

THOUGHTS OF A SUPER CREW

(Mark would be too modest to say this but he has been the winning crew in the Squib Champs on 10 occasions. Who better to tell us about crewing?)



Chris and Mark at Lowestoft 2008

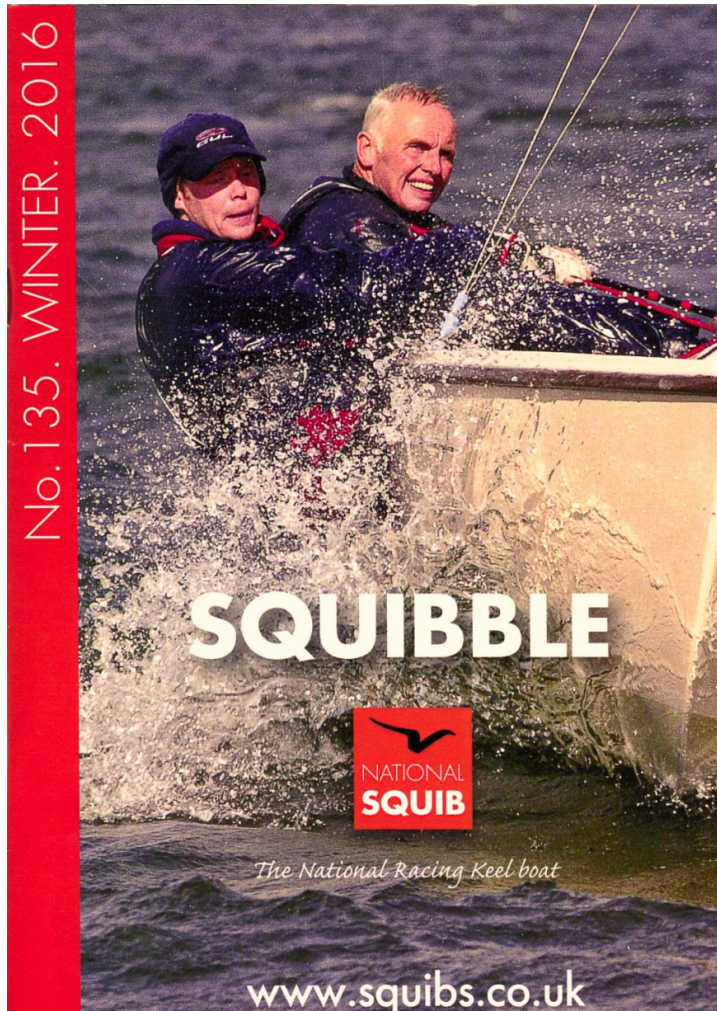
When Ricky asked me if I would be interested in writing an article for Squibble I was very honoured but at the same time totally stumped for anything I could write about that might be worth you guys spending your precious time reading... One suggestion was about my general thoughts, feelings and perspective on Squib sailing... but where to start when you've done 17 years of Squib sailing and not yet 40 years old?

I guess the obvious place is the start. I was just 21 and fresh out of a fairly hectic and very competitive few years campaigning a 470 when my dad asked me to sail with him for the Squib Nationals. Needless to say with the kind of experience and training I had gained with years of youth squad, together with youthful arrogance, I was pretty confident in my own abilities! So the chance to jump into a well prepared boat to sail with my dad was an exciting prospect, as it is for any son, even if it was a keelboat called a "Squib" (What is a Squib anyway???)

We got straight into preparations for the 2001 Nationals in Lowestoft our strategy to beat the best was simple - get the same kit as the best (Batt sails and a Canopus mast) and go train with them and try to do it more consistently... so we joined SCYC and in that first year got a beating from the early season weather with regular F4-5 easterly wind with big swell coming in. Being one of the lightest pairings I was given a very swift lesson in the uncomfortable nature of hiking a Squib - quite a far cry from trapezing a high performance dinghy... and so following some discussions with some of the other crews, I bought some body armour (hiking pants and shin pads).

Our first season was amazing having managed to keep the consistency we aimed for

despite the hugely talented and competitive fleet we were racing in. My initial thoughts about Squib sailing were that it was really not like anything I had experienced in what I (as an arrogant youth) considered to be quite a wealthy experience of sailing. The racing was fierce and extremely tight with all boats going pretty much the same speed through the water. Set up was important of course but positioning was vital. All of my training up to then had been around set up getting the best out of boat and helm for any given conditions.



Positioning had been important in the racing we had been doing but when boats are planing it's a lot easier to sacrifice a bit of position to gain boat speed (in a way one is much the same as the other but what I'm trying to convey is that the emphasis had now suddenly changed to positioning rather than through the water speed).

The thing I like the most about the Squib sailing is exactly that style of racing. It is hugely strategic from the initial race plan through the adaption stages during the race right down to the analysis afterwards.

I have also noticed that despite their weight and relative slow pace around the race course, they respond exceptionally well to the little details. Getting that kit hoisted and flying or through the gybe that second or two faster than the guys in front can gain you places every time.

The other aspect of the Squib fleet that has drawn us back year after

year is the personnel in the fleet and their attitude towards the racing. Whilst the competitiveness has rivalled some of the world and European fleets I've raced in, the level of secrecy and "bitchiness" that usually comes with that level is distinctly absent. The Squib fleet preferring to share knowledge on set up and racing to help keep the quality of racing at the highest possible level.

In all the years of sailing the Squib the social side of the racing has always held more of a draw with the diverse aspect of the socials arranged together with the ease of mixing and mingling with all of the characters and groups of sailors and their partners and families.

For a keelboat the Squib holds excitement, disappointment and elation at nearly every corner. There are not many fleets that can offer that and that is one of the biggest reasons for coming back time and time again.

Thank you for taking the time to read this, I hope it's not been too much of a drag. I also didn't want to bog it down with a history of sailing as there are plenty of better scripts out there for that but if you do have any specific questions then feel free to ask.

Mark Hogan 136 Ric O'Shea