

Live a Life You Will Remember

My name is Stephen Kirk and I've been a Heswall resident for just over two years. I have to say this little town really is a fantastic place to live. Full of friendly people, great shops and restaurants, within easy commuting distance of Liverpool and Chester, an hour's drive from Snowdonia and close to the sea, which is what this article is about.

We moved up here from London at the beginning of 2017 in search of a better work-life balance for our young family. As part of that, before completing the move, I spent a fair bit of time looking into getting a small boat to muck around with once we moved up here and to teach our kids to sail like my Dad did with my brother, sister and I when we were growing up. We were lucky enough to be gifted a small Wayfarer by an older gentleman from mid-Wales who had decided to hang up his sailing spurs – we've named her *Maggie*.

I then looked into joining a local sailing club and was again fortunate enough to get a very friendly welcome from Dee Sailing Club, located down at the beach in Thurston. The club has been around since 1909 and used to be located where Sheldrakes is, but relocated to Thurston a number of years ago. This is a great club and I would recommend anyone with the slightest interest in sailing to come down to one of the open days to check it out.



We have had great fun sailing *Maggie* out on the Dee Estuary, on the Marine Lake at West Kirby, down off Anglesey and at Lake Bala last summer (photo of my son, Oliver, aka Captain Kirk, at Bala). Oliver (age seven) can now more or less handle her and his little sister India (age four at the time) steered us to the pub at Bala last summer. The year before Georgia (then aged three) even managed to have a nap on her while we were out sailing in Red Wharf Bay off the coast of Anglesey. We have also taken quite a few of Oliver's school friends from St Peter's CoE Primary School out on her over the past two summers, hopefully inspiring them to become sailors too.

However, being a keen outdoorsman and inspired by the likes of Frank Dye's book *Ocean-Crossing Wayfarer: to Iceland and Norway in an Open Boat* (a 16ft open dinghy) and Peter Clutterbuck's *The Sea Takes No Prisoners* (both excellent reads), I was keen to take *Maggie* on some more adventurous passages. This resulted in hatching a plan to sail her from the Wirral to Anglesey and back, which quite a few people dismissed as crazy. Fortunately David Heron, one of the other dads I know whose kids do swimming lessons with our kids, was also crazy enough to think this sounded like a good idea. This enabled us to head down to the sailing club for many serious planning sessions last winter (some snooker may have been played and pints consumed at the same time). Joking aside, we did get lots of helpful advice from some of the club's cruising fleet members, who have sailed these waters many times before, albeit on bigger boats.



I am pleased to report that we successfully completed our trip over the beginning of May Bank Holiday weekend. It was quite an adventure. We covered about a hundred nautical miles over three days and sailed from Meols to Conwy on Day 1, from Conwy to Beaumaris and then to Rhyl on Day 2 and finally from Rhyl back to Meols on Day 3. We had favourable conditions but it was still pretty dodgy doing it in a small boat like a Wayfarer, which is really meant for relatively calm inshore waters (don't worry we were in regular communication with the Coastguard Station at Holyhead to update them on our movements).

After successfully completing the first leg we had a bit too much to drink in Conwy on the first night, which made it hard to keep our breakfasts down the next day. And we were lucky enough to be allowed to sleep on the floor of Rhyl Yacht Club because we couldn't find anywhere else to stay over the bank holiday weekend. We saw a pod of dolphins going the other way just off the Great Orme halfway between Beaumaris and Rhyl. It was pretty amazing sailing in the bright sunshine with snow on hills of Snowdonia in the background.



A big thank you to everyone who helped us out with this trip. Dee Sailing Club for all of the advice we got from members there. Rhyl Yacht Club for kindly putting us up for the night. Reverend Martin Cannam from St Peter's and The Church of the Good Shepherd who thoughtfully included us in their prayers. And, most importantly, thank you to our very understanding wives who granted us a hall pass to go off on this adventure.

For anyone interested, contact details for Dee Sailing Club are included below and remember fellow Heswall residents, like Avici said: "Live a life you will remember!"

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<https://www.dee-sc.co.uk/>