We still have no idea why the rig works as it does, but experimentation, research and listening to wise words from other Squib sailors has started to pay off. We have never sailed a boat with loose rigging, and swinging spreaders, so much of our previous knowledge doesn't seem to apply to a Squib. We have learnt that, as we are regularly told, the Squib is an easy boat to sail, but a difficult boat to sail well.

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