

HUNTER'S YARD



Newsletter of the Friends of the Hunter Fleet



Photo:Richard Jenkins

In this issue

Editorial-Christine Wall 2

Chairman's Notes-Neil Hopkinson 3

Events-Louise Hopkinson 4

Yard Report-Martin Whitaker 6

Memories of Tom-Tributes to Tom Grapes

8

Friends Write 13

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Editorial

Welcome to issue 83 of our newsletter.

In the freezing winter of 1947 a young man, Tom Grapes, arrived at Hunters Yard to start a new job there, having just left the Royal Marines.

Seventy seven years later, on Saturday 21st September 2024, that same man, now a little older, was still at the Yard, and had been during all the intervening years- on this occasion sitting quietly by the stove and chatting to old friends as they attended the Hunter Friends Autumn Picnic.

What an amazing record!! To have loyally supported one organisation for all those years.

Sadly, Tom died on 30th October.

From p.8 onwards in the newsletter there are tributes to Tom and his contribution to Hunters Yard.

There are many Friends who keep their old records of sailing trips in Hunter Yachts. I believe It is because the Hunter boats mean so much to so many people that these records are kept.

In 2023, I started an archive at the Norfolk Record Office of all the Friends newsletters so far (as well as brochures etc.), and in this issue, p. 13, Paul Harrison shares with us some of the memorabilia from sailing trips of the past, which his family have kept.

The Friend's AGM is on 17th May; I look forward to seeing some of you then.

Best Wishes,

Christine

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Chairman's Notes..

I had the honour of attending Tom Grape's funeral, a tribute and celebration to his long and wonderful life.

It was lovely to see that a few of The Friends had managed to make the journey and Tom's family really appreciated this. I am sure that many of you were there in spirit also.

Tom had countless stories to tell and many of us have been fortunate to hear them sat around the stove on a cold winter's morning down The Yard. One of them that comes to mind concerned *Sundew*, I think in the fifties, and occurred in Heigham Sound. We have all sailed close to those green posts but on this particular day *Sundew's* crew sailed a little too close and ripped the lee shrouds clean out of the hull. I don't remember Tom telling me how long they sat on a lee shore waiting for rescue but

in those days without mobiles it may have been some time.

I am sure that those of you who hired boats when Tom was working at The Yard will remember, possibly with a little trepidation, his passage down the dyke in a rowing boat with a pot of varnish ready to touch up any of those inevitable scuffs that occur when sailing!!

He was held in great respect and his memory will live on with The Fleet well into the future.

There will a memorial book at The Yard in which Friends can share their memories and perhaps add a photograph or two to commemorate Tom's life. This will be in place in time for the AGM.

I am looking forward to seeing and talking to many of you at the AGM in May and if you have any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to give me a call on 07930 910870.

Neil Hopkinson



Broads May Morning

EVENTS

I am sure that you are all looking forward to getting back to the Yard for one of your events for 2025, so here they are. The 2 day skippered sails are very popular, and we only have a couple of places left so get your place booked as soon as possible.

FHF AGM

May is not very far away and as is the norm we are expecting fine weather and good sailing. The boats will have been out on the water for a few weeks but will still look resplendent with their freshly varnished hulls glistening in the sunshine. As always, we will have a barbecue lunch, followed by sailing and one of Jeremy Halls excellent wildlife walks.

When: 17th May 2025

Where: The Hunters Yard from 1000

The Day's Programme:

*The AGM: 1100

*BBQ lunch of sausages, beef burgers, salad

*An afternoon sail with one of the Yard's volunteer skippers. We normally get to St Benet's and back, as long as a good wind blows.

*Jeremy Halls from English Nature will be running another of his very informative walks around Horsefen.

*Rowing boats will be available for you to row in and around Womack. You could row to the island to enjoy a picnic or moor at Womack Staithe and partake of an ice cream from the shop.

Food: Hot drinks, biscuits, BBQ.

Cost: £7.50 for FHF members (also cakes for sale).

Two-Day Skippered Sails

We will be using three Hustlers for the skippered sails, *Hustler 2* (Neil Hopkinson), *Hustler 3* (John Moore), and *Hustler 4* (Joy Eade). We will be able to enjoy some excellent sailing on the Bure's wide-open spaces, that is until we approach the trees from Ranworth Dam to Horning. We will also be sailing on Blackhouse Broad, after the challenge of the narrow entrance has been negotiated.

When: 15th to 20th June 2025

Where: The Bure to Horning and Blackhouse Broad



Blackhouse Broad

Sailing programme: The boats will be sailing from and returning to the Yard. At Horning we will be mooring beside a private cottage near Blackhouse Broad.

We will meet at 1000 at the Yard.

What to Wear: Waterproof & warm clothes just in case it rains or is cold. Clothes suitable for an evening meal in a Pub.

Lunches: You will need to bring a packed lunch for both days. Excellent lunches can be bought in Horning at the village shop or the Deli beside the Moorhen B and B.

The Moorhen B and B:

We are back at The Moorhen so you will only be a short walk from the pub for our evening meal.

Cost: £240 per person, includes your bed & breakfast, but excludes evening meal.

Bat Talk and Walk



This walk is for 8 people only. Matt Magson from English Nature will be fronting this exciting evening again. June is an excellent time to explore the twilight world around Hunters Yard and we expect to hear and possibly get a fleeting glimpse of three or more species of bats.

When: 28th June 2025

Where: Hunters Yard and Horsefen

Time: 1930 meet & park at the Yard

The Programme:

1930 to 2000: Coffee & biscuits

2000 to 2030: Bat Presentation

2030 to 2045: Questions and
Answers

2045 to 2130: Walk along the
wooded track to
Horsefen.

2130: Finish at the Yard

What to wear: Clothes to keep you warm on a cold June evening and dry if it rains. Walking boots recommended.

Food: Hot drink, soup and sandwiches

Cost: £10 for FHF members or £12 for non-members

Autumn Picnic

It is always a pleasure to see so many of you enjoying that special feeling of being part of The Hunters Yard. Being out on the water with these traditional Broads boats is one of life's great pleasures.

When: 21st September 2025

Where: Hunters Yard from 1000

The Programme:

*Sailing with a skipper in the morning from 1100 and in the afternoon from 1400.

*Wildlife walks around Horsefen with Jeremy Halls from English Nature from 1100 in the morning and 1400 in the afternoon.

*A cruise on the Nancy Oldfield boat to see our yachts sailing out on the river. Two cruises, 1100 and 1400 start.

*Rowing boats will be available throughout the day for your use.

What to wear: be prepared for a cold wind on the water and there is always the possibility of rain.

Food: bring the picnic of your choice. We will have hot drinks available as well as the possibility to enjoy those excellent home baked cakes.

Cost: £5.00 for FHF members

If you would like to join us on any of the events, please contact Louise:

Mobile: 07939 014747

Email: events@huntersfriends.co.uk

Louise Hopkinson

Please note: For all Events. do not ring Yard to book, but contact the Events organiser.

Yard Report February 2025

Belated best wishes for the new year to everyone! Suddenly the new season is rushing towards us. We always breathe a sigh of relief in October when the last hirer departs but we are now pleased to see the winter nearly behind us. We are looking forward to welcoming the first hirers of the season which will be the Kestrels and Swans young people's groups.

Thankfully we have only had one day so far this year with water through the sheds. As a result it is unusually dry. The varnishing is finished on the cabin boats, the electric engines are being serviced, masts varnished and Ian is prepping the rigging. We are working towards 10th March - cabin boat launch day.

As well as prepping the boats we are working through a general maintenance programme which includes new flooring and showers in the men's section, sprucing up the kitchen area and stripping, repairing and painting the windows fronting the car park. Much of the work is being done by a few volunteers.

In the office we have been pretty busy putting in a new accounts system - it is promising to make some admin tasks a great deal easier. A rolling programme of improvements is in place to the website and booking system. You may have seen activity, too, on the marketing side aimed at encouraging families and under 25s out sailing and also plugging the quiet times in the calendar at the beginning and end of the season. This year we'll be opening on Sundays in the peak period and offering half day and full day skippered sails as well

as the traditional 2hr sails.

Many Friends will remember that we took around 600 children and youngsters out sailing last year - for many of them this was their first experience on the Broads let alone a sailing boat. This year we are aiming to take about 400 children out and will be introducing some of them to the wherry *Albion* as well as working with the Broads Authority education department to show them some of the nature in the Broads.

The youth work is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Alan Boswell, Anguish Educational Foundation, Norwich Freeman's and the Ranworth Trust as well as small donations from individual Friends. We have funding through to January 2026. We are now putting together funding applications to extend the project for a further three years. There are three parts to the project - taking primary school children out sailing, working with Norwich charities to get their young people out sailing, and residential sailing on the cabin yachts for up to a week at a time for small groups. If any Friend would like to make an individual donation to support this work it will be very gratefully received.

A call out through the Ludham Parish Newsletter for volunteers has met with some success - we are extending this to adjacent parishes as we try to build the base of local volunteers. Help in basic jobs like mowing the grass, trimming the hedge, painting and helping out at events means that we can keep the yard spruced up while we concentrate on the boats and the hirers

hirers in the season.

This season we will complete the extensive repair work on *Swallow* which featured in the 1974 film of Arthur Ransome's *Swallows and Amazons*. Andrew is fitting new planks, frames, stem and other bits and pieces. When completed *Swallow* joins *Amazon* for hire from the yard for Swallows and Amazons enthusiasts. There will be a page on the website devoted to the boats, alongside our own *Lullaby* (*Teasel* in the films of *Coot Club* and *The Big Six*), *Dreadnought* and *Titmouse*. New for the website is a guide to locations on the Broads featured in the book.

There has been some movement in moorings this season but all spaces are now full except for a new space in the top dyke. This will suit a boat of around 18ft or less so if you know anyone who is looking for a mooring, ask them to get in touch.

We hope to see many Friends this season - drop in any time for a cup of tea!

Martin Whitaker

Local Volunteers Wanted at local boatyard

This is a piece which Martin wrote to be included in the parish newsletters of the villages close to the Yard. The article brought an encouraging response.

I am including it in the Friends Newsletter as there may be Friends who live fairly close to the Yard or there may be Friends who live further afield who may be interested and able to help occasionally.

I know Martin and Dan would be very pleased to see you; there are a variety of jobs to volunteer for, and I'm sure a warm welcome is assured.

“At the end of HorseFen Road you will find the Norfolk Heritage Fleet Trust at Hunter’s Yard - operating classic yacht hire since the 1930s.

Are you looking for something to do in your free time over the summer? We need help on general maintenance (scraping and painting), cutting the grass, helping out at visitor events and much more.

You’ll find a welcome cup of tea, friendly people and a lovely spot for a bit of lunch.

Come and visit for a look round at any time. If you would like to find out more about volunteering ask for Martin or Dan and have a chat about how you might be able to help out.

We are a charity that has a fleet of classic sailing boats for hire. We also take children out sailing on the Broads (over 600 last year) introducing them for the first time to boats and their local environment”.

Most grateful thanks to Judith Ellis who has provided an electric outboard to be used with Amazon.



Summer evening at How Hill



Memories of Tom- Tributes to Tom Grapes

Issue 29 of the Newsletter of the Friends of the Hunter Fleet, March 2007, celebrated Tom Grapes 60 years at the Yard. (See opposite reproduction of front cover)

Tom's amazing achievement was celebrated with a tribute article in the Eastern Daily Press. Tom also featured in an Anglia News broadcast and was honoured with a celebration meal courtesy of the Hunter Trustees.

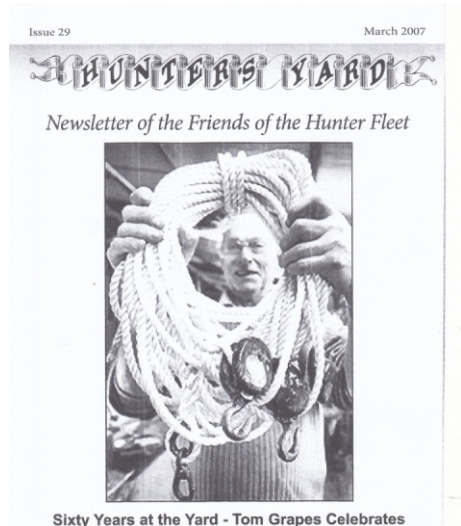
It is hard to believe it, but Tom's start at the Yard in 1947 was not only in the post war years of continuing austerity, but also in one of the hardest winter we have ever experienced. (Tom cycled along the frozen river to work at the Yard because this was easier than battling snow drifts -up to 16 feet in places- along Horse Fen Road!).

Tom actually retired from the Yard in 1994, but the Yard found it difficult to cope without him so he continued in a part time capacity.

And indeed, Tom's presence at the Yard continued; he was at the Friends Autumn Picnic in September 2024, chatting to the many people who still remembered him.

Tom sadly died on 30 October 2024.

St Catherine's church, Ludham was packed for his funeral service on 25 November 2024 with family, friends and neighbours from the village, sailing friends and Trustees and Friends of Hunters Yard.



The service was conducted by the Chair of Hunters Trustees, the Rev'd Neville Khambatta, with tributes from his younger brother, Ken who recalled what an excellent big brother Tom was, initiating him into the art of making a good catapult, from Tom's sons, grandchildren and the Rev'd Khambatta. It was a lovely service.

On the following pages, are further tributes, celebrating Tom's amazing 77 year association with Hunter's Yard.

Donations to Hunter's Yard in remembrance of Tom, collected at his funeral, are to be put to something special.

This article, written by Philip Bray, appeared on the front of the December Issue of the Hunters Yard Newsletter

“With great sadness, we announce the death of Tom Grapes, a true part of Hunter's Yard and Broads history, who worked at the Yard for more than 60 years.

Tom was born in Fleggburgh on 3 November 1929 and a year later the family moved to Ludham where his father worked as a gardener at The Grange. His grandfather was a thatcher and his great grandfather ran the last wherryman's pub at St Benet's.

He went to schools in Ludham and Stalham until he was 16 when he went to work as a gardener/odd job man in the village.

He told a wonderful wartime story of he and friends finding a radio transmitter hidden at St Benet's Abbey which resulted in two German spies being arrested at Wroxham.

At 17 he joined the Royal Marines and trained at Deal and Lympstone before being medically discharged.

He returned to Ludham and went looking for a job at Hunter's Yard.

There, he met Stanley (Percy's younger son) who offered him a job on the understanding that he also joined the Ludham volunteer fire brigade. He did all sorts of jobs, learnt his varnishing skills from Stanley and helped Cyril with boatbuilding, including building *Wood Anemone*. His day was 8.15 am to 5 pm for £5 per week.

He married Edna in 1952 and had two sons, Graham and Ian. He took his family on camping holidays and later upgraded to a camper van. Edna died young in 1976, and in 1992 he married Pam, who predeceased him.

When the boat yard was sold to Norfolk County Council he continued and became a council employee. He did any job that needed to be done, including all the signwriting on the yachts, until he retired in October 1994.

But he couldn't keep away and came back to help for two days week for NCC and then the Trust.



He retired again in October 2010 after 63½ years working at Hunter's Yard but still frequently visited. He always enjoyed chatting to customers and to Friends at their events. He could be seen on most Saturdays going round the boats sitting in a dinghy and touching up the varnish. He died on 30 October and is survived by his brother, sister, two sons and four grandchildren.”

Memories of Tom Grapes

Some personal memories from Jennifer, granddaughter of Percy Hunter and daughter of Cyril Hunter.

“My memories of Tom go back to 1947 when he started work at the Yard and I was eight years old!

I was a regular visitor during the letting season on the Saturday morning change-over days when I took “elevenses” to my father, Cyril, to have while he was cleaning the boats. Tom was involved in cleaning all

the kitchen utensils so that the pots and pans were shining and ready for the next customers.

The other things that I always associate with Tom is his preparation of the rigging in the winter, varnishing the quants and masts and ensuring that there were always spares available for the inevitable accidents, all to the extremely high standards that Percy expected from everyone.

While the boats were being cleaned inside, Tom was regularly seen in a dinghy with a pot of varnish meticulously touching up marks on all the boats so that they gleamed in the sunshine ready for the next customers. More than anything else, his painting skills on the transom after the minimum of five layers of varnish had been employed were second to none. I shall always remember him sitting with an old lamp over his shoulder and painting the



*Tom with Jennifer's father and Stanley
Jennifer says” Tom looks smarter than the
other two! So the photo must have been
taken soon after he arrived”*

Name and burgee with enviable accuracy. Sadly, Percy died in 1964. This was a major blow to Cyril and Stanley who struggled on for a couple of years without Percy, meaning there was a serious threat to the Yard's existence and the probability of having to put it up for sale.

However, luck was on their side because the appearance of the Yard on the market coincided with the Norfolk County Council's (NCC's) wish to establish a sailing base for Norfolk children. The result was that the NCC became the new owners of the Hunter Fleet in 1968 when the Yard was renamed "The Norfolk County Sailing Base" with Les Gee as the Fleet Warden and Tom retained as a Yard Hand.

The next milestone for Tom was in 1994 when the NCC's budget came under pressure and Tom "officially" retired after 47 years of continuous service. As Graham and Ian were the only full-time staff Tom, unsurprisingly, couldn't resist the pull of the Yard and he agreed to come back part time to help with the winter maintenance.

In February 1995 the NCC, with limited funds available, decided to sell the Hunter Fleet. This caused an immediate outcry from the public with a "Save Our Sail Fleet" campaign by the EDP. Things moved with amazing speed and by 1st March a Norfolk Heritage Fleet steering group was set up and became the sole bidder resulting in the launch of the appeal to purchase the Fleet on 1st April 1996.



The "Save our Sail Fleet" group at the Yard.
*Clockwise from centre: Lisa Morgan,
Ian Grapes, Simon Crudgington, Bryan Read,
Graham Cooper, Tom Grapes*

Again, Tom was retained in his part-time role.

The Yard was re-named Hunter's Yard with the original Hunter Burgee and continued it's original business of private letting, as well as school trips, with great success over the holiday periods.

2007 was a memorable year for Tom. To mark the 60th Anniversary of his employment and this great achievement, Tom featured in a tribute article in the EDP as well as a celebration Lunch provided by the Trust.

Tom always called himself the "Odd Job Man". He was very proud to have helped with the new build "*Lucent*" for which he made up the rigging, applied all the coats of varnish and painted the name and burgee on the stern.

Tom finally retired "properly" in 2007 but was down at the Yard quite often! I saw a lot more of him after I came back to live in Norfolk and we would always have a chat on occasions when Friends gathered at the Yard. Latterly we joked about the "joys" of growing old! The Autumn Picnic in September last year was the last time I saw Tom and, although he looked quite poorly, he was still up for that chat.

Hunter's Yard was very fortunate to have had the benefit of Tom's loyal service over 60 years, including several major changes to the Yard.

His was a good life well lived.

Jennifer

.....And some memories of Tom from David Clarke

"When I began skippering my own boat we always had a yacht with an engine because that is what my family always did.

One day we ended up mooring in the evening at the end of Hunter's dike.

In the morning we walked up to the boatshed and introduced ourselves at the office where we were given a brochure; then we went on our way.

Later that summer we discussed having about four days on a Hunter's boat. We had a great deal of apprehension about sailing with no engine. Setting off and docking were the main problems. By the end of the summer we had decided to give the Hunter's boats a try. A boat was booked with Mrs Webb and one Saturday we arrived.

Tom was detailed to introduce us to the boat, we knew what to do to sail. He said the Hunter's boats sailed easier than others, the keel and rudder gave steerage well below walking pace and coming up to a mooring the speed must be reduced right down and the boat will still steer well. Lifting the boom on the topping lift may not be enough to slow the boat.

I must have looked a bit doubtful about all of this so Tom asked which boats I had sailed before- I told him and he replied with all the problems and advantages of those boats I had sailed. I was convinced, Tom knew about the boats on the Broads and he wasn't giving me sales patter. I only ever hired one more non Hunters boat after that. Thanks for the introduction, Tom. If it wasn't for you I probably wouldn't be a member of the Friends of Hunter's Yard.

David

Friends Write....

From John Pugh

With reference to Tom Grapes, was he any relation to the Grapes who ran the pub at Thurne(No!)

My father took me to the pub in Easter 1946 to see if they had survived the War. My father was one of the few 'outsiders' that Herbert Woods allowed to race in the Regatta he organised at the end of the letting season, for the staff of the yard at Potter. They raced for The Gold Cup which was presented at the Grape's pub during the special dinner given by Herbert Woods for all the staff. My father and his best friend were assumed as staff for the night. They stayed there on many occasion.

My father and his friend bought the Yarmouth O/D 'Pimpernel' just before the War from Herbert Woods and raced her in many regattas. By co-incident I saw *Pimpernel* this last Spring for the first time nce we sold her back in the late '50s.

Kind regards,

John

PS I have a photo of our two frozen crews at Acle Bridge on our last morning at Easter 1957, having had a good week's sailing in *Hustler 2 and 3*.

From Paul Harrison

Hello Christine

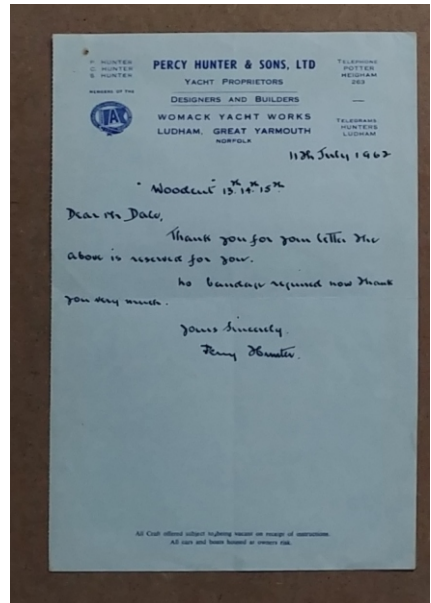
I was very interested to read the small paragraph in the Friends newsletter, issue 79 (Nov 2023) about "Archived for Posterity".

I was first introduced at the tender age of 4 in 1964 to Hunters Yard by my father John Dale and his brother Derek, both of whom worked as telephone engineers for the

GPO, now of course BT. Over the years they taught me the finer points of sailing a Hunters boat even to the point of sailing singlehandedly, a feat my uncle was very adept at.

Derek passed away back in 1998 leaving my father to sort out and clear his flat. Among his brothers' belongings were a large pile of various Broads photographs, holiday invoices, letters and other Percey Hunter & Sons, Ltd paperwork. My father too has now passed away, July 2022, leaving me and my brother to sort out his own possessions. Both my uncle and father came from a generation that never throw anything away..... sound familiar to any of the Friends?

In hindsight I'm so glad they didn't, as I now have in my possession both of their



*Yacht reservation letter signed
By Percy Hunter*

Broads paraphernalia which I would very much like to donate to a Hunter's Yard I have photographed a few items (there is lots more) to give a flavour of how things were done back in the day! All handwritten and I even have letters signed by Percy himself. Some Friends may remember Percy did a lot of the paperwork in those days himself.

The half model of the Hustler was built by a gentleman by the name of Peter Ward in Poole. I took measurements from one of the Hustlers (number 4 I think) and gave them to Peter. The aim of the exercise was to present this amazing model to my father for his 70th birthday as a family present. It has hung on the wall at the bottom of the stairs in the family home for 25 years now. I have inherited it since my fathers death but would love the "Yard" to have it if you canaccommodate it.

Should these time capsules of Hunters Yard history be of interest I would very much like to come and visit the yard again. It has been a long time since I last visited as I now live in Wales but do visit my brother in Saffron Walden every so often so a visit to the "Yard" is not out of the question when we could meet to hand over to the correct person.

Look forward to hearing from you later.
Kind regards *Paul Harrison*

I did indeed start an archive of Friends newsletters, hire brochures etc. at the Norfolk Record Office, with the idea of continuing to add to it, so that the record of the unique heritage boatyard, which is Hunters Yard, will not be lost,

I'm sure that the wonderful collection from Paul's family will be added to it. This will be discussed at the next Friends committee meeting. Ed.

SNIPPETS

*FRIENDS MEMBERSHIP

The membership currently stands at 690 active members.
With a total of 947

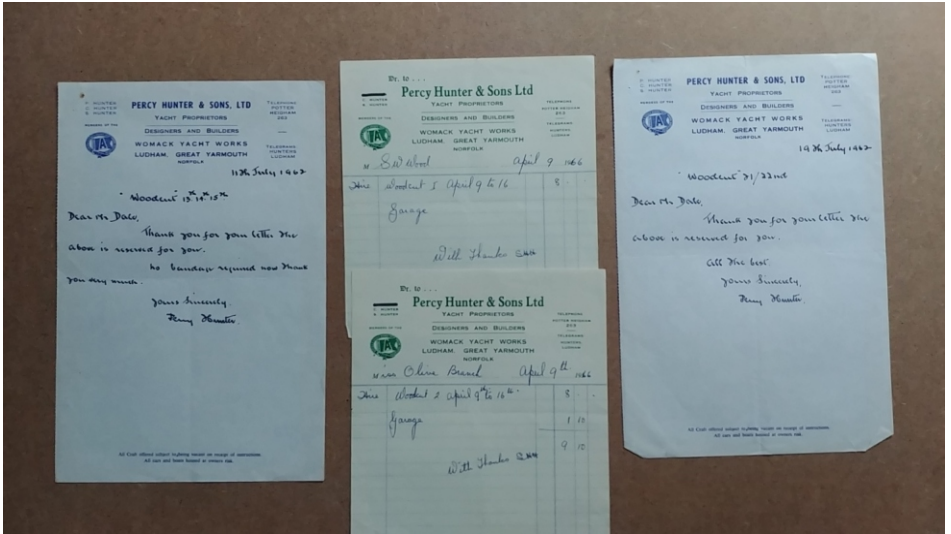
*The Yard front doors to be repainted this year

*GIFT CARDS

Gift Cards are now available from the Yard; these may be exchanged for Friends membership; yacht hire; merchandise etc.



MEMORABILIA FROM PAUL'S COLLECTION



Handwritten invoices-some signed by Percy Hunter



Half model of Hustler by Peter Ward of Poole

Hunter Memorabilia from 1960s



Friends AGM 2025
SATURDAY 17th MAY

We look forward to seeing you.....

- *Do you wish to continue receiving a paper copy of the newsletter of Friends of the Hunter Fleet?
- * There may be a small extra cost for this.
- *This will be discussed at the AGM

Friends AGM 2025
SATURDAY 17th MAY

We look forward to seeing you.....

- *New bench in memory of Les Gee, donated by Jean Gee.
- *This will be unveiled at the AGM

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