



**SBC**

# The Small Boat Club Kingston upon Thames

Newsletter: 18<sup>th</sup> April 2020

## Commodore's Message

Hello everyone.

By this edition of the newsletter I had expected to be summarising the great work completed on the island at two working parties, thanking various members for their help in getting improvements done and stirring up enthusiasm for forthcoming events. Boats would be in the process of being unwrapped, cleaned, and serviced for the new season, and I'd hope to see the water birds looking for suitable nesting spots on the island for their next generations. Instead, we find ourselves unable to start enjoying the river; firstly because of the strong currents that we've had on the Thames over the winter, and secondly because of this unusual situation we find ourselves with COVID-19.

I find it particularly strange having taken over the role as Commodore just at the end of last year. I expected my workload to be ramping up just now but, instead, I find myself, with Linda's guidance, having to send out postponement emails.

The Committee continues to work behind the scenes as much as possible. We had a Committee meeting recently by Tele-conference. Thanks go to our Boson, Andrew Juric for setting this up. We plan to look into video conferencing for the next meeting if the lockdown restrictions are still in place. There continues to be maintenance discussions with the EA around the replacement of the rubbing strakes and control of the public moorings, third party discussions about improvement projects such as security monitoring and our WC. We continue to talk to caterers about our summer party, to look for entertainers and discuss the setting up. We want to keep fresh in everyone's minds that we still have plans. Amongst our own "in-house" projects, we are looking at moving/adding to the number of mooring poles, continuing the refurbishment of our day boat

and the possibility of putting in place movement activated light or cameras for security.

We are going to complement our existing communications as well. You should have already received an approval request to share some or all of your contact information with other members. Please respond as soon as you can, even in the negative, so that we can get this information out. For those of you who have a Smartphone, I have set up a **WhatsApp group "SBC members"**. If you want to join this group, just drop me an email at [ajjones001@sky.com](mailto:ajjones001@sky.com). And don't forget the work that Gerry is doing on our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/SmallBoatClub.co.uk/> As well as compiling a history of the club, there are photographs and video updates on our island this year that were taken before the current restrictions were put in place.

Downstream of us we have been advised that Teddington Lock is now clear of sunken boats. It seems that two boats had been set on fire and released from their moorings on the pontoon in the weir stream. They were taken downstream by the current but apparently the combination of the eddies below the lock and the wind caused them to turn upstream. The smaller one became lodged against the main lock gates and sank but was cleared within a few days. The larger one, a Princess 38, drifted into the barge lock where it burnt out and sank. All that could be seen was debris including fenders, cushions and a large diesel slick. This boat has now been removed after an operation involving divers to position straps under the hull. There is still a sunken boat stopping access upriver from Sunbury Lock. A wide narrowboat that had become wedged on the weir sank when it was being towed off. There is also a tree blocking the river at Marsh Lock near Henley.

Some parts of the river are still on yellow boards, nearest to us Bell Weir to Shepperton.

As a bit of a diversion, if you yearn for the sights and sounds of boating, the Canals and River Trust have a number of videos on their website. If you sit right up close to your screens, you might feel as if you are there!

<https://canalrivertrust.org.uk/news-and-views/our-campaigns/canals-at-home-our-best-bits>

And a couple of other snippets.....

For those whose boats were due safety checks this year, I found this update on the scheme's website that states that extensions have been granted until April 14<sup>th</sup>. I expect that, if the government extends their Social Distancing measures, that this date will move.

Here's the link

<https://www.boatsafety.com/about-us/news-and-press-releases/news-releases/>

If any of you were considering going it alone on the Thames (and this is not an endorsement of doing so!), the EA have advised that they will not be staffing locks and that locks will not be powered but will be hand wound! Again, here is the link

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/river-thames-locks-and-facilities-for-boaters>

When we get through the current restrictions, there will be quite some work to catch up on our island. We will schedule a working party day (or several days) culminating in a club funded meal to thank you all for your work and patience.

Until then, just remember that this year that no British player will lose a single point at Wimbledon, the UK will be joint top in the Eurovision Song contest, team GB will win as many medals as the rest of the world combined at the 2020 Olympics, and England won't be humiliated at the 2020 European Football Championships this summer.

Keep safe, and see you all later in the year!

AJ

### ***Boat Show reflections***

I was browsing some 1968 SBC Bulletins and came across an interesting and well-written article by Claude Michael, the then Editor. He was describing a visit to the Boat Show at Earls Court and several things in his article rang true today.

To start with in January 1968 there was a minor flu epidemic which meant he was 'solo' and he also mentions an outbreak of foot and mouth disease. Every year has its problems, even if not on the scale we are experiencing.

Claude says "Glass fibre is now established as the form of construction. However, power craft in our size range, in the main, showed little sign of improvement, being either aimed for speed merchants or purely floating caravans with little grace and even less seaworthiness". Freeman either weren't exhibiting or Claude isn't a great fan of the lovely little boats which are still popular today. And, of course, one of our former members took his Freeman 22 across the Channel.

The attitude of companies also came in for comment. "I felt that their sole aim was just increase in sale of new boats and loyalty to and from old customers had no place in their production schedules". Sadly this is still reflected today – a friend of mine was looking for help with Volvo engines at a show. No one wanted to know about the engines that had been the workhorses of many boats between the 1970s and 1990s. It's largely for the 'marque' clubs to fill the gap.

But Claude did say he had enjoyed the Boat Show as did many of us who visited the Earls Court venue. Rather cramped but a great atmosphere. I remember sitting on the balcony gazing down on an Oyster 60 – wonderful varnished decks and incredible workmanship! Sadly, the move of the London Boat Show to Excel didn't really work. I hope Excel will be a great venue for the London Nightingale Hospital and save many lives. And for us Boat Show buffs, let's hope the restrictions will be lifted in time for the Southampton Boat Show to go ahead in September.

*Linda*

*What follows is the first of a series of articles by Gerry Taylor charting the history of the SBC*

### **THE SMALL BOAT CLUB 1958-1993.**

This is not intended to be a complete history of the Small Boat Club. The following information has been taken from the minutes of committee meetings and AGMs 1958-1993; items have been included solely because they have caught the author's eye. Just bits and pieces of minutes from our Club's past. When

thinking back on events the memory can play tricks, so for our old stagers I hope this will help recall happy times and that for us greenhorns, make us realise just what we've missed.



The Small Boat Club began as a gleam in the eye of Arthur Rowbottom and Jacko Jackson way back in 1952. This idea grew until a bonny bouncing SBC was born in 1953. First meetings were at members' homes, but over the next seven years a club room at the Royal Oak Teddington was rented once a week, boating meetings held mainly round Stevens Ait, cruises made on the Thames and Twickenham Regatta attended on a regular basis. By 1958 there were fourteen boats, the boat length was 26 feet and the ATYC and RYA had been joined.

A search for riverside headquarters was started, it covered moorings in Broom Water, below Maidline Boats Thames Ditton, above Trowlock Island, Turk's Boathouse and by the park near Sea Scouts Headquarters on the Middlesex bank just below Stevens Ait. We were successful at Turk's and near the Sea Scouts, but both were rejected by the Committee. This was because a canoe club which tried to obtain the use of the boathouse on Stevens Ait failed, so the SBC applied to Thames Conservancy as the River Authority was then called. After a few months negotiation we were successful, and the boathouse and creek were leased from February 1960.

The creek was narrow and silted up and the boathouse in a dilapidated condition. It had been originally used for a TC launch, but not for some years. The structure was built over the water to allow a boat to enter, it was open at the creek end which was secured with steel gates. Along the inside walls was staging to let officers

get on and off their boat. Within two years the building was made good, a full floor laid, the open and closed off and the outside painted in our Club colours of light and dark blue.

The island around the boathouse was still 24 hour public moorings, but in June 1971 Robert Parvin successfully renegotiated for half the island and the rights to moor four boats on the Surrey side. A fence was erected, private signs put up and SBC Headquarters established much as we know it today. Winter Headquarters were transferred from the Royal Oak Hotel Teddington to the Crown Twickenham in April 1964.

*To be continued....*



**Past copies of SBC Bulletins and Newsletters are in blue box files in the Clubhouse: Have a look sometime.**

## **Doug Steward**



I have just been told the sad news that Doug Steward has passed away. Doug joined the SBC in 1983 and in the following years did so much for the Club. He represented the Club in so many different functions up and down the river and was very well-respected. I'm proud to say I crewed for Doug when we won the top award in the ATYC competition, the Mark One Thames Trophy: first time ever for the SBC. He held the position of Commodore and President many times. He will be greatly missed by all those who knew him.

*Gerry*



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