

Story 01 A Cub weekend afloat

It must have been Half Term holidays in October. Bernard and I took the opportunity to plan a cub weekend on the Guardship. It was cold wet and windy. When rigged the old wooden Rovers had a real sense of purpose, heeling well, leaving a substantial wake.

We called these weekends Lads and Dads for we invited a couple of Dads to attend, it's where the helpers come from, for there was much less officialdom in those days. There must have been three dads, plus 10 or so Cubs. The guardship would sleep sixteen, twelve on the main deck and four in the Wardroom. At a pinch one could be accommodated in the aft Gunroom.

We secured the lads into life jackets and tied the jacket with a short length of rope wound round their chests. The Cubs looked buoyant and proved to be so eventually.

We rowed and sculled over the stern all Saturday morning. In the afternoon the Rovers were rigged for sail. Bernard and I were showing the dads how to manage a sailing boat, a sort of hands on, driving lesson. The two dads in my boat quickly picked up the skill, they appeared happy and capable of managing the boat in all the sailing positions. The wind was a good four to five with the waves crashing against the dam. Taking the helm for a moment I took the Rover very close under the stern of the Guardship, as we passed I gave the helm to a dad and grasped the flag staff of the Guardship and stepped onto the stern rails leaving the boat under the command of the two dads. I went on board to start the evening meal. I had been preparing the meal for about forty minutes or so when I could hear a commotion outside. Someone was shouting GRIFF GRIFF!. "STOP US!". I went onto the bridge just in time to see my two dads on a dead run approaching the bow of the guardship. The booms were in place and they don't swing that way, quickly hauling the Port boom into the vertical position the Rover passed under it. I jumped onto the Catwalk and ran the length of the ship, with one foot on the stern rail I leaped into the speeding Rover ending up in a heap on the feet and bodies of the Cubs. "This is book two" I said "How to come alongside"

With both Rovers safely alongside we de-rigged them. Preparing for the evening meal Bernard noticed one small cub standing at the doorway of the galley, shivering and quietly sobbing. On closer examination he was wet and cold, we judged him to have played and sailed himself to a standstill. When we looked at his kit, everything he had was wet, he had tumbled in a couple of times and changed into new clothes until he had nothing left. We thought he was mildly motion sick as well, the Guardship was charging about on her moorings. The Cub only lived in Streetly so Bernard took him home, where he changed all his wet clothing for dry ones plus a hug from his mom, then he was keen to return to our camp. This plucky little fellow did not want to miss the camp and his friends.

I'm not sure what was on the menu for the evening meal, usually it was a meat stew, something substantial, followed by pancakes. I had allowed plenty of milk and flour etc, with eggs and two bottles of pure lemon juice. We fed the Cubs pancakes with lemon or golden syrup or jam, until they said "no-more Griff we're stuffed". So I started to prepare pancakes for the dads. Anticipating the weather and from cold camps on the Guardship in years past I had taken on board a bottle of Scotch for medicinal purposes. When the first pancake was cooked I popped it onto a plate with sugar and a good slug of scotch, rolled it up and gave it the first dad standing by the door to the galley.

"Yes, these are nice" was the immediate response. This was followed by a very concerned.

"Your not giving these to the kids!. Are you?"

"NO! These are for dads only. Just something a bit more adult. As a treat."

I have heard indirectly that some dads have tried to imitate that recipe, to not much success. It must have been the conditions prevailing that particular evening.

One of the dads was the artist, cartoonist from the Birmingham Mail, so I cheekily asked for an entry in the log book. He sketched a very sympathetic cartoon of me, complete with crack in my chin and glasses, hat, wearing a high neck sweater, with the caption "Here is our Skipper oozing confidence" and across the front of the sweater is the word "TITANIC"

On the Sunday morning one of the more senior Cubs to me in the Wardroom a cup of tea, very welcome plus it showed that he was thinking. It wasn't very good tea but sufficed and it was hot. When we sat down to Breakfast my throat was quite tender. We rigged the Rovers again, practicing coming up to a buoy and a few Cubs and I sat on the bridge of the Guardship and learned International Code with single flag hoists. I was feeling quite poorly with a very sore throat. Lunch came and went packing up started. By 3 o'clock I was speechless. It transpired that the cub who kindly gave me a cup of tea that morning, had used pool water from the tap over the sink, in the galley and not drinking water from the water carriers. Sympathy from the parents?

"You shouldn't shout at the kids" THANKS!