

# SCUTTLEBUTT

SUSSEX POLICE OFFSHORE SAILING CLUB  
& DINGHY SAILING CLUB



## NEWSLETTER

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## 2020 CHRISTMAS ISSUE

### A Message from the Editor

What a crazy year this has been. With no sailing happening there has been little to write about in 2020. I have kept busy with daily walks, gardening and undertaking some projects that had been waiting for the appropriate moment. From July I was able to resume working as a guide at Arundel Castle and it was really nice to be able to meet people again.

Fortunately I and my family have remained well and in full employment throughout. As everyone, we had hoped that by now the situation would have improved somewhat, but with the new variant the disease has taken a firmer hold and the resulting cancellation of Christmas festivities has been a real blow to a lot of people, me and 'Mrs C' included.

We can only hope that the rolling out of the vaccine will continue and prove to be effective in restoring some kind of normality. I hope that Scuttlebutt will continue in 2021 and bring news of some sailing events in due course. I feel that I should mention that the RYA continues to support its members and offers online systems and training. The Commodore's Christmas Message follows on page 2 and I have no intention of pinching his material, therefore it just remains for me to wish you all as Merry a Christmas as is possible in the current circumstances, followed by a Happy, Healthy New Year.

With every good wish,

*Terry Clothier*

The Editor



### Editorial Note

Please remember that this is your magazine and should reflect your views and experiences for the benefit of other members. If you have any comment, articles or photographs you feel are appropriate for inclusion then please forward them to me, [terryclothier@hotmail.com](mailto:terryclothier@hotmail.com) for publication.

*The opinions expressed in articles within Scuttlebutt are those of the individual only and not necessarily those of the Sussex Police Offshore or Dinghy Sailing Clubs. No responsibility can be accepted for any inaccuracies or omissions.*



# SCUTTLEBUTT



*Photo taken mid-Atlantic by Terry Clothier*

## Commodore's Christmas Message

Dear Members,

Sorry about the lack of communication during the past year, my fault I'm afraid as I was off work for a large part of it and also because there wasn't much to pass on in the way of good news. Unfortunately it looks like it could be some time before we are able to run club charters again. I think you will all agree it would be impossible to maintain social distancing living on a boat.

Despite the lack of activities the committee has continued to work to try to come up with ways of keeping some events running.

In 2021 we will try to organise some day sails and boat handling refreshers so that when the day comes that we can go away for a week we are not all too rusty! It will be dependent on our ability to maintain safe practices with regards to COVID.

If any of you have managed to continue sailing this year it would be great to tell our members through Scuttlebutt, please email any stories or articles of interest to me or direct to Terry Clothier.

One piece of good news is that we have agreed to extend the training subsidy program. Currently it is only offered to those who successfully attend certain RYA practical courses. For 2021 the committee have agreed to extend the subsidy to those who pass an RYA theory course for Day Skipper or Yachtmaster, other RYA theory courses will be considered by the committee on application. Alwyn will circulate further information in another email.

We will not be able to hold a physical Annual General Meeting in 2021. The club rules don't cater for something like COVID! Having discussed this in committee we propose to send out the required reports by email and will answer

any questions raised. We believe this will comply with the spirit of the rules. With regards to the nomination and election of the officers of the club, voting by email would be very difficult to do, therefore the committee will remain the same for the coming year. If any members object to the AGM being carried out in this way, please email me ASAP, preferably with an alternative means of safely and practically progressing the functions of the AGM.

Hopefully it won't be too long before some normality returns.

Wishing you all as Merry a Christmas as you can have and a Happy New Year.

*Owen Poppett*

Surrey & Sussex Crime Review Team  
Specialist Crime Operations  
Mobile: 07901670721



# SCUTTLEBUTT

## 'Sextant'

### or 'A Cat in the Caribbean'

*The following true story, from Scuttlebutt No. 88, December 2000, was found by me in a news article while I was sailing in the Caribbean. One Gary Brown was the original author, and I thank him again for this heartwarming tale which is ideal to cheer December 2020 as it did 20 years ago. (Ed.)*

"There is absolutely no way, under any circumstances that that cat is coming aboard this boat. No, no, never!"

Three days later, a litter box, two cases of cat food and an 18lb black and white lump of angry fur landed in the cockpit. Friends, the owners, were leaving the island for three weeks and could find no-one to look after the animal, unsurprisingly! They had threatened to dump the cat at the local bar and let it fend for itself. My wife took pity on all concerned and hence our passenger.

Its first act was to sharpen its claws on the mast, a sixty year old piece of unblemished spruce sheathed in twenty three coats of varnish. I screamed in anguish but this only spurred the thing on to greater effort and then (to my continuing disbelief) it looked back over its shoulder and grinned at me as I launched a marlinspike, with deadly intent at the creature's head.



*Not Sextant I'm afraid!*

By the time the marlinspike had bounced on the deck and ricocheted over the side the cat was fifteen feet above said deck clamped like a limpet to the mast, head up tail down, and looking at me with those green eyes that would have withered a lesser mortal.

"Don't be such a grump", my wife cooed as she prised the spear gun from my fingers, "you'll like him once you get to know him." Far from wishing to 'get to know him', I had plans that involved a deck brush - and the deepest part of the Caribbean.

The said three weeks went by with no sign of our friend's return. Six weeks went by and our ex-friends had still not returned and, with the imminent approach of the hurricane season, it was time for us to leave.

"There is no way, no how, ever that this cat is sailing with us in this boat", I roared as my wife rocked the thing in her arms. The next day we hauled up the anchor and sailed away. From my position on the tiller I could see him standing like a figurehead on the bow. Whiskers streaming in the wind and his tail standing straight up like a flagpole showing me exactly what he thought of the skipper.

*(continued)*

#### A. A. Milne ~ Winnie the Pooh



*"Now then, Pooh," said Christopher Robin, "where's your boat?"*

*"I ought to say," explained Pooh as they walked down to the shore of the island, "that it isn't just an ordinary sort of boat. Sometimes it's a Boat, and sometimes it's more of an Accident.*

*It all depends."*

*"Depends on what?"*

*"On whether I'm on the top of it or underneath it."*



**A.A.Milne 1922**



# SCUTTLEBUTT

## 'Sextant' continued

Our first days passage went slowly by. 'Sextant', (this was the beast's name - and his only saving grace as I could see) was here and there doing what cats do, and although the time had passed when I wanted to shove him over the side with the deck brush I was still not averse to glowering at him..

I pretended to ignore him. But sometimes - when my wife wasn't looking - I found myself watching him and admiring his ability as a seaman. He walked down the heeling deck keeping himself vertical as if built on gimbals. He could navigate too. If we were approaching an island I would find him standing on the coach-roof like a furry compass, nose twitching, tail straight out looking directly at the point on the horizon where the land was due to appear. Best of all though he could eat anything at any time, including raw flying-fish, and not get seasick. He was a 'natural' and completely at home on the sea. None of this should have surprised me for with his previous owner he had sailed the Med', the Atlantic and the mighty Southern Ocean. He had been to sea on a fishing boat and had chased rats through the holds of a sailing ship.

Of course my wife fawned over him, but in the way of cats it was me he was

determined to please, I was having none of it.

What had ended as a gentle trade wind day had turned into a violent, lightning-torn night. The squall built rapidly and our ancient - circa 1932 - roller furling gear chose the perfect moment to jam, forcing me out onto the end of the bowsprit to free it. Twice I had been plunged into the sea to my waist. The jib was flogging and shaking the whole rig and the sheets were flailing around my ears like living things. Then, while forcing a spike into the shackle that held the furling drum, the boat lurched and I drove the spike into my palm. Dripping blood, salt water and fear I clung desperately to the bowsprit. My legs, braced hard against the bobstay, were beginning to go numb and I knew I had only enough strength for one more attempt. I chanced to look back towards the stem head and there, his green eyes locked into mine, stood Sextant. His fur was soaked and shiny black. He followed my movements, his head turning slowly left and then right. With each change of angle his eyes caught the glow of the navigation lights first green and then red, giving him the look of a demon. At first I thought he was there hoping that I would be washed off. But, as I watched him, I realised that this was not so. He was out there with me because that was

where he wanted to be, and like me, was having the time of his life.

Turning back to the sail I beat it into submission. Back on the deck I collapsed in a wounded heap and Sextant, standing next to me, leaned into my side. Right there, with the seas breaking over us, I wondered if Sam Coleridge had got it wrong. Perhaps the souls of dead seamen didn't just come back as the wandering albatross but also, on occasions, as cats!

We had many adventures after that'd it appeared that Sextant was well known to the sailing community - if not always well regarded! On at least two occasions people appeared with a gun, ".....if I ever see that 'kincat again I'll shoot it."

Over the years that we sailed together he became a big part of our life. Who would have thought that I would put myself between an angry man with a 44 magnum - and a cat! Crazy world isn't it.

Sextant doesn't sail with us any more as his time came and he jumped ship for the 'big pontoon in the sky'. I hope that he is somewhere high above the Southern Ocean, riding the Westerly Winds - with the other albatrosses for company.

By Gary Brown



*The 2021 AGM will not have a physical presence this January because of the Coronavirus Pandemic.*

*See the Commodore's Christmas Message on page 2.*

*Scuttlebutt 198 will be circulated in due course giving details of the Officer's Reports for your information and to give you a chance to ask any questions you may wish to put to your Committee.*

# SCUTTLEBUTT

# TRAINING

To all SPOSC Members,

Not exactly one of our most active sailing years in the history of SPOSC, but as we all know horrendous and difficult times. I hope you and your families have all stayed healthy and safe.

With my 'responsibility for training hat' on have been looking how and when we can resume sailing post Covid and to energise members to come sailing with SPOSC. Also to enhance or refresh members sailing & skippering skills.

Under normal non Covid times, SPOSC subsidise RYA Practical courses for its members.

SPOSC Committee are offering to its members additional generously subsidised RYA Theory and Practical Courses, funded by the 2020/21 grant.

This would enable members to gain RYA Qualifications to allow SPOSC to continue its activities into the future and it's members to benefit from training or take refresher courses before resuming sailing on SPOSC charters after Covid restrictions relax.

As we have not incurred any charter costs in 2020/21 the Committee will offer this additional subsidy **only for the Sailing year 2021-2022**. Hopefully during/after 2021 we may return to a situation where we can resume chartering yachts funded by our 2021/22 grant.

Until the demand for these courses is known, it's difficult to detail the additional subsidy applicable to each course. However we have the opportunity to allocate our 2020/21 grant to this 'one off special offer.' It is envisaged that Club subsidies could be as much as 50% or more of the course. Final figure will be based on number of courses to be subsidised.

RYA Training Centres have been offering Covid compliant practical courses, some of which can be completed on line. Members would arrange their own time and venue for the course. The SPOSC subsidy would be paid after completion of the course.

## **RYA Courses available and current a commercial costs are,**

RYA Diesel Course 1 day £125

RYA Sea Safety Course 1 day £120

RYA VHF Course 1 day £100 + £60 RYA Exam fee

Boat Handling Practical in Marinas Course 1 day £169

**Excellent Refresher Course for Club Skippers & Mates**

RYA Shorebased Theory Day Skipper Course 40 hrs On line/zoom etc £400

RYA Shorebased Theory Yachtmaster Course 45 hrs On line/zoom etc £400

RYA Practical Day Skipper Course 5 days or 2 weekends £600

RYA Practical Coastal Course or Yachtmaster Preparation Course 5 days £600

If you are genuinely interested in taking up this opportunity then please reply to [alwynevensuk@yahoo.com](mailto:alwynevensuk@yahoo.com) with course(s) interested in **by 1st February 2021**.

Merry Xmas to you and your families and hoping that 2021 becomes a better year for everyone.

Regards

Alwyn

SPOSC Vice Commodore & Treasurer

