

## RS800 Celebrations

This picture was taken at a party to celebrate my daughter Sophie's 30<sup>th</sup> birthday and my parents 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. As ever "butter would melt in her mouth" a quite from our former class chairman!! Given that I am 56 the latter should not surprise me but the former makes me feel old, so third on the RS800 circuit last year was not too shabby!!



Sorry Magic Marine but I had had a few glasses of fizz so the voucher is upside down – reminds me of the early days in the RS800 !!

Sailing is very much in the family and I was probably sailing between minus 9 months and minus 1 month and crewed Fireflies and Kestrals (in Aden before it became South Yemen) before I was 5! My parents, in their mid 80s, are still sailing a Halberg Rassy 34 and spend 5-6 months of the year sailing around the French Coast (the

boat is now back from a 15 year stint in the med). My father Frank was a former chairman of the Firefly association and a few years back was awarded a RYA award for service to yachting for his website about weather forecasting

<http://weather.mailasail.com/Franks-Weather/Home> .

So I guess you could say he is a silver surfer in more ways than one. This year they even endured a Force 10 on the way back to St Peter Port. As an ex-head weather forecaster for the Met Office he was not impressed with either the French or British forecasts that day!



Sophie's mother was less keen on sailing so Sophie probably did not get in a boat until she was 2½ and won her first open meeting in a Firefly at Upper Thames Sailing club at the age of 4 ½. She remembers the cream tea but not the Measurers Cup race which involved sailing 4 miles on the River Thames. At the age of 7 she helmed 35 footer into the Yealm in Devon in a stiff force 5. So this year we celebrated 25 years of racing together, the last 13 years in the RS800. We have

enjoyed many successes including a 4<sup>th</sup> at the Bloody Mary in 2016 when we passed 290 boats but let a couple of pesky 14s pass and Pete Barton in another RS800. That was probably one of the more intense days with 20 or more boats often converging at each mark. I have also done a number of Championships with my son Ollie who is an equally good crew and in fact crewed me at our first RS800 event at Stokes Bay in 2004 at the age of 13. Sophie has also done a number of Flying Fifteen, Wayfarer, J70 (Europeans 2017), 420, and RS200 events over the years so is a very versatile crew. I do get in the sharp end sometimes and have crewed Sophie in the RS200 to Wednesday Evening victory at Datchet.



This year we have had a lot of fun in the RS800 which in my view must be one of the best pound for boats (value for speed and excitement) in the market at present and I suspect if it were not for the financial crash in 2008/9 we would probably see larger fleets. The picture is from Lyme Regis where the fleet enjoyed some great sailing. Mind you on this occasion I was expecting Sophie to do the impossible and blast through the then National Champions Luke and Emma whilst rounding the mark with the kite up!

We stayed up right but did not quite get through to leeward.

The last event of the year was the inlands at Grafham as all the Londoners have given up wine and drunk Queen Mary dry causing the cancellation of the End of Season Championships. It was great to see Moth legend Chris Rashly at the Nationals taking a deserved victory and at the Inlands this time crewed by 49er World Champion Dylan Fletcher. Despite winning the first 5 races Chris and Dylan were up for a clean sweep and rounded the first mark in first place in race 6 but with the wind barely above the limit for racing. Having sailed on rivers and ponds for most of my life these conditions suited us perfectly. A quick gybe of to the left and into more pressure did the job putting us in front by the leeward mark. Staying in front was now the challenge up a fickle beat and down a run where the rest of the fleet were bearing down with what may have been the last gust of the day. In the ideal world we would have sailed on beyond the leeward mark before gybing for the finish but did not want to risk Chris and Dylan gybing inside us. Thankfully the wind headed slightly enabling us to bear off for the line and take the victory which

remarkably lifted us from 8<sup>th</sup> overnight to 3<sup>rd</sup> overall and a few more celebrations !



This picture was a light airs day at Grafham on day 2 of the Inlands.

So now it is Christmas so we wish festive cheer to all. My wife has bought me a new set of sails for Christmas, so Andy Jefferies' old square top main from 1182 will be consigned to the windier days and club racing as will Roger Phillips' old jib!! I never did believe in new sails, in fact when we won the Firefly event at Upper Thames I reckon the sails were at least 12 years old !!! Bound

to finish last the first time we use the new sails !!

Hope to see you all on the circuit next year or during the SailJuice series over the winter. Hopefully a few more celebrations next year at the RS Games.

Ralph Singleton RS800 1166