

A TALE OF TWO CENTURIES

By
Roy E Turner

The continuing history of St. Deny's Sailing & Rowing Club from 1987 until the Annual General Meeting March 2008

This history is dedicated to the memory of:

MICHAEL COTTON, Club President & True Gentleman

The last 20 years have probably been the most traumatic in the Clubs history with many major and sometimes controversial decisions having to be made by your committee solely to keep our club in existence.

Parallel to the everyday running of the club much structural and maintenance work on the premises has been undertaken and even our boating is undergoing evolutionary (some would say revolutionary) changes.

In the following pages I shall try to report in an unbiased way and in chronological order events that will record a true HISTORY OF THE CLUB.

I would ask readers that they take into account that this history is compiled from the minutes of committee meetings, my memories and from conversations with other club members and if our recollections don't coincide with yours I apologise.

A WIND OF CHANGE BEGINS

This chapter covers the period of Winter lay up 1986 until December 1987. It was a very busy year involving legal matters along with many boat disposals and acquisitions.

A really hectic winter and spring with problems with our up stream neighbours operating a car repair business in the old corrugated shed which used to adjoin our premises. The problem being J.K.Autos were illegally carrying out spray painting and incinerating materials causing noxious smoke. After representations by our Secretary and neighbours Southampton City Council banned these practices and J.K.Autos ceased trading.

At this time a Canoe Management code was introduced and plans drawn up for the construction of our up stream pontoon. Just to pile on the pressure the committee of the day negotiated the renewing of the lease with the now defunct Pigeon Fanciers Club.

On the boating scene volunteers constructed a store for our outboard engines of that era. Cock & Hen THRUSH was repaired by a professional boat builder. DUNLIN our wooden down river cruiser was found to need some serious repairs.

We successfully sold off our two wooden Wayfarers and acquired three fibre glass replacements. These were called HERON, TERN & TEAL carrying on the names of our old Lymington Scows.

During the summer of 1986 several races were held and the prizes awarded at the A.G.M. The Barney Ryder Trophy to Mrs. Stella Pritchard and the Crane Cup to Roy Turner (me).

Change was certainly in the air as our long serving Club Captain Nick Crane retired. Nick was what one might call an adventurous type of young man and regardless of criticisms certainly promoted very active and club oriented activities serving the club well. (I have many happy memories of surfing, windsurfing, snorkelling and sailing with him and

his wife Angela)

Reading the A.G.M. minutes I see Adrian Pritchard took up the challenge and many of our present stalwarts were re-elected at this meeting. Alan Blanford and Barry Blanford as Secretary and Assistant, Alistair Cole, Treasurer and of course our ever reliable builder Dick Bampton to the fabric committee.

We also renewed Topper sails and purchased an Enterprise dinghy from Thames Young Mariners plus REDWING a Shetland 14 or (family 14) probably our most successful purchase.

Sadly our past President John Rivers passed away. A very likeable down to earth person and my best memory of him is at a club dance when slightly “in his cups” we almost got him to strip to his underpants to swim the river. His wife stepped in at the last moment!!

1987 concluded with a successful “Ice Beaker Race” at Christmas.

1988 started very badly with the sudden death of G.W.(Mike) Cotton our long serving President whose father was a founder member of the club. Mike was enthusiastically looking forward to the clubs centenary which he would have enjoyed. This tragedy was mitigated by the manner of his death in that he had just had lunch with friends and died gently in their car. A fitting end to such a gentle man. As a result of his untimely death Alan Blandford took on the position of President as well as Hon Secretary and the family and executors of Mike’s affairs generously donated DUNLIN to the club

1988 saw the first planning application to develop the down river side of the club, which surprisingly included our premises.. When challenged we were told that it was not necessary to actually own the area in a provisional planning application and would we like to become involved and lease the new boat house with 2 apartments above from the developers!!!!

The A.G.M. saw Alan formally voted in as our joint President & Secretary and our well known and loved (?) stalwarts Mike Kelsey and Malcolm Payne re-elected to the committee.

On the boating side there is little mention of organised down river activities although on 10th December 6 sailing races took place. Interestingly I note that a Duty Officer was on duty at the club when

committee meetings were held.

The club purchased the hull of a MIRROR OFFSHORE CRUISER without a rig and fitted with an inboard diesel engine which appears to have required attention.

Committee Meetings had been held at the St. Deny's Community Centre as was our A.G.M. sadly for reasons beyond my recall this came to an end in December 1988.



CHAPTER 2

OUR CENTENARY YEAR 1989

Naturally it was decided to celebrate this occasion and a decision was made to have celebrations on and off the water, more of which later.

The committee decided to accept the kind offer of Mr. R.A. Bampton for the use of his workshop premises for future meetings and rapidly settled in to planning the years activities. As in previous years there was always some building fabric maintenance to carry out including replacing planking on the slipway. We also acquired two benches from Swaything Station for the princely sum of £20 thanks to Malcolm Payne. Purchases by the boat sub-committee included an outboard motor as an auxiliary engine to the diesel engine on PUFFIN the mirror offshore cruiser, a new sail for the Laser dinghy and at the end of the year it seems DUNLIN & PUFFIN needed further renovations.

CELEBRATIONS

Began with a highly successful row to the White Swan at Mansbridge with every boat that could be rowed or paddled taken from the boat house in ideal weather conditions. So successful was this social event it was decided it would be repeated annually.

The Centenary Regatta was very well supported over the weekend of 20th 21st May with a variety of events. Men's skiff, ladies skiff, Pair oars, Topper sailing and match racing Wayfarer dinghies. Winners being presented with engraved glass trophies at the following A.G.M. Then on the 11th June there was a row to Ocean Village who were more amenable in those days even allowing us a static stand. Once again almost every rowable boat was in use and everyone setting out made the return trip. The final centenary celebration was an evening afloat on Blue Funnel Lines "Solent Queen" in November. A dry clear night cruising Southampton water whilst dining and dancing the night away. If my memory serves me right a total of 72 members and guests attended with my late wife and I making the arrangements. A really enjoyable end to the celebrations.

IN TO THE NINETIES: and in to our clubs second century with the club being involved in opposing riverside developments along with other clubs and organisations. The suggested developments being Fawley B Power Station and extending Spitfire Quay about 25% of the width of the river. Club officers attended an enquiry at Southampton Civic Centre and asked pertinent questions regarding increases in tidal flow and what effect this would have on silt deposits etc. Neither developments were approved.

A large amount of boat dealing with 2 skiffs, the SKIPPER 14 and DUNLIN sold on. The latter to Peter Brindley an ex Thames Young Mariner who became an enthusiastic club member. We also purchased a Topper and three ancient canoes from Thames Young Mariners (about £5 each) one of which is still in use in 2007. A major purchase was the wooden cruiser "SNOWGOOSE" which required some modification for down river use. The final acquisition was a wooden skiff very kindly donated by Idris Curtiss promptly named "EAGLE", a nice light boat which rowed well but being flat bottomed misbehaved in side winds.

More excitement when a developer cut off the water supply to the houseboats as their supply passed through his site. The club stepped in to give temporary supply until the matter was sorted.

Major works were undertaken with water leaks, blocked drains and repairs to PUFFIN. The large new pontoon was constructed by R. Burney and W Hampton for the north side of the slipway.

This was a year I remember well 1991 - 1992

These years saw prolonged negotiations regarding renewing the lease to the Pigeon Fanciers Club who were already in arrears with their rent. Running repairs to an ancient water supply and drainage system and we managed with Richard Bampton's supervision to replace our main doors and concrete the club's river frontage. Also in 1991 the sewerage barge grounded on our slipway resulting in damage to planking. Sadly our attempts to get compensation failed.

1991 Boating Activities - Mike Kelsey volunteered to be Captain at the A.G.M.

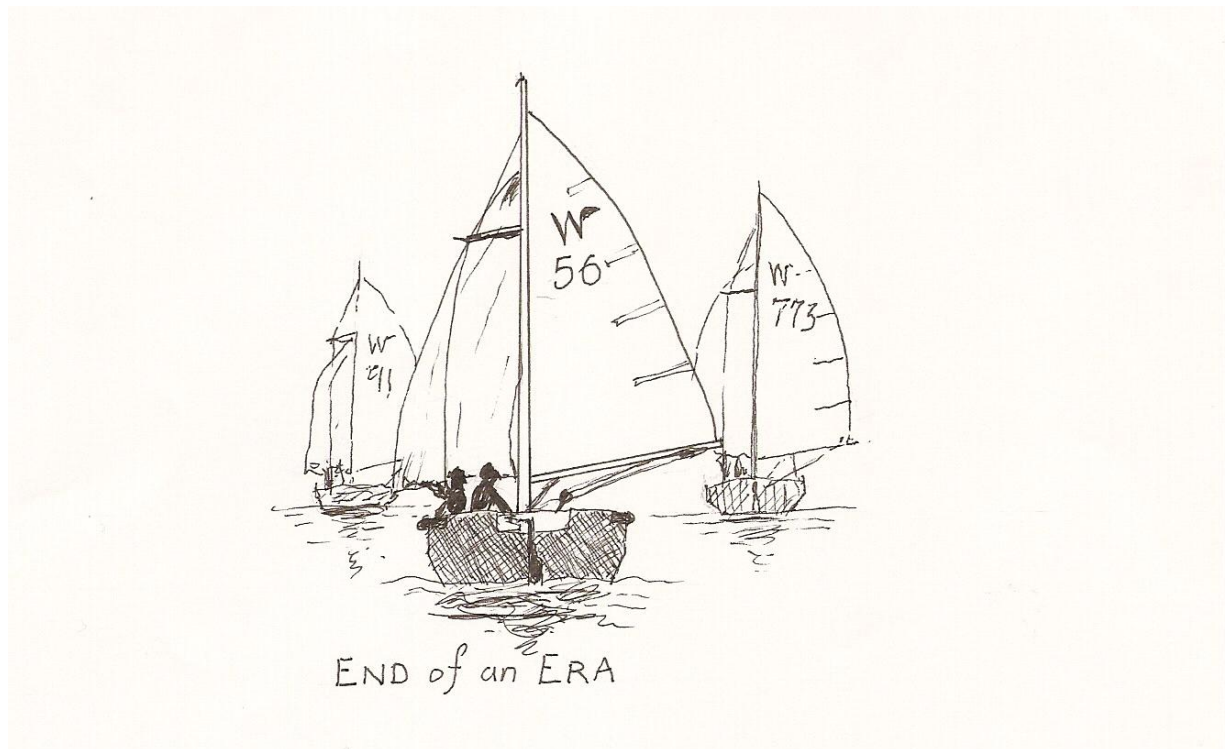
It was found necessary to renew our mooring chains and from the minutes of the committee meetings I see that I was mad enough to don a wetsuit and diving mask and free dived to replace the chains.

The club disposed of PUFFIN as she was a bit of a money pit and purchased BUDGIE a small cabin cruiser with an engine (rolled like a pig). Another purchase was a Canadian canoe hull straight from the mould. Whilst delivering it to the club I had to stop at Lodge Road traffic lights and horror of horrors it slid through the roof rack carrying straps and landed in front of my car!!!

I also see that SNOWGOOSE'S rudder cracked.

1992 Boating Activities: Strong winds curtailed many club events and we were wheeler dealing again disposing of a Wayfarer, Enterprise and a Shooting Star dinghy. More problems with the propeller falling off of BUDGIE then a steering cable snapped and sail renovations on SNOWGOOSE ! Also noted was the fact that Exeter Maritime Museum had closed and our gig VENETIA was in storage.

Membership was falling off following the usual pattern of rises and fall like the tide and adverts in local papers were placed.



Chapter 3

THE QUIET & NOT SO QUIET YEARS 1994-1997

1994: Although membership stagnated the committee was very active in attempts to purchase land either side of the club and at Chapel which were unsuccessful. Also as the river was badly polluted with sewage became embroiled in public meetings on this matter and also some unwelcome riverside developments.

Apart from our usual ventures to the Thames Traditional Boat Rally and the row to the White Swan there was a dearth of club activities. Our new Wayfarer LA MOUTTE needed rowlocks to be fitted we began to realise that although we had an excellent boat it was problematic to get it below Northam Bridge as the transom wouldn't take an outboard. In February our gig VENETIA was returned from the defunct Exeter Maritime Museum and a work party of six of us man-handled with ease into Geoffrey Wheelers barn for inspection. As we were now regularly attending the Traditional Boat Rally at Henley we joined the Thames Traditional Boat Club.

A new name appeared when Trevor Payne became vice captain.

As far as the club building was concerned there were drains to unblock, woodworm to be treated and a valuation of the property was made. Also ongoing negotiations with our then tenant the Pigeon Fanciers Club regarding lease renewal!

What a year!

1995: was a year of farewells with the sudden death of Les Dias a long standing member who transferred from the Cobden Rowing Club and Violet Turner, my wife, who was a serving committee member.

It was also the end of an era of fleet sailing down river with the disposal of two of our Wayfarers.

1996: saw the hall and balcony double glazed in conjunction with our

tenants. Peter Brindley published a leaflet to publicise the club and the Hampshire Magazine published an article on our club with photographs taken by Geoff Wheelers wife.

Boat acquisitions were our first Chippendale skiff, a Heyland Lugger which was not a success as the rig and rudder were not man enough for the excellent hull.

Owen Hughes kindly donated his cruiser, a Shipmate Senior, which had stood idle in a field for some years. To our surprise it cleaned up well and we had a classic boat in our possession.

We were spreading our wings with members attending Henley's Traditional Boat Rally and the inaugural Beaulieu River Classic Boat Festival with Barry Blandford rowing the full course in the Chippendale skiff.

New members joining us that year included a young man, soon to be known to us all, (Bill Pidgeon) who was to become a very hard working club captain.

1997: a very social able year with several club based and orientated activities throughout the year. These included a trip to Meon Beach with our canoes. A Regatta which was a "Fun" event with 39 members taking part in a multitude of races, an American Supper with 30 members enjoying a pleasant evening and finally a Cheese & Wine evening was held in the winter at Margaret's, my partners, home in Fair Oak. All this was in addition to the regular row to the White Swan, Beaulieu River Row and Henley Traditional Boat Rally. Two of our "Cock & Hens" took part in the "Illuminated Parade" at Henley one crewed by Barry Blandford and the second by myself with my partner (Margaret) and Brenda, our friend, as passengers. Both these ladies ended up in the Thames in full Edwardian fancy dress much to my horror, their embarrassment and the spectators amusement.

The year also saw the purchase of a Kiwi 2 Double Kayak with a child seat.

The news that John Leather had completed the renovation of VENETIA and entered it in the Great Thames Race with members of the South African Rugby Team crewing it, and in due course it won.

Over the whole of this period a steady stream of building maintenance

was in progress and serious concerns were voiced about our tenant debts.

Chapter 4

1998 - 2001 ANOTHER CENTURY BEGINS

Sadly 1998 began with the death of Peter Brindley, passing away peacefully in his sleep. Peter was a club stalwart travelling down from Hook every Monday evening to assist with the winter lay-ups.

The early part of the year also saw the beginning of the transfer of the lease of the hall from the Marlowes to David Hill as well as the planning permission being granted for the development upstream of our club.

On the boating side a kit to make a second Chippendale skiff was purchased and Barry Blandford began the task of assembly.

I note that I ran a course for aspiring Kayakers with a well supported group mastering capsize and rescue drills
An amusing incident when we purchased two MASTER 2 KAYAKS and a second KIWI 2 from the Woodmill Centre when Barry Blandford, Ray Pope, Maureen Parlour and myself tested out various kayaks before purchasing. Four O.A.P's paddling like mad with a group of 9-10 year olds watching!

At this time Susan Soal notified us that her husband, Paul (they were known as the Birmingham Two) had been admitted to hospital in a critical condition. Although he made a partial recovery he eventually died.

We were still having difficulties persuading our previous tenants to clear their debts to the club and were forced to resort to a debt collector and small claims court.

1999: The year began with the signing of a 10 year lease by Mr. Hall and the beginning of a campaign by Mrs. Dell to prevent parking in Priory Avenue which thankfully failed

Interestingly a trend was emerging that the use of larger sailing craft was falling and Toppers and Mirrors were increasingly used. Notably Kayak use far outnumbered rowing boats.

On the boating scene Trevor Payne began his annual demonstrations on outboard engines. Mike Kelsey became involved with the buying and

selling of boats and this year we disposed of SNOWGOOSE and EAGLE then went on to buy two MIRROR and one GULL DINGHY.

The upstream development commenced and almost immediately we were faced with a frosty relationship with the lady developer.

An ancient, but effective, volunteer work force started demolishing the slipway.

Socially a quiet year with only the regular boating events attended. Although work on the balcony, the sink area and water services found willing hands.

2000 (Millenium) The beginning of a new century and radical changes within the club and its surroundings.

A massive effort was made to replace the slipway with a common gradient in January and when the project was well under way an exceptional high tide coupled with the buoyancy of the new timber pulled the uprights out of the mud turning the slipway into a pontoon. This was remedied by putting concrete collars onto the uprights and all was ready for Spring Commissioning.

Joining the committee were two new and very keen and sociable members, Colin Wellman and Bob Paton, who, sorry to say, both left the area due to changes in employment - they were sorely missed. Soon after tragically Paul Soal lost his fight against a brain tumour and passed away.

The year was marred by disagreements with Mrs Dell, the developer, a very autocratic lady who tried (unsuccessfully) to brow beat us and our tenant over rights of way etc to our premises. We were also introduced to the planning application to build the flats downstream of the club.

A lot of boating activities with an annual canoe trip on the Upper Hamble River now added to Henley and Beaulieu. Plus canoeing from Meon Beach.

We sold GREENFINCH and replaced it with another lighter Coleman Canadian canoe.

Social activities included a Barn Dance & Skittles evening and committee meetings being moved to the Junction Inn in Aberdeen Road.

2001: Recorded was the death of Bill Gunton an old ex member who kindly donated a photocopy of Mike Cotton's record of the clubs history entitled "From Low Ebb to Flood Tide".

Regretfully the A.G.M. supported the dismissal from membership of Mr. Manning as proposed by the management committee mainly due to lack of co-operation.

Purchases and disposals this year included the sale of two gull dinghies (lack of use) and Mike Blackmore kindly donated the money raised from his donated boat (one of the gulls) back into club funds.

Rapidly acquired via the internet was a DRASCOMBE LUGGER named KITTIWAKE and we became members of the Drascombe Association and began attending rallies.

Thanks were owed to Bill Pidgeon and another short term member, John Christie (who moved away with his employment) for this additional activity. Oh yes, we bought our first electric outboard.

Much club orientated activity with high and fast running River Itchen forcing us to row to Shamrock Quay rather than Woodmill. An additional canoe outing from Porchester to Fareham had to be abandoned due to high winds and heavy swell off the castle. After a pub lunch attempts were made to navigate the stream at Wallingford. Bill Pidgeon and family successfully navigated the Drascombe Lugger to Poole Harbour for an annual rally.

Social activities that year included a Barn Dance, Skittles evening and a walk over St. Catherines Hill and the Itchen at Winchester.

Chapter 5

IT'S ALL HAPPENING 2002 - 2007

In which membership surges, the fleet changes, twice, and OA.P's again become construction workers.

2002: The year began with Dennis Arthurs standing down as one of our Trustees due to advancing years and health worries. Dennis a quiet, hard working member, a real engineer who can produce parts and tools when needed and can still be relied on to do tasks varying from scrubbing the slipway, washing up or sharpening tools.

Barratt's downstream development was progressing and their engineer, Mr. G. Slieman, proved to be a pleasant co-operative man. So different to the upstream developer. A real bonus when the clubs drains no longer had to carry the road rainwater. Mrs. Dell once more tried to terrorise us complaining about noise and unloading in the sideway.

A good year socially with canoe training at the club. Canoeing on the Kennet & Avon canal westward from Newbury (it rained). Also a trip from Warsash to Burlesdon and lunch at the Horse & Jockey. This year we didn't send boats to Henley although club members attended Drascombe rallies, Also the Beaulieu River event and of course the White Swan. Topper races between Northam Bridge and the Railway Bridge were held. Dick Bampton took the retired members to Dock Head in his launch and we concluded with a walk at Hook and Warsash.

Trevor Payne organised a work party to overhaul the upstream pontoon and as well as run of the mill repairs the top section of the slipway had rotted and we made temporary repairs.

Committee meetings were becoming rather stormy as a "Boat Policy" was hammered out, to end up with, at least, matching pairs of sailing craft to enable match racing to take place. This part of the policy was "almost" completed. The rowing fleet was the real bone of contention resulting in a compromise finally.

We did sell on the clinker skiff SNIPE and purchased a work or runabout glass fibre boat HERON.

2003: This year marked a major turning point in our club future,

including an influx of new members. They included Graham Petty, John Sims, Peter Skidmore and Jeremy Smallwood who were soon elected to the committee. Jeremy taking over as club Captain.

A short quiet man called Reg Stark appeared and although very quiet became well known for his enthusiasm and work on boats and boathouse. Sadly he refused a place on the committee when offered.

Oh dear the A.G.M. The venue at Bitterne Manor was locked up and the few of us attending retreated to Dick Bampton's workshop. At this A.G.M. Alan Blandford was made an Honorary Life Member in recognition of his many years service to the club. I stood down from the Presidency due to health concerns and Ray Pope was elected in my place, only to be struck down with ill health 3 months later.



This year we replaced our 2 stroke outboards with new 4 stroke. Purchased 2 sea going kayaks and a topper dinghy. A collision with a university coxed four with a rather foul mouthed young lady at the helm resulted in letters of complaint to the University.

Once again we were involved in upgrading club drains and usual

maintenance.

Had a good relationship with Barratt's development.

Trevor completed the renovation of a long pontoon which luckily required little physical effort to launch as an exceptionally high tide arrived just at the right time.

Winter 2003/4 saw the "Thursday Pensioners Group" commence work on building up the blockwork on the river frontage, making temporary repairs to the woodwork and our quest for rubble began.

Needless to say routine maintenance about the boathouse needed our attention as well.

A new venue for the A.G.M. at the Wheatsheaf Trusts offices in downtown Bernard street was found.

Ray Pope resigned the Presidency due to ill health and Dick Bampton took up the mantle.

Mr. Hill transferred the tenancy of the hall over to John & Vee Seymour who soon proved to be very affable and effective business people who (until the time of writing this booklet) have made a go of the Riverside Club.

A now familiar name joined us this year. David Bainbridge (soon to join the committee) along with a continuing influx of new members.

As for boating we attended Drascombe and Shipmate Senior rallies. Sold two older kayaks and purchased two replacements and an electric outboard.

Trevor Payne, ever busy, led a team repositioning the pontoons.

The year concluded with a Skittles match with the Riverside Club.

The years from 2005 until February 2008 seemed to just flow by and events followed as a seamless inevitable stream. So I will treat my recourse in the same manner.

Work parties on Thursdays worked relentlessly during the winter months to conclude the construction of club river front and slipway and by March 2007 finished laying the pavers. A job well done.

During this time it was necessary to update the fire alarm system and other electrical work, which was ably done by our tenant John Seymour. It never ceases to amaze me how much maintenance of drains, guttering,

pipe work etc needs to be carried out.

The Barratts development was finally completed and our premises were, at last, in more desirable surroundings with railings and 2 metre wall giving more site security.

Nathen Roe started the regular summer B.B.Q. and boat try out weekends, resulting in ever increasing membership. It was also noted that a nucleus of newer members used the club regularly at the weekends.

Boat usage changed over this period with Kayak and Canoe use steadily increasing whilst rowing and sailing bookings decreased. Most surprising was the fall off in Topper usage, could it be old age catching up with our seniors?

After much heated discussions a new boat policy evolved in that the club provided a very diverse selection of boats to satisfy ALL members. The consequence of this discussion being that the historic fleet became 2 Double Scullers, 2 Pair Oars, 2 Cock & Hens and 1 Skiff. The fleet of 5 aged and ailing Toppers down to 1.

Replacements bought in over this period included an 8ft Walker Bay which proved so popular a 10ft version was also acquired. Replacing a Cock & Hen was a 14ft Talisman rowing boat called TERN which is very heavily used. Unusually for us these were purchased NEW.

The sailing fleet was gradually augmented with our “gift horse” SELINA an ancient rather non descript dinghy, which, I believe is easy to handle.

January 2008 saw us purchase a Laser Pico as a start to replacing the Toppers.

During this period we also purchased what was believed to be a Drascome Dabber, but on closer inspection proved not to be the case. Despite this it turned out to be a very good performer with easy handling and comfortable sailing.

The newer members are predominantly canoeist and over the last 2 years our Kayak fleet has increased by 2 second hand slalom and 2 sea going Kayaks to accommodate a heavy demand

So here we are 2008 with the club in a very strong, sound position. Increased membership, heavy boat usage and a club totally different to

the one I joined in 1966. This is as it should be and may the St. Denys Sailing & Rowing Club long continue..



APPENDUM

Potted history of the Author

ROY E TURNER

Joined the St. Denys Sailing & Rowing Club in 1966

Positions held: General Committee Member, Vice Captain, President

Vice President, Trustee plus various sub committees.

Pen & Ink sketches by author.

Thanks to Margaret for the typing.

Me at Henley Traditional Boat Rally

