

NECRA Newsletter

January 2008



What's new for 2008?

So, the 2007 season has gone, the 2008 one is just beginning. I hope it proves to be an excellent season for all! NECRA is certainly trying to make it a season to remember – the programme (see page 8) is quite different from any in recent years – I hope it proves to be both popular and successful.

What has changed? Well, listening to comments from the membership, it would seem they want a little less arduous programme in terms of length of offshore races, coupled with more opportunities for socializing. Olympic type racing seems to be less popular and so has largely been substituted with bay racing (utilizing fixed marks and longer legs).

The programme is much more balanced in terms of offshore and inshore racing. There are nine races in the Offshore Series, although it is only possible to compete in seven (we are holding two races simultaneously on a couple of occasions to try to reduce commuting). The Inshore Series consists of six races. We also hope to hold slightly different (and less frustrating?) courses for the White Sail class in the Inshore events. However, we have maintained continuity with the past by continuing to hold the 'overnight weekend', the Farnes race and the North Sea race.

A new departure this season - a NECRA regatta - based at THYC and sponsored by Architectural ironworks, Fittings and Tools (ATF), a relatively local company with which Harold Usherwood has close contacts. The NECRA Committee is hoping that this event proves to be successful and can be moved round the clubs in the years to come. Feeder races, from both Sunderland and Whitby, will be held on the Saturday morning to encourage visitors to come to the event. There will be one bay race on the Saturday afternoon. Sunday will see two races (back to back), utilizing the range of fixed marks in Hartlepool bay. On Monday there will be an early start and a short bay race in order to permit visitors to return home in good time.

The sponsor, AFT, will be providing food and entertainment for all competitors on the evening (curry supper, I believe). Presentation of prizes will take place on both Saturday and Sunday evenings. In addition, THYC are talking to the Marina management at present and are hopeful of arranging a good deal for the visitors.

The other two races forming the Inshore Series will take place at Sunderland on the Sunday of Roker Regatta.

AGM and Open Meeting

This was held at THYC on Saturday 27 October. A brief review of the 2007 season was presented by the Chairman (which led into a number of questions being posed in the Open meeting about the future development of NECRA). The Treasurer then presented a financial statement which concluded that NECRA membership fees can be held at £10 for another year.

The new NECRA officers were elected as follows :-

Larry Wilkinson	Chairman
Alan Cooper	Secretary
Harold Usherwood	Treasurer

A full report of the AGM and subsequent Open Meeting is contained in the Minutes section of the NECRA web site www.necra.co.uk. It was in the Open meeting that members expressed a desire to see some modifications to the usual programme.

As of 1 January 2008 the new NECRA Management committee comprises of :-

NECRA Officers and	Jeremy Watson RNYC	jezwatson@doctors.org.uk
	Roger Bacon SYC	0191 5652336
	Jimmy Carter SYC	05251191567
	Gordon Spenser SYC	0191 5292510
	Alan Cooper THYC	07765 231109
	Nigel Robinson WYC	07984 236826

Please contact them if you have any views about anything that NECRA should be doing differently or if you are willing to help the committee in any way. There is still room for additional co-opted members to help in the running of the organization.

Annual Dinner and Prize Giving 24 November 2007

This was again held at Sunderland Yacht Club and proved to be a very enjoyable evening. Following the soup, the main course of a 'communal' pie brought some quizzical looks, but it proved to be both tasty and popular. The excellent meal continued with Black Forest gateau, cheese and biscuits and coffee. Considering that wine was also provided, it was excellent value for the £10 ticket.

After the meal the Chairman, Larry Wilkinson, made a few observations on the 2007 season and then Kath Cooper presented the season's trophies.



A very sociable arrangement for dinner - although not too much mingling between the clubs!



The THYC table (with a few guests)

It was good to note that there were more boats, new to NECRA, racing in 2007, than for many years. In particular, in 2007, Whitby Yacht club had a record number of registrations, including five boats new to NECRA. However, it is how the boats perform on the water that determines how well a club does in the Championship. 2007 was to be SYC's season. Their boats did very well, particularly in classes 3 and 4. They picked up both the club championship (by 2 points from RNYC, with last years winner, THYC languishing

in 3rd place) and the Yacht of the Year trophy which went to the SYC based Sonata, Storm in a G Cup.

Overall, the honours seemed to have been spread wider than usual, with a number of different boats collecting trophies (see the web site for a full list of trophy winners).

In the hope of continuing to attract new members, NECRA has decided to present a new trophy for next season - for the best performing new member to NECRA racing.



Jimmy Carter (Blue Max, SYC) collecting a trophy

The event was attended by 37 people, primarily from THYC and SYC. Unfortunately, due to a change in finances (NECRA had significant holdings of Northern Rock shares) the tickets for the dinner and prize giving will not be subsidized in 2008!



NECRA Yacht of the Year

This season the trophy was awarded to the Sonata **Storm in a G Cup** (Graham Kirkland and Alison Bell, SYC). She was a convincing winner of the Class 3 Inshore Series and a close runner up for the Offshore series. Quite impressive when you realize that Alison was pregnant at the time!

Club Championship Rules 2008

For 2008, the way in which the club championship is calculated has been changed in order to give more credit to clubs that turn out a greater number of competitors.

All boats racing will score points for their club in the following manner :-

- 1 point for starting,
- 1 point for finishing,
- 1 point for each boat beaten in their class.

For races with less than 5 boats starting, points will be calculated on the basis of 5 boats starting.

Samaki's North Sea Race

Thursday, 5th July. We started on Thursday, 5th July with a pleasant, lively sail down to Scarborough from Whitby, first goose-winged under reduced canvas and then reaching. And the good old Yorkshire welcome greeted us in Scarborough with, first “take that berth there”, shortly followed by “you can’t moor there”, after our beloved port manager had determined that an itinerant lifeboat in Scarborough for her naming ceremony should have the berth. So we had to move.

Friday, 6th July. The day of the race dawned and we were greeted with a sporty little westerly wind, occasionally shrieking in the rigging. This continued all day and a fast, if not lumpy, passage was anticipated. Come an hour to the start, the wind died and on the starting line was extremely fitful. A good crowd of 17 boats jostled on the line and I took evasive action to avoid a port tack boat who couldn’t give way to my approach on starboard. In gratitude, he tacked on top of me and proceeded to drape his canvas all over my rigging. Having passed the usual pleasantries customary in these situations, we continued attempting to get to Holland with very little assistance from the wind. After the turning mark, spinnakers were the rig of the day, but progress was extremely slow. We tried the light weight spinnaker, but it lasted about 5 seconds, following which I suggested the foredecky filed his nails!



Samaki leaving Whitby

Two hours in to the race, the charge of the motorboat brigade came storming past, obviously the smell of Heineken in their nostrils, but not long after that, we were all Netherlands bound at a good 5/6 knots as the wind returned. The wind continued to increase as the night went on and, after an abortive attempt to change down to the heavy spinnaker, we continued under white sails. With gas rigs flashing past and fleeting glimpses of other, mainly unidentified, competitors, we continued our way, not having a clue how we were doing. Come the evening, we approached the Traffic Separation Scheme off the Dutch coast, waved to the QE II, side stepped a monster containership (which didn’t do Harry’s nerves any good whatsoever!) and raced across what appeared to be the M1, just before a tanker could catch us. ETAs had been very promising, but the wind dropped off as we approached the Dutch coast. However, at least it came far enough aft to hoist the spinnaker again in the middle of the night, so we were making some headway and during the night, we crept in

between the 2 massive offshore wind-farms that guarded our approach to Ijmuiden and managed to claw our way over the finish line just before 06:30 BST for a 35 hour crossing. Not bad we thought, but, obviously, some boats were in and others were to join us, so, since we hadn't a clue who was in what class, nor the handicaps, we just had to be pleased with our own performance. It turned out that Phoenix beat us in by 7 hours, Cordon Rouge by 3½, but Barnstormer was only ½ an hour in front. These were all class 1 and we were the first class 2 finisher. The nearest NECRA boats were Whistledown II and Trumps, 7 hours behind, so we were comfortable there. Scarborough results were more difficult to predict as I knew I gave time to the boat, Dash (Sadler 34), ½ hour behind me, but a few days later I found out that I'd done enough.

A few celebratory whiskies, and a few more when Trumps came in, ensured we caught up with a bit of our lost sleep in the afternoon and we were in good form to sample the local beer, the odd genever and an excellent Reiz Tafel at the adjacent Indonesian Restaurant in the evening.

Nigel Robinson

Samaki (a Starlight 30 based at Whitby)

As this report of last years North Sea Race indicates, it can be fun, especially when it is over! It is a great way to start a holiday or to make a first North Sea crossing.

If you would like to share any of your experiences in the next newsletter, please submit the material to the NECRA webmaster.

NECRA Web site - necra.co.uk

The NECRA web site has continued to be popular with the membership, on average it has more than 50 visitors per day. Naturally, this peaks a few days before an event with members checking and downloading provisional sailing instructions. Sadly, at the end of 2007, the bulletin board began to suffer from abuse from outside the sailing community and so had to be withdrawn. Hopefully, a new one will be re-installed, but this time it will be necessary to sign in to prevent the same thing happening again.

For 2008, a set of tide tables, **for planning purposes only** (NOT to be relied on for navigation) have been provided on the site. They cover the four main NE ports for yachts. Also, in 2008, copies of this and subsequent newsletters will be available for downloading from the site together with copies of the registration form if needed.

Whilst the photographic competition was not overwhelmed with entries in 2007, it did provide a number of useful and interesting shots (many of which have been used in the newsletters). In 2008, we will again be collecting and displaying photos, although there will be just a single prize for the best photograph of the season.

A Profile of Harold Usherwood (NECRA's oldest, regular competitor)

Harold started his sailing career in 1947 - sailing Snipe dinghies as a National Service man in Egypt. On leaving the army in 1950, he purchased an ex-Whitby One Design and sailed in the Tees Sailing Club 'Menagerie' class for some six years. One summer he shipped the boat, along with a pal, to Holland and sailed around the Dutch waterways and lakes. This was the start of his extensive cruising activities. In 1958 he moved into dinghies and owned two GP14's, **Sabona** and **Embargo**, racing with TSC and competing in a number of regattas.



Barnstormer, winner of Class 1 (Sunderland to Whitby 2007)

Harold left sailing for some six years in the 1970s, returning in 1979, having purchased a Nicholson 26 **Bonnie Blink**. In 1982 he moved up to a Sigma 292 **Smuggler**. A year later he moved on to the larger Sigma 33 **Mayrise**, regularly racing in NECRA and HYC events.

In the spring of 1989 Harold purchased a Westerley Storm, **April Storm**, his most successful boat. He competed in a number of RORC races, including two Fastnets and was 4th in class in the 1991 race.

In the summer of 1990 he raced **April Storm** in the Brighton to Cadiz race, a ten day event. The boat was first in class and second overall! Two years later he competed in the Teeside Development Corporation sponsored 'Round Britain and Ireland' race, winning two of the stages in his class.

Seeking a larger boat, Harold bought **Stormer**, a Westerly Typhoon and raced the boat in local events and the 1995 Fastnet race and the RORC Falmouth to Lisbon race.

In 2001, he purchased his present boat, a Halberg Rassey 34, **Barnstormer**. This too has competed in NECRA and THYC events as well as racing in the Halberg Rassey Regatta in 2001. Now in his 80th year, Harold continues to race in local as well as NECRA events. This season he hopes to once again compete in the NECRA Scarborough - Ijmuiden race. Harold was Chairman of NECRA from 1989 to 1992 after which he took on the role of NECRA Treasurer which he continues to hold. He keeps threatening to buy a motor sailor with an enclosed steering position!

The 2008 NECRA Calendar

The programme in 2008 is intended to reflect members preference for slightly shorter offshore races and for some inshore races to be bay as opposed to Olympic style racing. Some of the passage racing is scheduled to link with and support local regattas. It is intended that all of the passage events will also include social arrangements for the evening after the race.

In 2008 there will be an Inshore Series and an Offshore Series. There are a possible 7 Offshore events and 6 Inshore events.

Event	Host	Series	Date	Start
Sunderland - Hartlepool	THYC	Offshore	24 May	09.30
Whitby - Hartlepool	THYC	Offshore	24 May	08.00
ATF NECRA Regatta	THYC	Inshore	24 May	14.30
ATF NECRA Regatta	THYC	Inshore	25 May	10.00
ATF NECRA Regatta	THYC	Inshore	26 May	09.30
Sunderland - Whitby	WYC	Offshore	20 June	21.30
Whitby - Hartlepool	THYC	Offshore	22 June	10.00
Scarborough - Ijmuiden	ScYC	Offshore	4 July	19.30
Farnes	RNYC	Offshore	9 August	06.00
Hartlepool - Sunderland	SYC	Offshore	23 August	09.30
Blyth - Sunderland	SYC	Offshore	23 August	10.00
Roker Regatta	SYC	Inshore	24 August	TBC
Sunderland - Blyth	RNYC	Offshore	6 September	09.00

NECRA Registration

Enclosed with this newsletter is a NECRA registration form and a number of fixture lists. If you are intending to race NECRA in 2008, please complete the enclosed Registration Form and return it (with £10) to the Secretary as soon as possible. The more boats registered, the more attractive it is for others to register. Remember, the more competitors on the water, the more likely you are to have your own personal race within a race. Inevitably, we all have our own 'special' boat to beat.

The fixture lists are intended to be shared with the crew, so that they too know when the NECRA races are being held!