

## Papercourt Sailing Club Commodore's Report 2017

As in the two previous years that I have given this report, when I look back at what the club has achieved and delivered it is quite breath taking.

Perhaps it is appropriate to pick up where we left off last year, which was the then ongoing storage project. After the AGM, at the Members request, your committee again reviewed the specification and looked at a number of other design options. Once these were evaluated it was felt that the benefits to members did not justify the quite significant costs associated with each of the proposals and we decided not to progress further. One benefit from the process was to establish that planning for any future project would be pretty much a formality. Very many thanks to David Baple for undertaking the research and costings.

At the time of the last AGM we were just about to embark on the extensive tree works at the bottom end of the lake, which were completed soon after. This delivered great benefit to sailors with much less fettered wind plus environmental and visual improvements for all other lake users and visitors. Thank you to the Estates team especially Roger Smith and Chris Granger who have driven this work. The estates team look after all the grounds outside of the compound, including the Brownie Hut which is now back in our possession as the Brownie Pack were no longer using it.

Justin has already mentioned Salability and I wish to add my thanks to all the helpers and congratulations on their Mayor's Award.

Whilst talking of awards it was pleasing to see that Jeremy Riley was a finalist in the national Old Poultney awards for Outstanding Contribution to a Sailing Club. Well done Jeremy, commiserations on not actually winning but I understand the rum was very good.

Our training section have delivered another exceptional year qualifying no less than 15 Members to Assistant Instructor level. The RYA level 2 spring course was well supported albeit dogged by either too much or too little wind but everyone came through with flying colours. Our summer course saw well over 30 students taking part with many additional awards being presented, including a further number of level two certificates. Once again Tom Key, our principal, and Peter Lytton, Chief Instructor have worked wonders and were ably supported by all our wonderful DI's and AI's.

On the water we changed the pursuit race start sequence earlier this year with each start being on the minute counting from the "go" signal. This makes the pursuit race much easier for competitors and our race officers.

Thanks to Alan Fuller for his work on the technical side of this innovation. We have seen a year of consolidation in the use of Sailwave and now have the benefit of being able to see results on the screen in the snug area as soon as they are posted, which looks very professional indeed to visitors at our open meetings. Another thank you to Alan, as I know he spent quite a few days designing and installing the necessary software. As well as the technical work Alan has headed up the House Committee for the last three years and each year delivering two very well thought out and executed work parties. Alan is standing down from House to be replaced by John Panting but will keep on with the “Virtual” Cloud and Technical House.

Justin noted our very successful Our Open Day and the record 400 attendees, which is probably due in no small part to the work Ali Wollgar did on the publicity front. She has done an excellent job on raising the club’s profile especially on the social media front and secured the new corporate clothing which is on display over there. Ali is standing down this year so if any one fancies the external media role please speak to Fraser after. The organization for the Open Day this year was taken over by Jeremy Riley and Justin Meredith as Fraser felt that that he was unable to lead giving some excuse about being on his honeymoon that week. Great work Justin and Jeremy – thank you.

Last year I noted we were at record levels with 405 memberships. This year I am pleased to report that we have held onto that magic figure which is all the more remarkable considering that most clubs are reporting downturns in numbers. Thanks to Judith for so ably and efficiently dealing with all our new joiners, resigners and ongoing records, now all fully administered on Sailing Club Manager. She is ably helped by Tony Canning who looks after the berthing for the club, which is no mean feat, with some 600 berths – slightly interfered with when members change their boats!

Over the last year our Social team headed up by Charlotte Sword and more latterly Sue Irons and Karen Fredborg have delivered, arranged or curated no less than 19 social events these have included the setting up super, summer BBQ, quiz nights, Annual Dinner and Awards Evening plus many more. Mike Tozer presented and evening talking about his experiences on the Jubilee Sailing Trust tall ships. We also hosted a day with the Royal Naval Reserve during the summer and they liked us so much they are booked in again next year.

On the water - we need boats and this year we have upgraded a further two Toppers. We have bought 8 new optimists as our old kit had done sterling service but was becoming a little tired. The replacements mean all our youth hire boats are of a truly excellent standard. We are planning to take two Hartley 12’s into the adult fleet, a boat especially designed for teenagers and

ladies training as Hartley have developed the craft for dinghy schools and the military.

Weed. This time last year I noted the stronger emergence of a newer weed in the lake which is the Canadian Pondweed. This spring the Canadian Pondweed grew with great vigor and literally drowned out the Curley Leaf pondweed, which is a great shame as the Curly Leaf has a six-week cycle before it dies back, whereas the Canadian Pondweed has a 6 to 7 month life cycle. Barry and the intrepid weed cutters worked hard to keep the Canadian Pondweed under control but, nevertheless, by July the amount of weed was making sailing very difficult. We took urgent action, bringing in a contractor to rake the weed and also run the weedcutter full time for a number of weeks. This opened up the near section of the lake to make it very sailable and cleared the main growth in the northern section. The Canadian Pondweed is noted for growing so big that clumps break away which float and, dependent on the wind, move from one side to another – OK if it stays in one direction – not so good when variable. The weed is also a problem for our open water swimmers, and indeed the anglers who cannot land their catch if too much weed is present. It is felt that the use of naturally based vegetable dyes that suppress weed growth will be the way forward for the Club and all three sports. We have an excellent dialogue with Natural England, through Chris Granger and Roger Smith, and although Natural England have previously not allowed the use of vegetable dyes to suppress weed growth they have agreed to look again at this and talk to the industry experts about weed management going forward. That said we are almost certainly not going to be able to dye the lake early next season. With that in mind we are in discussions with our contractor regarding a raking and cutting programme for next year to ensure we remain open for business. Indeed our Natural England inspector noted that Canadian Pondweed has been a particular problem in many locations this year, and Lee Brown our open water swimming organiser noted that many other swimming clubs had had to close or curtail swimming due to the very high weed infestation last summer.

Following the cancelling of the storage project your committee looked at other areas for improvement that would benefit members. The clubhouse was repainted as it was becoming a bit jaded. The floors in the gents changing room and galley were replaced and the rotten racking in the gents replaced at nil cost thank you to Peter Wadham and the Cranleigh Club.

Outside we looked at whether our launch facilities and capacities could be improved with suggestions to provide another powerboat launch finger pontoon and extend the main pontoon legs. Your Committee felt the costs were too high to justify the marginal benefit. Instead we concreted the other side of the safety boat launch pontoon doubling the potential launch and

recovery platform and took the opportunity to infill another section of the youth launch area making it less muddy.

Our Yamaha engines have done sterling work over the past 11 years but we decided it was time to refresh our engine stock, by the end of the year all our operational engines and a spare will be Tohatsu which are more efficient, lighter and slightly more powerful. Our Broadband has been improved with much greater speed and now unlimited downloads enabling us to meet modern demands and improve member experience. Talking of which we now have a dartboard.

Other projects in train are to refurbish the galley, lower the weedcutter wharf and screen the three containers outside for better visual impact all of which will be progressed through the winter.

A couple of other points of note from the last year – Our tribute to Tom wells is growing well ensuring that his name lives on. We have a new marquee and have updated and improved the CCTV.

I must pay tribute to the Main Committee who have helped me so much over the last year and in fact making my job easy. Ali White is our Company Secretary, Fraser my deputy (soon to take over the reigns) and Jeremy Riley who as well as being on the main management team also leads our vibrant youth section, the envy of every other club. Justin Meredith stands down this year as Sailing Secretary, which is an onerous task making sure all the sailing programs and events run seamlessly and my thanks, go out to him. Very special thanks to Patrick Fell, our treasurer who has kept great oversight on our finances but has also been a source of wise counsel to me and committee on more strategic matters. An absolutely fantastic team who have ensured this club goes from strength to strength and the envy of every other around. My heartfelt thanks to them all.

On a personal note I have really, really enjoyed being your commodore and will be quite sad to stand down but do intend to keep sailing and helping where I can.