

OUR FIRST YEAR IN SQUIBS

Gill and I have sailed together for 40 years – Enterprises, RS400's, Merlin Rockets, and lately in the 2000 (ex Laser 2000). Results wise we have varied between half way back and the top 10 at the Nationals in the 2000. But as we grow older and less agile, we have found that capsizing the 2000 means that we need rescuing – so we looked around for a safer, 2-man, keel boat.

Sending an email to various fleet captains on the East Coast received an immediate offer from Oulton Broad, along with a potential boat to buy! So we purchased *Croc* (855) and joined W&OBYC.

Launched and moored up on the Broad, we took our first tentative sail – no problems and rather enjoyable! Returning to the berth (remember we are used to landing on a gently sloping shore from a dinghy), Gill was on the foredeck intending to stop us before we crashed head first into the jetty. She did a grand job at stopping us, with one foot on the jetty and the other on the (now in reverse!!) Squib. The W&OBYC Squib fleet awarded her the Grand Potty prize for that first swim, at the very welcoming annual dinner.

Our first race was on a starboard biased start line – perfect for us as we could start in clear air down the other end. But this did mean we arrived along with everyone else at the (starboard hand) windward mark about 300 yards away – but the spinnaker hoist, run and drop soon showed us we had a bit to learn! Notes I made of one of the races at that time showed:

“We were squeezed up at the start, but managed to tack off for clear air. Tacking back again and we crossed ahead of Bryan and Jenny, before tacking and keeping them out towards the right hand side as we beat to buoy 3. 1st around the 1st mark! Then dropped 5 places before the next buoy on the short run / reach!!

On the spinny drop, we managed to wrap the spinny sheet around the keel – it takes time to undo, pull through, and then re-feed around the front of the boat.”

Doing 2 races each Sunday over the winter allowed us to experience many issues with our boat handling and spinnaker work, but we were gradually staying with the fleet, and then in the middle of the fleet by the end of the winter. The W&OBYC Open Meeting and 24 boats was next – we were looking forward to showing the Squibs our big fleet experience – HAH! Spat out the back and no way to recover .

Lifting the boat out and dropping the mast for the first time was a bit of an experience – I think we managed it in just under 5 hours! Then it was 2 days of work to remove the slime and limescale from the hull – no wonder we were spat out the back. The East Coast Championships at Haven Ports was our first experience in towing a Squib – having a higher car doesn't help! The hull prevents you seeing behind you. A lower car would, surprisingly, be easier! Dovercourt Bay, some waves, a clean boat, lots of space, and the rest of the fleet knowing we were not a threat – clear wind and a 3rd place in the 1st race! Thinking we had it cracked, we headed for the committee boat for the next start – spat out the back and down the fleet! Still lots to learn - starting a relatively heavy keelboat is a totally different experience to starting in a dinghy. But we did manage to be 1st W&OBYC boat overall.

Back in the 2000, a very stable dinghy which we now found to be rather wobbly, for a couple of months meant that launching at Torbay was our first sail in the Squib for 2 months. Starting in clearish air near the pin and putting in long starboard tacks (pointing well, going fast) gave us some great sails in Torbay – until we tacked, saw all the boats ahead of us, and realised we still had a lot to learn! A 2 to 3 metre swell was rather frightening, but *Croc* picked up over the top of each wave without an issue – we were very glad we had chosen

the Squib. We even managed to win a prize – highest placed newcomer – so we were delighted with the Nationals, despite not managing to complete the final day.

Back at W&OBYC, and all those boats we could beat on the open waters were back ahead of us again – learning a new boat and new waters and a new club and new people all takes time! We did manage a 2nd overall at Oulton Broad Week, and we have just lifted the boat out again – less than 2 hours to reach the moorings, paddle the boat around, crane out, onto the road trailer, mast down, and tied down! We are learning something!



Croc keeping pace with the Rileys

After 12 months, we realise we have done absolutely the right thing in joining the Squib class – it's going places (slowly!), it's developing (slowly!) but definitely a one-design, and it provides new friends (both in the local club and further afield), great racing, and a perfect mixture of local club fleets and National travelling.

Chris and Gill Jordan, Croc 855