

# Norman Bishop

*By his son, Paul Bishop (RSA newsletter, Autumn 2001)*



*Norman and Edna at 1997 Laying Up supper.*

I thought it was time I put pen to paper for several reasons.

Firstly I would like to thank all the members of the RSA who attended father's funeral on the 16th February. There is no doubt that he will have appreciated the presence of so many of his sailing friends at the beginning of his 'last voyage'.

Because of his long association with Paglesham and sailing in the area, I thought the members would like to know a little more about how he got started on the water and some of the events which led up to his eventually becoming president of the Roach Sailing Association.

It all began about sixty-two years ago when father was in his twenties and a bit of a 'ton up boy'. He loved speed and the roar of a powerful engine. Unfortunately the local police didn't love him and after several 'brushes' with the local constabulary, he decided to take to the water where speed restrictions were non-existent in most places; (nothings changed, come to think of it).

He bought a speed boat with an outboard motor which had been used in class racing off Southend. The motor proved unreliable so a large Lea Francis was installed inboard with the help of his Father in Law who was a shipwright. Mother and he had many years fun with 'MARCH HARE' along with a friend of theirs who was a co-owner.

Then came the second world war and MARCH HARE was laid up in a back garden where she gradually fell to pieces before receiving a 'Viking funeral' in the 1940s. By this time father had learnt to sail and the bug bit hard.

After the war he would crew for friends and take his annual holiday on the Norfolk Broads. It was on one of these trips when he gave me my first sailing lesson in a lug rigged dinghy and I too 'got the bug'.

This resulted in the pair of us visiting Paglesham to see if Frank Shuttlewood; who was a particular pal of father's; had any suitable craft for sale. He had two; one was the SWAN and the other wasn't half so pretty, so the SWAN it had to be. Frank introduced us to Don McDowell and a bargain was struck and I became the proud owner of my first boat. We had a wonderful time sailing her on the local rivers and creeks and in the local races. Dad loved to take the helm on these occasions to have a crack at the other boats, occasionally winning the odd race here and there. But as we were relatively new to the river, we weren't allowed to actually win a 'trophy'; one's apprenticeship lasted several years before that could happen.

When I moved to the south coast SWAN went with me causing the family to buy boats of their own. Father bought a 24' sloop called MARJON, from Burnham and he and mother sailed her up and down the east and south coasts before going foreign for the first time in the 1970s.

Then came FLIGHTY, a 27' Jaguar which was described by father as a fast and weatherly craft, which meant a greater radius for cruising and faster passages; at least that was the theory. By this time the speed bug had bitten him again and he decided to buy a bigger boat with all the 'mod cons'. After a lot of research and many visits to shows and yards an order was placed with Jeremy Rodgers of Lymington for a 32' Contessa.

Thus began a long and happy association; perhaps 'relationship' would be a better description; with PISCES. This beautiful yacht was to carry father and mother thousands of miles to many ports on both sides of the North Sea and English Channel where they had a lot of fun, made new friends and became an institution in their own right.

Father was an active member of the RSA during this time filling the posts of committee member, treasurer, Chairman and President in the fullness of time.

When advanced age and failing eyesight decided him to sell PISCES he was glad of the friendship extended to him by the RSA which still enabled him to 'do his bit' and at the same time keep in touch with sailing.

Father had a good race and would always have a go if in company with other crafts. His expression 'come on boy, get cracking', is one that Nigel and I will never forget.