

# HUNTER'S YARD



Newsletter of the Friends of the Hunter Fleet



## In this issue

Editorial-Christine Wall 2

The Chair Rambles-Rodney Longhurst 3

25th Anniversary Programme- Neville Khambatta 4

Membership News- Louise Hopkinson 5

Friends Events-Neil Hopkinson 6

From the Yard-VikkiWalker 8

No Mooring, No water- Jennifer Mack 11

(Very) Junior Hunters 14

Friends Write 15

# Friends of the Hunter Fleet Committee Members

## Chairman

### Rodney Longhurst

129 Christchurch Road  
Norwich NR2 3PQ  
Tel: 01603 453889

## Vice Chairman/Event Organiser/NHFT

### Nominated Trustee

Neil Hopkinson  
E: neil.hopkinson@huntersyard.co.uk  
Tel: 07930 910870

## Committee Secretary/NHFT Trustee

Philip Bray  
5 Westfield Road  
Swaffham, Norfolk PE37 7HE  
E: philip.bray@huntersyard.com  
Tel: 07710 403881

## Membership Secretary

Louise Hopkinson  
The Bumbles, 8 Spenser Road  
Lutterworth LE17 4PG  
E: louise.hopkinson@huntersyard.com  
Tel: 017939 014747

## Treasurer

David Yapp  
96 Christchurch Road  
Norwich NR2 3NG  
E: davidyapp@googlemail.com  
Tel: 01603 454567

## Chairman-NHFT

Neville Khambatta  
E: nevilleandval@gmail.com

## Yard Manager

Vikki Walker  
E: vikki@huntersyard.com  
Tel: 01692 678263

## Committee

### Jennifer Mack

Tel: 01692 403508

### Pio Altarelli

Tel: 01986 895559

### Christine Wall

Tel: 01692 678060

# Editorial

Welcome to Issue 70 of the newsletter.

Well, what a year it has been. I hope all Friends and their families have stayed safe and well and not too anxious during these difficult times and I hope that many of you were able to do at least a little sailing.

Hunters yachts did eventually get into the water and Vikki has made a lovely pictorial record of life at the Yard this summer (see p.8).

My request for memories of Hunters and sailing over the past 25 years and beyond has already produced some varied and interesting results, from a lovely account of her childhood at Hunters Yard from Jennifer, to a bit of a competition as to who was the youngest Friend to sail in a Hunter boat.

Plans for our celebration of 25 years of NHFT and the Friends are also detailed, although at the moment we do not know what regulations will be in place and how much celebration will be allowed, but I'm sure we will find a way of having a good celebration in which many Friends can take part.

*Christine.*

**STOP PRESS:** Just as I was completing this issue we heard the sad news of the death of Bryan Read, on 27 October. Bryan was Chair of Norfolk Heritage Fleet Trust from its inception and played an enormous role in its continuation and success. Appreciations of Byran will appear in the next issue of Hunters Newsletter.

Copy date for next issue: 1 February 2021

## Newsletter editor:

Christine Wall  
Flycatcher  
School Road  
Ludham NR29 5PF  
E:thewalls@broadland.net

## Chairman's Ramble Oct. 2020

This is my last ramble in a year which, some might say, has been, and continues to be, full of incident. It will, like this year's hiring season, be short.

Put in plain language it has been a financial and social disaster, bordering on catastrophic for some people, and it hasn't finished yet!

The Norfolk Heritage Fleet, along with the rest of the tourist industry on the Broads, and by extension, the rest of the country/world might well have crashed under the on-going covid crisis and, as I made it quite clear in my last ramble, was saved by the unbelievable generosity of the Friends (that's you) along with government and lottery fund grants.

The fleet will be going back into winter storage/maintenance, and all one can say is that they are in better condition than normal, due to lack of use, however, as one of the Yard staff told me when I last visited, there is always maintenance to be done on wooden boats. They have a list which has to be prioritised, but they may be able to catch up with some of the items which, under normal circumstances, would have been put back for another time.

I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all of the Yard staff for their work, for my colleagues on the FHC, and the Trustees of the NHF, who continue to keep the dream alive.

Please look after yourselves, stay safe and we will wait to see what the new year brings.

*Rodney Longhurst*

## AGM 2020

The AGM this year was understandable postponed in May because of the Covid-19 lockdown and although we had hoped to combine it with the Autumn Event that too had to be cancelled.

The FHF is an integral part of the Norfolk Heritage Fleet Trust: the NHFT is a registered charity and is required to hold an AGM under Charity Commission rules and this was held by a Zoom meeting on 15 May 2020 where the audited accounts, including FHF accounts, were agreed. Although the FHF has a constitution requiring an AGM within 15 months of the previous one, the organisation is an unincorporated association and not governed by a Memorandum and Articles of Association: so technically there is no need for an AGM and a cancellation under the current circumstances is acceptable.

It is disappointing that an AGM and its associated social event has not been possible this year but details of the activities at the Yard and the effects of the lockdown have been published in the Newsletters to keep members up to date. Other business will be delayed until the 2021 AGM. I'm sure you will all understand.

If anyone wishes to have a copy of the audited accounts, please ask the Secretary (contact details on Page 2).

*Philip Bray*

*Please continue to send me your Hunter sailing memories from during the past 25 years (and beyond!).....Ed.*

## **The 25th. Anniversary Programme:**

As you will be aware we are planning to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of the Trust next year.

There is much to celebrate, not just the 25 years but also the fact that despite all that has been thrown at us we have managed to keep the Yard open, the Fleet sailing and the customers happy. We all owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the team in the Yard, to Vikki and the office, to Ian and the men. They have done a wonderful job in the face of all sorts of demands. Thank you all.

By the time we all read this the fleet will once more be laid up for the winter in the sheds with work being done to prepare them for yet another season.

We had hoped to publish lots of details, dates, times, place and costs with this edition of the newsletter. Sadly the recurrence of restrictions has meant that has proved impossible.

The Fleet Float, our anniversary cruise in company will happen, indeed some of you have already booked your boat, thank you, but whether we will be free to socialise as planned is another matter. We shall all have to be patient and wait and see.

The same goes for the Grand Dinner Party in the Yard. Caterers I have approached obviously can't commit nor can we really set a date. It is all very frustrating.

The only thing I can promise is that we will have more to tell you in the next news-letter.

**Neville H. Khambatta**  
**Chairman,**  
**Norfolk Heritage Fleet Trust.**

## Membership News

My goodness how life delivers us a curve ball, this time named Covid-19. In these difficult times we have managed to maintain our membership numbers throughout the year, although they had decreased enormously in the pervious year. We presently stand at 768 Members. With this in mind I have just launched a recruitment drive focusing on the sailing and outdoor pursuits community, youth and historical interest groups and local Norfolk folk. Hopefully, we will soon see a rise in numbers. If you know of anyone who would like to join our merry band then please pass on my phone number 07939 014747 or they can follow this link:

<https://www.huntersyard.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Website-Friends-Application-Form-2020.pdf>

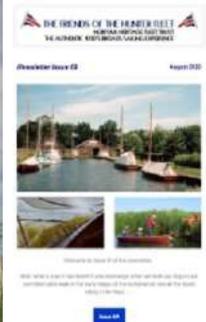
With Christmas just around the corner perhaps a Friends of the Hunter Fleet membership would be an ideal gift?

I would like again to thank you all for the extremely generous support in response to the Covid-19 Campaign.

By now members who have their Newsletter by PDF will have received their 3rd issue using our new system. I hope you like the snippet of what is to come on the email (*see below*) and find the button link through to the issue easy to use. We have started to use this method as it is safeguarding everyone from any viruses that might be linked via an attachment to an email. If you would like to receive your Newsletter as a PDF just let me know. Email [louise.hopkinson@huntersyard.com](mailto:louise.hopkinson@huntersyard.com)

The AGM & Barbeque takes place on 8th May 2021. If you would like to lend a hand during the day, we would love to hear from you. Again, call or email me using the information above.

*Louise Hopkinson*



## **Friend's Events**

### **8th May 2021: AGM, BBQ and Sail**

This will be (all being well) our first event after the upheaval caused by Covid-19. It will be a pleasure to see as many of you as can make it to this peaceful and historic part of Norfolk.

As you sit through the AGM your thoughts may well stray a little towards the afternoon's sail and wildlife walk, which will of course be taken in glorious sunshine and a perfect sailing wind!!!

As usual each of "Percy's Ladies" will be resplendent after the winter's refit and each with a skipper chaffing at the bit to get you out onto the river. The wildlife walk will be led by Pam Taylor from the Dragonfly Society so expect some knowledgeable sightings of not only insect life but also birds and plants.

### **20th to 25th June 2021: 2 Day Skipped Sails**

This year will be the thirteenth running of the Two-Day Sails and we return to where it all started, the Bure to Horning. On the way we will visit Malthouse Broad or South Walsham, as well as the usual stop at Cockshoot Broad Nature Reserve to get a glimpse of the elusive kingfisher that flies past the hide when our backs are turned!

Should the wind oblige, then there will be the possibility of enjoying a sail on Hoveton Little Broad.

Philip Bray and Neil Hopkinson will have the Hustlers ready to sail by 10:00hrs so that we can get two full days of sailing, or quanting if the wind is light.

When we arrive at Horning you will be staying at The Moorhen Bed & Breakfast.

In the evening we will enjoy a meal at the New Inn which is close by.

The price per person for two days sailing on one of 'Percy's Ladies', including Bed and Breakfast at The Moorhen, will be £240\* per person.

### **10th to 17th July: Fleet-a-Float Celebration Week**

25 years ago, the Hunters Fleet was saved from being sold off into private hands, possibly individually. Luckily, such was the strength of feeling for this historic fleet, a group of local people managed to raise the necessary funding to buy the yard and start the Norfolk Heritage Fleet Trust, this is our celebration.

The Trustees and Friends Committee have booked out the whole fleet for a week of sailing and celebration. The boats are open for hire with the proviso that you will be at Barton Broad on Tuesday for a sail and lunch on the Norfolk Punt Club pontoon, as well as attending Wroxham Broad on Thursday for a sail and dinner at the Norfolk Broads Yacht Club. On Tuesday we will also have a talk from one of the skippers from The BT Global Challenge of 2000, Manley Hopkinson

We will also be running a special 3 Day Skipped Sail week as follows:

1. Sunday to Tuesday The Yard, Neatishead & Barton Broad
2. Wednesday to Friday Barton Broad, Wroxham to The Yard

The Sunday to Tuesday crews will enjoy the lunch and talk whilst the Wednesday to Friday crews the dinner.

## **24th & 25th July: Half Decker Treasure Hunt**

This will be the second running of our Treasure Hunt, which for 2021 will be on the River Ant. The theme this year will be once again based on the Swallows and Amazons. Clues will be hidden in wooden boxes with a Friends flag painted on the lid and will lead you from point to point, but keep an eye out for the ultimate prize of a Swallows and an Amazons burgee.....The winner will be the team who gets them back to the Yard first.

The hunt starts at the Yard, where you will then be taken to a remote lane that will lead you to your boats. We will have *Buff Tip*, *Sundew* and *Brown Bess*, so book early to get the boat of your choice.

During the weekend, the *Come Along* with Old Bob will be in attendance if needed to tow because of adverse winds or tides. The Saturday night will be spent camping, possibly wild with a BBQ.

You will need to provide camping equipment and food for the weekend, but we will have a BBQ and also a couple of toilets.

## **25th September: Autumn Picnic Sail and Dinner**

This will be the last event for the Friends to celebrate our 25th Year so a dinner will be taken at The Lion of Thurne. We have booked the whole restaurant for the Friends so that we can raise a glass to the next 25 years.

Beforehand of course we will enjoy some sailing, rowing and a wildlife walk with Jeremy Halls. For those of you who are not taking a sail, the Nancy Oldfield Trust will be there with one of their cruisers so that you can see the yachts in all their magnificence on the river.

You will need to bring a picnic lunch, but we will have drinks and a cake table full of wonderfully baked delights for you to purchase





# From the Yard Vikki Walker Yard Manager

Pictures by Vikki Walker

## The Yard by Picture

For something a little different, how about seeing our season by picture.....



1st Day back a great feeling!



Our new entrance.....different but works well



Ian fogging, a new extra part of cleaning



Independence Day for ALL (thanks Eatons for the US flag too)



A whole lotta sailing finally went on!



We even had some 'lil' visitors til they found mum

**Work on Titmouse starts again**



**Trustees win a COVID grant for the Trust**



**The mahogany log arrives**



**Log in place ,thank you Heritage Lottery grant**

**Then came rain, high tides & flooding!**



**In front of the office even to middle of the sheds**



**And awning drying on lucky weather days.**

**Boat stripping- sail drying**



**Suddenly we had naked ladies ready for their winter beauty treatments Our lads are the best!**

**Thank you so much for your support, it's very much appreciated. Percy (& us) say, take care, keep well and stay safe- 'til next season- 2020 out**

## NO MOORING.NO WATER

*Percy Hunter's daughter Jennifer Mack shares some of her memories (this article first appeared in issue 2 of the Newsletter)*



### ***Three generations of Hunters***

*Jennifer with father, Cyril and grandfather Percy (photo lent by Jennifer)*

It was probably only after I had read Arthur Ramsome's books that I realized Percy Hunter & Sons was something out of the ordinary. Before that I suppose I took for granted everything about the way of life at the boatyard-as one does as a small child.

However, the excitement of building the first new boat after the war, *Wood Anemone*, did not escape me. I can remember being absolutely fascinated by the steam box from which the wooden ribs were rushed and then bent and cramped into position. I grew up with the weekly routine of busy weekends when it was advisable not to "get in the way". On Friday afternoons the boats would start to come back from their week or two away and my father was always anxious until the last boat was back safely on Friday night (or even as late as Saturday morning) and then relieved that no major repairs were necessary before

each boat was thoroughly cleaned and re-equipped with bedding and cooking utensils.

My duty on a Saturday morning was to take elevenes down to my father so that he could work through until all the boats were spick and span and ready for the next set of customers. Occasionally there would be a frantic rush home to borrow my hair dryer to speed up drying the varnish after a repair had been effected speedily so the customer would lose little or no sailing time.

New people arrived early on Saturday afternoon and often my father would say at lunch "the so-and sos" are coming today-we made a number of lifelong friends from the repeated visits of so many customers-and then I would wander down to the Yard to see them and catch up on their news over the past year. There was concern all round when a few of the customers had never sailed before and said "Can you take us out for an hour to teach us"! A nerve wracking week ensued, waiting for the safe return of the craft.

In the quieter parts of the season we were able to sail as a family and I enjoyed taking the helm of all the Hunter boats, but the Hustlers were always my favourites to sail. My father, on occasion, despaired about teaching me the finer points of sailing as he was such a perfectionist and the best comment he was likely to make was "Not bad youngster (even in my twenties!) but..." whereupon he would launch into reasons why we had not gained a few more inches on that particular tack. I also enjoyed his comments and manoeuvres concerning other users of The Broads,

Epecially motor cruisers when they were petrified and trying to avoid us in windy weather.

Looking back over my childhood in Ludham, I think the things that have left the greatest impression on me were the totally unspoilt surroundings and the sense of freedom. After the war I learnt to swim at the Yard because the water was so clean then- difficult to imagine now. I took for granted my annual foraging for the handsome Swallow tail caterpillars which I collected, fed, watched turn into the chrysalis stage and then kept safely until the following spring to experience the unfailing wonder of seeing them emerge as beautiful butterflies. I learnt to row the dinghy tenders at an early age- my father would be the first to agree that he was not renowned for his patience in teaching me nautical skills and I think he found it more than difficult on the way home from the first outing when I insisted on rowing us back to the Yard myself! It could only have been a hundred yards or so but I am certain it felt more like a hundred miles to him. However, I thereby gained the freedom to go off by myself and explore the small inlets and bays nearby which were full of glorious water lilies and wild life, including kingfishers, reed warblers etc., or go further afield to St Benet's Abbey or Potter Heigham. At that time sailing boats outnumbered motor cruisers by about ten to one so I was rarely bothered by the wash from the "Hullabaloo's". I also enjoyed fishing for tiddlers, sometimes just chatting to my grandfather who often used to fish when he had retired, or perhaps

trying to catch as many as possible to use as bait for the eel lines my father set across the dyke at night: the reward was to watch fascinated as the eels were skinned and then share the delicious meal of stewed eels.

I remember the Yard for its amazing array of tools, the characteristic smell (a mixture of sawdust, varnish etc.) the carefully stacked planks of best mahogany, the activity at the beginning of the week to produce gleaming sets of cooking utensils ready for the next Saturday, the laundry baskets awaiting collection, the spare masts, quants etc. in the rafters in case of breakage or damage in order to cut down "lost holiday time" to a minimum; how one had to prime the old hand water pump to get it to work. There was frantic activity at the end of each season to get all the boats safely into the two sheds so that any damage during the summer could be repaired and all the boats could be rubbed down ready for varnishing and restoration to their former glory in time for a new season. Thence followed more frenetic efforts, in March, to get all the boats launched and rigged before Easter, surprisingly often made difficult by snow and Equinoctial gales.

I hold very fond memories of my grandfather, Percy, who always looked the same to me ; he was kind and gentle, smart (never without a collar and tie) invariably smoking a pipe and always found time to talk. He was deaf, but not as deaf as he made out which gave him time to think what he was going to say. He seemed totally unfazed about the crises going on around him and I



*Percy Hunter at the boatyard, late 40s/early50s.*

feel that he was a steadying influence on the family. His standards were extremely high and he was a stickler for perfection and attention to detail. Both he and his sons were determined to stick to tradition; for example, to retain the gimbal oil lamps. I can remember discussions about not replacing the primus stove with gas for cooking because of reservations about the



*Percy Hunter with his sons Stanley and Cyril*

safety of gas cookers in the hands of the hirers (pressure from the letting agents finally caused them to reverse the decision). Percy always referred to motor cruisers as “stink boats” and the entrance to the dyke was marked by a welcoming sign “No Mooring, No Water No Petrol”! Past customers suggest they were made to feel that it was a privilege to hire a Hunter boat; the advertisement summed up these sentiments-“Hire your boat from Percy Hunter & Sons and be satisfied”!

Many of these memories of the boatyard came flooding back to me on 1st April last year (1996) at the launch of the Trust. I got that same special buzz from seeing the fleet in pristine condition as it was at the beginning of each season, the same boatyard smell; the familiar tools and most things exactly as they were. Also on that day when I had the privilege of helming a Hustler-it was the usual situation of a head wind in the narrow dyke necessitating short tacks and apparently defying the laws of physics to gain ground- I could hear my father's voice “Keep the bloody boat sailing”. Which I did, so I must have learnt something!

*Jennifer Mack*

## (Very) Junior Hunters

*This Junior Hunters section with a difference has developed into a bit of a competition over who was the youngest ever junior hunter to have sailed in a Hunter yacht. I imagine this could be the start of further competition!*

*It all started with an email from Friend Christopher Bishop...*

“ We would like to claim to have the youngest baby on board..

In 1966 we were sailing on *Lullaby* with our son. Unfortunately we do not have any photos of him as we were sailing in May and he was not born until August.

However he seemed to have enjoyed the trip. He eventually went on the tall ships, *Malcom Miller* and *Winston Churchill* and was bosun on *TS Royalist* and is now Commander of Sea Cadet unit at Reigate. We have been since with his two sons.(I appreciate that this happened longer ago then twenty five years.)

However, in case the above does not qualify, in 2012 we took Isabella, our grand daughter, when she was eight months old on *Lullaby*, her first sailing holiday. She thoroughly enjoyed it as the photos show. Photos show happy Mum (see opposite) and proud grandmother. ( see below).



*This is the contribution from Friend Peter Wall:*

One of the advantages of being married to the editor is being able to see what letters members have written to the editor before they are published. Christopher Bishop's claim for the youngest child taken sailing does I think not really qualify if it is still in the womb at the time. I can make two claims in respect of two of my sons ex womb though like Christopher Bishop they do not fall within the twenty five year time frame. My eldest son Andrew was just under five months when he was taken sailing in June 1977 on a *Hustler*. Please see photograph below of the *Hustler* at Sutton Staithe dressed overall with terry towelling nappies drying. Andrew, only 4 month old, ashore asleep in the carry cot on wheels and his mother, my late first wife, on board making the boat ship shape.

Then we come to June 1981 and my youngest son Ian with his mother was on board another *Hustler* at just 11 weeks old.



My two older boys were being looked after by my parents at the time. The middle son missed out on such early life voyages.

**Young sailors:**

*Ian (below)*



*Isabella (above); Andrew (below)*



**Friends Write**

*From Robin Webb*

Dear Christine,

In the latest Hunter Fleet Newsletter you appeal for memories of sailing from the Yard during the 25 years since the Friends' inauguration.

Well, my best memory of sailing Hunters doesn't fit the rules so you may not wish to use it anyway. This is because it was actually in 1990, when the Fleet was still in the care of the County Council.

In 1988 I returned to the Broads after some 25 years absence, and suffered the frustrations of trying to make Herbert Woods "Crimson Lady" sail.

During this I had seen Hunters in action for the first time, so my son and I booked *Hustler 2* for 1990.

Thus started a love affair with Percy's Lovely Ladies which lasted some 15 years until I got my own boat and then they had to share my affections.

On that first trip we went up to Horsey which entailed beating all the way up Meadow Dyke – a real baptism of fire!

A storm ensued overnight and the following day the wind had done a 180, so we beat all the way back down Meadow Dyke again!

At the Yard on the following Saturday there was the usual post mortem among the returned voyagers, during which several agreed that it was impossible to beat the length of Meadow Dyke.

When I said that I had just done it both ways it was plain that nobody believed me, and that I had to be "shooting a line".



After returning home I wrote to Jim Searle to say how much we had enjoyed the week and how delighted I was with the boat, and told him of our experience and how I was disbelieved.

I had a very nice letter in reply in which he said that never mind beating the length of Meadow Dyke, many people couldn't even sail it on a fair wind!

*As a postscript - I could get a 24ft. Hustler the length of Meadow Dyke against the wind, but, try as I might, I never managed it in my 17ft. Skipper. The secret, of course, lies in how the Hustler carries her way and in her*

*sail area up aloft.*

*I am delighted to see that the Trust is retrieving something from the shambles of 2020 and Covid-19, and also at the magnificent response to the appeal for funds.*

*All good wishes.*

*Robin Webb*

*(Pictures on front cover and above by Dennis Verdon)*

---

Printed by Century Printing  
132 High Street, Stalham Norfolk NR12 9AZ  
Tel/Fax 01692 582958  
email: [info@centuryprinting.co.uk](mailto:info@centuryprinting.co.uk)