

## From Surf to Sail (a personal voyage by jolyon wardle)

My only 'boats' before buying a Drascombe were surfboards — long ones which I had been using since being introduced to the sport a little late in life in the early 1980's at La Torche in Brittany by an old mate.

I had never imagined how a board could give you an element of safety in wild seas, but there we were, the only folks on a red flagged beach — being pounded, shivering and swopping the only wetsuit we had between us. That rough it was that I had small stones ground into my hands when I was thrown by the late breakers into the shore edge, that rough that the only other 'surfer' was a very accomplished wind surfer somersaulting in the waves.



That introduction led me to surf whenever I could — took me to wonderful breaks in Cornwall, Devon, the Western Isles, Wales , the USA and Portugal. But eventually some 20 years or so later, the time came when I was getting *mullered* too regularly; the effort to get out beyond the breakers leaving me with no energy to safely power back ahead of the wave and explode up onto the board. Also my wrists and hips and back were starting to show the effects of years of Motorcycling and high speed crashes. The writing was on the wall and was signed dramatically one very early Autumn morning in Jersey, when a friend and I were attacking a considerable storm swell and I took a large wave only to miss my footing, and getting hammered relentlessly in the breaking impact zone (the hairy area where you come up to the surface eventually only to be hit by the next breaker).

What was I to do — i loved the wild coasts; the freedom, the simplicity— I hated the paraphernalia of wind surfing etc, so decided to re-discover kayaks, and my Wife and I took some refresher instruction nearby, and went sea kayaking in Norway. While we were there we used a rowing boat in a beautiful little fiord Fjaerland on a perfectly still day; the water glacier jade in colour.— It was here that I made my decision, we were going to get a boat.

For years I had found myself living in the English Lake District, and was always promising myself I would learn to sail one day. Indeed I had returned to England years before from working abroad, intending to learn to sail (this desire had all started as a teenager, when on an Army youth team week, we had 'missed' the sailing tuition element due to some bad behaviour by one of our group, leading us to be sent back to the main camp at Catterick.)



Anyhow here was my chance again, I had once been advised to get a wayfarer, and now starting from a rowing boat I computer-trawled my way towards a rowing boat with a sail, and then persuaded by sweet design, to a East coast cobble and then to a fearing. I made a bid for a wooden Faering nearby, but couldn't complete at a price that suited both parties, and so looked again, and eventually 'computer' discovered Drascombes. I came to the Forum and asked for a test sail and Chris B kindly gave me a trip at Ullswater in his Dabber. I was sold!



Back to the computer, I looked for a reasonable priced boat, but they are expensive when you live frugally! I eventually, with the help of my generous wife, found a boat under 2k and we immediately went and picked it up — taking phone photos of it fully rigged etc and getting email instructions on how to set up and sail it from the previous owner and from the Forum.

I remember impatiently launching in Coniston with a non sailing mate and our fun and frolics as we got stuck on lee shores, and the sight we must

have presented (and probably still do to this day).

We repeated this at a DA Rally at St Mary's Loch where everyone was so helpful and forgiving — we were still learning its setup. I remember going with Tom A on his LBC one windy day that weekend, as there was no way we would have survived on our own boat. I learned so much that day.

I knew we would have to do courses and get help, so we 'stationed' the boat at Glenridding on Ullswater where they are very sympathetic towards Traditional boats and I did the RYA courses 1 2 and 3 and was encouraged and supported by the wonderful staff and members there. ("can I go out in this?" I had asked one blustery wild day. "Sure" Peter said, " you know we've got the safety boat here, and we keep a good watch, and we'll come and get you if you in trouble".

" Yes" I said, "but what about my boat , I don't want it to sink!" )



That day found me planing along on our Dabber parallel and overtaking a couple trapezing along in their wetsuits on some speedy craft.

A year or so later on, we took up a mooring on nearby Coniston, and began to enjoy a gentler learning curve.

As i have been approaching older middle age and seem to be more cautious that I was, I thought that I better also learn to sail something bigger while I could, and so I undertook RYA Day skipper courses and got myself a Gaff cutter, that was unfortunately lost in a trailer incident earlier this year. (the insurance for which afforded us a more manageable LBC which we have trialled this year). The Dabber has been swopped for a Lugger which allows us more space to get our disabled son onboard on sunny days, and we continue to learn and enjoy our sailing, and now hope to participate on more coastal and estuary rallies, and indeed return to the wilder areas i had so much enjoyed, when I was forever surfing.

