

flying fifteen Mallorca

If you occasionally read this column and wonder what sailing a Flying Fifteen is like, then maybe I can help. I started sailing with the fleet two years ago having had no experience of a FF and precious little experience of dinghy sailing either.

I'd mucked about in a sailing club on the Solent in Southern England when I was young in ancient wooden dinghies called Fireflies that were made after the Second World War using the same technique of cold lamination that was developed to build aeroplanes. So not much modern to compare it with, but the FF is a whole lot bigger at 20 foot, and so more comfortable and more fun. It also has a proper keel so unless you're trying very hard or are plain unfortunate it doesn't tip up and throw you into the drink. Important plus points to my mind.

I bought a boat with a mate – actually he bought it and then stitched me up for half of it over a drink, but as he was a bit skint I didn't complain, and anyway I'd wanted to get out on the water here for ages. After all, what's the point of living on this beautiful island and never getting to see it from the water? And you don't get much better scenery than the bay of Pollenca with La Fortaleza jutting out into it to remind you of Tom Hiddleston and the Night Manager.

So we joined a fleet of about 10 boats, some sailed by gentlemen of a certain age who've been doing it for ages and always seem to go quicker than us in races, but then you'd expect that wouldn't you? Experience pays in dinghy racing like anything else. And we've discovered taking a few chilled beers and a sandwich or two helps us enjoy the racing even more, although we have occasionally missed a smart turn round the mark while trying to hold a tinnie and fly the spinnaker at the same time.

But we are getting better, and it's surprising how competitive we feel now we understand more about it. And it has to be said that the other skippers are fantastically helpful to novices like us even if most of them insist on running dry ships, advice which we have so far chosen to ignore. We fully intend to do things our way. Watch out for a podium finish at the Palma Vela. Although we're guaranteed to do better in the social beach-BBQ cruises planned for later in the summer.

If you'd like to come and try a sail with us the fleet is always looking for crew and helmsmen to join the fun. There is also a club boat available to try if you want to join races or cruises.

Hugh Birley, FF Gecko 3817

And now, after two months with almost no racing due to extreme storms, to this month's racing.

Liga de Invierno race 3 – Pollensa

Five flying fifteens turned up to for the racing with the cruisers. We'd received the new cut jibs, taller and thinner, and David Miles was keen to try it out on *Stormtrooper*. *fuego fatuo* also had one, but elected to wait and see how things panned out.

First leg was a beat to the windward mark in Cala del Pinar ses Caletes. As designed, the new jibs proved not to be significantly different in speed, the main aim having been to modernise the design and reduce sheet loads. Nevertheless, *fuego fatuo* shot away, and was uncatchable upwind, taking an early lead. Next was an exciting and fast spinnaker reach across the bay to Formentor.

The leg back to the first mark was very tight, effectively a one leg beat. Final leg was deep downwind, a run to the finish at the club. The two leading cruisers, *Carat* – a Swan 45 – and an S&S 38, were the first two over the line. *Stormtrooper* chased *fuego fatuo* but couldn't catch her, finishing second flying fifteen, with *Dragonfly* third. *Fiskardo* beat *Triffid* who were trying out their new rudder. All in all, a perfect day's sailing, just over 14 miles in wonderful winds and warm sun.

Results

1 ESP 3577	<i>fuego fatuo</i>	John Walker / Francisco Gadala-Maria	1
2 ESP 3610	<i>Stormtrooper</i>	David Miles / Chris Doorley	2
3 ESP 3600	<i>Dragonfly</i>	Michael Beecken / Marco Haack	3
4 GBR 3650	<i>Fiskardo</i>	Claus Meyer / Martin Krings	4
5 ESP 3471	<i>Triffid</i>	Stephen Parry / Teresa Parry	5

We've published the 2017 calendar on our website

<http://flyingfifteen.mallorcaservice.de> and also Facebook [@f15spain](#).