

# TROY

# TIMES

## Commodore's Comments

As this will probably be the last Troy Times during my time as Commodore, I thought I would reflect on two very challenging years. When I was elected, I saw that the club was facing two significant issues: the membership was declining and the clubhouse needed urgent renovation. At my first committee meeting I shared with the committee a financial model which suggested that the club might cease to exist in 20 years. The committee rose to the challenge of turning the situation around.

We consulted you, the members, to make sure we understood what your priorities were. Your top three issues were the state of the access road, the general shabbiness of the club house and the outdated facilities offered by the clubhouse. We were able to act quickly on two of these. The road had several thousands of pounds spent on it to remove the worst of the pot-holes. The nature of this vital access route means that it will always be a challenge to keep the holes filled. It is getting time to have another bash at that particular problem. The shabbiness of the club house was tackled by repainting the club room, galley and bar. Just as the paint was drying, we entered the first lock down and have only recently been able to reopen the building. We decluttered the building by installing storage shelves in part of the training cabin and disposed of 12 cubic metres of rubbish in a large skip. Recently we have moved the buoyancy aids to a new storage area in the dinghy shed. The overall effect is to make the clubhouse a more useable space. The process is not yet finished as we need to replace the table and chairs.

The third priority of renovating the building had long been an object of desire, but there were significant barriers to making it happen. The first was getting planning permission for any major renovation. We have bats in the building, we are very close to a site of special scientific interest, there are protected species, such as water voles in the area, and we are on the flood plain of the river Colne. All in all, a very long list of difficulties for any planning application. Professional help with the planning application was simply beyond what we could afford. Your committee held a mammoth six-hour meeting with just one item on the agenda. The result was a plan to make a series of small applications learning from our mistakes as we went along. We completed the process over a period of 15 months and now have all the planning permissions we need for the work.

Last year the club was 90 years old, and we had planned to throw a party to celebrate. Fate had other plans and Covid intervened forcing us to shut the site on a number of occasions and impose major restrictions on how the club could operate. This impacted both our ability to use the lake for water sports, training or to maintain the site. It has been gratifying to see so many of you using the club when the regulations allowed. It has reached the point that I can go to the club on any day of the week and find members there. We are close to normality again with training restarted and all restrictions on using the building removed. The marquee remains popular as a place to meet other members and watch what is happening on the lake.

Last year there was a second unforeseen event that had a major but positive impact on the club. This was the closure of Aldenham sailing club. The loss of any sailing club is something to be regretted but we

were delighted to welcome a large group of new members and their boats. Making space for everybody was a challenge, but I think we have just about got everyone in. New members always add value to a club, and Rickmansworth has benefitted hugely from the range of new ideas and ways of working that you have brought to us. We are without doubt a better club because of your presence. The work to accommodate everyone has included two new dinghy compounds, a new slipway and renovation to an area of the lake shore. There is still more that needs doing and we will get there eventually.

An EGM last summer now seems a long time ago. But we made some important changes to our membership structure. These were driven by the analysis that showed the club was slowly losing members. With the support of the committee and membership we made a number of important changes. For some of you the commitment was to pay a little more in membership each year. This allowed us to reduce the cost of joining the club. We have seen the benefit of this during the year with many new members joining us. You are all very welcome and I hope that you enjoy using the club and lake for many years. Overall, that same financial model now shows that the club's membership will continue to grow over the next 20 years.

The last major item has been raising the funds for the renovation of the club house. In the early part of this year an opportunity came up to bid for some money from HS2. The principal grounds for our bid were that the club was very close to the line of the track and that we have and will suffer impact from the construction and operation of the line. The response from HS2 was an offer of £75,000 provided we could raise £37,000 from the members of the club. We sent letters to every member in August asking for loans and donations to raise the £37,000. There is more news on this later.

It would be nice to claim that it was all down to me. But that would be totally untrue. I have been surrounded by a group of people both on and off the committee that have worked to make all of this happen. None of this would have happened without

their efforts. We are greatly in the debt of this group of people. I would like to thank the committee members who have supported and challenged my ideas in equal measure. It is one thing to have an idea, but it requires more to turn it into a great idea and then into reality. That is where your committee have excelled.

## Friday Works Club

A small group of volunteers has been beavering away on Fridays for the last six months improving the infrastructure around the site.

The first project to be completed was the laying of a new slipway. At the moment all one can see is the



top metre or so as it disappears into the lake. Putting this into place was a significant engineering challenge. At the edge of the bank the lake is less than a metre in depth. But this rapidly increases to four metres. The initial idea was to try and create a beach from shingle. Once the depth of the lake had been surveyed it became clear that the volumes of rock and the associated cost made this unviable. The solution that was finally used was to lay several large lumps of concrete to form the base of a sloping surface. The holes in this were filled with a coarse gravel to provide a surface better able to support the final layer. The gravel was also extended to either side of the slipway to ensure that no feet could become trapped in gaps between the concrete. The slipway was then capped with four large flexible concrete mats which had to be lifted into place with a nine-ton digger. The depth of water over the end of the slipway is more than 1.5m. This is more than sufficient for all of the boats that might need to launch at this end of the club. In particular we can launch and recover the large rescue RIB that we use when we are running training days.

At the top of this new slipway, you will find a new metal shed that houses the large RIB. For the last



few years, the RIB has been in a “temporary” home in the dinghy shed and getting in the way of everyone (*the Webb’s Firefly in particular*). It is very pleasing to see the RIB in its new home.

For a few weeks there was much scratching of heads as the team tried to understand how to put the hundred or so parts of the shed together. It turned out that the instructions were incomplete. We plan to store the Jaffa (the small orange safety boat) alongside the shed. We hope that it will get its own shed, but this is not an immediate priority.

On the far side of the lake is a small cutting that connects the lake to the River Colne. Across this cutting there’s a small concrete weir that was intended to regulate the depth of water in the lake. Over the decades the bed on which this was laid became badly eroded leading to a drop in the level of the lake. At its worst it was about 20cm (8 inches) below the current level. Over the last two summers large volumes of gravel in the base of the lake and cutting were moved by manual labour so we could create a more stable structure more resistant to erosion. To stabilise the structure, we needed to install an additional ten tonnes of ballast. This was loaded onto one of the pontoons and towed across the lake. A small team then shovelled the whole lot onto the new weir.

We just have another half metre to install to finish the job. We will then be able to raise the lake’s water level to make launching a little easier.

While the water level is on the low side, we are taking the opportunity to install a new decked area between the slipways at the far end of the dinghy park. This will make the area between the two

slipways much more friendly to use. It will also give easy access to the new pontoon that is being



installed. This will be completed over the next couple of months.

The last of the projects that the works club has



completed is a new workshop. This is currently being fitted out with work benches, power and lighting.

The workshop will serve two purposes:

- As a store for the parts and tools needed to maintain the equipment that we use around the site. Such as lawn mowers and boat engines.
- To give members somewhere that they can work on their own boats. The exact details of how access to the workshop will be managed have yet to be agreed by the committee. In the meantime, with the removal of the two safety boats from the dinghy shed, there is space to work on boats in the dry.

The Friday Work Club deal with other things around the site including dealing with the ever-growing vegetation. If you would like an excuse to be regularly outside on a Friday then Pete Tobin would love to hear from you. It’s a really friendly group so please join in if you can.

## That floating feeling

One of the things that tended to make the club house untidy was the buoyancy aids (PFDs). Some would end up in the changing rooms while others would get scattered around the club room. Coat (PFD!) hangers ended up on the floor.

This also made it difficult to find the right PFD for you. To solve this, we now have a new racking system. Each of our buoyancy aids is now hung on its own peg. This will allow them to dry properly and finding something that is the right

size should be much easier too. The racks are at the back of the dinghy shed. Please make sure that you return any PFDs you borrow to its peg.



## Refurbishment

You will all have by now received either electronically or by old fashioned post a letter about our plans to refurbish the club house. The money given as a donation has ranged from one hundred to several thousands of pounds.

We are extremely grateful to everyone who has been able to donate. So far, we have been given around £28,000, which is more than halfway to our target.

We also have enough offered loans to let us meet the target that will let us access the HS2 funds.

We want to borrow as little as possible so, if you can make a donation, please can I encourage you to do so. The details of the club's project account are:

- Rickmansworth Sailing Club
- Account 00681316
- Sort code 30-15-95

We are really pleased with the generosity of members and happy to see their commitment to our club. Thank you!

Having met the funding condition specified by HS2 we are now finalising all the accompanying paperwork that will allow us to start the work. The plan says that it will take us about two years to complete the project. During that time the aim is to keep the club house open and operating as much as possible. There will be times when we will need to close access to parts of the building. Please be patient when this is necessary. We will be keeping the marquee in place for those occasions when we need extra space.

## And we went sailing

With the gradual removal of covid restriction over the summer we have seen an increasing amount of sailing happening at home and on the open meeting circuit.

At home we held open meetings of the Fireflies and the 14s at the start of June. The conditions were just about perfect with a gentle breeze and warm sunshine for the 17 boats taking part. There was



some close sailing in a high-quality fleet. The Firefly



event was won by our own Steve and Arthur Greaves.

As the summer got into full swing it was the turn of the Wilson family to try their hand on the RS200 open meeting circuit. Claudia did well at the Southern Championships at Royal Torbay Yacht Club with a third place. Alastair faced some very stiff competition in the big waves of Lyme Bay for the national championship held at Exmouth Sailing Club. He commented that the main problems were the large number of Olympic hopefuls that turned up for the event and that the average age of the fleet was about a third of his. His best result was 41<sup>st</sup> in a fleet of 120.



Our most recent event has been the Bart's Bash race



in early September. This was wonderfully organised by Amy Francis and Claudia Wilson, with help from David Hurst. We saw 18 boats out on the water. This despite an almost total lack of wind. It was good to see such a mix of members taking part. Including a few well-seasoned veterans and many newer members. Everyone appeared to have a good time (fuelled by the chocolate bars provided with entry) despite the trying sailing conditions.

There were two star performances to mention. One from Nick Harper, a long standing member, who has recently returned to active racing with a new solo. He showed that he had not forgotten anything by the end of the race establishing a 20-minute lead over the Commodore, in a Laser.

The second star turn was from one of the youngest and newest members of the club. Vanessa Moran-Komissarova successfully completed her RYA Stage One award on the Saturday and completed her first race in a Topper on the Sunday – no mean feat for even the most seasoned of sailors. Given that she was on the water for nearly two hours, almost the same as the Commodore, her prize of a mars bar was well deserved. We look forward to seeing Vanessa challenging the adults on the water!

As winter draws in we now look forward to the Frostbite series which typically brings the stronger winds and colder weather. Members are reminded to take note of the wet/dry suit rules to keep them warm on the water. Rooster Sailing is an affordable retailer for those looking to invest in new kit alternatively feel free to ask other members what their go-to choice of sailing kit is!

## Getting your voice heard

Do you sometimes think that things could have been done better, or that the club has missed an opportunity to improve something? Well if you do then you are not alone. Some of the people that think like this already help on the committee. But we have space for a few more people that have good ideas on how to improve matters. We are lucky to have a large committee, 14 people in total, so we get a broad range of views. But clearly things are not yet perfect.

There is a range of committee roles with varying levels of commitment. The flag officers and secretaries, put many hours each month into running the club. The other members' basic commitment is to attend the monthly committee meeting (currently held on the second Tuesday of each month via Zoom, making it easy to join from wherever you are with a beverage of your choice close at hand!) of course these members often take

on actions that involve them beyond simply offering opinions and are invaluable in keeping the club running and improving.

If you think you could help the club in this supportive role the Commodore would love to hear from you ([j.n.carter\\_clubs@btinternet.com](mailto:j.n.carter_clubs@btinternet.com)).

The election of new committee members will take place at **this year's AGM that will be held on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> November**.

## Social Events

There have been precious few opportunities for the club to meet socially over the last two years. Following the success of the Bart's Bash we are going to hold a bonfire and fireworks party. It will all happen on the evening of **Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> October**. Watch out for details to be sent out soon.

## WhatsApp Group

If you have a question about the club, need some help or just want to know what is happening the club's "WhatsApp" page might be the thing to join. We currently have 50 members communicating via the app. You can join at <https://chat.whatsapp.com/LoMgvL5wiLWC0tfundnKC1>

## RYA Training

Hi, Martyn the RYA Training Principal here. Jonathan has given us a mention above and, having spent yesterday at the club in charge of a training session I have to say that it's great to be delivering training again.

I'd like to say a huge thank you to all who have helped to get us back into action.

We try to be up-front about our capabilities, but I'd just like to emphasise a few things here.

All the members of my team are properly qualified for the roles that they carry out, the instructors hold the appropriate certificates, and the safety teams are all experienced powerboat drivers devoted to making your training experience a safe and fun one.

We are inspected annually by the RYA to ensure that:

- all our qualifications are in place and up to date,
- our boats and equipment used is up to standard
- the premises are up to standard, and
- we have proper operating procedures in place.

We have just passed our RYA inspection with flying colours as the inspector found no items requiring attention. So, we operate to the same standards as commercial professionally run centres and you can be assured of the quality of any training that you receive from us.

Where we do differ is that the whole team involved are volunteers and give up their free time to support the training that RSC offers.

This does mean that organising a session (balancing the instructors, safety crew, shore crew and different types of students) can be more of a challenge, so, please do bear with the RSC Training "back office". We love to train people; it gives them a great skill which they will hopefully use at RSC and also puts some funds into RSC's coffers so that we can improve facilities here at our club. We do our best to train as many members as we can in both RYA dinghy and powerboat skills.

I hope that this puts our efforts in some context for you.

Finally, if you are interested in joining the team, please let me know - we will make you very welcome. All skills are appreciated – maybe you would like to pass on your sailing skills; all courses need a safety crew; it's very helpful to have some support dealing with the boats as well as being an on-shore face or supporting the administration.

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