



THE HISTORY OF the Spanish Flying Fifteen fleet, Puerto Pollensa, Mallorca

In 1988 I came to work for the lovable pirate Brian Livingston Builder, at Livingston's Yacht Brokers, delighted to be dealing with boats and over the moon about living in Puerto Pollensa in sunny Mallorca.

Even though the newly constructed RCNPP 'Real Club Nautica Puerto Pollensa' promised plenty of moorings, hard standing and launching facilities, there was very little evidence of dinghy or for that matter any sailboat racing.

I asked Brian, as he was one of the club committee members, if there was any chance of dinghy racing attached to the club, to which he replied, 'well just organize it'.

So having spoken with Pepper Constable (ff2666) (Puerto Pollensa's first Flying Fifteen fleet captain), John Leaf (ff2877), Mark Manning (ff1650), Mike Brown (ff ?) and myself (ff2597) ascertaining how much each were prepared to spend on their boats, we decided to purchase classic Flying Fifteens. i.e. less than 3,000 sail number. I went to London boat show for work in January of 1991 and bought our fifteens on the telephone, offering to pay the asking price as long as the owners were prepared to trail their boats to Swanage in Dorset, where my good friend Chris Haw had offered to house the boats in his garden until such time we could build the wooden cradles required and remove keels etc, to be able to

pack up to 6 boats in a 40 ft container. Finally, Ian Royse bought his boat (ff2500) and arranged to join the others in Swanage so completing the full load.

Nick Crutchfield built the wooden supports for the hulls and removed the keels and Chris laid on a barrel of beer for the Swanage lifeboat crew to help load the boats, keels and trailers etc all into the container. My dear Mother helped us all immensely by labelling every item of each boat and their sail bags with their respective sail numbers, hence avoiding embarrassing squabbles when the boats did finally arrived in Puerto.

So the wonderful day eventually came when we became acquainted with our boats, and thanked the previous owners for their integrity and wholeheartedness, if only with our thoughts. We had a fleet of 6 sailable fifteens in Pollensa bay and very happy bunnies we all were.

I was later informed that Uffa Fox had tried sometime in the late 50s early 60s to import 2 Flying Fifteens into Mallorca and they were both confiscated by Customs and never seen again.

We wet sailed our boats, moored next to the military base, being ferried out to them by Mark Manning from 'Picnic Boats', who said he would keep an eye on them as he was down there every day with his day boat rental business.

All went swimmingly; we would race twice a week, Wednesday evening and Saturday afternoon. Rabbit starts (gate starts) avoided the need for any committee boat or personnel for starting and we chose mooring buoys or even moored boats as our marks of the course. The important thing was that we were out sailing and racing in our own little way, sometimes doing up to 4 short races in an afternoon. The 3rd placed finisher was automatically the next rabbit. I seem to remember beating towards the windward mark, (moored boat), on several occasions only to find that it had upped anchor and was off before we could get to it. But it was just so much fun to be sailing in warm waters with balmy breezes.

At about this time, I finished working for Livingston's and set up on my own as 'Wilson Yachts, maintenance, sales and service, renting a small office in the high street in Puerto, with my wife, Helena and 6 month old daughter Annie supporting me.

One bright mid-morning the lovely Felipe Bellini (at that time President of the World Boardsailing Association, Juror and committee member of the Spanish National Sailing Federation and ex RCNPP president) walked into my office and asked, 'Hugh, what is happening with the Flying Fifteens?' To which I answered that I had written to the Club Nautico asking if there was anything that they could do for our fleet, and that their reply was that they were not interested in Flying Fifteens as they were not an Olympic class and in any case they didn't like the tone of my letter! So Felipe asked if I could let him have copies of the letter that I had written to the club and their reply, which I gave him, he read them, snorted, and said 'How dare they! Leave these with me, I'm off to Madrid for a committee meeting in two weeks time and the Real Club Nautico Puerto Pollensa will be hearing from the Spanish National Sailing Federation'——!



A little while later we were invited by the Club to let them know what we needed, and after initially launching our boats from the ramp beside the travel lift and storing the boats next to the Marina worker's office, we were then later offered our own hard standing area over on the other side of the marina entrance where the fuel quay is, with our own crane, water for wash downs and electricity for any repair work that we needed to do. They apologized that we would have to drive around from the fuel quay to the shower rooms within the club as they could not see any way of building showers for us where we were!

Eternally grateful, Thank you Felipe.

Interest in Flying Fifteens grew; Michael Clough appeared one day and said he was moving from the UK to live in Palma, so I glibly told him to forget the idea if he didn't bring a Flying Fifteen when he came. A couple of months later and there was another 15. Another container arrived with 6 more and the class just got stronger.

We became more organized and became members of Flying Fifteen International, sending our yearly fixtures and regatta results to be included in the magazine. We elected officers for basic functions and there followed a bright and very happy time. My brother Andrew also arrived towing a fifteen -Rebecca (2950).





Soon after came our first team racing event, with the 'Pollensa Olive Trophy' sponsored by Derek and Chrissie Walker, as the prize for the winning team, racing against the Royal Motor Yacht Club in Poole, principally due to our friendship with David Kenyon, a keen Flying Fifteener from there. Their team arrived, were guests in our homes and we had a week of great sailing, while wives and sweethearts were able to go to the beach or wander around the beautiful streets of old Pollensa town. At the final farewell dinner their team Captain threw down the gauntlet and challenged us to visit them in Poole the next year, so they could have their revenge! We visited them, had a marvellous time and were entertained royally, but they never got their revenge.

The team racing event escalated and the next event in Puerto Pollensa was with 5 clubs participating, Poole, Northern Ireland, Chew Valley Sailing Club, Derwent Water and Puerto Pollensa. The racing was furious and the logistics also. Round robin, every team against every other, each changing boat after the first race so that each team would sail both yellow flag boats and blue flag boats. The thought of protest meetings after the day's racing was just not on, as we were expecting to do more than a dozen races each day, and there was no chance of being able to remember on which leg of which race that a particular incident had occurred! So 'on the water' judging was instigated with three team members from each of the teams that weren't racing, driving three rubber ducks doing the job. The rubber ducks also aided the changing of boats and teams.

It was a magic week, Felipe Bellini was committee boat officer and Judge, everyone had great fun and Puerto Pollensa finally prevailed against Northern Ireland in the final. Puerto Pollensa's 'Dream Team' had done it again.

There followed another team racing event, which reportedly wasn't quite as smooth as the previous ones had been, it was not so popular with those that lent their boats for the event,

as some visiting crews didn't treat the boats with the due care that they deserved, resulting in quite serious damage to one boat in particular.

Soon after this the fleet members opened the previous limitation on sail numbers, allowing people to purchase new boats if they so wished. There naturally followed a period of discontent as those that had bought cheaper old classics, were now precluded from winning races, against much faster newer hull shapes, resulting in vastly reduced fleets for normal weekend racing. At one moment there was even some doubt if the fleet would survive.

In 2004 the RCNPP hosted the first ever European Championship with great success, and in 2007 the Worlds. Very popular with the visiting crews, who enjoyed the warm water sailing and found the hot sandy beaches a great option for other family members whilst the racing was on, this turned Puerto Pollensa into a favoured venue for future events. RCNPP's second Europeans came in 2010.



Each year the fleet competes at 'Palma Vela', a meeting held in the early part of the season, the boats being trailed down to Palma for the event.



Regular racing continues right through the year and many regattas are sailed with the cruiser division of the club, making fun and friendly prize giving events with cocktails and eats at the RCNPP.

Of the original 6 owners whose boats arrived in the first container, only 1 still has a boat and actively competes, John Leaf a mere 78 years old. Well done John. It was a really great pleasure to be able to present John with the Hugh Wilson Trophy this summer.

I don't think that anyone expected the fleet to grow in the way that it has, we just wanted to be able to go sailing and have some fun ! While writing this we have heard of two more boats changing hands in the last weeks, to new sailors to our group, long live Flying Fifteen Pollensa.

Written By Hugh Wilson

Hugh now lives in Brazil and has done for the last 19 years. This summer 2019 he returned to Mallorca with his family, to visit friends and enjoy some wonderful Flying Fifteen sailing, including the Balearic Championship, where he sailed with his son Christopher, and his daughter Annie sailed with the current fleet Captain Michael Beecken.

FLYING FIFTEEN HYDE SAILS - CONSISTENT WINNERS

Over the past 5 years Hyde sails has been on the podium at the Flying Fifteen UK championship, winning two of them in 2015 & 2017 and runners up in the others. Wins at opens and area events over the past seasons represent a consistent performance by any standard.