

Annual General Meeting, Clubhouse, 23rd February 2014 Commodore's Report

Introduction

As outgoing Commodore, I would first like to thank my loyal and hardworking Committee who have been instrumental in driving through a large number of initiatives and achievements to stabilise and improve the facilities and activities of our sailing club and secondly your good selves as Members for turning out today and continuing to support the Club – we look forward to seeing you again at the Fitting Out Supper and Spring Maintenance Weekend 22/23rd March!

- **Club membership:** overall numbers remain buoyant at around 150 with subscriptions, boat fees and galley sales bringing in sufficient resources to broadly balance the Club's annual revenue expenditure and creating a small capital surplus to service maintenance and improvement of our site, premises and equipment. The load on Committee Members remains high if we are to achieve what we are aiming for, however, during the year we have recruited some excellent, hard working club members onto the Committee who are learning the ropes quickly and continue to make valuable contributions to improving the club.
- **Finances:** as you can see from the audited accounts, we completed the year in September with, partly due to the excellent provision by our Galley Slaves both on Sundays and at social events, a reasonable surplus of somewhat over £3,500 in our day-to-day running costs and a healthy reserve of some £43,000 which is, however, down from previous years as we have been carrying out a significant programme of long term maintenance and capital replacements (see section below). For the future we intend to keep a reserve of approximately a year's running costs and continue to use surpluses over this to carry out improvements to our club. However, we do feel the Club has to invest now in major Clubhouse and grounds improvements to maintain our position against local clubs and increase membership.
- **Infrastructure:** over the past few years a number of significant capital improvements to our Club's assets of have been made such as: 3 new Club sailing dinghies through Sport England/Lottery funding (bought last year but now signed off by SportEngland as a successfully completed project); purchased a new Rigiflex safety boat and Honda 30hp engine (auctioning off the worst dory); carried out a lot of premises repairs and replacements and estate improvements (repaired and extended slipway, willow tree felling, security fences and gates etc) and will continue to look for awards and grants to improve our facilities and extend our Clubhouse further. This has reduced our reserves somewhat, however, we are taking advice from the RYA and others as to the most appropriate level of reserves for a club our size and developing a budgeting system which clearly identifies on-going revue items (those necessary for the day-to-day running of the club) from capital expenditure on club premises and assets.
- **Sailing:** this remains the core purpose of the Club and we are delighted with the enthusiasm of new members and, particularly, our junior sailors who are developing well as the future of our club.
 - ✓ **Racing** the Winter and Frostbite series were quite well attended and these sailors welcome the opportunity of enjoying our inland facility during the worst of the winter weather, however, this year attendances have dropped off and we need to examine what competing clubs are offering and market these series more effectively. Club racing has continued to attract a small but keen group of competitors on Wednesday evening and Sunday mornings; and we have held Open Meetings for Solos, OKs and Enterprises and Juniors. A few club members have flown the Ardleigh flag further afield by attending Open Meetings elsewhere and 5 Juniors represented ASC at the National Schools Sailing Association Regatta at Bassenthwaite. However, getting members to carry out the required Safety/Race Organisation and Galley duties continues to be an issue.
 - ✓ **Cruising** often felt by the participants as the forgotten sailors, we fully recognise the need to develop a wider range of semi-organised Saturday afternoons and these are now advertised these on the 2014 Calendar with support from experienced sailors for the sailing and evening barbeques for all! We will be circulating information about these regularly and encourage everyone to find at least one other member/family to attend during the season.
- **Training:** staffed by a small but perfectly formed team of volunteers (both adults and juniors!), courses continued on Sunday afternoons between Easter and October. Individuals were supported in gaining

RYA instructing qualifications; however our plans to achieve RYA Accredited Training Centre status are moving rather more slowly than we'd hoped so, with support from the Eastern Region RYA, we're now aiming for registration as a Powerboat/Safety craft Centre in 2014; followed by Dinghies in 2015

- ✓ **Race Coach course** of 10 sessions was successfully delivered for a select group of sailors and trainee Race Coaches. This took place on three Sunday afternoons and 7 Friday evenings as part of the SportEngland/Lottery Funded Eastern Region RYA Club Development programme, and the programme will include a 2 day RYA Coach Training event with accreditation which will be launched in Spring 2014.
- ✓ **The Kids Club [now Cadet Section for 2014]** continues to be a great success and met throughout the season on Sunday afternoons attracting 15 to 30 youngsters. Gold, Silver and Bronze fleets have been created to drive progression and for 2014 will see the creation of a **Cadet Section** of Ardleigh Sailing Club integrating the youngsters and their parents more into the racing and social life of the Club.
- ✓ **Adult training** delivered two beginner/improver courses of 4 sessions each involving three to four instructors using the new SportEngland/Lottery Funded Argo dinghies and the six summer Supported Sailing sessions saw at least one crew each Sunday receiving refresher training and help to get their boats on the water.
- **Water Users Forum** the inaugural meeting of this forum was held in Spring 2013 with a very successful two hours meeting sharing each others' priorities and issues. Relationships with Anglian Water and other water users (Scouts, UERC, AW Anglers) remain very good and we are entering into dialogue to improve the estate to the benefit of all by removing obstructive trees and bushes and landscaping our land.

Conclusion

I have been on the Committee now for over 5 years most recently as Vice Commodore and Commodore and, whilst I have enjoyed organising and helping with the large number of initiatives we have delivered during this time, I have always said I would only serve as Commodore for a year until a suitable replacement can be found. I'm delighted to say that not only has Jonathan Reubin stepped forward to take up this post but a strong and, more to the point, willing team has emerged to support him, as you will see from the Committee Election papers. I'm entirely confident that our Club will go from strength to strength under their capable direction and administration.

The new Committee will be drawing up priorities for the forthcoming season in the next few months and will be sure to draw on expertise from our very supportive Eastern Region RYA Team and Anglian Water staff. An All Member Survey will be issued shortly to gauge Club Members' views as to what The Committee's priorities for improvement should be in order to guide the preparation of the next 3-year Development Plan.

I wish my successors all the very best in their endeavours and look forward to experiencing their undoubted improvements to the club as I return to the ranks and my grandchildren begin to take up their role as the next generation of Ardleigh sailors!



Fergus O'Sullivan, Commodore, 2013-2014

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