

A yard for champions

SHELLEY Jory is one of the UK's leading powerboat racers and the top female in her sport. In 2003 she became the first woman to win the British Three Hour Endurance Race on Lake Windemere and in the same year won an award in Cowes for outstanding commitment to the sport. Her team, Team Raymarine, won the Honda Formula Four Stroke Association series in 2005. It was the first female crew to do so, and having remained on podium places for the past four years, it is the most successful Honda team to date. This year she became the face of Honda Powerboat Racing. Each month Shelley will be giving All At Sea readers an insight into her amazing life.



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THERE is a small out of the way yard on the River Itchen that is home to a huge variety of boats from the very old to the very latest high performance P1 race boats.

They offer a dry berthing facility as well as craneage and storage for power and sail. But Drivers Dry Berthing is not your normal boat yard.

There are some very weird and some very wonderful people and it has a boat club feel to it, more of a boating community than just a yard where you store your boat. Most days you will find someone down there with the knowledge to help you should you be having problems with your own boat and if they cannot you will be sure they know someone who can.

Gill and Gareth Williams are the bosses, a mother and son team who have a long history of dealing with the Power Boat community and especially the race boat community, sponsoring some of the best racers in the country. Gareth himself was a National RIB Champion and is very sympathetic to the problems of running a race team. Gill has been running dry berthing facilities on the Solent for some 12 years and in the last three years has been running her own yard in partnership with Gareth.

On first impressions you may well wonder what Drivers is all about.

In one corner of the yard is Chris Strickland working on his barge that he is fitting out, and has been for some time actually, but then he has had to find time to do a few record

attempts in his Scorpion RIB. One of the most successful was the London Monaco record which he did in 2006 and absolutely smashed.

In the opposite corner there is a gentleman restoring an old wooden classic sail boat in the most traditional of ways, while just two boats away is an ex P1 race boat being prepared for the Round Britain 2008 race, which I am helping with in the long endurance test runs.

All these people working on their boats gives the yard a real old fashioned boat yard feel that is until two worlds collide and Jackie Hunt with her P1 Extreme Boat.Com, Pete Little with his Britta 2 litre cat and Vee Ganjavin with his P1 Hustler boat decide that they all want to prop test at the same time.

These champion racers can be launched and recovered four times in a day while they try to find the right props for their race boats to give them an edge over their competition.

Nothing seems to faze the staff at Drivers. My time keeping is not always my strongest point so when I turn up with my race boat in tow for my lesson with seven times world champion Neil Holmes, who is based at Drivers, an hour late, Gareth just shrugs his shoulders: "No problem you are running on Shelley Time aren't you?"

The yard itself has also had its fair share of fame and is the backdrop to many TV adverts and programmes.

There is of course my famous F1 advert – all filmed at Drivers with a crew of thousands, John Fuller a larger than life member of the Drivers community will be appearing



soon on Scrap Heap Challenge all filmed at Drivers.

Sky sports has also been to the small yard but yet again I have to take my hat off to the staff – nothing is ever too much bother even when my film crew bought the yard to a grinding halt for three days, stopped the crane and took three hours to shoot one photograph of the propeller.

Drivers is a yard for the guy or girl who just loves his or her boat and wants to be around like minded people. If you are looking for somewhere to keep your boat why not pop in and see them, you will be made very welcome but warn them if you are bringing a camera crew with you!

Shopping at the boat show

The Earls Court Boat Show is a show for both the heartland boating community and international visitors to London.

As a fellow ambassador of the show I am proud to announce that my racing boss - eight-time World Powerboat Champion Steve Curtis - will be bringing the Honda Formula 4-Stroke, the largest off-shore powerboat championship in the world, to the show in December.

The HF4S team and current racers will be on site to discuss the features and specifications of the cutting edge Cougar powerboats that race in the series. The stand will be displaying some of powerboat racing's finest boats from both past and present. Championship winning boats *Negotiator 225* and *Lings 150* will be on show as well my own *Team Raymarine 225* that has featured on all the ITV F1 Grand Prix adverts portraying my role as a Hondamentalist!

Another star attraction in the Powerboat Village will be a blast from the past. The *Christina 25 Thunderbolt* won the first Cowes to Torquay powerboat race in 1961, driven by Tommy Sopwith.

Months of hard work will reveal the final results to the public of its restoration when it is unveiled on 30 November prior to the launch of the show.

It is hoped that the unveiling will be carried out by Tommy Sopwith himself and Don Shead who saved

her from decaying in a French boatyard 20 years ago. *Thunderbolt*, one of the few surviving winners of this legendary race, will be in pride of place in the Powerboat Village along with another of Tommy's winning boats, *Telstar*.



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