



# MOORINGS

Issue 11 Newsletter From the Neil Thompson Boatyard

## IF IT WAS EASY EVERYONE WOULD DO IT!

How often have we heard that? And it's so true. But sometimes wouldn't it be nice if some of the big things in life were easy. If everything went to plan when moving a boat yard I imagine that I wouldn't have lost so much hair. With things that are difficult and a challenge, when you finally get them done, it feels really good. And so, even though just twelve weeks ago I was in the middle of organising the biggest and most important move of my life, now that I'm sat at my desk, with my sea view

of the North Norfolk Coast line, the stress feels almost worth it. As a team we've faced some big challenges this year and the biggest by far was the move. But we pulled together and now we're at this bigger, better yard, in a proper office, embracing the change and already reaping the benefits. If any of you are in Norfolk this winter and want to stop into the yard and have a look at the new facilities, and the work we're doing, then please do, we'd love to show you around.



## NEIL THOMPSON BOATS OR THE MARINE CENTRE?

It's both. We've changed the name of the new premises from 'The Old Lime Works' to 'North Norfolk Marine Centre'. We feel the new name is a better fit for the premises and because we look after both sailing and motor boats that are not exclusively Norfolk Range; service and repair commercial fishing boats; are authorised Honda Marine dealers and run a small professional chandlery, we feel that North Norfolk Marine Centre encompasses all of these additional activities that run alongside the Norfolk Range. We also want the yard to be a hub and centre of excellence for **all** marine users and for everyone to feel welcome and valued.



## SISTER ACT

There is a new face in the office and a new voice on the phone. It's my sister Rachel. Many of you will have met or conversed with Rachel already as she's been working part-time for us for just over a year now. She's recently left the police force to come and work for us as a full-time employee. Rachel is working alongside Richenda in office and I've assured her that you're all a friendly bunch so she won't be needing a baton.





# REGATTA REPORT

We know it happened but so much was going on, and has gone on since, that we can hardly recall it so please excuse me if the details are vague. We cancelled the Friday practice race as it was too windy. A few owners decided to venture out anyway and got into a spot of bother but it was okay as we were there to help them out.

The Saturday was great. I remember it being good winds and sunshine. We had twenty eight boats enter the race and everyone crossed the line. The Norfolk Oyster winners were The Shallows in Pearl Fisher. The Norfolk Gypsy winner was Chris Beek in Norfolk Gypsy 'Molly'. The fish and chip supper and nautical quiz at the Anchor Inn was good fun with a collection of sixty five sailors pitting their wits against each other to win the haul of Adams booze.



# AND THE AWARD GOES TO.....

Not us! Not this time anyway. We were honoured and thrilled to be selected as a finalist for the EDP small business award. It meant a night in Norwich for the whole team who had to swap their boiler suits for black ties. Everyone scrubbed up well. It was a fun evening for us all and such a great experience. We're really grateful to Farnell Clarke, the sponsors of the award, who came and interviewed Richenda and I and then decided that our team should be recognised for the hard work, commitment and innovation that we have shown over the past seventeen years we've been trading. The EDP hosted a fantastic event and it felt good to be part of what is an obviously thriving business community here in Norfolk.



## A BIG ADVENTURE FOR A TINY BOAT

We have a customer who loves Norfolk almost as much we do. He is successful and travels all over the world but it's safe for me to say that his heart is always in Norfolk. So much so that a few years ago we had to spec up a locally built sailing dinghy to match his Dutch built super yacht so that he has a small piece of Norfolk with him while he sails the world. We're now in the process of sending a Norfolk Urchin out to Florida for this owner. The Urchin will be the tender for his motor boat. We're only a little jealous of the adventures she's going to have and of the shores she'll visit.



## JUST LIKE DORA....

The Norfolk Explorer is proving popular. We built boat number five in the summer, just before the move and she is now at home on Lake Windermere. The owner had seen Norfolk Explorer number four, which is also moored in a beautiful boat shed on the shores of Lake Windermere, motoring round the lake and decided that the Explorer would be perfect for her too. We are now in the process of finalising the build list for boat number six. She will be moored, next summer, in Morston and used for fishing trips and family days on the west sands. We couldn't be prouder of the Norfolk Explorer and continue to enjoy seeing the fleet grow.



### GOING VIRAL! - SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATE

**Do you have any pictures of your boats on the water that you would like to share?**

With ever increasing use of social media in business these days, Rachel has been actively posting and tweeting about the boats and the boat yard. She would love you to join in and spread the word about the Norfolk Range.



# GIVING IT THE NEIL THOMPSON BOATS TREATMENT:

One of our projects this summer, before the move, was the complete restoration of a Colvic Northerner. We stripped everything off the boat so that she was a bare hull, inside and out. We primed the topsides before respraying them, dismantled the existing wheel house and constructed a new one and widened the cockpit before remodelling and re-fitting the interior layout. The day of the launch was a really happy one with the owners over the moon that the boat is now low maintenance and an exact fit for their needs. We were pleased with how she looked but that maybe because, as was pointed out to the owner who relayed this onto us, with her green topsides, cream wheel house and decks, and teak trim she looks a lot like a Norfolk Range boat.



## WHERE THERE'S A WILL

Many of you already know Will Darby. He's been messing around on boats, at Morston, most of his life. Will has sub-contracted for us over the past three winters and, like me, having indulged his passion of boats, it's now becoming a bit of an obsession. So Will, being keen to learn more and take on more responsibility, will be trained up to manage and service boats booked into The Marine Centre. He will also help with the brokerage of boats and you'll continue to see him on the water as he will be one of our 'on-water assistances.'



## ONE GOODBYE AND TWO BEGINNINGS:

Having worked like troopers to get the yard cleared by 23rd of September, I don't think anyone in the team had actually stopped to think how we would feel when our time at Glandford was finally over. The 23rd was a sunny day. A great day for a wedding, and because everyone, including members of the wider community, had all pulled together, the party was to be held in the barn at Glandford. It was only as we pulled into the car park by the Art Café that it started to sink in, that this was no longer our base. Over the last eighteen years the boat yard had been the one constant in our life and we hadn't realised how much like home it had come to feel. Hannah and Will had lined the inside with old sails, giving it a tented feel that stayed true to the barn's nautical roots. The place was festooned with lights and as it swelled with the love and laughter of Hannah and Will's wedding party we felt proud of both the place and the couple. It was strange to think that only three weeks earlier we had been building a boat right where the top table and speeches were held. It was the perfect place to begin a boat yard, the perfect place to celebrate the beginning of a marriage and the perfect way to say goodbye to our much loved home.

# THE FLOTILLA TO WELLS



We planned two this year and the first went off without a hitch but the second was thwarted by bad weather. Some of the flotilla sailors are now confident enough to head off ahead of me, reassured in the knowledge that we'll be there for assistance if they need us. This is really great for me as I want our owners to have faith in both their boat and their skills to explore the coastline.

We will be organising more sailing and beach days for the coming season so please contact the office if you would like to take part.

## FANCY SAILING AWAY?

We're setting up a sailing club and will organise sailing days, flotillas and races along the coast. The first meeting will be on Saturday 31st March, 4pm, at the Anchor Inn, Morston and if you'd like to become a member then please come along to register interest and offer support.

## 'BETTER THAN THE RAC AND AA COMBINED'

Did you know that if your boat is fully serviced at Neil Thompson Boats and you're moored along the North Norfolk coast, you get emergency 'on the water' cover as standard?

We offer this, at no extra cost, because we know how precious your time on the water is. So please remember to call us if you haven't used your boat for a month and you're coming up for a weekend. We'll go out and make sure that everything is in good order so that you can have an enjoyable time on the water. If you do get to your mooring and find an issue then please call us. Here is what happened when one owner found himself in just this position:

### Wednesday 16 August 2017

**12.10** Arrived on Mussel. Started engine. Realised no cooling water flowing. Tried but failed to fix.

**12.30** Called Neil to see if he could help. Said he would call back,

**12.35** He called to say that the team would be with me in 5 minutes

**12.40** Team arrive in Agar Creek

Try various methods, finally discovering the impeller was at fault

**12.50** New impeller fitted

20 mins from the call for help to being back in action. Really efficient and charming team! Fantastic service. Better than the AA and RAC combined.

**Many thanks to NTB**

# TWO MEN IN A FLOTILLA TO WELLS...

(AKA - AT LAST - I MADE IT!!!!)

Last year my wife and I attempted our first 'Flotilla to Wells' adventure – she lost her nerve, we capsized the boat and never left Blakeney Pit!! We got 'Warrior' back to our mooring safe and sound and with a little TLC from Neil & his team came back to try again.....

So here we are, the first to arrive at the quay, Steve (proud owner) and Colin, (coach at arms) intrepid members of the 2017 Wells Flotilla standing outside Norfolk Etc waiting for the prebrief for the trip of a lifetime - my maiden voyage outside of the safe waters of Blakeney Pit. "It'll be good experience ahead of the 'Worlds' in a couple of weeks and we can give your new jib sheet a good shakedown" ...said Colin ... (sailed all his life and on more than seven seas/rivers/lakes etc ..... )

As I look around me it doesn't matter who I peer at, everyone else looks like a salty seadog with years of experience (apologies to the ladies present!). Neil's brief goes something like this: 'Good to see you all, on station for 10.15am, turn left at the Fairway Buoy and Wells is the next port that you'll come to. Please take plenty of fuel 'cause its wind over tide and some of you will be on the motors for some time.....' Everyone nods sagely and the question is asked 'What pub for Lunch please Neil?'. It was at this point that I thought I needed to ask the 'Idiots Questions' given this was to be my sea adventure!

- Q1 What does the Fairway Buoy look like? (I've never seen it!)
- Q2 How do I know I've got to Wells? (I've never seen it from the water!)
- Q3 What's your mobile number Neil? (I've never needed it before!)
- Q4 How do I contact Wells Harbour Authority? (Well – you never know!)

We turned to kiss our wives a fond 'goodbye' and went to prepare the boat.....

A LIFE ON THE OCEAN WAVE..... OR 'NEVER TOO OLD TO LEARN'  
We had a favourable south westerly with wind over tide both inside and outside the Pit. It made for an easy passage close to the wind to get out onto the 'Open Ocean', bearing off to follow the channel between the red and green marker buoys out towards the Fairway Buoy. First question answered!!! The FB is a blooming long way out, a little bit round the corner to the East and it's a huge red thing (with very grateful thanks to the Blakeney Harbour Association!)

As the course around the FB takes you in the opposite direction to Wells we asked permission of the cover boat to cut the corner (not really but

I had to write it). We headed off into the open ocean continuing on a westerly course and thoroughly enjoying the blustery but even seas..... slightly choppy into the wide and tide – me at the helm and Colin getting wet in front whilst figuring out how we could trim the boat with the new furling jib and kicker hauled in. The field was led by a beautifully sailed Gypsy and we tucked in behind as we (still) had no real idea where we were going! I think the Gypsy was being well sailed as we couldn't hold Warrior so close to the wind and found ourselves after a couple of hours having to tack to get nearer the coast. Amazingly when we looked over our shoulder, and quite by accident, we found ourselves leading the Oyster crews but concluded as usual this was more to do with our ability to jump the start line than our sailing prowess!

NEARING OUR GOAL.....

For those of you that have never sailed to Wells one might expect to see a large seafront appear with a big sign that says 'Welcome to Wells – Moor Here'. However, due to the vagaries of the Norfolk coast it does a rather good imitation of 'Brigadoon', in that it appears and disappears behind bits of headland and vegetation not to mention wandering sandbanks. You have to steer a course to the far headland and eventually you bump into the Wells Harbour marker buoy which makes the entrance to the Wells Channel. This buoy is a huge yellow and black thing, (whatever the logic is for the colours I still have no idea!) which you cannot miss. You then follow the channel port and starboard red and green buoys which beckon you into safe harbour..... or so one is led to believe.....!

GETTING INTO WELLS.....

Anyone that thought, (as we poor innocents did), 'Ah! – Job done – Time to Celebrate!' was wrong. Our able Leaders hailed each boat in turn with; 'Get your motors running – NOW!' The last time this was said to me I was at the wheel of a race prepared Lotus but this was a very different situation as I was soon to find out.....

Neil had earlier said that 'It would be good to motor in together as it's a little tricky to get in first time'. This is an understatement that only the English would come up with - especially to a novice such as myself!!! Not only does one have to motor through what must be a mile of sinuous channel marked with buoys, but on an ebbing tide with water running at several (??) knots against you – progress was 'interesting' to the point where refuelling on the move was required by several of our compatriots. Nevertheless, through fortitude, skill and careful shepherding by our guardian angels (aka Neil & Will) we all made it in safe and sound after 40 minutes of motoring from the marker buoy.

Looking forward to next year already,  
Steve & Colin – Owner and Crew of 'Warrior' Oyster no 14 – the black hulled one.

## OF COURSE I'D SAY IT'S BETTER BY BOAT:

I know many of you have read Richenda's blog, *Better By Boat*, because you've emailed me, or commented about it on seeing me. For those who haven't you can find it on [www.betterbyboat.co.uk](http://www.betterbyboat.co.uk).

Organising the move has meant that Richenda has been unable to find the time to post for the last couple of months but she has told me that as we settle in to the new yard and the pressures are easing, she is planning her next blog which I think many of you will look forward to but which I approach with a sense of trepidation!



## DATES FOR DIARY:

NTB Sailing Club first meeting:

31st March, 4pm, Anchor Inn, Morston

Morston Sailing Regatta -  
Saturday 18th August 2018,  
start 11:30hrs

Pre-Worlds Warm up - Friday  
3rd August 2018 9:30hrs,  
Briefing at 09:30hrs, Race starts  
at 11.00hrs

Norfolk World Championships

- Saturday 4th August 2018, Registration at 09:45, Race  
briefing at 10:00hrs, Race starts 11:40hrs.

Blakeney Regatta Saturday 1st September 2018, Start at  
10:00hrs Sunday 2nd September 2018, Start at 10:45hrs



## MERRY CHRISTMAS

We would like to wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Please note the yard will close on Friday 22nd of December and reopen Tuesday 2nd January 2018