

THE MARTHA MCGILDA CHARITABLE TRUST

(1980-2010)

There are not many detailed accounts of the benefits that disadvantaged young people gain from the discipline, education and adventure of sailing. One of these accounts “The Tuesday Boys” was written by Lady Rozelle Raynes who was instrumental, with her husband, in setting up the Martha McGilda Charitable Trust in the East End of London. The Sea-Change Sailing Trust expands and develops this work [[Click here to find out more](#)].

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Lady Rozelle joined the WRNS at the age of seventeen as a Stoker Second Class, and served at Combined Ops bases in the Portsmouth Command during the Second World War. She was demobilised with the rank of Leading Stoker. On leaving she became a deck hand on a 100 ton Bermudian Cutter, and on her twenty-first birthday she was given a converted ship's lifeboat in which she explored the coasts of France, Belgium and Holland every Summer. In 1956 she bought her first proper yacht the Folkboat “Martha McGilda” which was built by Mr. Chippendale of Warsash in 1953.

In “Yachting Monthly”, May and June 1960, there is an account by Rozelle Beattie of “Martha McGilda's” voyage from Dover to Finland [much of it singlehanded]--- the ultimate aim of which was to visit Russia which at that time was behind the “Iron Curtain”. The only mechanical power used during the voyage was a seagull outboard motor hung over the starboard quarter and the whole episode was eventually published as a book by Rozelle Raynes entitled “North in a Nutshell” (1968). [She also published “Maid Matelot”(1971) and “The Sea Bird”(1979) concerning her wartime experience and career at sea].

The Book “The Tuesday Boys” comes later (1991) and is an account of a social experiment with eight disadvantaged boys living “in long term care” in Newham, London during the mid 1970's. The broad outline of this experiment can be gleaned from a paper entitled “**The Use of Volunteers in the Childcare Service**” [14th December, 1976] written by Mr. Mathews the Director of Newham Social Services.

“This Report informs the Committee of the progress of a venture with children in residential care. Some two years ago the Department was approached by Mrs. R. Raynes, wife of a previous Deputy Medical Officer of Health for the London Borough of Newham, regarding the possibility

of arranging for a group of boys to learn the art of sailing and to study forms of navigation. The boat used for the practical sailing was owned by Dr. And Mrs. Raynes, and moored at the London Marina. At the outset it was felt that the experiment should be task orientated. All the boys were from the Edith Moorey Home, their ages ranging from 9 to 13 years.

The boys were in two groups, spending half a day each fortnight under the guidance of Mrs. Raynes. This was made possible through the co-operation of the school staff at each of the schools attended who, on each games afternoon, allowed the children to be released from school.

During the first year the boys, none of whom had previous sailing experience, became aware of the many facets of the equipment of a boat, knots, personal and corporate safety, etc., which was related to trips on the boat in the Marina and on the River Thames. During the winter the academic aspects of navigation, rules of the sea, etc., were undertaken both on the boat and in their home.

During the year, the boys spent a day on the bridge of a cross-Channel steamer, taxing the Captain and crew on the operating of a large ship, and especially on basic navigation methods which they had learnt during the previous period.

Progress was such that some of the boys were sent on courses on training ships, namely the Larvik and the Arethusa, where they, together with other boys, formed the crew on ten day trips to the Continent and around the coast of this country.

The project is continuing and I am informed by my Advisory Staff that there has been a marked change for the better in the boys. There is no doubt that their confidence and independence have improved as a result of this experience, and it has given them a new outlook on life.

A few weeks ago a test was arranged for them on the practical and academic aspects of seamanship. The examiner was Captain Ian McLaren, Deputy Head of the School of Navigation, and you will be pleased to know that three of the eight boys gained a distinction, and five passed with merit. I would like to record my thanks to Mrs. Raynes who has spent endless time and energy in making this venture possible, as well as to Miss Murphy, the senior Houseparent of the Edith Moorey Home, who has participated in the venture to the full, including undertaking courses in her own time and at her own expense to support the boys."

What this report does not emphasise are the backgrounds of each of these eight boys some of which were horrific. Nor does it emphasise the total commitment of the young Irish woman Emily Murphy in attempting to provide them with a loving home.

There are other important aspects of "The Tuesday Boys" which are brought out in the book. The boys were invited to the Raynes' home beside the River Thames, in Limehouse Reach, from which, among other things, they watched from the balcony the tall ships and barges pass by.

They were also invited to the Raynes' country house on the edge of the white cliffs near Dover [The closest house in England to France!] where they camped in the walled garden. On special occasions they were treated to parties and were given a great deal of "freedom within limits". They were treated in many ways as the children that Dick and Rozelle did not have and this becomes even more apparent at the end of the book where the boys get married and face the huge problems of living in a society which often rejects them. For example, Rozelle describes the murder of one and the imprisonment of another. Despite the sea training only Victor went to sea in what was a rapidly shrinking Merchant Navy. [Two of the others volunteered to join the Army]. Nevertheless, the book gives a great deal of evidence showing that all eight boys benefitted from this sailing adventure.

What strikes one in particular are the high standards that were set for these young boys during the experiment. The following are some of the questions that Rozelle drew up prior to their examination by Captain McLaren and gives a flavour of how hard they must have all worked.

- 1] What would you do if you were out at sea and heard a gale warning on the radio?
- 2] What preparations would you make before entering harbour?
- 3] What would you do if one of the crew fell overboard out at sea?
- 4] What could you do if the boat ran aground on a falling tide?
- 5] What is the difference between Spring and Neap tides?
- 6] Look up the time of high water at Sandwich on May 2nd, 1976.
- 7] What time could you enter harbour if your boat drew five feet?
- 8] What are the twelve most important items of equipment on a sea going boat?
- 9] If you were at sea in a fog and heard the following signals what do they mean and what action would you take?
 - a) Two prolonged blasts at intervals of not more than two minutes?
 - b) One long and two short blasts?
 - c) A bell ringing rapidly for about five seconds?
- 10] If you see high cirrus clouds moving in from the West across a clear blue sky, what type of weather can you expect?

The practical side of the exam concerned each group of four boys getting either the 25ft Folkboat *Martha McGilda* or the 30 foot cutter *Roskilde* under way, bringing them alongside a pontoon or another vessel at the far end of the marina and mooring them correctly with bow and stern rope,

springs etc., hoisting and reefing the mainsail, picking up several “men overboard” and finally bringing their vessel back to the pontoon where they had started from. These practical exercises took place in winds which on occasion reached Force 6 or 7 and were accompanied in many instances with driving rain!

After Captain McLaren had examined them the boys were issued with a “Martha McGilda Certificate of Seamanship” signed by him. This together with their log book which contained all their navigation, rule of the road, buoyage notes and dates and times of trips made under sail and power could and was presented to future employers as evidence of their ability to achieve.

After the experiment with the first group of eight boys had proved so successful the Martha McGilder Charitable trust was created to further the work and this trust was first registered in 1980. In 2010 it was unfortunately de-registered and a chapter in voluntary social work came to an end. The Trust’s stated objectives were: “The advancement of education by providing training in seamanship or training in other similar character building activities in order to encourage self-reliance and the acceptance of responsibility amongst young persons in London, and other urban centres, who would not otherwise have the opportunity to receive such training.” They listed their activities as: “Education, Training, Disability, Sport and Recreation.”

The Sea-Change Sailing Trust is working at a different time in a different place [although The Tuesday Boys did explore the Walton Backwaters and sail on the Thames Barge *Thalatta* !] but it is, likewise, concerned with enhancing the lives of disadvantaged young people and to this end it works closely with social services. In this sense it carries on the vision of the Martha McGilda Trust which made such a difference to so many young lives during its time. [[Click here to read Sea-Change’s Newsletter](#)]

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