

Commodore's Report to the 2009 AGM -Sunday 16th August 2009

My Lord, Ladies and Gentlemen

I report a further year of strong consolidation. Club improvements continued and all those areas where work had been identified to be done, have been completed – now even the roadside render looks good.

The stairs from the Bar to the Club room were taken away last autumn and it has been a great success. In my view the whole Club is looking smart and fit for purpose, and there are in fact abnormally few capital expenditure projects in the pipeline. This is extremely lucky/prudent as last autumn we knew that a deep recession was coming along and we did not know exactly what the future held for us. It means the Club is in excellent condition with no serious commitments in the pipeline except for the dredging of the Club pool, which has already been deferred, but for which we have already allocated sufficient funds.

Sure I would have supported a complete revamp of the bar area, as well as more office space (if we could find it anywhere), as well as an extension out towards the Flag Pole. But those are all major projects and it was not the right time to start them. Therefore my two years of Commodoreship have been very much a time of consolidation.

We are financially extremely sound. Our major income is from membership and despite the recession, it is up another 1% to a new record – nearly 1400. As long as we do not get a flood of resignations, then this Club will undoubtedly remain vibrant.

Your Flag Officers have done their best to make the Club one to be proud of, with a host of improvements so that the new Flag Officer team will have a good start.

Whilst all the staff have had an health free year, your Commodore is almost ashamed to admit to two separate fortnights in hospital, and as a result has been eternally grateful to a really strong Flag Officer team for their support when he was not available. Caroline Peel has therefore had a tough two years as Vice-Commodore, but it will hold her in good stead for the future. I thank her especially for her help when I was ill and I do wish her well in every way. I am also pleased that I feel as well today as I did two years ago and I will surely continue such for the rest of my Commodoreship.

It is made more difficult for Caroline because we convinced our Rear-Commodore Sailing to have a third year of office. There is no doubt that we all much appreciated Colin Samuelson's good work, but it does mean that the two new Rear-Commodores will both now start at the same time and possibly this is a disadvantage for the new team. But it was good for me! Well done Colin.

Annabel Rhodes has been an excellent Rear-Commodore Admin and has brought a new fresh approach to various aspects which have all been effective. Well done Annabel.

So I would like to express my grateful thanks for my three Flag Officers.

I also am extremely grateful for a very sound Treasurer, whose views I understand totally and with whom I work extremely well.

Annabel has instigated a young art exhibition recently organised by Lucinda Guy (it is not too late to increase the 21 sales so far), and also was completely the main drive for the new coffee machine in the bar. Both excellent new ideas and well worth the trial they have been given.

Frankly, although many have been muttering to me, that we should be cautious due to the recession, the actual signs of a recession in this Club are only shown by the lower numbers attending events this summer. Maybe people are eating less at the Club and this was perhaps highlighted by the rather sad decision to cancel the Crab and Lobster supper on a recent Saturday in July. Personally I am not sure whether this was because people really could not afford it or because there is a general malaise in the membership over communication.

There are many excellent methods of communication but:-

Does everyone regularly switch in to Mike Sam's excellent web site?

Do they avidly read all three pages and more of the excellent monthly e-News including the Commodore's highlights at the beginning of each month.

Do they avidly read the twice yearly Wavelength?

Or is most communication still done by word of mouth?

The fact is that the office and Flag Officers find it extremely hard to know how exactly to pass on messages to the membership. This phenomenon is not just for this Club but is everywhere. We live therefore in extremely interesting times. Clearly the new generation will respond in a completely different way to the older generation.

But this does explain why 6 days before the Club Barbeque there were less than 20 names on the list, and three weeks before the Ball, it looked a disaster with so few bookings. After frantic phoning and holding one's breath uncomfortably long, both functions went brilliantly. I particularly want to thank Clare Chalmers for being Ball Chairman. It was not easy for her.

I should report that Easter this year, being in mid-April, was extremely hectic. The Club fed more mouths than ever before. At that time there had been a number of key staff changes in our caterers and so this resulted in a hectic start for the new team from AAC. They quickly went up the learning curve and have continued to provide the food that the Club requires.

The number of children instructed this summer is little different to the previous year. That means the Club is as busy as ever and Mike Sam and his team are nearly at their usual frazzle. Each year every Commodore expresses his grateful thanks to our Club Secretary and always do so wholeheartedly. We do have to plan for his succession and also that when one reaches the age of 60, one cannot work quite as hard as one did before. None of these things are easy. Neither for our fantastic Club Secretary nor for the Commodore and Flag Officers. But we have identified a way forward which I outlined last year and I had hoped to have it in place by the time the new Commodore started, but this is not to be so. It will happen more slowly than I had hoped.

With everything in the Club so active and going well, I should also mention that sailing is also in a healthy state. It is a great joy in the winter months to see the Illusions sailing and it really is excellent to see helms of every standard taking part. It means that the Club is actively sailing all year round.

Redwings have had a relatively quiet year, but the Class overall is thriving with more and more young participating.

The One-Designs have recently had two adventures taking part in a special 75th Victory Regatta in Portsmouth in early June and more recently in the four day Cowes Classic Regatta. How pleasing to see all 12 "ladies" out on our Regatta Saturday, and how great to have 2 splendid days for our Regatta unlike the 2 previous years when one day had to be cancelled due to too much wind.

I personally wish that our lovely Scows were more used, rather than decorating the front of the Club House. But it is not easy to competitively sail them. They are so much more a family boat.

Nevertheless more than 50 Scows sailed in the Scow Parade around St Helens Fort on a Friday evening late July, and this shows that all is basically well on this front.

In short all aspects of sailing at Bembridge are in good order.

I have already made reference to dredging – this will now take place in early 2010. The money has already been allocated. But it will cost a little over £70K. I have nothing specific to report on the Harbour except to say we all are keen to have a well looked after and cherished harbour. There are plenty of interested parties.

I also would refer to the fact that in 2011 the Club will be 125 years old and I know that Caroline Peel already has some ideas for what to do at that time. There was talk of a review but also a special Regatta in June 2011. I am sure that we will suitably celebrate this new milestone.

The Lifeboat Appeal is upon us and I reflect the membership's very strong support for this. We are surely all delighted with the 'sell-out' function at the Club last night. Many of us were thrilled by the

3 Maltbys and a Scow adventure on the Thames. Well done to all these efforts for the Appeal. Tim Woodcock tells me the Appeal has currently reached £317K so far.

I am nearing my finish as your Commodore and apart from my unplanned health problems, I have enjoyed doing my best for BSC and feel I leave it in excellent shape.

But I could not have done this without much help from all the team:-

The Flag Officers – I already referred to their help. A good team and they kept the place going when I was in hospital.

The Committees – The Management Committee, Sailing and Wine & House Committees all have very wise and good people on them and BSC is really lucky with their support. Our four Trustees have also given sound advice when needed.

On behalf of the membership I show appreciation to all the many volunteer hours that so many members put in for so many different aspects of our Club.

The Staff at the Club – the fact that there are no staff changes speaks volumes. They love working for us and we love them all. (That reminds me - the Staff Fund list will shortly be up and I do hope you will support the Staff in the normal way)

But finally and very especially, I thank and salute our Secretary and his wife. I really did try to ease his load and plan for his gentle retirement. We all want him to continue and I laid out the plans of how we see the future last year. But he is not an easy man to bend. He has seen off many Commodores before me, but I think this time the problems and solutions are well identified and the new Flag team will have to do something, as Mike will be 65 in 2 ½ years. Whilst my efforts to move the office along have been far too slow – maybe due to my illnesses – this absolutely does not detract from the fact that vast chunks of what our fantastic Mike Sam does, is indeed fantastic and is 110% appreciated by us all. Thank you Mike and behind every good man there is a good woman and Caroline has done brilliant things in the office and is so patient with Mike waiting for him to go home etc.

Having thanked as many as I could in the time I felt you would listen to me, I now commend my report to you.