



CANADIAN WAYFARER ASSOCIATION

# CRUISING LIBRARY

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## ENGLISH VISIT

by Dave Massy

Pat and I spent ten days with Margaret Dye this summer, staying with her in the fishing cottage at Wells-next-Sea. We had the use of her car to drive along the Norfolk coast, visiting old churches, public gardens, and pubs. We also sailed in Margaret's 14-ft Wanderer class dinghy, walked across the marshes, and spent an interesting 3 days in Norwich.

Margaret had visited us in Victoria two years before. Her visit included a TV appearance and a dinghy display, and did much to publicize the Wayfarer. Indeed, it was the meeting between Margaret, Wayne Moore, Betty Lording and Tony Balding at Musgrave's Landing, that led to the latter's purchase of Wayland Marine, the only firm in Canada that makes wooden kits for the Wayfarer.

Our holiday in England was made possible by invitations from Margaret, and from Rosemary and Robin Schlee, who came out to Victoria the following year.

August 8, at Wells-next-Sea

Margaret knew the fisherman. He came out from one of the flint cottages along the front. He wore a dark blue Guernsey sweater and a pair of grey woolen trousers tucked into over-size black gumboots. His face, weather-beaten and tanned almost to the colour of a loganberry, contrasted vividly with a crop of white hair, which waved about like a sea-anemone. He leaned over the rail of his sturdy wooden fishing boat, and drew our attention to the sky. "Reckon she's going to blow up within the hour. She'll be rough out there." We followed his glance as he looked out across the marshes towards Skull Island, crouching like some menacing animal on the skyline .....

We did not go out that day in the dinghy, but took a rowing boat and explored the flat marshland honeycombed with tidal inlets. There was no need to row: the wind and flood tide shouldered the little boat from bank to bank in a roller-coaster ride that took us miles away from the town. We swept by many small bilge-keeled boats and dinghies which were still high and dry on the mud. It would be another hour before these would begin to bob and sit upright. When we ourselves had run out of water, we tied up to some reeds, climbed up the bank, and began to walk across the marsh. We first took a bearing, however, so that we would be able to find our way back to the boat. People have been lost in the marshes, we heard. At our feet grew an abundance of purple sea lavender, and a kind of sea asparagus. We picked some of this for our salad that night.

In the evening we sat on the floor by the fire and talked about Wayfarer sailing. On the walls of the cottage were one or two very large pictures of Frank and his crew crossing the North Sea. The room was very simple furnished: some books, magazines, and a little table on which were some small ivory statues and other carvings given to Frank and Margaret on their cruises. There was history in the stillness and simplicity of the room. A fisherman and his wife had lived here and brought up a large family in the lower part of the house. That was a hundred years ago. We wondered idly if any of them ever came back .....

August 15, at Waldringfield, Suffolk

From Wells we went to Suffolk to stay with Robin and Rosemary Schlee where they had a summer cottage at Waldringfield, and their home in Woodbridge, a few miles away. We had met them last year when they came out to Victoria with their daughter, Oriel.

We followed the public footpath behind the rectory until we came to the river, which seemed to be full of yachts. Some of these were on a mooring, but a great many others had hoisted their sails in preparation for the race. An old grandfather of a tree-stump gave us a good vantage point to watch the start. Just off to our right we could see the windward mark - a red buoy with a black flag. The first boats around it were the 25ft. POPCORNS with a V on the mainsails. They came through well heeled over, crews on the foredecks anticipating the change of headsail. Next came the SQUIBBS. These were 18-ft. full-keeled boats with a small cuddy-cabin - not large enough to be called a yacht, but too heavy to be called a dinghy. After them the LASERS, tacking at the last moment close to the river bank. Now . . . yes, the WAYFARERS, ten of them. I can pick out Rosemary helming the tan-hulled boat. She is first around the mark. Up goes their black and white spinnaker. There's Oriel in fifth place. The dinghies are close enough to see the helmsmen carrying out the tack. Each seems to have his own way of manipulating the long tiller extension. Whoops! There's a mix-up at the buoy! Did Oriel hit it? No, she's round; there goes their spinnaker .....

Back at the clubhouse of the Waldringfield Sailing Association, a victorious Rosemary had got together some of the Wayfarer crews to meet us. A cake was produced in honour of the Canadian Wayfarers. We had just enough time to cut it and have a quick cup of tea before the next race was announced. This time I was crewing.

Charlie smoked a pipe and talked as much to himself as he did to his crew. "We've lost the wind. We have to tack. Ready about! No! Back the jib! We've got to go round him! Free off that sheet. Damn! The tide's taking us. It changes in ten minutes. Let the

jib go! Did you hear the gun go off? No? Well, let's go back to the start line. Up centreboard. We're in the shallows ..."

(There are 8 Wayfarers in the race. The white mark is coming up. We are trying to get an overlap on Rosemary's boat. Only two boats ahead of us - we're doing well.)

"The tide changes as of NOW. Good. The others will have forgotten this. We'll go straight down the fairway. Important to make decisions quickly. Don't lose the wind. Here, you take the tiller! See that mark ahead? Steer for it. Go round the stern of that boat! Watch the boom doesn't hit it! Now round up into the wind! Not too fast! We're catching up! We're going to win this race! Mind the next boat! Sheet in quickly or you'll lose the wind! Sail her hard!"

(A grey Squibb, NOT in the race, shoots out across our bows.)

"Can you give us room? We're racing! YOU CAN'T? Damn! We've lost the race. Tack! Come on! Get that sheet in. Ready about! Tack again! . . . ."

In the evening we would drive home to Woodbridge where we spent many happy days in Rosemary and Robin's house near the Deben. It became a habit to jot down in a diary things we had learnt that day about sailing. On one page I wrote:

"Most people here do not sail singlehanded in a Wayfarer. You need a crew to get off a mooring in a crowded river. If you have to sail singlehanded, use a cut-down suit of sails, or try a small jib and a reef.

"To drop the main quickly without knotting up the halyard at the foot of the mast, pick up all of the halyard and throw it overboard. The wind and tide will untangle it, and the main will fall down by itself.

"Sail the boat upright. No need to frighten yourself. First, sit out. If that doesn't help, let the main out. Don't sit on the thwarts. Get up on the side. Don't lose way. Sail the boat hard."

Rosemary, Oriel and Margaret all proved excellent sailing instructors, and I remember vividly one particular session at Waldringfield. It was the second day of instruction. I was leaning out to keep the dinghy as flat as possible. The wind, to say the least, was boisterous. I was tired, feeling my age, cold, on edge, and generally witless. My instructor barked questions in rapid fire: "Which way is the tide going? How do you know? Which way is the wind blowing? How do you know? See that buoy in front of us? Which way are you going round it? If you leave it to port will you

gybe or tack?" I was just going to answer the first question when she started again: "Come on, don't look at me! Make a quick decision. Look out for that boat in front of you! You'll have to tack soon, WON'T YOU? How about NOW? NO? Look, if you don't tack now we'll spend half the morning going down the river . . . alright, good! A shade too much. Watch the burgee at the top of the mast. Don't let it get outside the sail. Right! Which way is the wind blowing now? How do you know? Which way is the tide going?"

That night we escaped to a low-ceilinged 15th century pub. I ordered draught stout and sandwiches. We were both tired out, but quietly elated. Today Pat had taken the helm under Rosemary's capable direction and sailed the Wayfarer to Woodbridge for a picnic. And I, more by sheer luck than skill, somehow managed to pick up a mooring against wind and tide, under the eyes of the commodore and guests who were sipping tea in the clubhouse and watching carefully. We went to bed with Pat dreaming that Rosemary was making her lean out by pushing her firmly with a paddle. I had a nightmare that the mainsheet had twisted round the tiller extension causing the boat to wind up like a spring . . . .

Having the use of a car on this holiday meant that we saw so much more of the Norfolk and Suffolk coastline. In Margaret's Renault we had been able to stop at all the little coastal towns whose names we remember now - Sheringham, Cromer, Brancaster - each one meaning something special. That's where we had tea. We bought a vase there.... In much the same way, we spent happy days with the aid of Rosemary's station wagon, taking day trips to such places as Snape, Orford, Southwold; with a pub lunch in the middle of the day and the evening drive home to dinner with the Schlees.

Our photograph album is full of pictures bringing back many happy memories. One of the photos is of Frank Dye. We visited him while staying with relations in the Wirral. We drove down from Chester to his marina at Scholar Green, Stoke-on-Trent. A very quiet man whom we took to at once. In honour of our visit, he had the Canadian flag flying at the dockside, and it fluttered there proudly during the brief time we were with him. I remember that we ate Chinese food in the kitchen, and afterwards knelt down on the living room floor to look at the charts of the Persian Gulf where he and Margaret will be cruising this December. We took Frank's dog for a walk in the fields and then followed the canal back to the marina past lovely stone houses in beautiful gardens. I wish we could have stayed longer. The last we saw of Frank was him waving as he walked back to the office. A fine man.