

Jill Findlay writes: *This is an extract from a letter written by my late husband, Paul Findlay in November 1985, to the then owners of Dorian.*

" My late father, Leonard Findlay, bought Dorian from a Mr. Webberly in 1950 for £1125. Mr. Webberly ran a small boatyard at Bosham, Chichester, and was selling up to emigrate to Australia. He had bought the boat as an open 42foot harbour launch in 1937, from the Admiralty. He then lengthened it and converted it to charter as a cruising yacht, only to have it commandeered by the Admiralty for the duration of the war. She was not used by them, and spent the time at anchor in Chichester Harbour. We later learnt that she was taken over to Dunkirk by the Navy.

When we bought her she had a single Scripps V8 petrol engine, which I would guess was put in after the war. These engines were the Canadian marinised version of the Ford V8, quite a powerful engine at the time, which were used in landing craft. Not liking the idea of going to sea with with one engine, my father had a second one put in. The shaft work was done by Bowker and Budd of Bosham, while the engines were were installed by a Mr. Atherton, a marine engineer. He also put n the vapouriser to run the engines on TVO {paraffin} Mr. Atherton then delivered the boat to Twickenham on the Thames. She lay at Strawberry Vale for some years, then up to Toughts Yard at Teddington, and then to a berth at Maidenhead.

As a result of many years of neglect there was a lot of work to be done. The inwhales were rotten from end to end and had to be removed. New sister timbers and ribs to the upperworks had to be put in and also many of the upperworks planks had to be replaced. The sides of of the stern cabin were replaced with mahogany and the deckhead recovered. We did all this without the aid of power tools of any kind!

As this meant stripping the inside, we decided to alter the internal accommodation. When we took her over she had four bunk berths in the forecabin, then a two berth cabin which we turned into the galley. There were two berths in the saloon, so we removed one and put in a sideboard and cupboard, and added a settee bed. Aft there was a two berth cabin, a minute galley and a loo. The steering gear worked onto the tiller which protruded into the cabin. It was not long before the steering system jammed. We then replaced it with a quadrant head on the rudder, and put a 2:1 gear beneath the helm working on to a chain system with wire on the straight section. All of the standing and running rigging was replaced, and

a new mizzen sail was made.

For many years we cruised Dorian from the Thames up to Great Yarmouth, round the Broads, down to Yarmouth Isle of Wight, and across to France and through the Canals from Calais to Dunkirk. For a while my brother and his wife lived on her at Benson. My wife and I took Dorian up the Thames as far as she would go – to Folly Bridge in Oxford, with our infant son lashed into his playpen on the foredeck.

Early in the 1960's my father sold Dorian to an old friend, Ted Cattle. After Ted died we lost track of the boat until she appeared again at Ash Island.

I took out the old compass which was of the quadrantal type and had a 14 degree deviation error on some headings. We replaced it with a P2 aircraft grid compass [30 shillings, Government Disposal Sale] which proved to be very reliable. "

Jill again:

*I am sure you will have noticed that several of the facts in the article about Dorian in the book The Little Ships of Dunkirk were wrong and muddled. I wanted to take this opportunity to set the record straight! I will enclose a copy of the For Sale article in case you haven't seen it. There is also an entry for Dorian in the Lloyds Register of Yachts for 1952, when she was owned by my father-in-law.*