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## Introduction

We're all going on a summer holiday, and with that tune firmly stuck in your head lets get cracking.

This guide is a collection of handy tips and information put together by the all knowing members of [WWW.THE-NORFOLK-BROADS.CO.UK](http://WWW.THE-NORFOLK-BROADS.CO.UK), my deepest thanks to all who contributed!!

The Norfolk Broads have been called many things, the best description I have ever heard was from Michael Green's, "The Art Of Course Sailing", to paraphrase, "..Sailing is mucking around in boats, Broads Sailing is boating around in muck...". That might sound terrible, but a week on the Norfolk Broads is like spending seven days in heaven.

So you've picked up the glossy brochures and are scanning through trying to pick the perfect boat for you. You've really got two main choices, Sail or Power, and in the power category you also have a choice of diesel engine or electric.

At first glance you might think that these rather derogatory terms hint at some underlying tension between these groups of water users, and in a sense there is as both of these groups have fixed mindsets and usually are totally unable to see what the other group finds so fascinating by their chosen mode of transportation. But in reality it is all in good fun – really !

While you choosing a boat you also need to think about the location you will be hiring from. The Broads are split into two areas, the Northern and Southern rivers, separated by Great Yarmouth. Both areas have their own individual charms and identities. If this is your first time on the Broads you do not have to go through Yarmouth, as there is more than enough to see in a week in either section.

What sort of boat should you pick? Try and get one that has more than enough room for the number in your party.

I'm always amazed at the photographs and descriptions in these brochures; they usually tend to only have a passing similarity to the real thing. But in general all of the broads hire boats are well built and in good condition.

Don't go by the description in the brochure, the phrase "easily sleeps four" means that there is one double berth big enough to allow a constipated midget a good nights sleep, after the table in the salon has been collapsed and all the cushions re-arranged. The single berths will be even smaller.

If you have questions about a boat just call the boatyard directly, they will be more than happy to help, and also maybe able to help if you have any special needs, like you're over seven feet tall or you have claustrophobia

So get a boat as big as your credit card allows.

## **Before You Leave**

Packing for your trip needs a bit of fore thought. Think about the weather, it can get cold and wet on the Broads. Only take clothes that you don't mind getting wet and dirty!

Buy good deck shoes; check the soles to make sure there is plenty of grip. The blue, inexpensive, canvas topped ones are the best; get the slip-ons, not lace up.

You can get quite a lot of glare off the water so take sunglasses along one of those ties so they hang round your neck rather than fall in the water, if use regular glasses get a tie for those too.

There are whole shoals of the coolest fish you've ever seen on the Broads, so get polarized sunglasses. A baseball cap back to front is a good way to keep the sun off the backs of necks.

If you have a very small child it is worth buying a jacket for them yourself, one with a strap between the legs and a handle to scoop them up by if they do go in. Keep the receipt and if boating is not for you the yard might be happy to buy it from you at the end of the holiday. Small sizes are always difficult to stock. Remember small kids are not actually so likely to drown but they are much more likely to suffer from hypothermia because of their smaller body mass so they have to be got out fast.

If you're taking Rover with you think about getting him a life jacket.

## Shopping

Unless you packed up your whole house for the trip you will need to get some supplies in – so make a list.

So why would you want a shopping list before going on holiday? - Well you can't imagine the number of times I've moored up in the middle of no-where only to find that I'm missing the most obvious of ingredients.

Keep the plastic bags from your shopping trip. These are very handy for keeping dirty clothes in and for storing rubbish.

Checkout the cutlery that the yard has supplied for you. You might need to pick up a GOOD knife, corkscrew, bottle opener.

One time we where moored up in the evening enjoying a beer and a smoke, and a chap came over from another boat and asked to borrow my lighter - they had forgotten to bring matches!

When you are thinking about victualing (fancy sailors talk for buying food for a boat!) you have take into consideration a number of things, like how many meals will you be cooking, what supplies you will be able to get from local markets. There are a number of simple rules to remember. Tins Good, glass Bad. Anything in plastic or cardboard tetra pak - Good.

## Shopping List

- Matches
- Tin Foil
- Eyeglass Strap
- Batteries for cameras, games etc.
- Battery Chargers
- Re-Seal able bags
- Salt & Pepper
- First Aid Kit
- Tea Bags / Coffee
- Sugar
- Paper Plates
- Plastic Cutlery
- Washing Up Liquid
- Brillo Pads
- Kitchen Towels
- Sharp Cooking Knife
- Bin Liners (get the strong ones with handles)
- Torch & Spare Batteries
- Corkscrew/Bottle opener
- Small Tool Kit
- Gloves
- Sunscreen
- The Norfolk Broads Guide !!

## Your First Time Out

When you get to the boatyard you will find the staff friendly and helpful, well, they have just extracted a large chunk from your wallet and large wads of cash tend to make me friendly too.

After you have unpacked and stowed your gear it might be an idea leave your suitcases in your car (if you don't have a car the yard will usually look after them for you). Now is a good time to have a poke around the boat and try and work out where everything is - like the loo, or head. There are a number of stories about why a toilet on a ship is called "the head"; the real reason is that this is the first part of your body that you will introduce to the cabin roof.

You also should take a moment to work out how to get out off the boat, ok now I know that sounds daft, but you will be sleeping in a new place and if you need to get off the boat in a hurry at night you don't want to think about where the exit is, like being on a plane.

Fire is the main reason you would want to get off a boat in a hurry, well fire and opening time that is. Most boats have two or three sources that could cause a fire; the galley, the engine, and your boat mate who loves to set farts alight. So your exit routes need to bypass these areas. Now might be a good time to review the safety section.

Even though the boatyard has a large chunk of your hard earned readies, they are about to let you loose with a very expensive piece of property, namely the boat. With this in mind they will want to check you out before letting the boat go. Even if you are familiar with boats it is a good idea to ask for a check run, every boat has it's own little idiosyncrasies, and if there's a problem with the boat the yard will be able to fix it straight away.

You'll find the boatman to be an invaluable source of information, and will happily answer all of your questions. If you don't understand something ASK, you don't want to be stuck somewhere, or have your holiday ruined because you don't know how to use a piece of equipment. Also the boatyard doesn't want

to have to send someone out to help you unless it's a real problem.

Also make sure you pick up a copy of the "Broadcaster" this free paper is a great source of information, tide tables

If you're not familiar with boats the yard will probably take you out for a test run so that you can get an idea of how the boat handles. I've noticed on these "check out" trips that the yards usually don't show first times how to reverse. This is something you are going to have to do, especially as a lot of moorings require stern on mooring. So make sure to have the boatman show you.

A couple of years ago I was at Ludham Bridge taking the mast down before going under the bridge. Now we were in a bit of a hurry, but we had to stop and watch as cruiser skipper tried to turn his boat around in the river. This was so interesting that we grabbed a couple of cold ones and watched the show.

His boat was about 35' long and the river at that point is nearly 50' wide. This should have been a simple turn. Slow right down to idle, and almost stopped, make a sharp turn, and slip the throttle in to idle reverse, and increase the revs slightly to stop the boat if the turn can't be made.

Well this chap's idea was to just use two throttle settings, full ahead and full astern. He probably spent a good fifteen minutes going back and forth across the river, not even changing direction, just churning up the water as the prop cavitated.

So the basic rule here? just take it slowly and let the boats momentum do the work.

If you make a mess of it the first time, don't worry, everyone does, just go around and try again. Often you will find willing volunteers to assist you – we've all been there!

## **Mooring**

It's great to be on the river, but at some point you're going to have to stop and moor up. This is sometimes easier said than done. If you have a chance, practice, on a quiet riverbank before trying to moor up at a busy staithe or boatyard. The first time I had to moor up was when I was a young kid. I jumped off the boat and just stood there with the mooring line not knowing what to do with it.

"Just wrap it around a pole", my Father instructed me, and being a good kid I did what I was told.

Although this didn't impress Mr. Bartochowski, who was on holiday from Krakow.

It's useful to know a number of different knots, but not essential, reef knot, granny knot, it doesn't really matter, just so long as it stays firm and is easy to undo.

There are a number of Mooring methods: -

### **Rings**

By far the easiest. Just pass a loop of mooring line through the ring and tie with a simple reef knot, or half hitch.

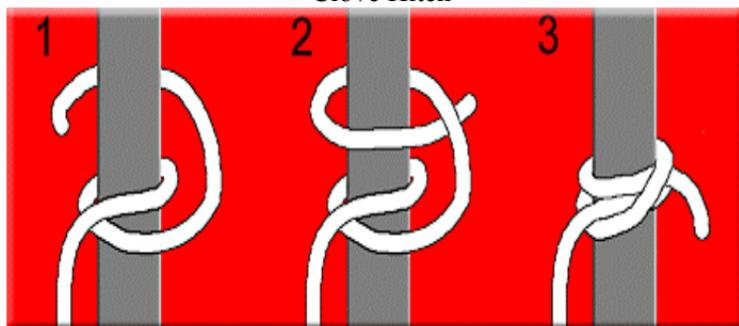
### **Mud Weight**

You will need to use the Mud Weight, sometimes called a "Mud Plug" if you are mooring in the middle of a broad, or if you are stern moored against a jetty or bank. Simply drop it over the side, after FIRST making sure the end of the rope is attached to a cleat! Then pull the mooring line until it's fairly taut and secure on a deck cleat. If you are stern mooring you want the mud weight to be about five feet from the bow of your boat.

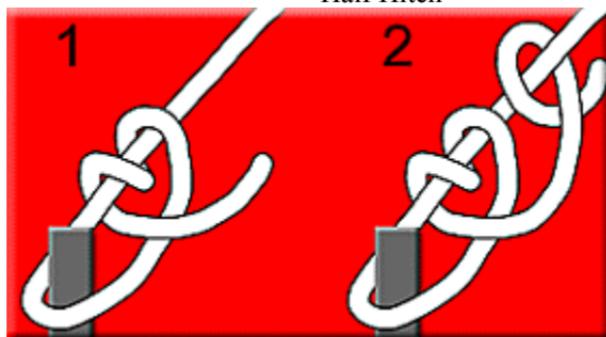
### **Posts**

You need to use a clove hitch or a few half hitches

Clove Hitch



Half Hitch



### Rond Anchor

The Rond Anchor is shaped like the letter "L" and is used when mooring at a bank. Just stick the pointed end into Rond (Rond is peat or soft earth).

Stamp it down with your foot and then tie the mooring line through the ring on the Rond Anchor, just like at a ring mooring.

A word of caution about the rond anchor. They are made of steel, steel doesn't float, ergo, rond anchors sink. So the recommended way of mooring up with a rond anchor is to have one-person step off the boat with the mooring line, and a second person step off with the anchor. The second person can try and get it in the ground while the other holds the boat.

There is a temptation to toss the anchor from the boat to the shore. Not a good move as despite the aforementioned flotation abilities, Rond Anchors do seem to have amazing flight characteristics, and an incredible ability to bounce - usually into the nether regions of the person holding the boat.

## Cleats

You will find that you have cleats on the deck as well as on quays.

A few things for you to keep in mind:

### Keep it slow

Come in against the tide. If you're with the tide, always turn round & come in against. If you try & come in with the tide when it's strong it will swing the boat round 90 degrees to the bank.

If it's a stern-on mooring, don't try & steer in reverse. Instead, steer using forward gear with reasonable revs & the wheel on hard lock. Keep the revs up in reverse whilst you're maneuvering in reverse & you'll find the boat goes straight back, tide & wind willing. If it doesn't, correct using forward.

When you are leaving the mooring make sure someone is responsible for making sure all the mooring lines are in the boat, not hanging over the side. Boats tend not to move with three feet of rope wrapped around the prop.

As you are leaving have a look over the side and make sure that cooling water is coming out of the exhaust.



## **Safety**

Probably the last thing you want to think about when going on holiday are the risks involved.

It's all really just common sense, but a couple of things you need to remember, like take a first aid kit.

Also you want to add a couple of items, like a good-sized compression bandage. If you slice your self-open in the middle of nowhere you want to stop the bleeding ASAP.

Also remember to take your mobile phone with you! I know it's nice to get away from the damned things, but in an emergency you'll want it.

The broads rivers are tidal, and at some places the tide runs very fast, so you probably want to think twice about swimming, and considering the number of water birds on the Broad's it's not so much swimming as going through the motions.

While you're taking that second thought about swimming spare a second to think about falling in.

This is usually a bad idea; apart from getting cold and wet you really don't want to put yourself between the riverbank and a heavy boat.

So when you are mooring up, step off the boat, DON'T JUMP.

If you've hired a dinghy to take with you, always remember to step into the middle of the boat, not the sides.

Boating and Boozing almost go hand in hand, but don't over do it. Being Brahms and Liszt and driving a big boat is a recipe for disaster.

## **Bridges**

Take care when going through bridges. Check the height of your boat, sometimes called the "air draft", (from the skippers manual) and compare it to the depth gauge by the bridge. Take it

easy going through tight bridges, but keep enough speed so that you have enough speed for steering

Otherwise this can happen: -



Not a very good picture I'm afraid, but I hope you get the point.

## **Do's and Don'ts**

Do not stop the engine till the boat is securely moored up, and do not untie the boat till the engine has been started.

Do not ride in the Tender while underway.

Indicate clearly to the approaching cruiser how you want him to pass; he may well be a novice.

When on deck, one hand for you, the other for what you are doing, i.e. always hold on.

When overtaking on the river, pass on the riverside not the bank side.

Ensure all ropes are tidy at all times.

When mooring, if there's already another boat's warp (Mooring Line) tied to the post, try to tie yours under the other knot, not on top of it, in case they want to leave before you do.

Don't jump ashore with a mooring line that's tied in a knot.

Don't get ashore and find that you really should have taken a round anchor with you.

## **Hints and Tips**

Pulling harder on ropes doesn't make things happen faster (well OK a bit), patience with a boat is much more successful!

When you've moored in a village or town that you've never been to before, and you're trying to find your way to the shops, walk in the reverse direction of people with carrier bags.

A lot of yachtsmen will tell you where to go, a few will give directions, some however are not sure themselves so it can be unwise to put your all your faith that the advice will always be correct.

If you've taken Rover with you don't leave him locked in the cabin all day, it might be a bit un-nerving for him, which might cause him to leave you a small present, and it will be on your bunk.

## **To and through Yarmouth**

Some people think that going through Yarmouth is akin to rounding the Horn, this is patently untrue, the Horn being further south, and having slightly worse weather. But it can be a bit daunting the first time.

The most important thing is the tide. You need to go through Yarmouth at low tide, when the water is slack. Just to make things confusing “slack” water is one hour AFTER low water.

The most important thing to have handy is a tide table. The “Broadcaster” is a great source – and it’s free.

### From The Northern Rivers

You will probably be coming from Acle, remember that it will take about two hours to get from Acle to Yarmouth. So if low water is at 10 am, slack water will be 11 am, this means that you would need to leave Acle at 9 am.

### From The Southern Rivers.

Same thing applies here, give yourself time, from Reedham it will also take you about 2 hours to get to Yarmouth.

### Through Yarmouth

Yarmouth is hardly the Garden Spot of the Norfolk Broads, but it is well worth a visit. If you are going to go into town don’t forget the rise and fall of the tide – which can be 7’ (2.2 M).

If you do take a trip into town let one of the attendants know, and they’ll keep an eye on your mooring ropes so you don’t come back to find your boat hanging from the quay.

## FAQ

**Q. Do I need to run the engine in the evening to keep the battery charged?**

A. Your hire boat will have two battery systems, one for the engine and the other for domestic supply (the lights, tele, fridge, microwave, satellite dish, Jacuzzi, etc. ). Even if you drain the domestic battery you will still be able to start the engine and charge up the batteries.

Usually you should get an evenings worth of power from the batteries so there should be no reason to run the engine at night, doing so might result in some of your neighbours showing you other uses for a rond anchor.

**Q. Will I have to put fuel in the thing?**

A. Unless your yard says otherwise no most cruisers have enough fuel for two and a half weeks. If on checking you find you are running low check with your yard because something may be leaking or weeping.

**Q. Do I have to do anything about the toilet?**

A. If on a short break probably not. If out for a week it's a good idea to have it pumped out half way through. Remember only things which been eaten or drunk should put down it. Yards may not be able to do pump outs on turn round days.

**Q. Can I plug in electrical equipment from home?**

A. In general No. Even if the boat has 240 volt supplies these will be matched to the equipment installed. Most of the supply is 12 volt and wired in strange ways to avoid the risk of misuse. Shaver sockets must only be used for shavers, which should be removed when not in use. There will almost certainly be a car cigar lighter style 12volt recharging point for mobile phones and laptops. This however is not much use if the lead has been left locked in the car.

**Q. Does that mean I can't use a hair drier?**

A. No the yard should be able to supply a 12 volt one

**Q. Where can I moor and shouldn't I?**

A. There are free 24 hr mooring dotted round the broads, or you can moor outside pubs who may make a charge but often you can redeem this against the cost of drinks or food. In some place you can moor on a mudweight (like an anchor) in the middle of a broad. The various yacht stations make a charge but there will be attendants to help you. Be careful about mooring against any old bit of bank there may be a shelf or underwater obstructions. Do not moor in such a way as to cause an obstruction. You can also moor at the other hire yards normally for free but should not attempt to moor in private marinas.

**Q. If the gas goes out what do I do?**

A. If you have ANY problem with the gas turn it off at the bottle and call in to the nearest boatyard

**Q. Will I have enough water?**

A. You will need to fill up whenever you can, as there is not a water main attached to the boat. You may be surprised how much you use. Water is filtered for drinking purposes but if you have very small children with you may wish to boil it or give them bottled water. Only put water into a filler clearly marked as such.

**Q. Will my mobile phone work on the Broads?**

No problem – there are a few dead spots – but not many hills to get in the way!

## **Broadsiquette**

Funny things happen on the Broads, like people tend to smile more than usual – although this could just be something to do with good beer.

Often you will find that the people on approaching boat will wave to you, usually you don't have to count the number of fingers – but it's polite to wave back.

When passing moored boats, cut your speed down and reduce your wake. Remember that could be you having a pot of hot coffee being dumped in your lap.

## Stories

### **First Time on The Broads – Flonker**

It is time for the start of your first holiday on the Norfolk Broads. The car is loaded, the crew, plus dog, are ready for the off!

You arrive at the boatyard. Park the car and clutching all your documents you proceed to the reception area.

“Hello, my name is Mr. Pearson”

“Hi, now let me see, you are on Tranquil Moments”

Is that an omen or what! The receptionist brings out a form.

“Is this your first time on the river Mr. Pearson?”

“Well I did have a trip on a boating lake at Lowestoft several years back, but I suppose that doesn’t count”

“Err, not really” as she surreptitiously ticks a box on the booking form.

The receptionist adopts a superior manner.

“Car parking undercover is £10.00, Outside is £5.00 and Diving Insurance is also £5.00”.

You can’t help but think that Inshore Life Boat Insurance would be more appropriate, what the hell is Diving Insurance all about – anyway you pay.

The receptionist smiles benevolently.

“I’m afraid that your boat is not quite ready at the moment”, as she accepts your total payment.

Your stomach lurches. You have that sinking feeling that all is not well!

“ It will be about an hour, perhaps you would like to pop into Stalham”

“No problem – I’ll be back in an hour”

An hour soon passes and you present yourself to reception yet aging. All is well the boat is ready!!!

With family, you proceed along the quay, and there she is Tranquil Moments, moored stern on, looking immaculate. You open the door, the boat is spotless.

“Right Mother, get the kettle on, and I and the boys will unload the car”

Feverish activity takes place as boxes and cases are taken from the car and placed on the boat.

“Darling”

“What, you can see I’m busy”

“There’s no water – the taps don’t work”

“You’re joking”

“No I’m not. Nothing works.

“ I can’t believe it – I’ll speak to the man.”

You decide to get the dog on board (it’s name is Mafeking due to the fact that it all ways wants to relieve itself).

Mafeking stands on the aft deck, mortified, Refuses to budge, Dogs feet do not like decks of boats. There is only one remedy, a quick boot up the rear, an undignified scramble in the well of the steps. One problem resolved.

Salvation is at hand. The trial run driver appears.

His name is Darren (All first born, in Norfolk, in the mid 1980’s were called Darren).

Darren is 20. During his informative years, from 14 to 19 he used to converse in Neanderthalian grunts to his elders. Now, having mastered the art of conversation, he finds it necessary to end each sentence, or comment with the word “right”. This gives

him confidence that he has been understood.

“Hi, my name is Darren. Right”

“You’re ready for you trial run. Right”

“ Yes – were ready”

“Tell him about the taps darling”

“I will, I will”

Darren gives a knowing smile. (I’m starting to “warm” towards him already).

The family is on the boat. The Trial Run Driver, Darren, Gods Gift to Blakes, has arrived and has been presented with the first problem. No water!

“Have you turned the pump on mate?”

“The Pump? What pump?”

“The Water Pump”

Darren takes that as a no, and strides purposefully towards the middle cabin. He points down towards to what ostensibly looks like a light switch.

“There you are – it’s off - right”

He switches to the on position. Immediately the sound of running water, from all the taps heralds whoops of delight from Mrs. P.

Darren, flushed with success, details the GRAND PLAN.

“First I’ll show the outside of the Boat – Right”

“Then the inside – Right”

“Then we will go up river – Right”

“Sounds good to me – Right” You can’t believe you said that.

On the deck Darren explains the fixtures and fittings:

“This is the toilet pump out fitting – where they pump the toilet from”

“I see. How often do you have to do that then?”

Darren makes eye contact for the first time.

“Depends on how regular you all are”

“How do you know when it’s full?”

“Don’t worry about it. Over breakfast one morning it will be the topic of conversation, then will be the time”.

You both progress further along the deck.

Darren points a foot clad in a somewhat neglected trainer at the next deck fitting.

“That’s the diesel filler cap – you don’t have to worry about that, you have enough fuel to circumnavigate the broads for three weeks”

(You don’t believe him)

The next fitting is examined after a suitable pause.

“This is your water filler cap. The water goes into the Wonder Tank”

“The Wonder Tank Eh!”

You wait with bated breath, what technological marvel will be disclosed.

“It’s called the Wonder Tank because all week you will wonder how much you have got in it”

“Err! Has it not got a gauge or something? “

Darren looks at you as if you are demented.

“No, just keep it topped up”

The conversation regarding this particular subject seems to be finished.

“Well that’s the outside bit, we’ll go inside and I’ll show you some more, and then we will go up river”

Darren has sorted out the water problem and concluded the tour of the decks. It is now time to explain the inside of your craft. You follow respectively and enter the aft cabin.

Darren opens a door on the left hand side, which to all intents and purposes looks like a cupboard. It resembles a Tardis. Inside there is a shower and a toilet. The former being self-explanatory is summarily dismissed. The toilet however requires closer examination.

On this boat Roger, one of the tallest men in Norfolk, installed it. Subsequently this particular variant has been designed in such a way that all who patronise it find themselves perched about four feet up in the air.

You both gaze into the bowl. Your first impression is that such a contraption defies all known logic.

Darren breezily explains:

“When you have finished, close the lid” (.....think about it)

“You then reach out to the back here, turn this valve on, turn that valve off, pump the handle briskly for a couple of minutes, turn the valve off – and there you have done it. Or not, as the case may be!”

You make a mental note to use shore toilets whenever possible.

“Now for the engine”

“I’ll follow you Darren”

Surprisingly Darren enters the middle cabin. Followed by you, the dog, and the children.

“OK you guys, there is not enough room for us all in here”

“Oh Daaaaa”

“No. Out of it. Go and feed the ducks or something.”

Darren folds back the mattress and removes a wooden panel. Lo and behold the engine!!!

“Phew! What an awful smell”

Darren looks a bit phased. “Can’t understand it. Must be the bilge. I’ll put some Bilge Sweetener down – that will cure it”

Mafeking rolls his eyes towards the ceiling, with a baleful stare, and with tail between his legs sneaks out of the cabin.

You notice that the engine is made by some chap called Perky from Peterborough, Darren by this time is engrossed in explaining, dip sticks, water filters and a thing called a header tank. You nod solemnly.

“Right – that’s the engine bit, now I’ll show you how to start the beastie up.”

You follow Darren to the Bridge. Well. It’s not really a bridge, more a panel with a few dials and a wheel in front of it.

“That’s the rev counter – shows you how fast you are going.”

You attention is drawn to a conversion chart, and relates revs to miles per hour.  
(in practice this instrument is as much use as an ash tray on a motor bike.)

“When you start the boat first of all take it out of gear by pulling this little silver button out – like so. Now turn the key to the heat position for one minute, then turn to the start position like so.”

Perky at the back, groans and grunts like a geriatric threshing machine. And then, when all seems lost, Perky rallies and with a triumphant cough splutters into life, and it must be said, goes from strength to strength.

“I think that we are ready to go up river” Says Darren, having recovered his composure.

“I’ll undo the ropes”

“Let me do it Dad”

“No. You can do it next time”

“Oh Daaaaad”!

“Don’t worry your Father – you can see he is a bit stressed.”

“Yes Mother”

Darren, having completed the tour of the inside of the boat is ready to “go down river” as the final part of the trial run.

Darren expertly maneuvered the boat out of the mooring and nonchalantly stood at the wheel.

“You keep to the right hand side of the river and remember to keep the revs down – now if you’d like to have a go”  
You hang onto the wheel as if you were on a white-knuckle ride.

“Very good – just ease it to the left a bit, not too much. Now to the right a bit.”

Thankfully the river is straight at this bit.  
You progress down river, with Darren offering words of comfort.

“Now I’ll show you how to turn the boat round. No, stay at the wheel and I will talk you through it”  
“Slow down, a little more reverse, that’s it. Turn the wheel over to the right. Now, gently push the throttle forward – can you see the stern coming round”

You daren’t look.

“Now a bit in reverse – not to much – we don’t want to hit the bank do we? Ha! Ha! Ha!” – and now forward. There we are we’ve done it.”

You bristle with pride, you cannot believe how easy and how professionally you achieved that which looked impossible.

(You will remember this moment at St Olaves a few days later!)

Before you knew it you were back at the boat yard where Darren showed you how to moor side on to the bank.

“If you would like to turn the engine off, sign the completion form and away you can go”  
You turn the engine off..... Perky continues to burble contentedly.

“Err, how do you stop it?”

“Oh, sorry, I’ll show you, Follow me”

You follow Darren into the middle cabin whereupon he pulls at a button on the side of the wall. Perky gasps, and all is quite and still.

The form is signed.

“Right then “I’ll cast you off”

Darren starts the engine, jumps off the boat, and unties the ropes fore and aft.

He pushes the bows out with his foot.

“Have a nice time”

We will, we will. Byeeeeeeee.

You push the throttle forward. Perky builds up the revs. The boat doesn’t move an inch. A bit more revs. Soon Perky is wailing like a banshee.

“NO, I don’t want a beer”

“Darling, Darren said “Put it in gear” - Oh!

The boat lurches forward, just missing the moored boat in front, the stern gives the side a resounding thump. Well at least it straightened the boat up. You wrestle with the wheel, trying to save some composure.

“SLOW DOWN” Woolly Hat, attired in a disgusting overall, emerges from his boat clutching a paintbrush.

You duly oblige, as you proceed down the river.

After about two minutes you realise that your boat has all the handling characteristics of a super market shopping trolley. You turn to the left, to the right, to the left. It refuses to go straight. No matter what you do the thing has a mind of it’s own. You desperately battle with the wheel as the boat zigzags down the River Ant.

A large branch, hanging over the river looms into your vision, frantically you turn the wheel; you just cannot believe that you

have managed to miss it.

You didn't, a resounding crash from the blunt end says otherwise.

"Dad, Dad"

"WHAT"

"We've lost the mop"

".....give me strength"

"It's Ok Dad, it's fallen onto the back"

This trauma seems to have the desired effect – bit like a cure for hiccups. You find to your amazement that the boat steers perfectly well without constantly turning the wheel. The crew, and more importantly yourself, start to settle down.

After about ten minutes of calm, it is decided that a stop for a cup of tea would be good.

"That looks a nice place to moor"

"No problem, I'll get in as close as I can and you can tie her up"

The boat closes in on the bank.

"Right, jump, go on jump"

The boat hits the bank and bounces away from the bank about three feet.

"Tie it up then"

"I can't, I haven't got a rope"

"I can't do everything, quick you boys throw your Mother a rope"

"The bows are secured"

"Hurry, hurry, the back end is coming out"

Mother just mangers to catch the last four inches of the rope.

"Whew! That was exciting. Get the kettle on Mother"

The kettle soon boils and the crew gathers round the table with one leg shorter than the other. Mother dutifully pores the tea from an incontinent teapot. Soon you are munching into chocolate covered Hob Nobs. Life is good.

A little Coot, ever the opportunist, bobs its way towards you.

“Can I feed the ducks Dad?”

“Of course you can”

Contrary to popular belief (and Bill Oddie) there are only three types of bird to be found on the Norfolk Broads.

LBJ’s, the BBJ’s and the Duck.

The LBJ’s are little brown jobbies. The BBJ’s are big brown jobbies. Ducks are things that float on the water.

They come in various sizes, and the big ones are called geese.

Some people call ducks Mallard’s.

Mallard’s are easy to recognise.

(a) They eat copious quantities of bread.

(b) They quack a lot.

(c) They spend an inordinate amount of time engaged in an activity, which for the sake of those of young and tender years, is best described by saying “I think they are having a little squabble darling”

This should avoid a long and drawn out discussion on the matter.

Another endearing quality of the Mallard is that it likes to prance about on the roof of your cruiser .....at four o’clock in the morning.

“OK boys, undo the ropes we must be away”

The boys scamper to the allotted task.

You turn the key. Perky rocks and vibrates. You turn the key again, and again. Nothing happens. Perky seems to be getting weaker and weaker. You start to drift imperceptibly towards the centre of the river.

“It won’t start”

You try again. Perky, by this time sounds distinctly asthmatic.

“Darling what can we do”

“I know, lets look at the weed filter” (the only positive thing that you can think off)

That does not cure the problem; there is only one thing for it. To ring the boatyard.

“Hello, Jolly Boating, Daphne speaking, how can I help you”

(don’t you need a Daphne at a time like this)

“It’s Mr. Pearson here, the boat won’t start!”

“The boat won’t start?” (What is it about the “boat won’t start” that she doesn’t understand)

“Wait a minute I’ll pass you over to George”

A mature and calm voice answers.

“Hello Mr. Pearson, where are you”

“Dunno”

“Do the lights work”

“Err yes”

“Is the engine turning”

“Yes”

“Have you pushed the stop button back in”

“The what button”

“The button you pulled to stop the engine”

“I’ll check”

You find that indeed the button has not been pushed in, turning the key, Perky roars into life.

“That’s it – it works – thank you. Bye.”

The anxiety etched upon the faces of the crew disappears as you proceed down river.

“Mummy, is Daddy cross”

“No, of course not Darling”

“Why has he got a red face then?”

Some will say that it is a brave hirer who attempts a stern on mooring on the first day, others that it is irresponsible. The

family has been on the boat for a few hours, with one or two little mishaps. The trip across Barton was enjoyed by all. Indeed there was an air of confidence, of wellbeing, as a map was produced and all agreed that Gays Staithe would be an admirable place to stay for the first night.

Tranquil Moments glided majestically towards the entrance of the staithe, the sight that met them was truly magical. Gaily painted boats were moored stern on against the bank, the green grass was host to children playing, one or two people were fishing from the front of their boats. What was not quite so magical was the fact that it seemed full up!

“Are we going to stop here Dad”

“Not enough room I’m afraid, we are going to have to try somewhere else.”

“Well, we must do something darling, Mafeking is desperate”

“Yes dear” (ever the obedient husband)

“Wait, look, there is a space, right at the end, next to the white boat with all the aerials sticking up”

“I can’t go down there, it will mean..... it will mean, I have to reverse it.”

“Oh don’t be such a woose, I’ll help you”

“Yes dear”

There is one thing that you have been able to do, must have been a gift!! You always seem to be able to turn the beastie round. This evening was no exception, without any drama the maneuver was carried out impeccably. At least the stern was pointing in the right direction.

At this point it is worth mentioning a phenomena, recognised by anybody who has hired a boat, owned a boat, lives or works on the Norfolk Broads, the phenomena is known as the Reverse Syndrome. It afflicts in the main, the holidaymaker, the first time boater, although it has to be said, it can last for more than one season.

It manifests itself during a period of acute distress, when everything defies principles that guide reasoning within a given situation.

The Reverse Syndrome is where the person at the helm presupposes that to reverse a boat, one needs to apply maximum revs in both the forward and reverse gears. The gear lever lends itself admirably to this task enabling the driver of the craft to change from forward to reverse at full speed, in one swift movement – in fact you can alternate between the two in rapid succession, several times during the operation. Reversing also requires a degree of multi tasking, the head must swivel round repeatedly in order to ascertain if the objective has been realised, and the steering wheel must be rotated from one lock to the other in several rapid movements in an endeavour to direct the blunt end towards its goal.

“Right dear – lets go for it”

You turn the wheel over onto the right hand lock and put the boat into full reverse. Perky roars with delight. The boat goes backwards – in a straight line – heading for the bank.

“Stop! Stop”

You slam the boat into forward gear. The stern scythes round in a complete ark. Fantastic, absolutely fantastic. You are pointing down the dyke.

Unfortunately, the wrong way round.

By this time, ducks and coots have reached the sanctuary of the bushes on the far bank. Mothers have called their children from play.

Curtains twitch.

Men emerge from the stern of their boats, clutching glasses of Chardonnay and Jacobs Creek Shiraz. They stand sullenly. A chorus of advice in strange dialects comes across the water.  
“Put it in reverse mate”  
“Go forward”  
“Sling me a rope”  
“Turn the wheel the other way”

You feel somewhat inadequate.

At last you manage to turn the boat around – again.

This time more by luck than judgment, the stern is situated, more or less in the direction intended.

Full into reverse again, the boat, at warp factor 3, proceeds down the dyke. A well-placed foot kicks your stern away from the bows of the third cruiser.

By this time Mrs. P has decided that her contribution would be best made at the most vulnerable part of the boat. The stern. To assist in this onerous duty, she frantically shouts instructions.

“Go left”

“No go right”

“FORWARD”

All to no avail. Desperately she looks for a solution to the dilemma. And then she finds it. The very thing. The Boat Hook.

The Alifred lay peacefully at her mooring. Immaculate, Gleaming chrome rails surrounded the decks. Pennants fluttered from the aerials. An imposing ensign on the stern endorsed the boats importance.

On board Mr. and Mrs. Entwhistle, Alice and Fred, both enjoying their customary sundowners of generous Gin and Tonics. (Indeed, unbeknown to Alice, old Fred also enjoyed a few sun uppers as well!!)

What caused Fred to look up, we shall never know. A sixth sense perhaps. As he looked out of the starboard window he saw this vision, this apparition, of a boat careering in full reverse towards the Alifred. On the stern, a wild looking woman, hair blowing in the wind, clutching a boat hook like Bodicea ready to lance the enemy. In this case the enemy was the highly painted white gloss of the Alifred.

Fred started to hyperventilate.

Alice desperately tried to find her glasses.

Fred reached the foredeck and performed what can only be described as a nautical jig on one leg!

“Put that \*\*\*\*\* thing down, woman”

You could feel a solicitor coming on.

“You can’t moor here.....Pal!”

You had the distinct feeling that he was not your “Pal” In fact you could hardly imagine him ever being your “Pal”.

And then a miraculous thing happened. One of the fenders on Tranquil Moments snagged a rope attached to a mud weight. (Hirers like to put mud weights down at every possible opportunity – a feel good factor). The boat slowed and slew to rest, inches from the gleaming paintwork.

And then the true camaraderie of the Broads came to the fore. Willing hands assisted in the task of mooring the boat – having of course been advised to turn off the engine.

“Thanks a lot you guy’s, must have been the wind that caught me” (There was no wind)

“Come on inside Darling and have a nice drink”

With shaking hands you gulp down a large Bells whisky. After what you hoped was an appropriate period of time you decide to venture out of the stern door. Fred was lying down in a darkened room.

The chap next door seemed friendly enough.

“Hi mate – how are you doing?”

“Oh hello!”

“A bit frazzled I’m afraid”

“Don’t worry about it. We’ve all been there”

In no time at all other people gathered round to pontificate on the days events. It was looking good.

After an enjoyable meal, the first day was coming to a close.

The children were put to bed, exhausted they soon fell asleep.

Mafeking, because of a rather unpleasant nocturnal condition, was placed in the middle of the boat, with the doors shut, and a window left open.

And so to bed.

You both snuggle down the duvet.

“Gerald Darling” was whispered in your ear.  
You can’t help thinking that it sounds promising.

“Yes dear”

“The bottom of the bed is all wet!”

One thing that Darren did not explain - All boats leak.

Even when it is not raining they leak It is called condensation.  
Don’t bother to look for your leak – you will find it in the passage of time.

Yes - the family had a wonderful holiday, several dramas followed, but none so drastic as to spoil the holiday.  
And did they book again?

Of course, doesn’t everybody?

Andrew

Dwile Flonker

## TheSkipper - Pizzalover

Mr. Flonker's writings were excellent, and inspired me to dig something out of the archives.

This was all written many years ago (with a little editing today). It tells of my very first sailing trip on the Broads, and was written for a bunch of people who knew nothing about boats, Norfolk or indeed, England.

Looking back, I know how much I have learned.

Trust me that we have since had tuition, and have many incident free trips and years behind us.

No boats were actually harmed in the writing of this tale.

Names have been changed to protect the guilty.

Cast your minds back several years..... when I wrote the following words....

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Many years ago, I spent a weekend on a lake in Kentucky in a houseboat with MyDearWife, The Skipper and TheSkippersWife. One evening, we built a bonfire on the shore, cooked up something tasty, and settled into a bottle or three of the case of mixed wines that I'd picked up at the Liquor Barn. It might have been the wine, it might have been the bonfire, or it might have been the eyebrows - burned slightly when flambéing the bananas, but history recalls that the last bottle that night was a particularly smoky red. The tale is oft told of how I sat with my last glass by the fire, with MyDearWife complaining that I'd already drunk too much, and that she wasn't looking forward to the inevitable snoring.

It's funny, that, how we keep getting reminded of some small thing in our lives. Dragged out at dinner parties in perpetuity. Every two or three years, MyDearWife tells the tale of how I once was navigating in a car that she was

driving, and I confidently directed her to an industrial estate, and not the shopping mall we were intending to go to.

Actually, it might not have been a mall. No-one actually remembers where we were going - or the fact that I have managed to find my way home several times on dark nights... but it will always be remembered that I missed a turning off a freeway in Cincinnati. I know it happens to you too. I bet that you just love that moment every Christmas when one parent or the other reminds you of that minor misdemeanor of your childhood.

Well, TheSkipper and I are regularly reminded of the smoky red wine drunk on a Kentucky lake.

That wine WAS wonderful and TheSkipper and I have, since that time, tried to find that same smoky wine. And one evening last year, we continued our quest.

As the wine level sank below the label on the second bottle, one of us had this idea that maybe TheSkipper and I could go sailing on the Norfolk Broads.

There's a rule in my house: any agreement made when you have a wine glass in your hand is not binding.

But, even when sober, we continued to think that the idea was pretty good.

For those of you who come from Somewhere Else, the Norfolk Broads are a collection of man-made lakes, joined together by natural rivers. They are in Norfolk.

I digress (even more) for a moment. There's an article in today's Times (don't make assumptions about my socio-political standing... the paper was free in the coffee shop that I went to... though I guess you could make assumptions about me, based on the fact that I went to a coffee shop). The article tells the tale of a US film company that was making a movie about a castle, which the script said several times was perched high in the mountains of Norfolk. The Times confirms something that anyone who knows the area could tell you... there is no part of Norfolk that is more than 300ft above sea level. One of

the film crew revealed this to the film company, and now the script is being re-written.

Following on from that... I read once about a Norfolk Mountain Rescue Team. There is, I think I read, a team of serious climbers (who, of course, go to places with mountains when they want to climb). They formed the Norfolk Mountain Rescue Team as an excuse to gather in a pub - and apparently, they regularly abseil across the car park.

Anyhow, TheSkipper and I agreed to go sailing on the Broads.

At this point, I should admit to something that is probably going to be abundantly obvious to you before long.

I'm not a very experienced sailor.

And I don't think The Skipper's that hot.

I spent quite a lot of time sailing a dinghy in Malta one summer in the mid 1970's. I also sailed a dinghy on the Broads once... AuntyKaren tells the tale (ah - another oft-remembered event) of how I nearly killed her when the boom swung across unexpectedly, and how we happily sailed 3 miles down a broad in the evening sunshine - and that I overlooked the fact that the wind is stronger in one direction than the other, and how we had to row three miles back.

I did do a sailing course on the Solent (the bit of water that I have crossed by ferry a hundred times)... which included this memorable exchange:

Teacher: " Now for some navigation practice.... I want you to navigate into Cowes Harbour. How can you find your way there?"

Me: "Follow the red ferry."

Teacher: "Uh..... .. How do you know that the red ferry is going to Cowes... it could be going to Ryde?"

Me: "The white one goes to Ryde, the red one goes to Cowes."

Teacher: "What if the ferry was going the other way?"

Me: "I'd wait for the next one... they run every hour."

Yeah, yeah, I know... "Mr. Smarty Pants"... but my teacher did

enjoy the joke.

And I did manage to get us into Cowes without following the red ferry.

(I followed the hydrofoil instead).

Oh - also, to add to my extensive sailing credentials - I have recently read Swallows and Amazons to Jake.

TheSkipper has sailed on the Broads before - as crew with his parents, and as "captain" with his brother and TheSkippersWife.

So we're not complete idiots. Just partial ones.

Winter has passed, and spring has arrived. And in spring, a young man's thoughts turn to lust. And two guys looking for a mid-life crisis turn their thoughts to boats.

One big problem that we have is to select the right boat. The brochure says for some boats, "Not for inexperienced sailors".

For others it says nothing about the degree of seamanship required.

For a couple, it says, "Suits any type of sailor".

I wonder if that includes incompetent bozos.

The Skipper and I agreed: we should avoid the boats that are not for inexperienced sailors.

And we agreed: a gaff rig was not good.

Cor - did that impress you? See - I told you that I read Swallows and Amazons.

A "gaff rig" is one where there's a pole (the gaff) at the TOP of the sail, as well as at the BOTTOM.

So the sail is sort of square, and not triangular.

One thing about gaffs is that they are heavy, and are held up in the air by two ropes.

The opportunity of getting in a mess with those two ropes seems to be great. And - gravity, being what it is, may well bring this pole down on our heads.

Remember how AuntyKaren claims I almost killed her with the boom of a 7ft dingy?

So - we need a boat that is for idiots, and it mustn't have a gaff.

We had a discussion last night, and, fortunately, agreed that while it might be dead cool to sail out of the boatyard, it might be wiser to use the engine at that point.

MyDearWife is enjoying the boat-selection process. She liked the bit where The Skipper and I were discussing facilities on the boat, and concluded that a shower was unnecessary.

But then had a serious discussion about keeping the beer and chardonnay cool.

The question is: do we need a cool-box (a sort of electric fridge), or a put the bottles in a bag, and hang them in 6ft of water, over the side of the boat on a rope.

I did a tour of the local bookstores today. I now own a "How to sail" book. My bookcase at home has "How to speak German", "How to fly light aircraft", "How to play squash", "How to make wine".

I can't do any of them.

So that shows how much use my new "How to sail" will be.

A new day....

I have studied my How To Sail book. My favorite line so far is on the subject of reefing (a process which makes the sail smaller). The book says, "Lash the luff cringle and then the leech cringle to the boom". Until now, I did not know that there were such things as cringles, either luff or leech. I suspect that The Skipper hasn't, either. I plan to wait until he is in the middle of taking in a reef, and then call to him, "You idiot - you're supposed to lash the luff cringle BEFORE you lash the leech cringle". I suspect, though, that by that moment, I will have proved to him without doubt that I haven't got a clue what I'm talking about.

I have repeatedly pointed out that my role is not "captain". I told Jake this. Jake knows the order of seniority on boats (based on

Swallows and Amazons). So Jake thinks I should be the "mate". I think this is too high a position, but Jake is adamant. I think this is because he wants to come sailing one day too, and thinks that if I appoint myself as Able Seaman, he will always be stuck with being Ships Boy. I don't think I even rate as "Able" seaman, so Jake may need to compete to be Boy.

My book offered alternative roles: Helmsman and Crew. That seemed good. but then I read that all the helmsman has to do is steer and give orders, and the crew has to do all the work.

While we're on terminology, I even have problems describing the craft.

The Skipper prefers "yacht".

But I grew up on the Isle of Wight, and there, Yachts are driven by people who are referred to as "Yachties". This is not a term of respect.

I found, over some time that, for me, referring to such craft as "Sailboats" worked.

I think that Sailboat is an American term, but it seemed o.k.

Because everyone seems to understand roughly what I mean when I say it. But TheSkipper scorns this as TOO American.

So, I'm going to have to get into the habit of referring to the thing as a "boat" - which seems acceptable.

TheSkipper has a Psion Organizer.

MyDearWife and I call it the TheSkipper Organizer.

He plans lots of things in it.

He tells me that he has an entry for Ships Supplies.

This includes the ingredients for Steak Diane.

One tries not to boast, but one of the things I think I do well (maybe the only thing) is a Steak Diane.

This dish is well known in Britain - we think it is some sort of fancy exotic dish created by some French chef.

But it was probably created - along with Ploughman's Lunches - by a pub chain.

The Skipper quite likes my Steak Diane, and has proposed that I cook it on board the boat.

So - there we will be. In very restricted space. With a 2 ring gas cooker.

And I will be trying to bang out Steak Diane.

Those of you who have had Steak Diane will know that a fundamental - indeed essential - part of it is the flambé.

So I need to make sure that the TheSkipper Organizer - "Data: SailingTripSupplies:" has "Fire Extinguisher".

On Saturday, I read my sailing book. I learned a lot.

Like how to stop your boat from flooding when the tide comes in, if it is left high and dry when the tide goes out.

Or, what type of radar is best (anyone who knows the Norfolk Broads will know that radar is not really useful - no matter how good it is).

My favorite bit of knowledge was a technique for preventing your boat from sinking that I wouldn't have dreamed of in a hundred years.

You inflate your rubber dinghy INSIDE your yacht.

I ask you this.

You are in the middle of the Atlantic, and you hit - say - an iceberg (it's happened before).

And you get out your life raft, and, while you're waiting confirmation of your mayday message, you check the How To Sail book.

And it tells you that instead of inflating the life raft on the water and climbing into it, you should take it down into the cabin and blow it up there.

Sure you would.

Many weeks later...

Time has passed. It's now June.

There have been several, if not many, things that have prevented us from going on the go-next-week sailing trip.

Tennis matches.

A trip to Paris.

One or two birthdays.

Etc.

I caused many of these.

So did TheSkipper.

My favorite moment was when The Skipper was recounting how (deep breath...) TheSkippersWifesBrother was due to go on a short break to Amsterdam, but

TheSkippersWifesBrothersDaughter, who was booking the trip was in Munich for the weekend (with her boyfriend), and was unreachable by several different mechanisms.

Shortly followed by the WhoWillLookAfterTheCat moment.

TheSkipper has called the boat booking agency twenty times, to check various availabilities.

I've mentioned Leech Cringles to The Skipper.

He thinks I'm making it up.

A new day.

Something amazing happened.

We have booked a boat.

I think the booking agency earned their commission on this one.

Apparently, the boat hirers reserve the right to reduce the size of the sails if they feel that the crew is inexperienced.

I have a picture in my mind of us setting sail with a 4ft tablecloth strapped to a 30ft mast.

Well, time to go sailing.....

A bright, hot, day has dawned, and I set off up the Motorway. I arrive at TheSkipper's house, and prepare to load his luggage into my car.

I've been given some warning... number of cool boxes, quantity of groceries... even the number of bathroom bags.

But I'm not prepared for TheSkipper's irrational purchase of the year - a fishing net.

This is not the sort of thing that MyDearWife buys Jake every year at Big Nanny's house, to catch small items of wildlife on the beach.

This is the sort of thing that Icelandic fishermen carry on their trawlers when whaling.

I scratch my head, jiggle a few things around, and find a space on top of the crate of wine.

A quick trip up the A11, and we are aboard our boat - a 28ft sailing yacht, varnished, and splendid.

28ft might sound big.

Let me give you a guided tour.

We'll start at the back, or "stern", as the sailing books call it.

The first 6 feet is occupied by bits of sailing stuff, like the tiller (early design for a steering wheel), and half a mile of rope.

Then, minding your head (and observing my blood on the hatch roof), we duck inside.

To your left, is a bunk. At the moment, it has TheSkipper's bedding in it, but tomorrow, he will move it to the identical bunk on your right, when he realizes that the left bunk has a leak over it - unfortunate if you should be in the boat during the only thunderstorm of the year.

In fact, TheSkipper's clothes are going to spend more time on the floor than on either bunk. This seems to be a characteristic of sailing.

We move forrard (nearer to the pointy end), passing the sink and fridge on our left and cooker on our right.

We have, in fact, taken four steps since boarding.

Next comes the combined toilet, shower and en-suite washbasin.

All neatly housed in two square feet.

And finally, we are in my cabin.

To the right is a bunk that has my luggage on it.

To the left, we can see 14 inches of my bunk. The rest of it disappears beneath a bulkhead. I sleep alongside the

base of the mast.

If you want to see the rest of the boat, you need to retrace your steps, and go out on deck.

Starting once more from the blunt end, we walk - or rather - climb forward.

There is a walkway, which is around six inches wide around the edge of the boat, which we climb onto to get back to the mast.

The mast is a big sticky out thing with a lot of ropes.

Further forward, is an area known as the foredeck.

Sitting here, moored up, this area seems the sort of tranquil place that you might sunbathe on, but believe me, when all hell breaks loose, this is a place where it does so.

So we set off.

Or, at least we would, if we could untie the boat from the quay.

Don't you just love it?

You read all the books, including Swallows and Amazons, and there is no solution to the problem of the knot that can't be untied.

At no point does John turn to Titty, and say, "I say, who tied this up?"

And at no point does Susan - supremely competent as she is, send Roger off to get something... butter, probably, to loosen the knot that had been pulled tight by several hours of tide induced strain.

The Skipper and I prodded and poked at a small, but persistent knot for half an hour before admitting defeat, and calling on the services of the boatyard staff to help is with this simple task.

Fortunately, the first oik that came to assist was no more able than us to release us.

And the second one only managed it with the aid of a ten-foot pole.

What a great start.

I can still hear the boatyard staff snickering now... "They couldn't even untie it".

The plan comes together though. We motor happily to a broad and prepare to sail.

There was no argument. There is more than enough wind, and it seems smart to hoist the sail with a reef in it.

A reef is a primitive mechanism to make the sail smaller.

And how do you do that?

Well, first you tie the leech cringle to the boom, and then the luff cringle.

The Skipper still thought I was making this up.

I have one of those once-in-a-lifetime, I-can-be-smart moments.

There is no way to get that leech cringle to the boom. It just won't go.

And I remember doing something similar in a sailing class several years ago, and am able to confidently dismantle part of the rigging to complete the reef.

For some 30 seconds, it almost looks like I know what I'm doing.

So we actually sail up and down a bit.

Yep.

Up AND down.

Left and right.

Port tacks and starboard tacks, even. Yeehah.

We even gybe. A gybe is a dodgy bit where the boom (that large swiny thing at the bottom of the main sail) swings from one side of the boat to the other because the wind is behind you, but not behind the bit of you that the sail wants to be on.

These first gybes are essential training, as we will go on to have about 300 less controlled ones soon.

The day's boating comes to an end with me reversing the boat under the control of the engine to a riverbank.

There are two boats already moored, about 20ft apart, and I need to back in between them.

TheSkipper is standing coolly on the stern, waiting for us to come to rest in the gap.

I guess that for once I appear to know what I am doing, because TheSkipper asks, "Which mooring post are you aiming for". I smile.

"Now that would be your 'advanced mooring' - I'm sticking to the basics at the moment, and will be happy to get this thing between those two boats without any damage".

I tell you, making a bunk at 11pm, when the majority of the

bunk is 2ft wide and has a headroom of 1ft, is far from easy.

Especially when Jack Daniels is helping.

Day two.

We are creaming along, being driven by a strong breeze. The wind is coming over my shoulder, and the boat is heeling over hard.

There is a clatter from below as saucepans and the frying pan jump about.

TheSkipper's luggage has long been thrown onto the cabin floor.

One thing worries TheSkipper.

"How do we stop", he asks.

I think for a second, and say,

"When we hit something, probably".

We discover that the only way to move around inside the boat is with a constant hunch.

The only way to access anything in the fridge is to be on your knees.

In the evening, moored on a calm, beautiful river, The Skipper and I sit in the back of the boat in the late sunshine, slurping the Chardonnay.

The breeze up the river is now gentle, and we watch eight to ten identical little yachts tack past us.

On board each is an adult and several kids.

Their voyage is perfection - some might dream of lazily sailing down a river in such a way.

But one person's perfection is another person's tedious day on a boat.

The kids all look bored.

The Skipper and I chat to the adults on the boats as they pass...

there is a reason for their crews to be tired... they have had a long day.

But still, it seems that they are missing something.

A use has been found for TheSkipper's fishing net (he doesn't fish, you see).

We use it to suspend the Chardonnay in the river, to keep it cool.

For dinner, we have pasta.  
The Skipper laments that we have no scales to measure the correct quantities of pasta.  
We use the stopwatch capability of my watch to time the cooking.

You may remember that the toilet facilities on our boat are somewhat limited.

The combination of restricted space and TheSkipper doing things like making tea three inches away encourage me to find alternative venues for bodily functions.

It occurs to me that there are many unique sounds in the world. The sound of a cork leaving a bottle, for example, cannot be mistaken.

Nor, indeed, a golf ball falling into a hole.

And who could mistake the sound of a Jacobs Cream Cracker being broken in half.

Well, here's another one.

Urine makes an unmistakable sound as it hits the ground.

Another day.

Inspired by the success of the previous day's sailing, and with confidence boosted by watching the fleet of yachts pass us last night so expertly, we decide to tack, as they did, down the river. We are in a narrow stretch, moored against the bank.

For some insane reason, we decide that we are now expert enough to raise the sails, untie from the shore, push the boat round onto its first tack, glide gracefully across the river in perfect control and go deftly onto the next tack.

Opposite us is a boatyard, with several boats moored.

Up and down stream are neat little cottages with wrinkled people waiting for their day's excitement.

And, we set to work to provide it.

Up go the sails.

Within 30 seconds, we are across the river, ramming a moored cruiser on the other side.

Observers will see these 30 seconds pass at normal speed.

For TheSkipper and I, they pass in slow motion.

TheSkipper, at the tiller, is trying a variety of things to get control.

I spend the first half of the journey trying to get the sails to fill on the correct side.

I then spend five seconds trying to make several hundred square feet of sail pretend that it is a flag.

I spend the last five seconds of the journey on my stomach in the bottom of the boat, between TheSkipper's legs, fumbling with a tiny metal key and a small black button.

I start the engine and put it into full throttle reverse.

We get away with no damage, which is pretty remarkable, seeing as we have a thing called a bowsprit sticking out of the front of the boat.

A bowsprit is a sort of spike like weapon, disguised as a sail-tethering device.

We manage to back off the cruiser, and sail with the wind behind us, the wrong way up the river, out of drama.

As we regain our composure, I remember that the previous evening, I saw a boat further down the river with a neat hole about three feet above the waterline, and wondering how such damage was caused. I now know.

We turn, and begin to tack, under control now, back down the river.

I suggest that we should drop the sails and motor out of the built up area, but TheSkipper thinks he's worked out what went wrong.

We put in several good tacks, and are starting to get the hang of things.

Until we get back to the boatyard.

This time, we impale ourselves upon a moored yacht.

I'm delighted to note that we are being observed, not only by the wrinkled people on the shore, but by the boatyard staff too. I don't actually see anyone selling tickets or making bets, but I know they're doing it.

Again, we manage to reverse off the thing we rammed, and turn, once more the wrong way up the river to get out of trouble.

I suggest that it would be a VERY good idea to drop the sails and motor away from the audience, but TheSkipper persists that the only way to sail is to sail.

As soon as we get ourselves sorted, we turn back once more into the wind.

This time, we get past the boatyard.  
The euphoria is so great that we lose concentration and get into a mess in someone's front garden.  
It's hard to turn a yacht when you've moored it on someone's lawn.  
As we back off this time, I note that one of the boats patiently waiting for us to sort ourselves out is a River Authority boat.  
I smile weakly at the River Policeman. He doesn't respond as warmly.  
We settle down to some tacks, and make phenomenal progress (in 30 minutes, we have covered 100 yards).  
We are just getting beyond the moored boats and pretty gardens, when we end up in a tree.  
Finally, as we clear the decks (literally, because we have half a forest on board now), we admit defeat and drop the sails.

We go on to tack in wider and less cluttered rivers, and gain in ability. I will, though, remember for the rest of my life - mainly at 2am, and with a cold sweat - the trauma of early tacking practice in Potter Heigham.

Tacking in the open rivers is an exciting and enjoyable experience.  
We find ourselves yelling "Yeehah", and "Phwoooooar", and "Good grief", as we get more adept at turning the boat at speed, brushing the reeds.  
I try to find the term to use to describe the right balance of speed, wind, angle - and of course, it's obvious.  
We're trying to find the G-spot.

We stop for a late lunch.  
I have a bit of a hay fever attack, and I feel like I have laid on my back and someone has poured a bucket of dry sand over my open eyes.  
There is a village shop nearby. I think, "They must be well stocked for boating tourists, and must have some sort of eyewash".  
They have a pharmacy department.  
Oh, all right, a pharmacy shelf.  
And on it are twelve Tampax and a bottle of TCP.  
I grit my teeth.  
And my eyes.

We are at our evening mooring.

We have walked several miles to a nearby town to buy fillet steak.

I have cooked Steak Diane.

Nothing is burned.

We have drunk several bottles of wine. I am surprisingly sober, but TheSkipper has reached a relaxed slump.

In the evening sunshine, I observe a fellow boater returning to his craft.

Under his arm, he has a set of bathroom scales.

I ponder on this.

What, I wonder, could be a more surreal thing to carry to a boat at 9pm?

A cabbage?

A lawn mower?

A camel?

A new dawn.

We sail a bit, but after a while, the wind drops.

We spend half an hour annoying a fisherman, as we drift slowly past him, waiting for a breath of air, but eventually give up and fire up the diesel.

As we motor through Horning, the wind picks up again, and we hoist sail.

And plough straight onto a moored boat.

We're getting fed up with this tendency that our yacht has to aim for expensive things for the first 90 seconds after the sails have been hoisted, and I propose that we go to a broad, where there is masses of space and nothing fragile, and get some more practice. For some reason that we can't understand, the boat doesn't behave itself in the way that the boats do in the line drawings that are shown in my book, but we start to feel that we're working it out.

We arrive at our last night's mooring and put together a decent barbecue.

There is a small, brief shower.

A nearby motor cruiser has its roof back.

Someone on board flicks a switch, and with a metallic hum, the roof rolls forward.

Later, TheSkipper and I unwrap the large sheet of canvas that fulfils the same function on our boat.

And, finally, we return to the boatyard, proving, once more, that the whole point of any boating trip is to practice for this event. At last I remember something important from my sailing book - that yachts have an odd peculiarity of steering in circles when going backwards, and use this information to gracefully bring us back to rest.

As Shirley Valentine said,  
"Where did that orchestra come from"?

## Great Yarmouth - Pizzalover

I won't tell you the name of the boat, or the year of the journey - but I will claim robustly that lessons were learned, and mistakes will hopefully not be repeated. I'd also make the claim that the boat in question had some sort of clutch fault - but you won't believe me.

Cast your minds back a few years... we're sailing down from Acle to Great Yarmouth.

Of course, we all know that a trip through Gt. Yarmouth needs some care.

This passage south has been planned really well... tide tables have been consulted, heads have been scratched.

We set off allowing good time to reach Yarmouth in time for slack water.

Actually, we have over-planned, and are arriving in that twisty bit where the river actually gets narrower, a bit too early.

Well, actually, WAY to early.

I would like to take this opportunity to claim that we are not complete bozos, because of course, when presented with a bit of river, which actually has us facing into the wind, we lower the sails and tidy the boat.

And of course, we know that all we have to do is moor and wait for the tide to go slack.

And not being complete bozos, we naturally know that we have to turn, so that we will be mooring against the tide.

It is suggested that we cruise down to some point near the bridge, then turn and motor back to a good mooring, and the idea seems perfectly reasonable.

OK, so here we are then, rushing at an exciting rate down the right side of the river, past the Yacht Station. The bridge is in full view. There are some nice moorings. I am at the helm. The Skipper goes forward, in preparation to step ashore with the mooring line.

I check all round.

I push the tiller hard over, and start the U-turn.

Except that it becomes an L-turn.

Of course! Although we were doing several knots, most of that

was due to the current, and when I turned us, I found how little forward motion was being created by the engine.

Have you got the picture in your head?

We're on a yacht that's storming down the river, broadside to the current, and with no steerage.

We're facing the bank (which is made of concrete), but I take the risk, and kick the throttle fully forward.

Isn't amazing how slowly a single-cylinder engine can take to get to full revs?

All that I achieve is to move us across the river... nothing that I do with the tiller has any effect.

So we're still heading broadside down the river - a ballistic missile. And you all know what's getting nearer.

And you also all know that something big sticks out of the top of a yacht, and we have done nothing to take it down.

So - about 7ft clearance, and about 60ft air-draft.

My mind-camera photographs the look of horror on

TheSkipper's face perfectly framed by Great Yarmouth Road Bridge, as he looks back to see what was going on, and sees me frantically jerking at the tiller in futility.

Well, I've tried Plan-A, Plan-B and Plan-C. Thankfully, Plan-D comes to me.

"Throw the mudweight over." I command, in a clear, confident shout, as if I knew what I was doing.

Now, TheSkipper is an interesting character. Some days, he can tack a boat so well it makes me jealous. Some days, he can confidently take control of a situation and leave me wondering why I procrastinate so much. But there are other times when the boat is in some situation that we've had a hundred times before, and he'll want to stop and have a debate about what we'll do.

So when I give the order to deploy the mudweight, I wonder if he'll come strolling up the deck, saying, "Why? What do you expect that to do"

But I guess that he sees the bridge some 20 yards away, works out our speed, considers the options, and decides that he can't think of anything better to do.

So the weight goes over.

Amazingly, under the circumstances, he doesn't go with it.

We snatch neatly round.

Finally, the propeller wakes up, and starts to work. This is slightly alarming, as I had the tiller hard over, but a quick straightening and a toe under the throttle, and all is calm. We now have control. The weight comes back up, and we moor comfortably.

We sit and, drink tea, and wait for the tide to stop and the heart rate to go below 200.

It's hard to be sure, but I think we were probably within 10 seconds of going under the bridge, side on, with the mast up.

I've often wondered (again, in a cold sweat at 2AM,) what would have happened.

My bet is that the forestay would have snapped, then the mast, and we would have gone down into the harbour - but who knows what would have happened then. Or maybe we would have been held at an angle of about 45 degrees under the bridge. I'd like to think that if we had, it wouldn't have been so bad that we would sink, but would just sit there being laughed at, waiting for the current to drop.

OK - we're off again.

Yacht, heading through Great Yarmouth for the Yare.

It is a dull day, and there aren't many boats around, but there is a good wind.

We pass happily through the bridges of Yarmouth.

I think that our confidence, somewhat deflated by our earlier experience of almost mooring under a bridge with a mast up, might be boosted by sailing up Breydon Water.

But we are not good enough to raise the mast on the go.

We are unclear about what to tie up to for mast raising, so it seems reasonable to put to one side of the channel and plop the weight over.

This yacht has an A-frame and winch. That is to say, in order to raise the mast, you turn a handle which pulls on the forestay which pulls the mast up. The A-Frame acts as a lever to make the process easier.

The Skipper goes forward, and starts cranking. I trot happily around, untangling the various bits of rigging from the places they like to tie themselves to when the mast is down.

TheSkipper starts to work up a sweat on the foredeck with the winch. I looked out over the bow and notice that the channel is wider than I remembered.

Odd that.

I unwrap a shroud from around the tiller, and look back over the stern to see if it is trailing in the water, and notice that the land is closer than I remembered.

Odd that.

The mainsheet, which had been neatly coiled as the mast was lowered has tied itself around the throttle.

I release it, and check around once more to see that nothing is snagged.

How did that post get there?

Oh, I see. We are dragging the mudweight at a gentle pace, are reversing happily away from the channel, and will be on the rocks in - say - 60 seconds.

The mast is now at about 70 degrees.

Masts which are not vertical are really unwieldy things, and ours is swinging angrily around.

TheSkipper is still steadily cranking.

I fire up the engine.

Unaware of our closeness to the scenery, alarmed, and probably annoyed at my impatience, TheSkipper looks over his shoulder to complain that I've started the engine. I give my second clear and direct command of the day, "Do NOT stop cranking."

He sees the waves breaking on the shore (well... ripples lapping) and returns to his task with a new vigour.

I slip into forward gear and pray.

Let's see... I'm motoring towards my own anchor rope, which means that it will go slack under the boat (was it me who asked here about diver insurance?) I have a post about 10 yards off the starboard quarter, and it's getting bigger.

So with no certainty whatsoever, I put the tiller hard over to port. The yacht does what yachts do so much better than cruisers ever will, and turns sharply.

I feel the tug of the weight, snatch at the bows. In neutral, we swing round to face it and the post.

Then, well... what could be simpler.

Gently reverse away from both weight and post with relieved look on face.

I can't help smiling though, as the exhausted Skipper can't pause

for a second between cranking the mast and hauling in the mudweight.

We do a sharp 180 U-turn (it's funny how easy those are), but don't raise the sails for the journey to the Berney Arms.

The voyage to Norwich continues.

We nearly run aground in Rockland Broad - but doesn't everyone?

We're cruising up the Yare. You probably know the spot - wide sweep of river, lovely lush lawns running down to it.

We come around the bend one of those wonderful drift sails..

Just enough wind to keep you hoping for more.

The idea of mooring seems attractive.

There is a beautiful cruiser - The Pride And Joy (not really) - tied to the bank... she is all wood and has been kept in excellent condition, and there is a convenient mooring just beyond her

Her owners - Henry and Doris - are sitting in chairs on the bank. Doris is knitting. Henry is admiring his varnish.

We are approaching under full sail and it's a lee shore - but there is little almost no breeze, and we decide that we can do it without all that cumbersome engine and head-to-wind stuff.

As we approach, the cruiser Henry and Doris begin to twitch.

As we draw alongside the cruiser - still under full sail - they can't decide if they should continue to sit or if they should stand, so they do both several times.

The Skipper is at the helm, and I go forward to lower the mainsail and take a rope ashore.

I smile warmly at Doris and offer a happy greeting, "Good afternoon - isn't it a splendid day?"

Henry is relieved (though I'm not sure why).

But as we continue to approach, I can sense their blood pressure rising again. Doris is knitting-one-pearling-one furiously.

Henry is getting quite pale.

"Don't worry," I say, "We've done this before."

Once more, they relax.

Things are going quite well. So I can't resist it.

"Actually," I say, "we've only done it ONCE before."

We're now about two feet away from the Pride And Joy. The knitting speed increases, until the needles are a blur. Henry is on his feet, not knowing which to stand on.

As our stern misses their beloved by a comfortable and controlled twelve inches, I deliver the punch line.

"Come to think of it, we REALLY screwed it up last time."

TheSkipper, grinning, lets fly the foresail. I drop the main and step ashore.

See... it isn't ALL disasters.

And so we go to Norwich. Participate in Trisha. Turn and head back.

We're in Reedham. It's middle to late afternoon, middle to late September.

Shall we stop here, at the Ferry, or trot down to St Olaves?

Well, it's not far.

And off we set.

We're under power, and the going is not good.

It takes forever to slog down the New Cut.

Above us is a clear blue sky.

Behind us is a thick, dark black cloud that must be a thousand miles across.

The race is on, and we are losing.

All we have to do is take a left turn in St Olaves, find a mooring at the pub and argue about who's round it is.

Except, that is, for that thing at the end of the New Cut.

Darkness is falling in the way that bricks do.

We moor to lower the mast.

TheSkipper places the stern rope back behind the boat as usual.

He is confused that I place the bow rope amidships. I refuse to waste time in explaining that there is a strong tide behind us, and actually ANY form of bow rope is a bit of a waste of effort.

Down comes the mast, and we set off under the bridge.

So we're in one of those "picture the scene" moments.

We swing out into the Waveney.

The tide is vigorously flowing, and it's flowing in the wrong direction - we are a surf board... but a 60ft long surf board with about 20ft of mast hanging over the stern and 6ft of it in the well, along with halyard, topping lift, stays and other assorted bits of chandlery.

It is - I have to admit - dark.

We are deeply concerned about how we're going to moor at the pub - it being a stern-on job, and there being the small issue of the mast. We decide that we can go in bow first, raise the mast and as people call their mates out from the bar to watch, turn the boat.

But the moorings are jam-packed.

We search the darkness, looking for some nice place to tie up... well, actually, ANY place to tie up.

It's becoming clear that we're running out of options. If we're not careful, we'll be out of the village in total darkness, trying to find a cow to moor to.

Through the gloom, the boatyard comes into view. There's a cruiser moored there.

We are very reluctant to raft up to an unknown boat in a strong current - but one thing makes it attractive - there are no lights on inside it... so there won't be anybody on board to be irate, and more importantly, there's a chance that it was tied on by someone who knew what they were doing.

We come alongside with the engine almost full astern.

TheSkipper takes at the bow rope over, I take the stern... one loop around the host's cleat and straight ashore for a post.

Later, as we are joined by a Mr. Jack Daniels, we discuss desires to buy a very big torch.

Time passes.

The day comes for our return trip across Breydon.

Heck, low water isn't until 5pm - we've got plenty of time for a sail on Oulton Broad, haven't we?

Lunch on Oulton Broad was splendid - Italian bread and a glass of something crisp and dry.

But we must press on - time and tide, and all that.

It doesn't take long for me to form a strong set of opinions:

- We are late

- We are much faster under sail when the wind is behind us

- We are much faster under power when the wind is against us

I propose to expedite things with a brisk motor-sail.

But TheSkipper disagrees, and I don't press it.

Actually, I blame the bridge keeper. I spend half a bloody hour on the foredeck waving a red shirt before he makes any attempt at acknowledgement.

The mast fairly rattles down at St Olaves.

Fortunately, something is going our way for once - the tide is actually being a help, and the clutch seems to be biting. We charge down to Breydon.

There's an odd thing though.

Whatever happened to slack water?

Because the tide seems to turn in a heartbeat, and I notice that it's against us as we go under the big bridge.

Oh, that's good then.

That will mean that we're going to be riding a wave again as soon as we get on the Bure.

And, of course, it's getting dark once more... so dark that we pretty much HAVE to moor in Yarmouth for the night.

And, yes, the mast is in the awkward position.

We sweep under the bridges.

The river is too narrow to turn, and anyway, we've not excelled ourselves at U turns on this bit of river.

We decide that we're going to have to try a mooring with the tide behind us.

Oh Joy! There's a nice uniformed man outside the yacht station, come out to watch.

TheSkipper hops neatly ashore from the bow.

Full of calm urgency, I pick up the stern rope and gracefully trip over it, landing flat on my face along the deck.

The rope is neatly wrapped around my ankle.

As I untie it, I consider letting the boat do a 180, as if we'd meant that, but I'm unconvinced that the river is wide enough, considering the mast out over the stern.

I'm faced with the igmony of chucking the rope to the uniformed man in what must look like blind panic.

He secures it neatly.

As TheSkipper strolls back, the man in uniform says, "You know, you really should moor against the current."

I wonder which of the three of us I should punch.

## Useful Phone Numbers

Waterways	
Beccles Yacht Station	01502 712225
Broads Authority	01603 610734
Broads Society	01603 433613
Diving Services, Maffett Cruisers, Loddon	01508 520344
Environment Agency	Enquiries: 0845 933 3111
Environment Agency	Emergencies: 0800 807060
Great Yarmouth Port Authority	01493 335500
Great Yarmouth Yacht Station	01493 842794
Navigation Assistance	01603 625091
Norfolk Yacht Agency, Brundall	01603 713434
Norfolk Yacht Agency, Horning	01692 630212
Norwich Yacht Station	01603 622024
Oulton Broad Yacht Station	01502 574946
Potter Heigham Bridge Pilot	01692 670460
River Control	01603 625091
RSPB, Norwich	01603 661662
Salvage, Bridgecraft, Acle	01493 750378
Salvage, Pearson Marine, Reedham	01493 700288 / 7000278
Tow Boat Services, Bridgecraft, Acle	01493 750378
Tow Boat Services, Ludham Bridge Boatyard, Horning	01692 630486
Tow Boat Services, Martham Boat Building Development Company	01493 740279

Tow Boat Services, Pearson Marine, Reedham	01493 700288 / 7000278
Tow Boat Services, Royall and Son, Wroxham	01603 782743
Wildlife Trust, Norfolk	01603 625540
Wildlife Trust, Suffolk	01473 890089
Windmills Trust, Norfolk	01603 222705
Wroxham Bridge Pilot	01603 783043

<b>Broads Authority Information Centres</b>
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Beccles	01502 713196
How Hill	01692 678763
Potter Heigham	01692 670779
Ranworth	01603 270453
Wroxham/Hoveton	01603 782281

<b>Tourist Information Centres</b>
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Aylsham	01263 733903
Great Yarmouth	Easter – Sep: 01493 842195
Great Yarmouth	Oct – Apr: 01493 846345
Loddon	01508 521028
Lowestoft	01502 533600
North Walsham	01692 407509
Norwich	01603 727927

<b>Emergency Services</b>	
Norfolk Police	01603 768769
Suffolk Police	01473 613500
Ambulance Control, Norwich	01603 424255
	If any medical assistance is needed, telephone Ambulance Control who will give advice on the nearest doctor
NHS Direct	0845 4647
Dental Emergency	5pm Fri – 8am Mon: 01603 419800
Norfolk Family Health, Norwich	01603 300600

## Local Radio

Classic FM 100 / 101.9 MHz

Broadland 102.4 FM

The Beach 103.4 FM

Vibe FM 106.1

KI 96.7 FM

BBC Radio 1 99.3 FM

BBC Radio 2 89.7 FM

BBC Radio 3 91.9 FM

BBC Radio 4 94.1 FM

BBC Radio Norfolk 95.1FM, 104.4FM

BBC Radio Suffolk 95.5FM, 104.6FM

Talk radio 275/285m 1089/1053kHz

Radio 5 Live 330/433m 909/693kHz

World Service 463m 648kHz

Classic Gold Amber 1152kHz AM