

Back in 1931 a group of wayfarers in two little ships *Onaway* (Joe Burton) and *Vagabond* (Jim Rose) set out from the River Derwent to explore the waters to the north, which at that time were unknown to them. They eventually found themselves at Ox Close lock, entrance to the Ripon Canal, soon to become the headquarters of the Ripon Motor Boat Club. Jim Rose lived in Ripon; he intended to keep *Vagabond* on the Ripon Canal, and his account of what followed was printed in the RMBCs 1953 Yearbook.

‘Having moved in to Ox Close Lock, with *Onaway* ahead of *Vagabond*, and not being able to trace any keys,* we used some large ‘moving keys’ to lift the cloughs. Joe Burton and myself had gone ashore to work the lock, leaving the remainder of our respective crews aboard. We started to fill the lock very slowly to avoid any unnecessary bumping of the boats, Joe and I leaning on the rails of the lower lock gates, admiring the scene looking down the cut and the river beyond. Suddenly, as I looked down over the rail at the outside of the gate, I saw that it was bulging badly at the level of the water as it rose inside the lock, which by this time was almost full. We hastily decided to continue filling and get out on to the canal, and close the top gates. We cut our mooring lines and ran to the top gates to get them open as quickly as we could. After what seemed a very long time, and we began to think they were immovable, they started to move and we got them open. Joe managed to get *Onaway* out and I followed on *Vagabond*, having told my crew to get ashore. As we were just about clear of the gates and my wife was about to jump off the bows on to the path, there was a rending crash behind us, and I saw a large part of the bottom gate disappear in a mass of water. For some reason which I have never been able to explain, I grabbed the anchor as I jumped off *Vagabond*, and by jamming the fluke against the slope of the bank and passing our head line through the anchor ring, the four of us were able to hold her. By this time the whole of the first reach of the canal was pouring through the breach in the bottom gate, the movement of the water gaining momentum very quickly. Joe and his crew had secured *Onaway* to a nearby tree, but we were entirely dependent on our anchor, and it held.

One of the top gates had swung in to the shut position with the surge of the water, and as many of our party as could be spared from holding the boats, started to try and shut the other. If we had been able to do this our immediate trouble would have been overcome, but despite all our efforts, and the water level decreasing every minute, we failed to close the gate. The pressure of the water flowing past the gate was so great that we could not force it out the first few inches, when of course, it would have shut with a rush. Suddenly, Joe looked up the canal and saw a full-size barge floating towards us at an alarming pace, and we realised that if

not stopped in some way it would crash into our boats, with the probability of doing great damage. Grabbing a couple of boat hooks we ran up the bank and waded into the canal and both of us hooked on to the fore-end and started to slew it toward the bank, where it quickly went aground. Incidentally, many months afterwards the owner was required to have this moved as it was deemed ‘a hazard to navigation’ and it was found necessary to cut it into several pieces before it could be removed from the canal.

The danger having been dealt with, we again endeavoured to close the remaining top gate, but it was not until the water level had become very low, that we succeeded. By this time both boats were hard and fast aground, and we were concerned as to how they would settle on the steep bank. As they continued to lay over, all sorts of crashes could be heard as various paraphernalia fell out of lockers and cupboards, and we were all feeling very despondent. Eventually, they were both left completely clear of the water, and *Vagabond* appeared to be at a dangerous angle, but there was little we could do beyond securing her with ropes in the hope that she would not roll.

After a council of war we decided that I should walk up to the next lock and open the cloughs to gradually fill up the reach (or pound) we were in. It seemed a very long way to me that day, particularly as my shoes and my trousers up to the knees contained a considerable quantity of black Ripon canal mud, which I had collected when wading out to the barge. However, I reached the lock eventually, opened up the cloughs, and the task of refilling began. At a later stage we had to find the feed from the River Skell, and get this opened up, as we were anxious to refloat our boats as quickly as possible. It was nearly 10 p.m. before there was sufficient water for us to move up to the next lock, during which process we must have cleared most of the weed from that reach of the canal, stopping every few yards to clear the props. Our intention was to go through the next lock before turning in for the night, as we should feel safer with a barrier between us and Ox Close Lock. However, when we arrived at this lock we were met by a little old lady who blankly refused to allow us to go through as she stated that it was not safe, being in a far worse condition than Ox Close.

This rather queer person turned out to be the occupant of a very ancient cottage, which had at one time been the lock keeper's cottage. Her ‘partner’ Tommy, was also quite a character, but these two people were very helpful, and after all the initial excitement was over, and we settled in at the moorings where we had tied up that night, they looked after our boats for us in our absence.

As I had a lot of gear to remove from *Vagabond*, and was leaving the next weekend for a holiday I decided to try and get my car to the boat. This

* The clough operating windlass's were at this time kept at Ox Close House, the water supply to which was provided by a Hydraulic Ram. The operation of this device depended upon the difference in water level between the Ripon Canal and the River Ure. Commercial traffic having ceased, it seems it was found necessary to remove the windlass's in order to prevent unauthorised interference with the lock.

meant going some distance along the towing path, and I had not gone far when I was confronted by an apparently very wrathful farmer, who demanded to know where I thought I was going. In an attempt to appease him I started to explain our plight, but before I could say very much he said, “you mustn’t drive a car along here, its too dangerous; bring it through my farm!” I told him we did not wish to trespass or put him to any inconvenience, but he said — “now you’re here we want to make thee happy, and tomorrow I’ll show thee a ready-made mooring for tha boat” — and he did.

That was my first introduction to Farmer Nicholson and I thought it could not be genuine, but that grand old man treated us all in just that spirit from then on until he died, and his son Frank has carried on in the same way. The Ripon Motor Boat Club owes a very great deal to these two very good friends. The mooring referred to by Mr. Nicholson was a small landing stage just near where the present *Ranchi* boat-house is situated, and had been put up by a man from Bradford, who a few years earlier had kept a boat in the canal. Just adjoining was a small boathouse in which the late Mr. Anders moored a small motor launch. *

The day following the accident at Ox Close the LNE Railway Co. sent a representative to see us and hear all the details. He also asked us to submit a list of any breakages, etc., due to the gate collapsing. He informed us that repairs would be put in hand without delay, but it would take about three months to complete the work.† My friend, Joe Burton, who had intended to return to the Derwent after completing the Ripon trip, was thus compelled to stay in the canal for the time being. Sid Cattle, who had accompanied Joe on the trip round to York, hearing what had happened, came over the next weekend. He was very impressed with the canal, and decided to bring his boat round from the Derwent, as soon as the lock was repaired, although neither at that time contemplated making Ripon their permanent home moorings. Naturally, we spent a lot of time each weekend watching the work being carried out at Ox Close. The old gate was removed, and it was possible to break off a piece of the wood and crush it in the hand. When we considered that this was all that had been between us and the whole of the water in the first reach of the canal, we marvelled that we had got off so lightly.

Mr. Anders, the owner of Littlethorpe Hall, who had a small motor craft on the canal was very interested in our adventure, and was more than pleased to have some boating companions. Being unable to do more than move up and down the canal, we spent a good deal of our time during the period of the repairs in discussing and making plans for the future. Joe Burton and Sid Cattle were becoming more and more

enthusiastic about Ripon and the advantage of the canal as winter moorings. Of course, I was delighted to think that they might stay, as the prospect of losing my cruising companions was not pleasant.’

Here Joe Burton, writing for *Hornblower* in the mid 1960s, takes up the story: ‘After the decision to form the RMBC had been taken, and the re-opening of the lock in September our membership rose very quickly, and boats began to arrive in the canal week by week. The main reason for this was the failure of the LNER to repair the damage done to the river Derwent’s Kirkham Lock by the heavy floods early in September.

While I was fastened in the canal by the broken lock at Ox Close many of my friends who had boats on the Derwent came to see me, having heard of the accident at Ox Close from the press and hearsay. When they saw the safety and quietness of the canal after the anxious weeks on the Derwent many of them decided to join the Club and bring their boats around, to Littlethorpe. It was decided the first batch should travel in company as soon as Ox Close was again passable. When the time arrived five boats were at Sutton Lock – where the tidal Derwent begins about 15 miles from the mouth with the Ouse on the Friday evening ready for the Saturday.

As soon as the tide started to make, about 11 am, we set off. There was still a great deal of fresh water coming down so that though the river rose the current was still fast down stream. We passed through the lift bridges at Wheldrake and Cottingwith with little trouble; just scraped, under Bubwith road bridge, and were soon at Loftsom swing-bridge. Passing this we rounded a bend, about half a mile below to see ahead, completely blocking the river, a complete tree, branches, trunk and roots, of about 50 feet in length. I was with Sid Cattle on *Verona* (later renamed *Oceana* by Gordon Dinsdale) leading the way. We swung round upstream and dropped anchor. The rest did like-wise and the crew of two boats that had dinghies came over to us. We decided to go down in the dinghies to inspect. We found that where the root end was fast on the starboard side there was about 2 feet 6 inches of water over the trunk where the roots sprang from. It was possible therefore with care and judgement to get over close to the projecting root with about 2 feet 6 inches draught as the heel of the boat would slide over if it caught only slightly. On the other hand, by cutting away some of the thickest branches at the other end of the tree a boat could force its way through the thinner branches. First we set about doing this, then we on *Verona* decided to try the root end. We judged it very well and were almost over when the heel caught and we stopped. Immediately three of us ran into the bows leaving Sid at the wheel and this was enough to lift the

* Both boathouses had to be demolished prior to the excavation of the marina.

† At that time the Ripon Canal was the responsibility of the Station Master, Mr Proudfoot, who happened to be the City’s Mayor. This was the last time that repairs were undertaken by the LNER with the intention of keeping the entire canal navigable to Bondgate Basin, Ripon. It would appear that one lower gate was renewed at Ox Close lock, one gate at Bell Furrow’s lock was renewed, other gates were repaired as necessary and Ox Close cut was dredged. This was also the last time that repairs were carried out by the LNER at their sole expense; thereafter, until nationalisation, part of the cost of maintenance was borne by the RMBC.

heel and with the pressure of the fresh behind us were over. The rest decided – wisely I think – on the branches end, and one by one they forced their way through. The whole process took about an hour, a rather anxious one I must say, and did not stop us from catching the last of the tide up through Selby to Naburn. We arrived at Ox Close just after lunch on the Sunday, to be met by Jim Rose and Mr Anders, our President. When the five new boats were moored ahead of *Onaway* and *Vagabond* we felt very satisfied with the look of things – seven boats now instead of two. The club was growing, and we were a very happy band of pilgrims.’

According to the first minute book of the Ripon Motor Boat Club its inception seems to have been in October 1931, by which time the un-minuted discussions between Mr Anders, Joe Burton, Jim Rose and Sid Cattle must have resulted in agreement as to how the club should be constituted, and which office each of them would hold. Mr Anders invited the founding members to Littlethorpe Hall to hold the Inaugural Meeting on the 14th November 1931, at which it was resolved that the temporary officers for 1931 should retain office in 1932, viz;

President and Chairman:	O.L.Anders Esq.
Secretary:	J. Burton Esq..
Treasurer:	J.H.Rose Esq.

In addition it was resolved on a proposal from the chair that Mr S.E. Cattle be Captain. The secretary reported that he had successfully negotiated with Ripon City Council for permission to use the Ripon Horn on the Club's burgee (we still fly the flag he designed at our mastheads today) Joe Burton also reported that he had arranged for the supply of club badges and burgees, and had made arrangements with the LNER for the removal of the barge obstructing the fairway above Ox Close lock. Apart from the officers, only two members were present, Mr H. Burningham and Mr E.A.Morris. ‘In later years when Mr Anders was unable to continue as President, we asked the Council if we might each year appoint the reigning mayor of the City to be our President, and they graciously agreed.’ Later still it became the practice for the mayor to be our Patron; from 1962 it became customary for the retiring Commodore to be elected President.

‘The old couple at the first lock house caused us a lot of amusement, but had become the accepted motorboat attendants; they were known as Tommy and Birdie. The first Christmas we were in the canal we had a whip round for Tommy and Birdie who had looked after us very well. With the money collected we bought a hamper of Christmas fare and sailed up with it to their cottage on Christmas morning, much to the delight of the old people.

There was a further meeting on the 23rd January 1932 at which we instructed the Secretary to insert a notice in the *Motor Boat* announcing the formation of the Club*, and our surprise can be

imagined when we received applications for membership not only from the surrounding district, but from as far away Liverpool and Northumberland. So the Ripon Motor Boat Club was born, and although the pre-natal pain may be said to have been rather severe, the resulting child developed rapidly into a very healthy near nautical specimen. Applications for membership arrived continuously, and fresh craft appeared at the moorings regularly.’

Members paid 5 shillings per year for a mooring, plus, if they had a car, 2 shillings per year for the use of the car park. During 1932 the Club had 17 craft moored on Ripon Canal in addition to *Top C*, our President's launch, which was moored in her boathouse. Two further moorings were let but not apparently occupied that year, and Mr Nicholson received £5.17s, collected on his behalf by the club's Secretary.

‘The Club continued to grow in numbers and all the members in those early days were enthusiastic in any proposal that came along. For instance, one suggestion was to repair and put into working order an old dry dock adjoining the cottage at the first lock. This dry dock had been used for carrying out repairs to barges when the canal was used as a commercial waterway. On investigating the proposition we found that it would be necessary to purchase the cottage, as the dry dock was included in the boundaries of this property. The cottage itself was almost falling to bits, and was valueless, but at a meeting on the moorings one member asked how much the owner wanted for the site, etc. When told it was £100, he immediately said, “I'll give a third,” and two others at once agreed to do the same. We eventually decided that it would be a better proposition to build a slipway, than try and repair the dry dock, so the £100 was not required, but that was the spirit prevailing in the Club in those days.

Those few original members had the joy and pride of building up from the start a Club which has continued to grow from year to year, and which has given, and from what I am told, continues to give a great pleasure to a large number of people who derive their enjoyment from “messing about in boats”.’

At the first Annual General Meeting of the club's members, which was held at Littlethorpe Hall on the 10th December 1932, Mr Wigglesworth was appointed to the newly created office of Mate. (Several RMBC members were also members of the Humber Yawl Club, which to this day has a Captain and Mate instead of the more usual Commodore, Vice, and Rear Commodore). By that time there were 50 full members who had paid their annual subscription of 5 shillings, and 28 lady members who had paid 1 shilling. The total revenue for the year was therefore £15.18.0d; total expenses were £8.17.0d, leaving a healthy balance of £5.1.0d. No payments were made for the use of the canal to its proprietors, the London and North Eastern Railway Company.

* Thanks are due to Alex. McCullen, the Editor of *Motor Boat and Yachting*, for permission to reproduce in the Club's *Cruising Guide*, the page on which this appeared.

‘About this time old Tommy and his mate, Birdie disappeared from the scene, to be followed a year or two later by the cottage in which they had lived. He was replaced by that very handy man and master of all trades, Harley, who played such a large part in the early activities at Littlethorpe; no task defeated him, no engine failed to start at his touch, be it never so old.’ This ends the account written by Jim Rose. At a committee meeting on 9 June 1934 it had been resolved that an attendant be employed at 9d per hour, and to receive 6d per boat for locking through Ox Close Lock on Sunday evenings. A levy of 7 shillings per boat was to be made to cover attendant’s expenses. At a meeting on 25 March 1938 it was resolved that he was to be on Club Duty 2 to 4 pm Saturdays, 9.30 to 12 noon Sundays, and Lock Duty at Ox Close Sunday 7 to 8 pm, and not available to work for members at those times. On 28 April 1939 his wages were raised to 10 shillings per week (11/ 7d. including stamp) and totalled £22. 2s. for the year. On 23 March 1946 it was agreed Harley would be paid £1 for 8 hours each Sunday, and that he was free to work for members during the week, but on the 28th of July he resigned his position.

By May 1932 it was evident that further repairs were needed to Ox Close lock, and by an Agreement signed on the 4th of February 1933 the Club as Licensees undertook to pay the sum of £47. 10. 0d, by instalments, for the LNER to renew one upper gate. This represented half the cost, to meet which a levy of 10 shillings per boat per year was introduced. By the end of 1933 the club had 54 Full Members, 32 Lady Members, and 25 craft moored on the canal. *Ranchi’s* boathouse had been built during the year; members must have been confident that the club was securely established, and the LNER would not exercise its right to ‘determine and put to an end at one calendar month’s notice in writing’ the agreement ‘by which the club enjoyed the privilege of using the Ripon Canal.’ All was not well, however, with the Ripon Canal. Its water supply, which had probably been no better than just adequate in its commercial heyday, was quite unable to cope with a dozen or so pleasure craft locking out at the start of a summer weekend, and returning 24 or 36 hours later.

By June 1934 it had become necessary to persuade the LNER to erect a notice at Ox Close lock to the effect that ‘Permanent moorings in the canal are reserved for members of the RMBC’. At the same time the committee took the decision to limit the growth of the club by restricting new membership to ‘persons purchasing present members craft’. During the remainder of 1934 it became increasingly evident that more water was leaking through Ox Close lock than entering Bondgate Basin from the River Skell, and on the 6th of April 1935 the club received a letter from the LNER advising that repairs estimated to cost between £115 and £120 were necessary. The club agreed to meet half the cost by instalments spread over two years, and the LNER agreed to ‘provide a second new top gate and arrest the leakages now taking place with all reasonable despatch’. To meet the cost the club ‘reopened membership to six more owner members’, and later that year introduced ‘Winter Mooring

Membership’, the inclusive subscription for six months mooring being £1. 5s. 0d.

In 1935 one of the club’s earliest members, Jack Boddy, started his boatyard *Rivercraft*, at what became Tower Marine Boroughbridge, and then British Waterways marina. His first cruisers were attractive and workmanlike conversions of ship’s lifeboats. (Later he diversified, and during the war he built ship’s lifeboats and firefloats. In 1945 he began the timber business that survived his death on the 11th January 1985). The arrival on the market of these cruisers coincided with the reopening of RMBC membership. By the end of 1935 the club had 127 members, with 50 boats, 32 of which were moored at Littlethorpe, and nearly £20 in the bank.

During 1935 the owner of the club's moorings, Mr. John Nicholson, died. The club owed much to his kindness and hospitality, and his son Frank proved to be a worthy successor, and a good friend to the club. At about the same time our first honorary secretary decided to sell *Onaway* and join Syd Cattle in partnership aboard *Sydia*, which was moored on the Ouse behind Acaster Post Office, and nearer to his home. Ha increasingly engaged in coastal cruising, for which a mooring at Acaster was a more suitable base, and his main interest thereafter was at that point instead of Ripon. He even wintered there. He resigned his office, but never lost interest in Ripon Motor Boat Club, to which he was later elected a life member. Members owe much to his untiring energy with axe and pen in the formative days of the club. He produced the club’s first yearbooks, for 1933 and 1934, and led the early club cruises. The charts and information regarding Linton Clay Huts, Asselby Island, and the Upper Humber that appeared in the Yearbooks and the Sailing Instructions for the Easter 1935 cruise to South Ferriby formed the basis for what later became the club’s *Cruising Guide*. The account he wrote in the mid 1960’s describing some of the happenings in those early days follows.

CRUISING IN THE EARLY ‘THIRTIES.

I was delighted to be asked to reminisce about the early days of the club of which I was the founder Secretary. There were few boats about in those days, not more than 50 on the Ouse and Ure Navigations, and half of those were ours at Ripon. We were an adventurous Club, taking our boats on what were in those days almost voyages of discovery, which were prepared very thoroughly beforehand. A couple of us would go by car and approach the river or canal to be explored at various points and look out for good moorings, any obstructions we might meet with, stores and other facilities.

The Pocklington Canal.

One of our first ventures was to the Pocklington Canal, which joined the tidal Derwent about 11¼ miles from its junction with the River Ouse and had been unused for many years. In 1932 I had been up the Derwent on *Onaway* and we came down the tideway from Sutton Lock rather late in the evening. As we knew we couldn’t make Derwentmouth before it got

dark we decided to anchor in the river until next morning. We were just going to drop anchor when I glanced across to where the first lock into the Pocklington Canal could be seen and we noticed a large barge lying above the lock. If a barge had gone into the canal we thought we might do the same, and it would be much pleasanter to lie there in still water. So into the canal we went, and moored up behind the barge *Ebenezer* in a very pleasant situation.

Next morning the owner of the barge, John Brown, came down rather intrigued at seeing a cruiser in the canal, something that had never happened before. We asked him about the canal, was it passable, were the locks good, and was it possible to get anywhere. All our questions being answered satisfactorily we decided to have a go. We started up the engine and set off. We went about 20 yards and then stopped. The propeller was like a ball of knitting wool, absolutely swathed in weeds. We were determined to go on, so taking a long light line which we always carried for such an emergency as we were now in we hoisted one end to the masthead, and Sid Cattle and I went ashore to tow, leaving my wife and daughter to look after the steering. With a line attached some feet back from the bows a boat will steer without pulling on to the bank, and with the end being fast to the masthead the line clears the bushes on the bank. We towed along quite comfortably, passing under Hagg Bridge, and through several swing bridges and the second (Gardham) lock, and about 4½ miles from the canal entrance came to a short cut to the right which led us into a sizable basin, not a hundred yards from the village of Melboume. We stayed there a day or two and then returned to the Derwent, and home to Littlethorpe.

It had been a novel experience, and all that winter I had a feeling that I wanted to revisit the canal. While there we had made enquiries from local people and fishermen, and it seemed the masses of weeds and water lilies did not obstruct the canal until into May, as they died down during the winter. I got a number of other RMBC members interested, and at Easter 1933 six boats from the club made the passage to Melboume; *Onaway*, (Joe Burton) *Vagabond* (Jim Rose), *Verona* (Sid Cattle), *Ranchi* (S.Wigglesworth), *Midget* (G.S.L Johnson), and *Top C*, an open launch owned by our President O.L.Anders, who was then nearing seventy. We left Littlethorpe on Good Friday, and on Easter Saturday afternoon, nicely in time for tea, moored up in Melbourne Basin, and the whole village turned out to watch. There were lively 'goings on' in the Inn that night, and I learned a great deal about the old barge trade that went on along the canal in its early days from some of the old stagers who were kept well primed to loosen their tongues. It was a very pleasant cruise in really rural surroundings, and we had no trouble at all from the weeds, which had died down during the winter and left the canal crystal clear.

That sane summer Jim Rose and I and our families decided, to explore the canal in its full nine miles nine locks length. We duly arrived at the entrance to the canal in *Vagabond* and *Onaway*, and passed through and stayed the night above the lock. The next

day we set off, but within 50 yards our engines were actually brought to a standstill by the weeds. It was a lovely summer day, and the wind was blowing in the direction we had to go. *Onaway* was rigged as a yawl, so we tied *Vagabond* astern and hoisted the mainsail. Later Jim and I went ashore and bow hauled, which was hard work, but we made Melbourne late that afternoon.

The next day we pushed on, finding another basin at Bielby, a couple of miles above Melbourne, and passing through Thornton, Warbutt and Coates Locks until we came to Sandhill lock, less than 1½ miles from the canal head, although there were still three locks to pass before this was reached. We entered Sandhill lock and began to fill it. When it was almost full I casually looked over the botto gates and noticed an ominous bulge in the cross beams. Remembering our disastrous experience at Oxclose in 1931 we hurriedly emptied the lock and gracefully retired, Jim Rose and I walking the short distance to the canal head. We spent the night in the pool above Coates lock, a dream of a mooring, and next day we pulled, back to Melboume, and in due course made our return to Littlethorpe. The canal is a very pleasant place to cruise to, through lovely pastoral country, and right away from it all.

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Down the Ouse to Goole.

Looking back over the years some of the things you did in your younger days now almost make you shudder. I remember just after we started the club a young fellow of almost 17 brought a little cruiser up to Ripon. It was about 15 feet long, and had as motive power what must have been the first outboard Evinrude ever made. It was a colossal thing, and, when it was started up the transom used to vibrate a couple of inches fore and aft. It was a marvel it didn't break away from the planking. Our young owner was a cripple, and on approaching a lock or landing, the engine had to be stopped some distance off and he had to scramble forrard over his cabin top and fend off with a boat hook. I was very much afraid for him so I persuaded his parents to fit a 4 hp Waterota two-stroke engine with a reversible propeller so that sitting at his tiller he had perfect control and could come alongside and make fast at his leisure.

This meant taking the boat to Goole under the outboard to have the new engine fitted. We left Ox Close one Friday evening and vibrated our way down to Linton lock, but by the time we got there it was dark. Charlie the lockkeeper begged us not to go through until daylight, but we wanted to catch the ebb starting at Naburn at 4 am. I felt sure we could go through the clay huts in the dark as we could still see the banks faintly and only a week or two before we had surveyed the channel and made a chart of it, which we had issued to our members, and we had also driven lengths of gas piping into the ends of each shoal as markers. So we set off. We steered along the port-hand bank to the first tree mark, and then steered out to mid-stream which was the course. At this moment the night suddenly became black as pitch, and we couldn't see a thing. Just as suddenly up went the boat's bows. We dashed to stop

the engine, but she just wouldn't stop and drove us on and on until we were absolutely hard and fast. There was only 6 inches of water around us, so I cast off my shoes, and we parked the cabin table on the shoal alongside the boat. We piled the mattresses, blankets, cooking utensils and everything we could, on top of it and propped the outboard up at one end of it. I walked round to the bows of the boat, got my back under her stem and one hand each side with the fingers under the landings of the planks and lifted her bows and pressed backwards, but she wouldn't move. So I climbed back aboard, we reshipped the gear and turned in.

At daybreak I stripped off into my birthday suit and tied my shirt and trousers tightly in a waterproof sheet. Fastening these round my neck I took a long warp and walking down the edge of the shoal into deep water swam to the bank about 30 feet away. It was bitterly cold, and what the cows on the bank thought as I appeared through the early morning mist I don't know. I dressed, and sheered the bows of the boat and so broke the suction between the hull and the clay and she soon came off, just as Charlie came down from the lock in his cog boat to find us where he expected he would. We missed our tide at Naburn of course, but ran down to Goole on the evening ebb a wiser crew, to return in due course after an uneventful and pleasant cruise with the new engine.

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Jim Daly and Gaelic Crusader.

One of our earliest and most venturesome members was an Irish doctor practising in Leeds called Jim Daly, who had a 28 foot aft cockpit cruiser with a 15 hp Penta engine. He used to slip over to Ostend quite often single-handed, and while there saw them building big hefty fishing smacks one of which he ordered. He had only two bulkheads put in, one just aft of the main mast and one just forward of the mizzen. She was a strong ship with 3 inch planking on 4 x 4 inch doubled timbers every foot. Rigged as a ketch she had a long bowsprit, a staysail, a gaff mainsail and topsail, a gaff mizzen, and a tiller about 7 feet long with a handy billy tackle rigged on either side. 58 feet long she had a beam of 16 feet and drew 7 feet of water.

Jim had about 20 tons of shingle off the beach at Ostend tipped into her, then with the skipper and mate of a Humber sailing barge as crew, sailed her across to the Humber mouth, where a tug picked her up and towed her to John Smiths yard at Goole where she was fitted out below as a yacht, with berths for a dozen. As the big diesel he had ordered was going to be a long time in delivery he had the little Penta out of his old cruiser fitted. Then late in 1932 he brought her up to Acaster Malbis for the winter, his paid hand, also an Irishman, living aboard.

In 1933 he decided to take her round to Bridlington for the summer and I was asked to join her one weekend, my job being to get her out of the Humber. *Gaelic Crusader* as she was named left Acaster on the Friday afternoon and although the little Penta gave her only about two knots we reached Howden that evening in the dark and with a heavy mist

falling, and found the bottom in the Hospital bight. We got off on the next tide, and waiting until high water set off past Goole, Trent Falls, and got to New Holland pier as the flood made again and anchored there. We left at high water and dead on Saturday midnight we passed Spurn Light Vessel.

There was a fine northerly breeze so we set everything, put her head North East, set the long tiller with the handy billy's and let her go. It was the finest night's sailing at sea I have ever experienced. She just sailed herself hour after hour. At 3.30 am I went to the log and she had done 20 sea miles. We turned her on the other tack, north west, and again let her go and at 7 am we made an offing at Withemsea. We turned her north east again and kept her on this course for another three hours, then brought her round north west again and found ourselves just south of Homsea with the wind easing off and flood tide against us very soon.

We had used a lot of petrol getting from Naburn to Spurn and as it looked like having to push against the tide under power up to Bridlington Jim Daly decided we must go ashore and get some more to add to our store. We lowered the 12 foot dinghy, put half a dozen cans in her, and then the paid hand rowed ashore. There was quite a break on the beach, but we turned in stem first and got safely up the sands. We filled our cans at a nearby garage and put them aboard. We had quite a struggle getting off the beach but managed it at last and reached *Gaelic Crusader* to find a fishing boat hovering around wanting to give us a tow. When they saw us pass the cans of petrol aboard they realised we were not powerless as they had thought. So we chugged into Bridlington that Sunday evening, after the finest sailing weekend I ever remember.

An Easter cruise to Ferriby.

At Easter 1934 the Club essayed its first cruise down the Humber. A certain amount of advance information had to be obtained in those days, as Asselby Island was an actual island, and the channel there varied. If there had been a lot of fresh during the winter then the channel was on the northern side; if not, then to the south. For Asselby we contacted Harry Hobman, skipper of the Motor barge *Bishopthorpe* and for the Humber we enquired of the Conservancy Board.

Sydia (Sid Cattle, for whom Joe was crewing), *Ranchi* (S.Wigglesworth) *Ruth* (C.Walker), *Letitia* (P.G. Peacock), *Verona* (G.S.L.Johnson). *Ebor* (S.J.Moxon), *lanthe* (W.Attenborough), and *Pearl* (G.E.Hewson), set off from Ox Close on a warm and sunny Good Friday morning, and reached Naburn during the afternoon, staying the night there. Easter Saturday saw us off early on our way down through Selby on the ebb, passing Asselby on the northern side and past Goole and down to Trent Falls.

As we left Walker Dyke beacon and steered over to the Upper Whitton Light Vessel we noticed that the middle Whitton Light Vessel beyond it seemed rather odd. As we neared it we saw that it was dried out on the edge of the channel on Whitton Sand, and was listing, so low was the tide. Almost at once we

found the bottom, and we with only 2 feet 6 inches draught and in the middle of the channel. One by one our eight boats grounded either astern or just ahead of us. Only the two smallest boats kept afloat and as they were in strange waters these rounded up and dropped anchor. We had not long to wait however, and as the flood arrived we were off again, but making slow progress against a strong tide. We passed the Lower Witton Light Vessel and taking the south channel turned into Ferriby Haven. Frank Straw the lockkeeper having been notified of our impending arrival had the lock all ready and soon had us all through. We stayed the night at Ferriby and had a splendid view of the Saturday night shipping streaming up to the Trent and Goole.

Sunday we steamed up to Brigg and lunched well at the Angel Hotel, returning to Ferriby for tea and lying there ready for an early start on Easter Monday. We were ready at 5 am the next morning, and what a morning ! It was snowing heavens high and bitterly cold as we put out of the haven into as fierce a tide as I have ever known in all my long experience of the Humber. Visibility was almost nil, and we had to steer a course from light vessel to light vessel helped by the foghorns on the light vessels going continuously. The boats behind kept close on one another's sterns so as not to lose touch and we reached Trent Falls safely, when the snow stopped and the sun came out. We reached Naburn in time for an early lunch and by teatime we were being helped through Ox Close by the members who had been unable to go, all eager to hear our experiences. It had been an interesting, and on the last day a rather exciting cruise.

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To the Broads with *Verona*.

Percy Westerman's cruiser *Zoe* was based at Littlethorpe for the 1932 season, and Percy's yarns about the Broads prompted one of our members to essay the trip down there and I went with him to navigate. We set off at Whitsuntide in 1934 in *Verona* a 27 foot cruiser with a Ford engine, and had an uneventful trip as far as Trent Falls where we found the Humber in turbulent mood, and put into Ferriby Sluice for shelter. The wind soon died down and we went and had a word with Frank Straw the lockkeeper who was famous in those days for the accuracy of his weather forecasting. A good forecast was a must, as from Grimsby we had a passage of a least 18 hours to Yarmouth with no safe place to run for if the weather became bad. His advice was to carry on as long as the wind didn't back.

We passed Grimsby just before dusk, wind still south west and sea calm, and headed south east by east for the Inner Dowsing light vessel some 25 miles away. We had just picked up the glow of the light over the horizon when I noticed the wind had backed to the south east. Then it came, first a sharp hard gust, then the sea all around us was torn into white crests as the squall hit us. We throttled right down and just kept her head into them though at times we stood almost on end. After about half an hour of this the engine suddenly stopped. As usual in such circumstances the boat went broadside on to the seas and they began to come over into the

cockpit. Not a pleasant situation. I crawled along the foredeck to the mast and after a struggle got our steadying trysail hoisted and the boat turned away from the wind, and we were on our way back to Grimsby. The filter on the engine had got choked with sediment stirred up in the tank by our jumping about and we soon had the engine going again. The following day we made Yarmouth in perfect weather, and left the boat at Wroxham for the summer, to visit as the chance arose.

One Saturday late in August that year we left Yarmouth at 4.30 am and after a moderate passage arrived off the Humber about 10.50 pm just as a terrific thunder-storm broke over the land giving a display of fireworks I have never seen equalled. We were so wrapped up in the sight, that until we heard a deep bray behind, we were unaware of a trawler right on our tail. We went hard a port, and as she passed her wash nearly turned us over. We turned to starboard up Spurn Head and dropped anchor opposite the lighthouse, putting out plenty of chain as the tide was still rising, and had a good meal, the first since breakfast. The owner decided to take the first anchor watch and I turned in, very tired.

I awakened at dawn, half way up the cabin side. The boat was very, very still, and lying on her side. I stepped out into the cockpit to see the watch still asleep on the low side seat and the anchor chain stretching across the sand and into the water about 30 yards away. The wind had gone westerly during the night, and we had gone gently ashore on the long chain which the watch should have shortened as the tide went down. However we floated just as gently when the tide made, and supped that night in the Ripon Canal. The Broads are well worth a visit, and given settled weather it is an easy passage. There are buoys and light vessels every 7 or 8 miles from Grimsby to Cromer, and then a run along the Norfolk coast to Yarmouth, and you have company all the way, there being a stream of shipping coming and going all the time.

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***Onaway* and *Sydia*.**

With *Onaway* I cruised far and wide, working up the Weighton Canal, the River Ancholme, and the Driffield and Beverley Canals via the River Hull. I went up the Trent, and down the Witham to Boston, and up the Grantham Canal (now derelict) from Nottingham. When I parted from *Onaway* in 1935 I did so only in order to join Syd Cattle, because he found himself without a crew and we were very good friends. Very often we had crewed with him or he with us, so it was only a natural outcome that we began to consider going into partnership, and we joined Syd on *Sydia*, which he had had built in 1935. Our reason for this was that we wanted to do some coastal cruising, and as Syd got only about 15 days holiday we wanted to cover as much ground as possible during the time. *Sydia* was 34 feet 9 inches long by 9 feet 5 inches beam with flared bows and a cruiser stern. Powered by two 15 hp Kelvin Ricardo engines she had a speed on trials of 11 knots.

Sydia was sold out of the club in 1937, renamed, and in May 1940 took part in the epic evacuation of British

Forces from Dunkirk.* (Lt. B.L. Coates (*Dawn*) and Major J.J. Denby were also present; there is no record of other RMBC or ex RMBC craft serving there).

1936 – 1939.

At the 5th Annual General meeting, which was held on the 9th November 1935, Mr H.M. Comber (*Dwrgi*) was elected the club's honorary secretary, an office he held until 1945. Rallies as we know them now began in 1936 with an Easter Rally to Aldwark, which, despite bitterly cold weather was well supported, our President, Mr Anders, then over seventy, attending in his open launch *Wild Duck*, with nine other boats. Five took part in a speed test, when *Dwrgi* was grounded and all other participants were disqualified for breaching the conditions. Other events included a 'Speed Estimating Competition' (*Dwrgi* won first prize), Mens' and Ladies' Tug of War and a Dinghy Balloon Race. A Club Supper was held in the *Bay Horse Inn*, shortly after a 'blinding snowstorm'.

Soon afterwards Linton Lock closed, and remained closed for 142 days, curtailing the cruising of those members who moored their craft on the upper river, and resulting in the 'virtual cancellation' of rallies. The club also sustained a sad loss by the untimely death of the Captain, Sam Wigglesworth on the 24th of May; the few boats taking part the Whitsun Rally flying their burgees at half-mast. Owing to the continued closure of Linton Lock the usual end of the season leg-of-mutton supper was cancelled, as members who were downstream were unable to get home to Ripon. Winter activities included a club bonfire on November 7 at Littlethorpe, and a dinner-dance at Briggate, Leeds, on November 13.

During the year Mr Anders moved away from Littlethorpe, sold his boat, resigned from the Presidency, and on the 12th December the committee heard that extensive – and expensive – repairs were again needed to Ox Close lock. Once again the club agreed to pay part of the cost, amounting to £156, by instalments, and the LNER accepted the estimate of Messrs J.H. Coldbeck and Son, Builders and Contractors, of the Canal Sawmill, Ripon, for £225 to replace the remaining old lower gate, renew the lower cill, and repair the lock floor.

At the 6th Annual General Meeting of the Club held on the 16th January 1937 Mr A.G. Pickles was elected to Captain, an office he held with distinction through the difficult war years until 1945. At the time of his election Mr Pickles owned *Celia*, a British ship registered at Hull, of 11 tons Thames measurement, 35.3 feet long by 8.9 feet beam, with a draught of 3 feet. Built by J. Smith and Son at Goole in 1926 to a design by R.W. Paul she was re-engined in 1937 with a pair of Thomycroft *Handybilly* twin cylinder petrol motors of 9 horsepower. She also carried 240 square feet of sail on a single mast. In addition to being our Captain Mr Pickles was a member of the Humber Yawl Club (Brough), Whitby Yacht Club, and the Royal Yorkshire

Yacht Club (Bridlington). It was quite usual then for yachtsmen to be members of several clubs, and some trouble was taken to ensure that our major social events did not clash with those of other clubs in Yorkshire.

To give added interest to club events, and to foster a spirit of keenness among our members, in February 1937 Mr Pickles donated a valuable silver bowl, to be known as the *Celia* Trophy, for annual competition. The trophy was to be awarded at the end of each season and held for one year by the club member whose craft had gained the greatest aggregation of points at the club's rallies during that season. 10 points were to be awarded for attendance, and for competitive events 10 points were to be given to the winner, 6 for second place, and 4 for third place. At about the same time the club negotiated a lease of the mooring rights to 'Longbottom's Field' at Acaster. It was decided that club members would only be eligible for attendance points at rallies held on their normal mooring if they or their crew took an active part in at least one event. It was also laid down that there would be no charge for the use of the Acaster moorings by members attending official rallies, at other times a charge would be made as follows:

24 hours:	½d per foot.
7 days:	1½d per foot.
Longer periods:	1d per foot per week.
Winter mooring:	50% of above rates.

1937 was the year of the Coronation of His late Majesty King George the sixth and Queen Elizabeth, the late Queen Mother. Mr Rose and Mr Comber were appointed to represent the club on the Ripon Coronation Festivities Committee. For the great day, Wednesday the 12th of May, some dozen devotedly repainted boats were taken – not without considerable difficulty – to the little used top reach of the canal. During the day, the boats were dressed overall 'rainbow fashion' the flags being exchanged after dark for coloured lights and flood lighting. Harrogate Corporation laid the cable and supplied the current, the lights cost £6. 3s. 0d, Ripon Corporation made a grant of £4, and the balance was paid by the members present at the display.

On Saturday, May the 15th the boats left Bondgate Basin to cruise in company to the new moorings at Acaster, and to take part in the first Rally and Competition for the *Celia* trophy. This was the last occasion on which craft passed under the original Navigation Bridge at the head of Littlethorpe Lane (now rebuilt as a footbridge), and penned through Rhode's Field and Bell Furrow's locks before they were rebuilt nearly half a century later.

June 1937 saw the inauguration of the Club's Sailing Section, with headquarters at the Acaster moorings. A launching slipway was constructed, with winches which enabled sailing dinghies to be brought ashore and stored in an enclosure, and a most successful season was enjoyed, the major feature being a series of 25 races for the 'Mate's Cup'. The sailing section not

* For this information thanks are due to Joe Burton's daughter, Mrs Pat Adamson.

only promoted sailing and racing, but also the construction of sailing dinghies by amateurs, and both the Cup winner *Redwing* (L. Simpson) and the runner up *Tern* (G. Cook) were constructed and rigged by their owners.

At that time the Club's objects were 'The encouragement of Motor Boating and Yachting, and the promotion of Social Intercourse amongst its members'. Many members had sailing interests, and the manner in which competitions under power were run evolved from yacht racing practice. Code flags for use as racing flags were issued to competitors, and 1st, 2nd and 3rd Prize flags were awarded at the end of each rally. The racing flag is, in yacht racing, a rectangular flag of unique design used in place of the burgee at the mast head to signify that the vessel is engaged, in racing. It is a polite request to non-competitors to 'keep out of the way'. The use of Code flags for this purpose by the RMBC is an interesting variation, and the ordering of flags 'S' to 'Z' in July 1937 implies that the Whitsun Rally attracted the support of more than 18 competitors. In yacht racing prize flags were flown from the burgee halyard below the burgee, or from the starboard cross-tree, at the conclusion of each days racing, and again at the end of the season.

The unexpected breakdown of Linton lock caused the August rally to be postponed until September; it was held at Acaster Malbis and included a set throttle contest, for which there were 18 entries, and a steering astern event, which attracted 16 competitors. For the first event boats were required to run a course of 2½ miles, including a turn, in 27 minutes exactly without reference to any timepiece or any alteration of engine controls, except for the actual turn. Five of the contestants completed the course within 60 seconds of the required time, the winner being only 5 seconds out. For the other event, craft had to pass stern first through a pair of buoys on opposite sides of the river, without touching. A strong cross wind added to the difficulty and only six boats were successful.

The End of Season rally and supper at Boroughbridge on the 2nd of October was exceptionally well attended, partly due to the fact that Ox Close Lock was closed for repairs from the 9th of August until the 7th of October, which kept boats in commission until later than usual. During this time the canal was drained, and craft based at Littlethorpe had to moor in the cut. Twenty-seven boats were in the running for the *Celia* trophy; the competition was very keen, there being only two points between the first three:

52 Points: *Dawn* B.L. Coates, Winner.

50 Points: *Puffin* S.H. Doyle, Runner up.

48 Points: *Lady Molly* Jim Rose, Third place.

The annual dinner and dance was held at the *Victory Hotel*, Leeds, on November 19. To give a 'boating' effect, in addition to the usual display of code flags, etc, the band platform was designed to represent a ship's bridge, and a model of the club flag-staff, flying an appropriate signal, adorned the captain's table. Attention to speakers was called by strokes on a ship's bell. The principal event of the evening was the

presentation of the *Celia* Trophy to B.L. Coates (*Dawn*). A silver tankard was given to L. Simpson (*Redwing*) for the best performance put up in the newly formed dinghy sailing section. The club's Captain also presented a silver cigarette case, a silver cigarette box, and a silver ashtray, each with a coloured enamel club burgee, to the skippers of *Dawn*, *Puffin*, and *Lady Molly* respectively.

The annual general meeting, preceded by a supper, was held at the Lawrence Cafe, Ripon, on the 11th of December. The balance sheet showed that although the year's expenses had been unusually heavy, due to repairs at Ox Close Lock, there was a satisfactory balance in hand. This lock was, however, now in sound condition. Club moorings at Acaster established early in the year had proved a great benefit and would be carried on during 1938. The preparation and publication of an enlarged and improved Year Book, giving more detailed information on local rivers, etc, to be sold to members for 1 shilling, was approved. Arrangements had been made to hold Navigation Classes in Leeds, under the tuition of Captain J.C. Johnston, O.C., A.I.N.A. A provisional programme of events for 1938 was discussed and approved by the meeting as under:

January to May, navigation classes at Leeds.

February, dance at Leeds.

Easter, rally and supper, at Boroughbridge.

Whitsuntide, rally and supper, at Acaster.

July, a club cruise to Ferriby Sluice.

September, rally and supper, at Acaster.

October, end of season supper, at Boroughbridge.

October-May, series of lectures or classes, at Leeds.

November, dinner-dance, at Leeds.

December, annual meeting, at Ripon or Leeds.

Other weekend events are also under consideration.

In the event the Easter rally of the 1938 season was held at Roecliffe, the weather was none too warm, but 20 boats turned up for the occasion. On the afternoon of Saturday April the 16th there was a 'Ladies and Juniors' dinghy race, followed by a similar race for men. There was a good entry for the principal event of the day, a man-overboard competition. It was won by the trophy holder (B.L. Coates) in 57 seconds, in spite of a strong wind, which in one or two instances blew the 'man' ashore before a rescue could be effected. Over 60 people were present at a supper at the *Crown Inn* in the evening. After supper Cine films taken by Mr Pickles and Mr J.R.S. White were shown. Three events were held on Sunday. The morning event, a time estimating competition, demanded a sound knowledge of a boat's capabilities, it being necessary to run over a course of 2½ miles in exactly 25 minutes without reference to watches and without alteration of engine controls during the run. In the afternoon a steering and mooring competition and one for line throwing were held. The Mayor of Ripon (who had been elected to the Presidency at the 6th Annual General Meeting) was invited to attend, and the Captain and Secretary each invited journalists as their personal guests. Cine films were taken, and the club attendant, Mr Harley, was present to give general assistance in addition to his usual Sunday evening duty of manning Ox Close lock. Two pewter tankards were provided as prizes for visiting non-member competitors.

The Whitsun rally featured a boat handling competition at Acaster, followed by a cruise in 'Line ahead' to York, where supper was provided at the *Windmill Hotel*.

The Summer rally followed the August Bank Holiday cruise to the River Ancholme and Brigg, and started on Saturday the 3rd of September with supper at the *Windmill Hotel* York. After supper Harry Hobman, skipper of the motor barge *Bishopthorpe*, gave a 'most informative lecture on the navigation of the Ouse and Humber'. The venue on Sunday for the competitive events was the club moorings at Acaster. They opened with a Time Estimate Competition over a 2½ mile course, the winners being *Lady Molly* (J.H. Rose) with an error of only 9 seconds, *Valletta* (F.H. Rhodes), error 29 seconds, and *Seaburnia* (T.G. Irving), error 36 seconds. A Line throwing event was won by *Celia* (A.C. Pickles) with a throw of 42 ft. 6 ins., followed by *Dwrgi* (H.L. Comber) and *Vagabond* (H.G. Hurst). In the afternoon a Steering Astern event provided some excitement, being won by the last competitor *Bered* (W. H. Chadwick) with a conversion. Second and third places fell to a tie between *Betsy Jane* (W.S. Thompson) and *Lady Molly*. This was run off again, *Betsy Jane* winning second place by a margin of only 10 seconds. The Rally concluded with a five-mile cruise in line ahead from Acaster to Clifton, in which all competitors wishing to earn attendance points were required to participate.

The final rally of the season started with supper at the *Crown Inn* Roecliffe on Saturday the 24th September, its accommodation being taxed to the utmost by the ninety members who turned up. The photographic competition was judged – the money for prizes having been contributed by committee members – and Mr Pickles and Mr Attenborough again showed cine films of club interest. The rally finished on Sunday with a 'line ahead' cruise from Roecliffe to Milby and back, starting at 11 am.

One of the craft moored at Jack Boddy's *Rivercraft* boatyard that weekend was the cruiser *Fay*, owned by Kenneth Dawson (who was a member from 1936 until his untimely death in 1939) and he took photographs that have been kindly made available by his daughter Mrs Fay Baxter. They show what must have been the only commercial traffic remaining on the river; Blundy Clark's gravel dredger *Catherine Clark* – which remained in service into the 1990s and was owned after September 1965 by Potters of Boroughbridge – towing *Enid Clark*, which later became the clubship *Enid*. They also show part of the 'line ahead' cruise, with a close up of one of Jack Boddy's conversions, *Kiwi* (Mr A.A.Woods) and the winner (with 76 points) of the *Celia* trophy for 1938, *Dawn*.

Dawn is a steel 'bridge deck cruiser', 30 feet long by 8 feet beam, built by Jacht Werf de Kaag at Kaag in Holland. She first appears in the club records for 1934, and was acquired for the 1936 season by Mr B.L. Coates of Bradford, who replaced her 15 hp engine with a 25 hp Hylander in 1937. In 1938 she was one of 31 competitors, and is pictured here flying her burgee,

racing flag, (international code flag letter 'B'), and three 1st and one 2nd place prize flags from her masthead. The trophy and a personal memento were presented to Mr Coates by the Captain, Mr Pickles, at the End of Season dinner at Harrogate on the 9th of December.

By the spring of 1938 the club's officers had started to 'make discreet enquiries at Boroughbridge with a view to finding suitable club moorings', and on the 24th of October the committee approved the arrangements they made. The moorings were situated on the North bank of the River Ure, about 200 yards above the railway bridge, and the charges for 1939 were set at 1 shilling per week for boats not exceeding 35 feet in length. These moorings were so popular that half way through the season it was necessary to lease the adjoining field, and this too was almost filled.

In the meantime it had become evident that all was not well at Acaster. At a committee meeting on the 18th January Mr R.H. Drewery formally resigned from membership of the Sailing section sub-committee after correspondence noted in, but not detailed in the minutes of previous meetings. At the next committee meeting 'it was agreed to ask the Sailing Section for a rent of two guineas (£2.10) for the year beginning 1st April 1938'. On the 13th of May it was 'confirmed that the club contribute a sum not exceeding 50 shillings for the provision of a fence for the dinghy mooring, and a new rope for the dinghy slipway, but would not pay for cartridges'. On the 15th of July it was agreed that the club's officer in charge of the Acaster mooring, Mr Attenborough, collect the sailing section moorings rent quarterly. On the 7th September the committee unanimously decided to 'recommend to the Annual General Meeting that the Acaster Sailing Section be discontinued as a separate unit of the Club'. At the same time, 'in view of the certainty that the lease of the club moorings at Acaster would not be renewed enquiries were instituted as to the possibility of obtaining accommodation further upstream'.

The eighth annual general meeting of the Club was held at the Lawrence Cafe, Ripon, on the 19th November, and was better attended than usual. Officers-in-charge were appointed to the new club moorings at Acaster and at Boroughbridge, Mr H.G. Hurst (Leeds) and Mr A.A. Woods (Leeds) respectively. Additions to the committee included Mr A.D. Brydon (Harrogate) and Mr B.L. Coates (Bradford). It was decided to separate the motor and sailing sections of the club. The sailing section formed at Acaster two years ago is now known as the Yorkshire Ouse Sailing Club, and occupies the Club's original Acaster moorings, now vacated in favour of a more convenient position ('Wood's Field') a few hundred yards higher up stream. A comprehensive scheme for the provision of a slipway and dry berths adjoining the present moorings in the Ripon Canal was discussed and approved. Work will begin almost immediately. It is hoped to have the slipway in operation before fitting-out time arrives. The issue of a new Club Year Book (probably in January) was sanctioned, publication to be repeated annually without further confirmation. It was reported that the opportunity had been taken to correct the Club Chart of

the Linton Clay Huts, when the river was lowered in April for repairs at Naburn.

At a committee meeting on the 24th November it was 'assumed that Sailing Section members whose annual subscriptions (of five shillings) were overdue wished to resign'. Thereafter our former sailing section members substituted a dinghy for the Ripon Horn in their burgee, and began an independent existence. The final event of the season was a dinner and dance held at the Grand Hotel, Harrogate, on the 9th of December.

Further afield a small group of members established an outpost at Marton Pool on the Leeds and Liverpool Canal; they later formed themselves into the Skipton Motor Boat Club, but it failed to survive the 1939 - 45 war. In 1947 there were still only ten pleasure craft moored between Bingsly and Gargrave, and since no facilities were provided by the Leeds and Liverpool Canal Company it was the practice of their owners to obtain drinking water from nearby houses. Bingley Urban District Council then served notice on the householders, warning them that if this practice continued their water rates would be increased. Two RMBC members, Mr W. Clough and Mr E. Dacre, called a meeting of boat owners to discuss their common problem. At that meeting two further RMBC members with four other boat owners founded the Bingley Motor Boat Club, and resolved to have their own tap fitted at the top of Bingley five rise locks. Water is still available there, and the BMBC became an extremely popular club, but some years later it changed its name to The Craven Cruising Club.

Work commenced in February 1939 on the construction of the club's slipway, financed, initially, by a syndicate of 29 club members who contributed to an independent construction fund. Exactly a month later the first boat was hauled out, and the official opening was by the Mayor of Ripon, on Saturday May the 13th at 4 30 pm, followed by a celebratory tea at the Lawrence Cafe, Ripon. The 'demonstration boat' at the opening ceremony was Mr T.G. Irving's *Seaburnia*, of 50 feet length by 9 feet 8 inches beam, which was dressed overall for the occasion. The venture was so successful that the loan, totalling with interest £102. 14. 0d, was repaid from slipping revenue in 1943, and the slipway taken over by the club. By the time war ended in 1945, the slipway had been used 120 times.

Less successful were the initial efforts to provide a clubship. In June 1939 the barge *St Paul* was purchased and towed to Acaster with the ultimate intention of taking her to Ripon for conversion. In January 1940 Blundy Clark's offered to tow her to Ox Close for 30 shillings, but before anything more could be done the war intervened, and when that was over *Paul* was a wreck. When the river is low her keel and bottom planks may still be seen on the riverbed, at the site of the Club's moorings.

The Easter rally was thoroughly successful, and favoured, for the first time, with warm weather. The June rally was well attended, and the 'line ahead' cruise from Acaster to York most impressive. The

competitions at these events were keenly contested, and by the end of the June rally *Dwrgi* and *Puffin* were in the lead with 36 points each; *Dawn* was in third place with 34 points. As September approached interest was centred on the Rally to be held at Acaster on the 9th, when *Dawn* was to make her final effort to win the *Celia* trophy outright. (At that time it was the custom for a competitor winning a trophy on three consecutive occasions to keep it for his lifetime, and it will be remembered that Mr B.L. Coates and *Dawn* were the winners in 1937 and 1938). When war came on the 3rd of September there was a rush home to Ripon, where many craft were to remain for years while their owners went home to prepare for the thousand and one duties that the war was to bring to all of them. Rallies were abandoned for the duration, and Mr Coates retained the *Celia* trophy, which was not awarded again until 1948.

At the 9th Annual General Meeting, held at the Griffin Hotel Leeds, on Saturday the 18th November the Treasurer reported the income for the year had been £197. 17. 4d., expenditure £179. 6. 0d. Club records show that 277 members had 102 craft, not all of which moored at Littlethorpe. Annual subscriptions were as follows:

Members mooring at Littlethorpe paid	£1. 1. 0d.
Members not mooring at Littlethorpe paid	5. 0d.
Lady and Junior Members paid	1.0d.

Members craft varied in size from the Dobson family's *Catherine Rose*, an 87 feet long by 13 feet 6 inch beam twin screw motor yacht, to Mr and Mrs G.G. Powney's *Ninonette* which was a 8 feet 6 inch long by 4 feet 5 inches beam centreboard sailing dinghy. 46 had been converted to cruisers from ship's boats; *Dream*, *Gaelic Crusader*, *Montana*, and *Narwhal* were all 50 feet or more long. When war came to bring to an end the 1939 season there also came the end of an era.

PEJ November 1985, revised 2004.

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THROUGH THE YEARS OF WAR.

H.M. Comber.

Though 1939 undoubtedly opened with war clouds in the air few people actually took war into their calculations for the coming season and a full programme was arranged, and in the main fulfilled. The imminence of war was rather brought home to us by the appearance of sandbag defences at Hull Docks and by the arrest (temporary) of one of our members for taking photographs near Spurn, and then on Sunday, September 3rd, it came.

A few members, on the Services Reserves, were called up at once, but the first hint that small craft might take a hand in the war came in October when a Coastal and Waterways Squadron was got together (on paper) by the Yacht & Motor Boat Association. Seventeen Club Craft were offered, but nothing came of it.

Though boating events were obviously 'off' for the moment it was determined that subject to necessary

modifications, the remainder of the programme should be carried out. Black-out Regulations had come into force immediately, both afloat and ashore, and this, of course, prevented the usual 5th November Bonfire on Littlethorpe Moorings, so useful for the clearing up of junk.

The Annual Meeting, hitherto held in Ripon, was transferred to Leeds, and became an afternoon instead of an evening function on November 18th. This should have been followed by a Dinner and Dance at the Grand Hotel, Harrogate, but the latter was now in the hands of the R.A.F., and a Dinner-Dance in Leeds took its place; Dancing till 10-30 p.m. instead of 2-0 a.m., and tickets endorsed 'Lounge Suits.'

During December, heavy repairs were in progress at Milby Lock – new top gates being put in – and towards the end of that month very heavy frosts set in, which lasted till February 21st, though the Ripon Canal, which had nearly a foot of ice, was not clear till March 2nd. This caused a great deal of trouble among craft which had been hurriedly laid up, and the then O/C Moorings and Harley had their hands full. Much damage was also done at Boroughbridge, York and Acaster and lower down river by floating ice. A Notice to Mariners records that 'The Middle and Upper Whitton Lightships, and Ness Buoy were off station, Brough Scalp Buoy adrift, Broomfleet Beacons carried away by ice, and that no Floating Marks in the Upper Humber could be relied upon.'

Meanwhile, some War Regulations affecting boats had come into force, in addition, of course, to the black-out. Among these, on September 1st, was the Ships and Aircraft Transfer Restriction Act prohibiting the sale, etc., of craft without the sanction of the Board of Trade, which, however, was cancelled for craft of 15 tons and under (ours) in December, 1945.

On September 10th, the Humber between Spurn and Barrow Haven became the 'Port of the Humber' governed by a 20 page Booklet of Regulations under which, in certain circumstances, craft might be fired on without further notice. Another was the Immobilisation Order whereby, even on ponds and lakes, craft had to be made safe from an invader, even to the extent of removing oars and rowlocks from dinghies. At first for areas within five miles of the coast, it was in July 1940 extended to the whole country.

All tidal waters came under the control of the Naval Authorities, and cruising below Naburn Locks was prohibited except under permit obtainable, if a suitable excuse could be offered, from the Flag Officer, Humber. About this time, too, came the rather over-enthusiastic removal of all signposts and indications of locality that swept away the Ouse-Ure sign, which used to adorn the River Bank near Ouseburn, below Aldwark, marking the junction of those two rivers.

1940.

The year 1940 opened for the Club with a Men Only Meeting in Leeds on January 9th, and events got

into their stride with a Panto-party on January 26th, when 54 members filled a block of seats at the Empire to see George Formby. On February 13th, 85 members gathered to hear and see a cine-film 'Through Holland and Belgium in *Montana*'; and on March 12th, 'Cruising in *Stroma*' – another film – drew a large gathering, so concluding the winter programme.

This had been the period of the 'Phoney War,' and our efforts to maintain 'business as usual' had been fairly successful, but henceforward no set programme was arranged, but the committee, in the words of the Year Book, would 'make every effort to maintain the normal activities of the Club' and in pursuance of this a Fitting-Out Supper and Flannel Dance was arranged for Easter at Ripon, and a Whitsuntide Rally at Westwick, with supper at Boroughbridge. The war was warming up, however, and these Bank Holidays were officially cancelled by the Government and our events abandoned, except that that Suppers were held unofficially, the effects of rationing not yet being felt.

In April, the long-wanted Fresh Water Supply was laid on to the Car Park Jetty (before then all drinking supplies were brought from Nicholson's farm in a wheeled water can, pushed across the field by Harley at weekends and by members themselves at other times).

On May 10th the Germans invaded Holland, and on the 15th entered France, which capitulated a month later. On May 30th came Dunkirk, that epic event which brought 'The Little Ships' right into the picture, and at least two of our members were there (Lt B. L. Coates and Major J. J. Denby, the latter Mentioned in Despatches for that event). This brought the war home to nearly everyone and pleasure boating virtually ceased. In June, several of our larger ships were acquired by the Admiralty – *Montana* being taken over at Boroughbridge by a naval crew on the 8th.

On June 19th, heavy repairs were commenced at Westwick Lock, which was not re-opened until July 15th. This was most unfortunate as most of our fleet were blocked in above Westwick when, on June 28th, a most urgent request was received from the Admiralty for a fleet of small craft to assemble at Hull at the earliest possible moment. Fortunately, a number of boats were at Boroughbridge and York, and seven of these were hastily manned by volunteer crews of Club Members and others and rushed to Hull, reaching St. Andrew's Dock on July 4th, not entirely without incident, to be very thankfully received by Capt. Porter, R.N., and Commander Poustie, R.N.R., not to mention one of the earlier air raids on Hull.

With the opening of Westwick Lock more ships became available and a further seven were duly delivered to D.E.M.S. Hull, These ships were to take part in a scheme for removing crews from ships to be scuttled in the Humber Fairways in the event of an invasion. It is interesting to note that of the 26 ships required by the scheme, 14 came from the R.M.B.C. With the departure of these craft boating activity more or less ceased, particularly as on October 31st petrol for

motorboats was suspended for the time being. The only other event of the year was the Annual Meeting in November, at which was held the last of the Photographic Competitions. There were only 12 entries.

1941.

Though petrol was allowed from April 1st to October 1st, 1941, there was relatively little activity; more members had joined the Forces, A.R.P., Home Guard, and other war work left little time for pleasure cruising, though a few members from the much-bombed coast towns came down occasionally for a week-end's sleep, and some craft were kept ready to provide alternative accommodation if required. To keep members together a Club Dinner was arranged for 11th January, but was cancelled for lack of support, and a proposed Monthly Lunch, at the Red Lion, South Stainley, also collapsed about the third month, and no other fixtures were attempted.

About this time a Royal Engineers Training School for Bridging and River Crossing was established near Newby Hall, and strange amphibious craft appeared on the river and roads, and bridges at various points on river and canal sprang up overnight, to disappear as quickly.

On March 23rd we received notification that the craft sent to Hull were no longer required and should be removed, and being assured that all the boats were in good running order, arrangements were made to bring them away at Easter. By this time, however, many more of our members had entered the Services and the provision of crews was somewhat of a problem. Nine of the original delivery crew and two other members (Mr. N. R. Parker and Mr. E. Thornton), together with nine non-members, were collected and the balance required were supplied by the Harrogate Sea Cadets, who thoroughly appreciated the chance of some real work, and who were all most efficient and useful, and these were duly transported to Hull.

It was found on arrival, however, that only one out of the eleven engines could be started, and much work was necessary to get the craft away. *Funchal*, *Ianthe* and *Kalvern* left on the 12th as arranged; *Armada*, *Dwrgi* and *Verona* next day. *Carmina*, *Ebor*, *Valetta* and *Fay* left on the 26th in rough weather, and off Hessele the latter bumped her rudder off and completed the remainder of the trip to Goole towed by *Carmina* — an hectic and protracted operation. *White Lady* did not get away till May 3rd, and meanwhile was damaged by a blitz. On the whole, however, the flotilla was fortunate to return with so little damage as a few weeks before a parachute mine had fallen into the dock near the boats but had failed to explode at the time. It was later exploded *in situ* by the Bomb Disposal people and did considerable damage to the dock, but the boats had been moved to safety first.

In May, the Treasurer, Mr P.G. Farmer, was suddenly transferred to London, and Messrs. Rose and Comber became Joint Treasurers *pro tem*. Meanwhile, the concentration of craft in the Ripon Canal was

causing difficulties and a new set of 'Mooring Regulations' was drawn up and confirmed at the Annual Meeting in Leeds on December 6th, and it was decided that to simplify the operation of the Club, the Slipway which had hitherto been run by a separate Committee, and had incidentally almost paid for itself, should be taken over by the Club; Mr Rose, who had 'managed' it being appointed Officer-in-Charge.

About this time began a series of depredations by thieves. The black-out, lack of attendance, pre-occupation of the police, not to mention a ready market for all classes of goods in short supply, almost invited this kind of thing, and on one night nine boats were broken into. A raid was also made on the Slipway from which a large quantity of timber was removed — the thieves actually making a raft of oil drums to ferry the stuff away. This was later found and destroyed.

1942.

Nineteen-forty-two was probably the lowest ebb in Club activity as it was in our fortunes of war — this was the year of the fall of Tobruk. Our Attendant Harley, on full-time war work was seldom available, and the effects of time and weather and inattention showed more and more in broken mooring ropes, flying sheets and overgrown trees and bushes. There was no petrol for private craft or car, public transport conditions were beyond words, and few members outside the immediate locality were able to visit Littlethorpe; even the Committee only met once that year. A car in the Car Park was an event to be recorded; it was altogether a depressing sight on the moorings, and only the ever-busy Slipway kept the spark alight. It was not surprising that thieving again gave trouble, and a reward of £10 was offered for information, but without result.

The danger to craft on the Coast and the difficulty of caring for those on the Rivers resulted in still more seeking the sanctuary of the Ripon Canal with resultant overcrowding. Since the outbreak of war nearly fifty new members had joined the Club, and as an indication to these and others that the flag was still flying it was decided to issue a Supplement to the Year Book noting the changes, and also drawing attention to various War Regulations affecting boat-owners. This was circulated in February. In April, York was bombed in a Baedeker Raid, craft at Clifton Ferry being machine-gunned.

The Annual Meeting, now the only Club event, was held in November, and it was decided that the Slipway, which again showed a profit, should be acquired by the Club and the contributions paid off in full forthwith.

1943.

By the beginning of 1943 it was evident that the tide had turned, and even though it was slow in 'making' it was clear that the 'first of the flood' had arrived; Alamein, Algiers, Stalingrad, and the Solomons were behind us; it was no longer 'how long' but 'how soon.' Little indeed could be done, but 'after the war' was something concrete.

Some fitting out was done, the Slipway waiting list grew longer and craft began to change hands, still at reasonable prices. In August, a 'Mooring Committee,' formed of those most able to get to Littlethorpe, was formed to help in keeping things in order there, and in September some much-needed repairs were effected to the cleughs at Ox Close Lock. The most casual of labour was becoming almost unobtainable and members were notified that in future they must find their own when a 'slip' or other work was required.

A second and very small Supplement to the Year Book was issued with the notice of the Annual Meeting, which was held in November.

1944.

So far as the Club was concerned, 1944 was another year of hope rather than accomplishment, but in the war theatres there were great advances with D Day as the crowning achievement. About March, the Admiralty called on Yachtsmen and others to volunteer for emergency service in 'Harbour Craft,' and in the hope of being 'in' at D Day there was a big response, which included several members of the RMBC. Though not called till after the great day all put in various periods of service, mainly on MFV's at Plymouth, Portsmouth, etc., and some on coastwise cruises, being temporarily enrolled as Naval Personnel for the purpose.

Very little actual cruising was done; officially there was no petrol, but a number of boats at Littlethorpe and Boroughbridge became 'inhabited' and were cleaned up and painted. Several craft which had been on the slipway for the duration were returned to the water and found to be none the worse.

Much trouble this year was caused by wide fluctuations in the level of the canal, the result, apparently, of the activities of an aquatic Bomb Disposal Training School, whose members functioned in the depths of Ox Close Lock, and now and again a dummy mine came bobbing down the canal.

There was no business of particular interest at this year's Annual Meeting.

1945.

Though it is perhaps too much to say that 1945 brought Peace, the urgency of war was over, and with the coming of petrol (June to September) it was once more possible to cruise with a clear conscience so far as the quantity permitted, and after some feverish activity with scraper and paint brush, and quite a lot of attention to engines, a dozen or so craft got away down river to Acaster and beyond.

At Littlethorpe, a good deal of work was put in and some important additions to the Club equipment provided, which included an excellent Rapier power pump and a Radial Crane for lifting out boat engines direct on to a road vehicle.

We unfortunately lost half our Langthorpe moorings at the beginning of the season, (Johnson's

field), and the remainder at the end of the year, (Cook's field), but this was rectified by the acquisition of a site further downstream between the Railway bridge and the lock cut, (Brewery field, later known as Laundry field, then *Anchor Marine*, and now a housing development).

At Acaster the position was rather difficult, some silting had taken place and all but one of the landing stages had carried away. The barge *Paul* was in bad shape, and mainly useful as a resort for the local anglers.

The principal business of the Annual General meeting on the 15th December was the election of an almost entirely new set of officers and committee. With the conclusion of hostilities the existing Officers felt there should be a change and resigned, and at the 1945 meeting there was a general post, and a good deal of new blood came in, as will be seen by reference to the list of Officers of the Club.

The Reports of the retiring Officers showed that the Club was in a very strong position both financially and numerically; the membership, in spite of the loss of over 90 members and 35 craft from one cause or another, was 314 members compared to 277 in 1939, and our Fleet was 95 strong against a pre-war 102. The club had £222 in the bank, and £500 invested in 3% Defence Bonds.

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1946.

The 1946 season opened with two evening meetings in Leeds – successors to the popular 'Men only' meetings of pre war years – and these were followed by two 'Tidy up' Sundays at Littlethorpe when a few enthusiastic members put in some very useful work cutting back trees and bushes, which after seven years freedom threatened to close the fairway with their overhanging branches.

In February the construction of a bridge over the cow drink at the car park end of the Littlethorpe moorings was commenced. In earlier days many members had quite literally to run the gauntlet of Mr Nicholson's numerous bulls, many a time having to wait half-an-hour or more for a chance to slip across. It is perhaps an irony of fate that Mr Nicholson was himself chased by a bull, and soon after the bridge was built ceased keeping them in the field.

The first rally took place on June 1st and 2nd – a 'Line ahead' cruise to Boroughbridge – being followed by an excellent supper at the *Crown Hotel* on the Saturday night. Sunday was devoted to the usual exhibitions of boating skill. Though no Club event was arranged for the occasion June 8th was Victory Day. The only river celebrations appear to have been at York, where the bridges were all picked out in coloured lights, and toget-her with a display of illuminated boats staged by the YMBC made a brave show. Three RMBC craft in York 'dressed ship' for the occasion but took no official part.

At Boroughbridge the road bridges were much in the news – the bridge across the river collapsing

under an 80 ton load on July 5th, while the bridge across Milby Cut was being reconstructed. This was more serious for river users, as it resulted on September 1st in the draining of Milby Gut for the purpose of taking out the foundations of the old bridge and the construction of a new one to complete the new Roundabout. This was expected to take about six weeks, but in fact the canal was not reopened until well into January 1947. The original bridge across Milby Cut is believed to have been one of the first iron bridges, and one of its nine girders was taken to the LNE Railway museum in York and put on display. (This girder is part of the reserve collection of the present National Railway Museum).

Though many of the club craft which had gone downstream returned before the cut was closed, others left it too late, and were unable to get to the 'End of Season' rally at Boroughbridge on September 21st / 22nd. There was, unfortunately, a very severe 'fresh' that weekend, which left several would be competitors high and dry both at Westwick and Boroughbridge. River conditions being so bad, and so few entrants available the events were called off and the energies which would have been devoted to the competitions, were diverted to the re-floating of stranded vessels, all of which were ultimately returned to the water undamaged.

'Bonfire night' so useful for clearing away the year's accumulation of rubbish on the Littlethorpe moorings, had, until stopped by the black-out regulations, always been an important club event, and in 1946 it came into its own again on Saturday, November 2nd, when over seventy members gathered on the slipway field to watch an excellent display of fireworks, and to salute the Funeral Pyre of that redoubtable craft *Merlin*, originally *Pearl*. She made a grand show at the last, as well she might, for *Shady Lady* was stuffed inside her.

At the 16th Annual General meeting on December 7th Jim Rose and his wife were elected Honorary Life Members of the club, and it was reported that a further attempt was being made to provide a floating clubhouse by the purchase, for £100, of an Assault Landing Craft (LCA) No. 510, which measured 41 feet by 10 feet and was lying at Gillingham.

Mr T.G. Irving, our 'mate' at the time, arranged for one of his ships, the 420 tons deadweight diesel coaster *Rosedene* to tow her to a Humber port, but a shortage of fuel and severe weather which included ice flows in the North Sea and ice packs in the Humber delayed the attempt. On the 23rd August 1947 it was reported to the committee that LCA 510 had been lost at sea.

1947.

Not for many years had we been blessed with such a fine and sunny season as that of 1947. Fortunately the petrol ration, though none too generous, allowed most of the members to make the most of the weather and undertake some really serious cruising.

The season was opened with a 'seamanship training' weekend at Westwick on May 10th and 11th, and was followed on May 24th to 26th by the club's

cruise into tidal water. A flotilla of six cruisers went down as far as Blacktoft Jetty, where they tied up for a few hours, and then with the flood tide went back to Goole, locking into the docks for the night and returning to Naburn next day. The photograph of craft assembling in Naburn Cut was taken by Roland Bird (*Ubique*) and won that year's photographic competition.

Fourteen craft attended a joint rally at Bushy Close on June 15th, when the RMBC were invited to join the YMBC, but a sudden rise in the river's level caused the competitive events to be abandoned. Over twenty craft attended a joint rally at Acaster on Saturday September 15th, which commenced with a 'line ahead' cruise to York, followed by supper at Davygate Hall (at five shillings per head). On Sunday there were 'time estimating', 'station keeping' and 'man overboard' competitions. There were also dinghy races and line throwing competitions for both men and ladies.

Meanwhile seven Ripon based craft had cruised on the Humber, as had two craft based at Beverley. Several craft visited Bridlington and took part in the regatta, and *Lady Molly* made a record single-handed return run of nine hours to Goole. *Dreeka* started her cruise from Bingley, and made an 11 week 1,000 mile cruise to the Broads via the canals, Trent, Witham, and Wash to Yarmouth; returning from Lowestoft to Boston, calling at Wells *en route*. *Joanra* started from Skipton, first visited Ripon, and thence via the Trent to Boston, across the Wash to Kings Lynn and Cambridge, continuing to Peterborough, Northampton, Leicester and so home via the Trent – round trip of some 700 miles.

Two craft visited the Thames, one of which entered for the Holehaven Trial, a 35 mile fixed throttle competition from Cadogan Pier Chelsea to Holehaven Creek organised by the Thames Motor Cruising Club. One craft made her way up the coast to the Forth and Clyde canal, thence to the West Coast and down to the Menai Straits. Another cruised down the coast to Yarmouth and Lowestoft and back. Other craft cruised on almost every inland waterway (including the River Wharfe), and two craft spent the season on Lake Windermere.

During the year some very good work had been put in at Littlethorpe; the cut at Ox Close had been dredged out for the whole of its length, together with the section of canal from Renton's Bridge to the slipway beside 'Pond Field'. The work was undertaken by the Royal Engineers as an exercise, and as a gesture of appreciation the club paid a gratuity of £6 to the President of the Regimental Institute, School of Military engineering, Bishop Monkton. By renting 'Pond Field' from Mr Nicholson for £10 per annum from November 1946 the pressure for mooring space at Littlethorpe was relieved, but was not entirely eliminated.

In July 1946 the club's moorings attendant Harley had resigned, and the following month Mr Irving Hatton was engaged to replace him. A year later Hatton was sacked, and a German prisoner of war was employed in his stead. On November 1st, Bonfire night,

a link with our founding President O.L. Anders was lost when the hull of his old launch *Top C* was the principal sacrifice. (Mr Anders had acquired *Wild Duck* in 1933, and in 1934 he presented the hull of *Top C* to the club for use as a painting 'flat'). At about the same time the government found it necessary to abolish the basic petrol ration, and uncertainty as to when it would be restored made planning for the 1948 season impossible.

1948.

Petrol was the dominant factor in the 1948 season; the cessation of the ration altogether in the winter months of 1947 caused a late start, while the meagre ration when it did come – in June – had a serious effect on long distance cruising. Eleven boats turned, out for the 'line ahead' to Boroughbridge on Saturday June 5th, and, between 60 and 70 members sat down to a most excellent supper at the *Crown*. 'Time estimating', 'man overboard' and steering competitions the next day in drenching rain for the *Celia* trophy resulted in a tie between 4 craft, and the winner of a tie breaking competition for the Captain's prize was *lanthe*.

Unfortunately a shadow was cast over the August rally by the sad news that Roland Bird had been drowned at Linton Lock while bringing *Ubique* up from York to take part. 'Roley', described by the Captain as 'that Good Companion of the river', was one of our less affluent members, and the main support of his old and recently widowed mother. A fund for her assistance was immediately started, closing a few weeks later at £220, and she courageously accepted Honorary Life Membership of the Club.

The *Celia* trophy was eventually won by *lanthe*, Mr. G.E. Neesam, who received it from Mrs Irving, the wife of our Captain, at the Annual Dinner on November 12th, an event saddened by news of the death in tragic circumstances of its only previous holder, Bernard Coates,

By the 18th Annual General Meeting on December 4th there were 416 members with 104 craft, but the Treasurer had to report that for the first time expenditure had exceeded income; there was a deficit of £61. This was due to the revenue from letting moorings being less than had been anticipated, probably as a consequence of petrol rationing. Mr. S.H. Doyle was elected to the newly created office of Flag Lieutenant, as a mark of appreciation for his many years of effort to instil into members a good standard of seamanship and an understanding of flag etiquette. It may too have been in remembrance of the many occasions when a few minutes before 8 am his stentorian voice roused members to 'Make colours!'

At the end of the year the Railway Executive handed over the 'Ripon and Boroughbridge Canal' (Ure Navigation) to the Inland Waterways executive, but before doing so made a few necessary repairs to Milby, Westwick and Ox Close locks, leaving them in good order.

During the post-war years it became increasingly evident that there was a need for an organisation

devoted to keeping before the Authorities and the public the importance of properly maintaining, wisely developing, and fully using our rivers and canals for trade, pleasure boating, and as the national amenities they are, or should be, in many other ways. Many of the waterways known to earlier members had gone out of use; the River Derwent, the Pocklington Canal, Driffild Navigation, Dearne and Dove Canal, the Rochdale Canal, and the Huddersfield Canal, the two latter being through routes to the West. In October 1948 Linton Lock, which had been in poor condition for a long time became so bad that it could no longer be operated with safety. At about the same time an Association of North East Yacht Clubs was formed at Whitby to 'co-ordinate Yachting fixtures, and to take action to protect yachting interests'. Our Captain and Mr H.R. Parker attended to represent the RMBC, and arising from their report to the committee on November 6th the formation of an 'Association of Inland Motor Boat Clubs' was proposed. At the committee meeting on January 19th 1949 it was decided to invite other inland waterway clubs to join us in discussions regarding the formation of such an association; at the same meeting the decision was taken to apply for corporate membership of the Inland Waterways Association.

The IWA responded by inviting the RMBC to form a North Eastern Branch of that Association; an invitation that was immediately accepted. At the end of March the committee were advised that the estimate for the repair of Linton Lock totalled £2,000, and that as the navigation Commissioners lacked the necessary funds the repairs would not be put in hand. The Club immediately offered £100 towards the cost of permanent repairs, and Mr H.R. Comber was authorised to take whatever action would best ensure the establishment of a NE branch of the IWA. The club had, meanwhile, called a public meeting at the *Station Hotel*, York, on April 5th, under the chairmanship of our Captain, Mr T.R. Irving. At that meeting Mr H.M. Comber was elected Secretary of the new Branch, which the club financed initially by a loan, and thereafter by a donation of one shilling per annum per boat-owning member. By 1955 the Branch included, among many other bodies and individuals, no fewer than 12 local motor boat, etc., clubs. At its first meeting on the 9th May 1949 the restriction of navigation on the River Derwent, and the unservicability of Linton Lock were both discussed.

In November Mr. H.M. Comber was elected a Commissioner of Linton Lock Navigation, and the IWA instructed their surveyor to proceed with repairs 'insofar as available funds would permit'. Plans were drawn up for damming, and 3 contractors were invited to tender for the necessary repairs. In September the promised £100 was paid from club funds, and it was reported that 'the lock would be operable next summer'. In January, however, came news that both the tenders received had been excessive. Eventually some £900 was raised and repairs were commenced on August 8th, and finished on September 12th. Linton Lock was safe to use, but for a complete repair more funds would be needed than had been available. To celebrate the reopening there was a

rally to Linton on September 23rd and 24th. 3 craft from Ripon attended and 6 from York, the Commodore Mr S.H. Doyle put the lock into commission, but there was no official ceremony.

At the Annual General Meeting on the 17th December 1949 the title of the club's officers were changed from 'Captain', 'Mate', and 'Flag Lieutenant' to 'Commodore', 'Vice-Commodore', and 'Rear-Commodore', to bring the club into line with the usual practice of other clubs. By a sad coincidence, the death was announced at the meeting of the club's first Captain, Mr Syd Cattle, and a tribute was paid to his memory. Mr S.H. Doyle was elected the club's first Commodore, and the *Celia* trophy was won by Mr T.G. Irving the retiring Captain, in *River Girl*. In his speech he deplored the apathy of a large proportion of the membership; 'It must be a great disappointment to Mr A.G. Pickles who presented the trophy in 1937 to know that only in 4 years from 1937 to 1949 had it been possible to complete the annual competitions. The war, storm, and restrictions had caused the abandonment of rallies for 8 years.

For the first time there was a fall in the number of members. In March 1951 the IWA's NE Branch appealed to the RMBC; 'the bill for the repair of Linton Lock had been paid except for the last £105. £50 had been promised (from an unnamed source), could the RMBC help with a loan of £60?' Alas, the RMBC could not. The year that Linton Lock had been closed heralded, if it did not actually cause, the club's decline, and the best that could be done was to make an interest-free loan of £25.

The 'austerity' editions of the club's yearbooks for 1949 and 50 became little more than lists of members in 1951 and 52, but 1953 was to be 'Coronation Year', and H.M. Comber edited and produced the last full yearbook, containing an 'Autobiography of the RMBC' upon which much that is in this history is based.

It will be remembered that in 1937 the club had been invited to appoint representatives to Ripon's Coronation Festivities Committee. No such invitation was made in 1955; in any case Bondgate Basin had by then become inaccessible, as no maintenance had been undertaken to the canal above the club's moorings since 1931. (The masonry of Rhode's Field and Bell Furrow's locks was still sound, but the gates were in very poor condition, and there was little more than a trickle of water flowing on the bed of the intermediate pound under the upper cill of Bell Furrow's lock.) In the circumstances the club accepted with pleasure the invitation of the North East Branch of the IWA to participate in the Water Festival at York on Saturday June 6th. It was hoped that many members would wish to attend, and a circular was sent to all members inviting them to participate. At the Easter Fitting-out Dinner our club's part in the planned festival was explained, and lighting equipment was offered for members use either free, or at very nominal cost by Mr C.S. Lord, who had an electrical installation business at Pontefract.

The Whitsun rally to Linton Lock on Saturday May 30th was to be in the nature of a rehearsal, and in due course seven craft attended. *White Lady* (Felix Thornley) won the time estimating and station keeping competitions; *Idler* (Mr J.C. Heslop) won the tug-of-war. On Sunday evening there was a "line ahead" cruise to Aldwark with all craft 'dressed overall'; at dusk strings of lights replaced flags or bunting and during the return cruise craft were illuminated.

The Ripon and York Motor Boat Clubs were the principal participants in the York Coronation Water Festival; but St Peter's School and other clubs with river connections also took part, as did craft from other boating clubs. It was a very enjoyable occasion. Our Vice-Commodore Mr J.F.A. White conveyed the Sheriff of York to the saluting base aboard *Water Beetle*, and Mr J. Wormald performed picket duty with his launch. The RMBC was well represented in the 'line ahead' cruise which left Ouse Bridge at 2.30 pm. Ensigns were dipped in salute to the Lord Mayor and Sheriff on the outward journey, craft then rounded Scarborough Bridge and returned. Later that afternoon there was a tug-of-war between *Mayfly* (Commodore W.H. Chadwick), *Idler*, *Vandra* (Rear-Commodore C.S. Lord) and *Vahine* (Mr A.Loveridge) and a spectacular show had been put on for the public. The illuminated procession in the evening had been judged a great success; *Mayfly*, our Commodore's vessel displayed the illuminated letters E I I R, and when he later thanked all our members who had assisted at the Gala Mr W.H. Chadwick said that he had gained the impression from the general public that this had been the finest ever held on the river.

The records of Ripon Motor Boat Club during the early years of the second Elizabethan era tell of the struggle for survival. It was not merely the future of the RMBC that was at stake; the survival of the navigation was itself threatened. The uncertainty as to what, if any, future the club could look forward to did little to encourage members enthusiasm, but the contribution made by the RMBC was crucial.

Were it not for the RMBC the Ripon Canal would not now exist, and it is quite possible that the navigation locks upstream from York would be impassable. It may also be remarked that the debt of gratitude owed to our officers of that era by all who cruise the waterway today is rarely acknowledged.

The London and North Eastern Railway Company, who owned the Ure Navigation prior to nationalisation, was required by the provisions of sundry Acts of Parliament and a decision of the High Court, to maintain the navigation 'for the use of all persons desirous of using and navigating the same'. By the time pleasure craft appeared on the river its only remaining commercial traffic had been with sand and gravel, dredged from its bed by Blundy Clark & Co. No tolls were payable by pleasure craft, and the revenue from the sand and gravel trade was insufficient to meet the cost of maintenance. In the circumstances the alacrity with which the Ripon Canal was put into good

order in 1931 is noteworthy, and the later requirement that the RMBC pay part of the cost of maintaining Ox Close lock entirely reasonable.

In 1937 the LNER had considered applying for authority from Parliament to extinguish the right of navigation on the Ripon Canal, but to allow the RMBC to continue to use its lower pound if they would undertake not to oppose the application. The RMBC agreed, informally, with this proposal, but the LNER did not proceed with their application. In the event 1937 was the last year Ripon Canal was navigable throughout; there had been no maintenance to the canal upstream from the club's moorings since 1931. The remainder of the navigation was in good order when the Docks and Inland Waterways Executive of the British Transport Commission took it over at the end of 1948.

In 1950 the practice of locking the cloughs of Ox Close lock was started by the club, owing to the frequency with which the level of water in the canal had been lowered by persons unknown. With the benefit of hindsight this may not have been the best remedy. The design of both the feed water intake from the River Skell, and the lock spillways, was such that constant attention was required. In the absence of the attention of a conscientious lengthsman to keep the intake clear of obstructions the canal's level would fall. If the lock spillways were not kept clear the canal would overflow, and the complaints of the landowner into whose land the canal overflowed were not fewer than the complaints of members whose craft were aground.

On the 7th December 1952 it was reported that at a recent meeting 'officials of the D&IWE had given the impression that they would not be sorry to part with the canal, and the subsequent complaints from the landowner'. In their reply the representatives of the club intimated that 'the club would possibly be prepared to consider acquisition of the canal'. During 1953 the D&IWE prepared a detailed report on the canal, and had several meetings with club officials, and as the result of a meeting in March 1954 a Special General Meeting of the club was convened for the 24th April at the *Windmill* York. Mr H.M. Comber outlined the intentions of the British Transport Commission to the members: 'The BTC was seeking an abandonment order for 800 miles of canals, including the Ripon Canal. The canal had been offered to Ripon Corporation, but refused. In an interview with representatives of the BTC in 1953, when the club sought permission to make an alteration to Ox Close lock to maintain a constant level of water on the mooring length, the BTC had suggested that the RMBC should form a Limited liability Company to take over the Ripon Canal. If the BTC obtained the abandonment order and no one took it over the Ripon Canal would become a mere trickle; there would not be sufficient water to maintain the club's moorings'.

Mr Comber went on to say that 'The IWA would oppose the closure if we desired, but it was obviously preferred that a Limited liability Company be formed to take over the canal. If the order was opposed, and not granted to the BTC, since the BTC had no money for maintenance, charges, not at present

made, might be forced upon us. A suggested agreement dealing with the bridges over the canal had been put forward by the BTC:

- The Humpback bridge (Navigation bridge) would be levelled out, water piped under it, and it would become the property of the County Authorities.
- The Accommodation bridges would be given to the landowners concerned, with an amount of cash for maintenance'.

After discussion, the meeting passed the following resolution:

'That the Committee of the RMBC be, and are hereby authorised to take the necessary steps and incur the necessary expenditure to form a Limited liability Company, to be known as the Ripon Canal Company, with the initial object of taking over the Ripon Canal undertaking from the British Transport Commission, subject to satisfactory terms being arranged'.

The club's programme of rallies and social events proceeded as usual during the remainder of the 1954 season under the leadership of Commodore J.F.A. White. Some new members joined the club, and there was some forward planning, but there was no real confidence in the club's future. At the end of the season 48 of the Littlethorpe moorings were occupied, but the club's honorary secretary and honorary treasurer both declined to serve the following season, and no members could be found who were willing to serve as Vice and Rear Commodore. In the circumstances Mr J.F.A. White accepted nomination to the dual role of Honorary Secretary and Treasurer, and Mr C.S. Lord accepted nomination as Commodore.

In the spring of 1955 the proposed British Transport Bill was published, and various bodies objected to various aspects of it. The IWA negotiated the reprieve of over three quarters of the threatened canal mileage (including the Kennet and Avon Canal); The County Landowners Association withdrew their objections on being given certain assurances, and Mr White commenced negotiations with the West Riding of Yorkshire's County Planning Officer.

At a meeting at the County Planning Office in Wakefield on June 1st Mr White learned that in the WRCC's petition against the 'Closure to Navigation' Bill, they required the canal to be filled in, the bridges levelled, and the water intake cut off. They would not agree to the BTC conveying the whole of the canal to the RMBC, on the grounds of public safety, as our resources would not have been sufficient for the potential liabilities involved. After negotiations between Mr White, the County Planning Officer, and the BTC, mutually acceptable proposals were evolved; Rhode's Field and Bell Furrow's locks were to be reduced to cascades, and only that part of the canal from the tail of Bell Burrow's lock to the River Ure was to be leased to the RMBC. At a later stage it was also agreed that the maintenance of Ox Close lock would remain the responsibility of the BTC.

In March 1956 the club was informed that the BTC Bill of 1955 had received the Royal Assent, and instructed its solicitors to complete the formation of the Ripon Canal Company Limited. The BTC commenced negotiations with the other interested parties, and workmen spent April and May breaking down the two derelict locks to form cascades. By this time the club was in serious decline; Mr S. Whittingham in *Merrifrey* may have won 'The *Celia* Trophy' in 1956, but club records are unclear on that point. In 1937 and 38 the trophy had been won by Mr B.L. Coates with *Dawn*, who may well have also won in 1939, had not the war intervened. In 1948 it was won by Mr G.B. Neesam in *lanthe*, in 1949 by Mr T.G. Irving in *River Girl*, in 1952 by Mr C.S. Lord in *Vandra*, in 1953 and 54 by Mr J.C. Heslop in *Idler*, and in 1955 by Mr F.N. Carby-Hall with *Kathan*. In 1958 Mr Pickles wrote to the club about the lack of competitive rallies, and after further correspondence on 4 December 1960 the committee minutes noted that 'the purposes for which the Trophy was originally given by Mr Pickles could not now be easily complied with. Resolved that the trophy be returned to Mr Pickles, and his offer of 25 guineas to the club's funds in lieu of 'The *Celia* Trophy' be accepted'.

In March 1957 it was reported that the canal towpath had been purchased by the BTC from Mr Nicholson for £85, which represented 20 years purchase, and in May it was reported that the BTC had reached agreement with Mr Nicholson regarding the transfer to him of the accommodation bridge now known as *Nicholson's*. The Club continued to exist on the canal, nothing was heard directly from the BTC and formation of the Company fell into abeyance. But in 1958 the BTC announced that in view of its rights of abandonment, it could no longer accept the status quo, and wished to place its relations with the Club on a more satisfactory footing. In July 1958 the Heads of Agreement were received from the BTC. By this time the committee had grave doubts as to the BTC's intentions regarding the remainder of the navigation; 'it was felt that we would be wasting our time and money in taking over the canal if the BTC planned to abandon the lower locks in the near future'. It was decided to arrange a meeting with Mr T.H. Thornton, British Transport Waterway's Divisional Manager.

In April 1948 the club had been instrumental in establishing a North Eastern Branch of the Inland Waterways Association. Notwithstanding some early successes at both national and branch levels, in the 50's the IWA was torn by dissent and policy disagreements fuelled, to some extent, by the incompatibility of the distinguished men at its helm. Fundamental to its problems was an apparent preoccupation with the illusory romance of the narrowboat, and its failure as a consequence to attract the whole hearted support of cruiser owners based on the broad canals and rivers of the north. Several appeals to support the IWA were made to our members, but few responded. At the Annual General Meeting on the 1st December 1956 a suggestion had been made that an Association be formed to safeguard the interests of river users. (At that time there was growing concern that the BTC might

abandon the whole Ure Navigation). The proposal received little support; it was felt that the IWA should be better supported. During 1957 however concern began to be expressed that the IWA was applying Branch funds to purposes other than those for which they were raised. The IWA's NE Branch Treasurer at that time was also the RMBC's Honorary Secretary and Treasurer, and it is to be assumed that he was in a better position than most members to know the truth. At the committee meeting held on the 30th March 1958 he reported that 'the NE Branch of the IWA was considering their future relationship with the IWA, and that it was likely that a new Association would be formed in this area because of disagreement with the IWA'. It was agreed that the two previous subventions of £5 each that had been withheld should be paid to the new Association as soon as it was formed. Shortly afterwards at a General Meeting of the Branch its members unanimously decided to break away from the IWA, and form the Northern Waterways Association.

On Friday 14th November 1958 Mr White, with Mr Mennell and Mr Seabrooke who were two of the directors designate of the Ripon Canal Company, met Mr Thomson and were entertained to lunch by Dr. Wallis, who was chairman of the newly created Northern Waterways Association. Mr White later reported to the committee that 'while Mr Thornton had not been able to assure them that the Ure Navigation would not be abandoned in the foreseeable future, he had assured us, as far as he was able, that the Ure Navigation would not be neglected by his division, and he planned to spend £3,000 on Westwick and Milby locks during 1959. Any future developments would be affected by the action, if any, taken by the Government in accordance with the recommendations of the Bowes Committee. It was expected that class 3 navigations would be transferred to a conservancy.'

Meanwhile, Navigation Bridge had been transferred to Ripon Corporation. To facilitate its demolition, and the installation of a 3 ft diameter pipe on the canal bed, the City Engineer decided to shut off the water supply and drain the top pound. It was thought that the job would take no more than three weeks, and be completed by the end of September 1958. It was 'hoped that members of the boat club would not be unduly inconvenienced', but in the event the planned time was exceeded, and in the absence of a supply the lower pound leaked away through Ox Close lock. On the 19th October it was reported that 'the canal was dry, and some craft may have been damaged, and others appear to be in danger of falling over'.

At the time of the Club's Annual General meeting in December it had 99 Full Members, 160 Associate Members and 44 Junior Members. Members owned 87 craft; four moorings were let at Acaster, nine at Boroughbridge, 56 on the Ripon Canal. In his report the Vice Commodore, Arthur Laight, said he was 'disgusted, at the number of boats that appear to have been abandoned at Littlethorpe'. Every member was urged to become a member of the Northern Waterways Association, the annual subscription to which was only

fifteen shillings. Arthur Laight was elected Commodore, and Dr I.A. Davies was elected to the combined offices of Honorary Secretary and Treasurer.

During 1959 negotiations between the Club and the BTC were opened and, simultaneously, Company formation was re-started.* As a result the Ripon Canal Co. Ltd came into being on the 29th of April 1960. The following year, on the 5th of July, after a period of very hard bargaining, a lease agreement was concluded between the Ripon Canal Co. Ltd and the BTC, whereby the Company took over responsibility for the Ripon Canal between its junction with the River Ure and the tail of the first derelict lock, a stretch of just under 1½ miles, but excluding Oxclose Lock, which remained the responsibility of the BTC. For this the Company agreed to pay £150 p.a. Duration of the lease was for seven years, i.e. until 1968, with the option of renewal for two further periods of seven years.

The Company released the Canal to the Club for the total rent to the BTC (later British Waterways Board) plus a small sum for incidental expenses. Subsequently the Company concluded an agreement with the riparian owner of the land on the west bank of the canal – Mr F. Nicholson – whereby the Company (and the Club) would enjoy access facilities, car parks, etc, for the duration of any agreement with the BWB. At the 1961 Annual General Meeting Mr H.B. Sanders was elected the Club's Honorary Secretary.

On the 26th February 1962 it was reported that H.M. Comber, who had moved to Deganwy, North Wales on his retirement in 1955, had died there during the winter. An estimate of £147 to rebuild the bridge over the cow-drink with brick piers and concrete spans was accepted. In May 1962 there was a request for a landing stage to be built over the barge *Paul*, which had sunk during the war on the club moorings at Acaster. And in June the Commissioners of the Linton Lock Navigation decided that it must be closed 'in the interests of public safety'. It remained operable however, and several craft belonging to members did pass through the lock, including H.B. Sanders' recently acquired *Baranne*, and C.E. Popple's *Spray*, in early June 1963. It actually closed in October 1963, and did not reopen until June 1966.

On the 7th December 1962 'It was resolved that all fees and charges be waived in respect of Hon

Secretaries and Hon Treasurers.' An invitation from York Motor Boat Club for a 'Quiz' was accepted, and 'successfully held in February 1963'. On the 29th of July it was 'resolved that slipway charges be waived for the slip team'.

1964 – 1980.

At the Annual General Meeting on the 8th December 1963 C.E. Popple was elected Commodore, and the committee was authorised to purchase a replacement for the clubship *Paul*. On the 10th of January 1964 the Commodore reported that Potters' barge *Enid* was for sale at Boroughbridge, and on the 7th of February the committee agreed to purchase *Enid* for the sum of £100, (to be paid by instalments). On the 6th of March it was agreed that *Enid* should be insured in place of the sunken *Paul*, used as a landing stage at Acaster.

At the Westwick Rally on Sunday 7th June 1964, the 'Hornblower Trophy' 'to be competed for annually at club rallies' was given to the Club by Mr and Mrs Arthur Beales (*White Lady*). On the 10th June 1964 a sub-committee was appointed to oversee the conversion of *Enid*, comprising Brian Coward, (now a Life Member) Jack Fishburn, Don Marsland, and Ernest Sinkinson (later to become the proprietor of Tower Marine).

On the 2nd September the Commodore, C.E. Popple, offered to donate a further trophy, to be known as the 'Spray Shield'. During the autumn a slipway for trailable craft was constructed in the car park by Mr E.T. Middleditch and Mr E.H. Vie, who supplied all the materials used at no cost to the club.

On the 11th November the commodore reported he had decided that the *Spray Shield* should be awarded to the skipper of the boat that, in the opinion of the Officers, has sent in the most interesting log during the season. Mr J.G. Powell had decided that the *Trynga Trophy* should be awarded to the skipper of the best crew-maintained boat of the year, the judging to be done by three flag officers.

The Annual General Meeting for 1964 was held at the *Crown Hotel* Harrogate on the 11th of December, when the *Hornblower Trophy* was awarded to H.B. Sanders (*Baranne*), the *Spray Shield* to E.T.

* It was necessary that a Limited Liability Company should be the legal holder of the canal lease, to protect the property of Club members from the consequences of unforeseen events. Having undertaken responsibility for maintenance of the Canal, the Company would be liable in the event of a major disaster, such as an extensive bank collapse, giving rise to a heavy claim for damages. Legal liability of the Company was limited to the amount of its fully paid up share capital (£100). With the Club as a party to the agreement instead of the Company, successful legal action could extend to the sequestration of Club members' craft and property.

The Ripon Canal Co. Ltd was a legally constituted and registered body consisting of Club members only. It was fully responsible in all respects to the Club and its Committee. The three directors, Mr G.G. Mennell, chairman, Dr C.E. Shipley and Dr I.A. Davies, secretary, were all full members of the Club, the last named was also an officer of the Club. All the shareholders were members of the Club, two were also Committee Members. Voting rights were such that the directors could be dismissed at any time by a majority vote, and they received no remuneration.

Middleditch (*Mermaid*), and the *Trynga Trophy* to Ben Taylor (*Falcon*). Joe Burton was elected a Life Member. The first issue of the club's monthly magazine 'Hornblower' had been the previous January, and its Editor, H.B. Sanders, reported that it had cost 2½d per copy per member.

The 1964 Northern Waterways Association Rally had been successfully held at Brigg on the 7th to 10th of August, with C.E. Popple (RMBC Commodore) as Rally Committee Chairman. At the meeting of the RMBC committee on the 18th of January 1965 he suggested that the NWA be invited to hold their 1966 rally at Boroughbridge.

The 1965 Annual General Meeting was held on the 12th of December at the *Crown Hotel*, Harrogate. Two memorable events were to enliven the Club's 1966 season; the 'Grand Opening' of the clubship *Enid* was staged at the slipfield on Saturday the 7th May, and the NWA rally took place at Boroughbridge on the 12th to 15th of August. The events celebrating the completion of the clubship were as follows:

- At 3.15 pm Mrs Burton accompanied by Mr Burton was met at the car park by the Commodore Mr C.E. Popple. They boarded *Baranne*, (H.B. Sanders) and sailed down to the slipfield.
- The President Mr H.B. Clark made the welcoming speech, followed by Mr Burton, who introduced his wife. Mrs Burton then performed the traditional opening ceremony.
- The Commodore gave a vote of thanks, and a plaque of the club burgee, made and presented by Mr Burton, was then unveiled by the President. A vote of thanks was given by the Vice-Commodore, Mr J. Fishburn.
- Tea and refreshments were then served to the official party aboard *Enid*, and to members on the slipfield. After tea the members were invited to inspect the clubship, and the bar was opened at 6 pm.

A competitive cruise to Newby Hall on Sunday the 14th of August was the highlight of the NWA Rally at Boroughbridge, when 23 boats locked through Westwick Lock in 90 minutes. *Enid* had been based at Boroughbridge during the summer, and on the 1st of October she returned upriver propelled by two long-shaft Seagull outboards, attending the 'End of Season Rally' at Westwick *en route*. The current was so strong that it took one hour and ten minutes from the time her bows went under the A1 road bridge, to her stern clearing the bridge. It was quite a journey !

Problems with the bottom gates of Linton Lock resulted in the lock being closed from the 30th of September 1966 until July 1967. Meanwhile, the 1966 Annual General Meeting of the Club was held aboard *Enid* on Sunday the 11th of December.

During 1967 the Club served notice under the Landlord and Tenant Act to the effect that it wished to

renew the lease for a second term, but found itself dealing with a different authority. The British Waterways Board had moved into the picture. This was, incidentally, the fourth authority for the waterway with which the Club had negotiated since its inception in 1931.

BWB in the guise of Mr Harper, the then Principal Estates Officer North, replied that the Board 'was unable to agree to a further term to the lease and invited members of the Club to meet him to explain the situation.' At a meeting in Leeds on 11th November 1967 Mr Harper said that for the Board to grant an extension of the lease would be *ultra vires* [beyond their power] in the light of legislation introduced since the terms of the lease were agreed. A recent Transport White Paper had included the Ripon Canal in the Cruising Network and so the Board must take over the Canal on the termination of the current lease.

Discussing the Ripon Canal as a Cruising Waterway Mr Harper agreed that 'the Ripon Canal may be said to terminate at an inconvenient point and to lead nowhere'. In conclusion, Mr Harper assured the Club's representatives 'the Board have no intention of robbing the Ripon Motor Boat Club of its tenure on the Canal'.

At the 1967 Annual General Meeting, which was held aboard the Clubship *Enid* on Sunday the 10th of December, the office of Flag Lieutenant, discontinued in 1959, was revived, and G.T. Dinsdale was elected to the office.

On the 24th June 1968 the lease of the Ripon Canal expired and responsibility for it reverted to BWB, a body charged with responsibility for maintaining the navigation and serving the public. Ripon Motor Boat Club was approaching the fortieth anniversary of its foundation and felt for the first time that its home waters were secure. At the 1968 Annual General Meeting held aboard *Enid* on Sunday the 8th of December, it was reported that the Club had 398 members, with 105 boats. At the 1969 Annual General Meeting held aboard *Enid* on the 7th of December, it was reported that the Club had 406 members with 104 boats

At their meeting on 27th February 1970 the Committee of the Ripon Motor Boat Club instructed the Directors of the Ripon Canal Company Ltd to bring their business to a close and wind up the Company. Through the late 1960s and early 1970s the Club settled into a period of consolidation, with its home waters apparently secure, and enjoying security of tenure on our headquarters moorings. At this time all of the field side canal bank from Green Lane to Nicholson's Bridge was leased from Mr Nicholson, and most of the towpath side canal bank from Nicholson's Bridge to Bell Furrow's Lock was leased from BWB.

During this period the average length of craft owned by members had been very significantly reduced. Until the early sixties virtually all of them were built of timber, many of them were converted for pleasure use from ships' boats, and the separation between landing

stages on the Canal bank suited craft that were 30 or more feet long. The introduction of marine grade plywood and GRP construction heralded the arrival of a great number of smaller craft. The moorings upstream of Nicholson's Bridge were not popular and the erection of a number of new landing stages between the bridges enabled the Club to relinquish its lease from BWB.

Also during this period, the owners of Ripon Race-course applied for Planning Permission to extract gravel from part of their land. It was necessary to show how the pit thereby created could be used, and so the construction of water-sports and marina facilities was proposed. The coincidence of these circumstances seems to have caused BWB to reappraise the revenue earning potential of the Ripon Canal.

In the 44th year of the Club's existence BWB produced a scheme to construct a lay-by on the Ripon Canal. The Club's existing moorings were to be removed but in return the Board would lease the proposed lay-by to the Club for approximately £6,000 per annum. Quite obviously to commit the Club to an annual expenditure of this magnitude would have been a gross error on the part of the Officers and Committee at that time, especially as no security of tenure was forthcoming. The Board's estimate for the construction of the lay-by at that time (1974) was £36,000.

There was no road access to the proposed site (Pond Field – between Slip Field and Renton's Bridge) and it was inconveniently distant from the Club's car park. After the Club turned down their offer the Board withdrew its plan to construct a lay-by – coincidentally at the beginning of the rapid inflation in the price of such civil engineering works. It seems reasonable to assume that the Board could no longer afford the cost of construction. Since BWB had made threatening noises as to our existing moorings on the Canal, the Club was left with no option but to explore the alternatives open to it. Negotiations with Mr Nicholson resulted in provisional agreement being reached regarding the purchase of land, and outline planning permission was applied for in November 1974 and received in March 1975. Fund raising measures were instituted, and a construction scheme for a marina was prepared, the estimated cost of which was put at £15,000 – £20,000 and this figure was communicated to the Sports Council for Grant Aid. But the scheme was not sufficiently detailed, and the drawings had not been submitted to the Board's engineers for approval.

A second, more detailed scheme was prepared after discussions with the Board's engineering staff, and full planning permission was applied for in July and received in October 1975. The Club's professional Quantity Surveyor put the estimated cost of the marina alone, constructed to the engineer's requirements, to be of the order of £120,000 and this was the figure quoted to the chairman of the Board. This estimate was subsequently reduced following clarification of engineering points concerning the construction of the marina. Even so, raising a sum of that magnitude was beyond the scope of the Club and so its continued existence was threatened.

At the 1976 Annual General Meeting held at the Spar Hotel Ripon on the 5th of December, the Club's long-serving Honorary Secretary Harry Sanders retired, and David Leach was elected to that Office. It is from his reports to the members, and those of Ron Blamire (Commodore 1973-6, President 1977) that much of this phase of the Club's history has been drawn.

The Club attempted to ask questions of the Board to clarify the situation. Never having been given a reason in writing for removing our linear moorings from the site they had occupied since 1931 we asked 'Why have our moorings to go?' The Board replied verbally that they wanted to clear linear moorings off through navigations. This statement followed that of Mr Dunkley's predecessor who agreed 'the Ripon Canal may be said to terminate at an inconvenient point and to lead nowhere'. The Club responded with the point that the Ripon Canal can never be considered a through navigation in the light of all that has gone before. However, the Board replied, again verbally, that as there were plans for a commercial marina further up the waterway, the Canal was now considered a through navigation. The Club understood that the conditions imposed on the construction of that marina were so onerous that it was very questionable if it would ever be built. The Board claimed that our boats obstructed the Canal. But the Canal was built to carry Yorkshire Keels with 15ft beam. It is 40ft wide and the clear channel was reduced to 20ft at its narrowest point alongside the widest cruiser. Our club ship *Enid*, with a beam of 15ft was the largest vessel that could navigate along the Canal, and 20ft width left safe clearance on both sides.

In conclusion the Board's representative was reminded of the statement made by Mr Harper in Leeds on 11th November 1967 which was:- 'The Board have no intention of robbing the Ripon Motor Boat Club of its tenure on the Ripon Canal'. And finally, the Ripon Motor Boat Club asked if it could remain on its linear moorings on the Ripon Canal.

A meeting was held at the *Three Horseshoes Hotel*, Boroughbridge on 1st February 1978 attended by the Officers and Committee of the Club and five representatives of the British Waterways Board. Mr Straughton, the Principal Amenity Officer attended together with Mr Turner his assistant and the Principal Estates Officer Mr Dunkley. The engineering side of the Board's operations was represented by Mr Barnes, the Area Engineer, and Mr Johnson, his assistant.

The meeting commenced with the Club making the point that it wished to remain on the linear moorings on the Ripon Canal and supported this argument by quoting the historical factors that had resulted in the present situation. Mr Straughton agreed that the Club had done a lot in the past to ensure the existence of the Ripon Canal but said that the times had now changed and the Board must make the Canal an attraction to the NE waterways and make provision for the possible construction of the Racecourse Marina. The Board said that the Club moorings were untidy and obstructed the Canal but the Club argued that contact had been made with the local Parish Council and the Inland Waterways

Association and no complaints had been forthcoming. However, the Board's Amenity Officer claimed that the IWA was too large an organisation to take note of such local matters and said that the Local Planning Authority (the County Council) preferred marina moorings to linear moorings as exist at present.

The Club objected to the Board continually quoting the possibility of a second marina. The President (Gordon Dinsdale) said that this had been planned for over five years and no progress had been seen; it appeared that the Board were holding this as a carrot before the Club. Mr Dinsdale quoted statistics showing that the present capacity of Oxclose Lock and the water supply to the Canal were totally inadequate for the number of craft planned. Earlier in the meeting the Club had quoted the estimated cost of the marina development and said that such a figure was beyond its resources. Taking up this point Mr Dunkley said that if the Club could not afford to construct a marina it should write to the Board putting forward alternatives. Mr Barnes said that the Board wanted the Ripon Motor Boat Club to stay in existence but thought that the most desirable solution would be for the Club to move into off-canal moorings.

Following a suggestion from the Board that the Club could consider the possibility of abandoning its own project and move into the proposed commercial marina B.H. Coward said that he could not see anyone forcing the Club into a marina with rates three times as high as its own. In view of the Board's declared policy against linear moorings Mr Straughton said that they could give no indication that this would be the case.

The matter of water supply was discussed. J.C.S. Brown said that the frequent lack of water in the Canal was a result of the Board's lack of maintenance and Mr Barnes accepted that this was a problem. Work was planned to construct a weir below the Canal intake on the River Skell in the near future, and this should help the situation. In conclusion Mr Dunkley said that if the Club decided that it could not afford to construct its own marina then a formal approach should be made to the Board's headquarters putting forward reasonable alternative suggestions, referring to the Club's wishes to construct facilities of a more durable nature and stressing the environmental aspects of the proposals.

W.D. Handley asked what the financial implications would be if the Club decided against constructing a marina. The Board replied that one half of the Class B mooring charge would be levied on our linear moorings and that would currently cost us 9p per foot per month. This would be levied on the length of banking occupied.

Following this meeting specifications for a marina were prepared, and quotations for its excavation and piling were sought from civil engineering and earth-moving contractors. An acceptable quotation (£35,000) having been received, financial proposals were formulated and put to the members at an Extraordinary General Meeting held on the 14th of May 1978.

The proposed scheme involved the trading of income for capital. At that time interest rates were relatively high, and interest on a loan of £200 would cover annual subscriptions. A loan of £300 would cover mooring fees, and a loan of £500 would cover both. The scheme would run initially for three years, when the capital could be repaid, but with the possibility of extension for a further period. During the tea break of 35 minutes, the Hon. Treasurer received promises totalling £13,000.

The order was placed soon afterwards, and excavation of the marina commenced. Topsoil was spread on the low parts of Nicholson's fields, and the pond in 'Pond Field' ceased to exist. Much of the clay excavated served to line a boating lake being created at that time in Lightwater Valley. Members built landing stages, laid on water and electricity, and laid the paths. Members' craft entered the marina for the first time on the 27th of October 1979, and it was officially opened on the 6th of September 1980. The Territorial Army provided refreshments, while *Enid* 'dressed overall' provided a stage for performances by Ripon City Band. The opening ceremony was performed by Mr E.S.J. Standen of the British Waterways Board, who seemed very happy that day – as indeed he had cause to be. His officers had negotiated an Agreement with the Club whereby all members' craft afloat on Club-owned water were required to be licensed by BWB at all times. And the Club had to pay a considerable annual sum – subject to periodic upward revision – for the licence to connect its marina to the Ripon Canal. Nevertheless, by creating a secure future for the Club with the completion of this project, its first half-century can be said to have been brought to a successful conclusion.

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Pat Jones, December 2004.

