

Commodore's Report August 2007

*based on my report to you included in the Annual Report and Accounts.
I hope this will give you some idea of the Club's doings during 06/07*

This is the first sailing season of Newport Boat Club's 4th decade. We are clearly here to stay! Looking over what I have written I notice that there seems to be an unconscionable amount of 'admin' stuff for you to wade through this year. That is because this has been a very busy year with much to attend to - not all enjoyable. However, all this is a means to one end: sharing the pleasures of sailing and boating in the setting of our unrivalled Newport Bay.

Sailing and Rowing

As this report goes to press we look forward to another successful sailing season -- weather permitting! There is a full calendar of sailing races during August which includes many races for the slow handicap classes and novices. I hope that everybody will encourage our junior members to participate in these races. It is hoped that the four Club Oppies will be in regular use during the summer. Here again, parental input is an important factor. The S&B Committee have done great work in improving boating facilities and in producing a long-needed operations manual based on RYA recommendations.

Away from home, our rowers have been furthering the Club's reputation. The Ladies' Veterans were the fastest women's team in the Dinas Head Challenge. In the Thames Great River Race we were the Fastest Ladies in a Celtic Longboat, the first Veteran Ladies Overall and the 3rd Fastest Ladies Overall. Our under 16 girls are the Welsh and Southern League Champion Junior Girls of the Welsh Sea Rowing Association League. This year, so far, our under-18s in their travels have won every event! There was a turnout of 30 young rowers to a recent training session. Congratulations to everyone including our rowing captain, Peter Fletcher, who is an officer of the Welsh Sea Rowing Association.

Litigation

At the last AGM the Commodore announced that there had been a Claim against the Club for constructive unfair dismissal.

The new Committee took this matter up immediately and, after initial preparation of our defence, came to the decision that, although our case was good, our prime concern in this matter should be financial. The reason for this was that, although we wholly refuted the claim, a favourable outcome can never be guaranteed. Indeed, the cost of our success, according to our legal advisers, would have been only a little less than the cost of failure. With all this in mind, during April and prior to the expensive phase of preparing our case, we agreed to settle out of court for an amount considerably less than the cost even of a successful Tribunal result. The matter is now closed, with all the usual legal safeguards including withdrawal of the claim, and the case has been struck out by the Tribunal. We owe our thanks to the few Club Officers who saved the Club from much additional legal expenditure by giving long hours in dealing with this matter. Thanks are also due to a Club Member, a senior HR adviser, for his help and support.

Finally, may I emphasise that Newport Boat Club is a good employer. We did nothing wrong, and our decision to settle was made on a purely commercial basis.

Rules and regulations

Gone are the days when legislation could be regarded merely as a guide to good practice. In fact, the law has not actually changed that much: the big difference is that the closest

compliance is now expected and actively monitored and enforced by the various authorities. Much of our behind the scenes work and expense this year has been dictated by having to comply ever more closely, particularly in the fields of employment, disability, health and safety, fire regulations, licensing, food hygiene and smoking legislation. Planning, conservation area issues and disabled access have all affected us during the year.

Membership

This is the first season for our new measures aimed at satisfying the licensing authority's insistence on positive membership checking. Our aim is to make the new arrangements as painless as possible for Members and Staff. The important new change you will discover is that your card will be 'swiped' at the bar. There is a reward in the form of a reduced price for those who produce their cards when buying drinks..

If you have forgotten your card it will sometimes be possible for the Manager to check that your name appears on the latest membership print-out, BUT that may not be feasible when the bar is busy. The message is: KEEP YOUR CARD WITH YOU!

You may have wondered why the card you currently hold has no date printed on it. This is because, unlike previous membership cards, it will continue for 4 or 5 years. From now on, the database in the Club till system (updated monthly by the Membership Secretary) will verify your membership whenever your card is swiped. If you lose your card, apply to the Membership Secretary for a replacement (charge £5). Please also remember that allowing someone else to use your card is a serious infringement of Club rules. Setting up the new card-swiping system has been an arduous task involving the Membership Secretary, the Treasurer and their support group. There may be a few 'glitches' to start with, hopefully only small ones, and we feel entitled to ask for your patience as we grapple with these.

At the AGM we will be asking you to agree some changes to the Club Rules relating to Membership. You will find the details in the appendices to this booklet. I commend these changes to you and hope you will vote for them.

Expenditure

During the financial year we made some major purchases on your behalf, all of which are in regular use and valued by members. Here is a list with round figures: Electronic two-terminal till system networked with the Club Computer (£4000), Cinema system (£2000), Large Safety RIB (£1400), Weather station (£500), Table tennis table (£270). We are indebted to Douglas Williams for obtaining very good deals for us in the case of the RIB and the cinema system. Spending continues on the inside of the Club. The work on the Commodore's Lounge, lobby and staircase will have cost approximately £15,000 and leave us at a point where we can draw our financial breath and enjoy vastly improved interior arrangements.

We also sold one of our two skiffs for £500 (I believe the second one has just been sold).

Subscriptions

This is a year in which your Management have to give advance notice that it is time for an increase in subs. In order for rises to be infrequent, they need to be large enough to last for a reasonable length of time. Tony Williams our Treasurer will be talking to you about this at the AGM. The new subs will take effect for the membership year commencing 1 September 2008. The likelihood is that we shall be looking at an increase of approximately £5 on a Full Member's subscription of £20. Rest assured that we intend to keep our reputation as one of the lowest boat/yacht club subscriptions to be found.

Licensing legislation

During this season the Vice-commodore, with the help of the Bar Committee, has completed a review of our licensing status and steered us through all the stages of applying for various important changes. Although we do not intend to alter our basic pattern of Club events and opening hours, our new licence will allow us much greater flexibility in how we use our premises for special events. The main features of our new licence are as follows: we have widened the opening hours 'envelope' within which we can operate (much more convenient than the old system of applying for extensions); we can provide a greater range of possible entertainment, indoors and out; we can admit non-members and other organisations to certain parts of the Club building without having to make them guests (the Members' Bar remains sacrosanct of course).

Staff

We are grateful to Ema Evans for taking us on at the start of last year's busy season and coping so well with the unfamiliar pressures. We have long had a regular block of bar employment hours needed to cover the Manager's weekly time off and the Management Committee have now packaged these hours as an employed position (a cost-neutral change). Thus we welcome Diane Davies as Senior Bar Person, to deputise for Ema Evans as required. To complete the line-up, Ron Curly, who Members will most often see behind the bar, is also in charge of general cleaning and mowing. We also retain the services of Club handyman, Alec James, who helps with our constant trickle of repairs and renewals.

Building

This year has involved continuing with the refurbishment programme started last year.

The stairs from the bar to the Commodore's Lounge have been removed, giving us more floor space in the bar and in the Commodore's Lounge.

We have stripped and re-rendered the remainder of the Commodore's Lounge to the high standard of the seaward end, taking the opportunity to reveal the original warehouse fenestrations. It is also being re-wired and fitted with new radiators.

The upstairs lobby has been re-aligned and fitted with new, fire safety-compliant, doors - also provision has been made for a new access door to the upstairs bar which will be extended and improved in due course.

The North fire escape has received a major repair to satisfy fire regulations.

The food preparation area has been upgraded with a service hatch giving into the Nevern Room and improved refrigeration, freezing and storage arrangements have been added.

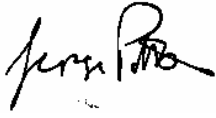
The grasscrete has had a decade of wind-blown sand removed and storage arrangements in the boat store have been improved. Safer storage for petrol and lpg has been provided.

Not least, your previous Commodore and I have risked our necks installing a weather station on the flagmast!

The immediate 'to do' list consists of: redecorating the Commodore's Lounge including a new ceiling, lighting and carpet; a new floor for the cellar (to be done this winter) and, when funds permit, a refurbish/refit of the upstairs bar. We are also required to install an automatic fire detection system before the end of the year.

Finally I would like to record my appreciation of all the time, work, and mutual support offered freely by members of the Management Committee and particularly by the Club Officers. We are very lucky as a Club to have the services and commitment of such a talented and hardworking

team.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Jerrisa' followed by a stylized flourish.

Commodore

