

## A BEGINNERS TALE FOR SQUIBBLE

It seems like forever ago but it is only a little over 2 years since I acquired my very own Squib after managing the occasional sail on the River Deben. It came about after a relationship breakdown that coincided with an unexpected bonus at work. As a child I recall drawing sailing boats and looking back, I realise now that those innocent crude pictures I had drawn and coloured as an 8 year old were in fact Squibs. A classic shape and form that despite the high tech world of today is probably still drawn by children all over the world, albeit unknowing of the what it is they are drawing. Of course, as with people, looks are only part of the story. The rest of the tale is made up of all those other characteristics we generally search for in people; personality, stability, reliability, dependability, strength and most importantly, fun.

As a beginner I wasn't sure quite where to start but all I knew was I had to have my own and the Deben was not to be my base. Living in the midst of Suffolk, the River Orwell and HPYC was the logical choice. It was a good choice. The friendly and helpful members welcomed me and as a result of my experience there I am not surprised that the fleet has grown from single figures to in



excess of 20 in my two years there. Of course, the amazing sailing with easy access to the Rivers Orwell & Stour and the North Sea also helps.

In the short time I have been racing at HPYC I have learnt so much and gone from finishing just about in time to see everyone else leaving the lightship [HPYC clubhouse] after the post race debrief and the downing of the necessary liquid refreshment, to making it back into the marina whilst everyone is still removing sails and even finishing ahead of others on occasion. As well as figuring out how the spinnaker works, sailing with others has also helped. Possibly the biggest learning curve coming from a simple statement made by Robert Leggett whilst hindering, sorry, crewing, on *Squeaky Monkey* – 'any idiot can pull, it takes a sailor to let go'. Boy what a difference that little nugget has made!

I have found confidence has also had a role to play and has come from the most unexpected experiences. This includes heading to the start line to realise looking about, it couldn't be seen. In fact nothing could be seen and it wasn't long before the call came over the radio, 'race cancelled due to fog'. The next task was finding the marina. A very eerie and disorienting experience.

Another was getting caught in a real humdinger of a squall within spitting distance of the marina entrance which resulted in the boat getting laid flat multiple times with water pouring in before the brave little boat popped back up long enough to get the main down. Looking around I could see several other Squibs having just as much fun with the weather. Once righted, the main down and heading in to shelter I was surprised to see one such boat coming back out of the marina. Apparently, they had made it in at speed but had been unable to spill the wind and had come back out to drop the main. When a boat takes that kind of pounding and still forgives you for your lack of ability, you can only ever learn and improve. I have made many rookie errors and continue to do so

but I am learning and making fewer every time. Seeing how fast and capable these little boats are in the hands of those far more talented than me only serves to drive my thirst to learn.

It's not just the comradely and competitive friendliness of racing at HYPC that makes it special, it is also the pleasure of day sailing. I find that there is nothing better than packing a picnic and heading out to admire the scenery, wildlife and other boats. I have even made Instagram friends on the river and whilst I am saying 'hi' and posting photos of their 6 figure boats cruising out to sea and beyond, they are saying 'hi' back and posting pictures of my little Squib skipping down the river in the lightest of breezes heading to tie up at Halfpenny Pier, Harwich, in anticipation of an all-day breakfast in the pier café.

Even on the trips down to Halfpeny Pier I have learnt so much about sailing. I have learnt where the wind shadows are, depending on the wind direction, where the mud is, and the importance of planning! On one such trip we had a perfect pleasurable sail down to the Pier but sat a bit too long



soaking up the Autumn sun before heading back. The wind died, the tide turned and a 3½ hour sail back to the marina began, arriving back just before the last of the sun disappeared behind the trees. A beautiful and thoroughly enjoyable day out in the Squib.

I don't what it is about it, whether it's simply the plink plink of the water under the boat, the flapping of the sails or the way it feels when the wind blows and it picks itself up and glides through the water with such ease. It could be that when out on the water all the worries, stresses and strains of everyday life melt away, which with a stressful career and a small business to run is important to me. Whatever it is I can truly say that I love my time sailing my Squib and can't imagine life without it. I had initially thought I would learn on a Squib and move quickly on to something bigger and preferably with a toilet and kettle. Now I realise that there is nothing wrong with a bucket and a flask. Anyway, that's my view and I have no doubt that if Carlsberg made sail boats they would probably be Squibs.

### **Paul Herbert – Merlin 662**

*For those interested Paul also posts the occasional clips to Youtube – search Squib on the River Orwell and you should find him.*