



SBC

The Small Boat Club Kingston upon Thames

Newsletter: 4th July 2020

Commodore's Message

Hello everyone.

So, another month passes and another one under lockdown. Covid is still out there but, because most of the population are behaving, the government has decided to again relax some of the restrictions on us. These loosening of restrictions have flowed down through to the Environment Agency. Amongst other things, from Saturday (unusually), 4th July (Independence Day in the US, the land of our PM's birth!), we can all stay on our boats overnight when on the river! I strongly recommend that, if not already the case, you subscribe to the EA's emails updates and alerts at <https://www.gov.uk/email-signup?link=/government/organisations/environment-agency>. They also note that "assisted passage" is available through Teddington Lock from July 1st until the 31st, between 07:00 and 21:00

So, to get the bad news out of the way, we have had to postpone some more of our events. The *Family Fun Day and Summer Party* will no longer go ahead. The *Ride London* event originally scheduled for the 15th/16th August has been cancelled so, one small silver lining, we will be able to drive to the river that weekend. The *Kingston Rotary Club Dragon Boat Challenge*, which was scheduled for 19th July, has also been cancelled. A great event from which our island gives a "ringside" view. To cap it all, we lost one of our willow trees at the creek end to some high winds a few weeks back. At the time of writing, it was still hanging in the water waiting for the EA to assess and prioritise its removal.

But, to try and lift the spirits, I am looking at how we might still go-ahead with the *Crew-To Sunbury* event on 23rd August with a follow-up tea party. Own boats

with, maybe, "bubble" members as guests, tables socially distanced, own teacups and a bit of old-time music and a "surgical-masked ball" or is that too far? Watch this space. Oh, and the *Commodore's Cruise past* on 13th September is still on the schedule! Anyway, from 5th July we will be re-instating the ferry service. Rather than coerce members into doing their currently scheduled duty days, we have asked instead for volunteers through July and August. The list is printed at the end of the newsletter but we still have some days in August (16th and 30th going "begging"). Please don't be shy in putting your hand up.

Our Club, like swans, may look all calm and serene above water, but there has been a lot of activity going on under the covers.

Thanks again to Dom, Andy Juric, the Dougal "crew" and a few others for doing a shuffle of the boats on the island and ongoing work on the mooring poles. It means that we can at last welcome Simon Price's LaLuna onto the island. It also means that we have space in the creek for another craft which, subject to committee approval, should be with us the weekend of 11th/12th.

Thanks to Andrew Barwick we have had an assessment of our electrical system done on the island which produced a list of tasks that need to be undertaken. The relative quiet on the island has meant that this could be done with minimum intrusion on our members. A big thanks to Simon Pinnock who has helped in the assessment and will be involved in a lot of the recommended work for us. The work on our new day-boat is nearly complete and it will shortly be removed from the Club House (until then, the Club House remains closed). Work on the loo has

started (I strongly advise that this is “out of bounds” until we progress some more!), with Andrew looking at the ventilation fan before the contractors come in to rebuild the “composting” facilities below (my term!). We will possibly be re-siting and upgrading the solar panels on the roof to somewhere on the Middlesex side of the creek. We continue to talk to the EA about repairs to the rubbing strakes on that same side. We have an “agreement in principal” with them, we are just awaiting the availability of contractors.

We have also secured a new “jump starter” for the club. If any members find themselves with a flat battery and unable to start their engines, you now have access to this to give you a hand. It is in the Bosun’s locker along with full instructions. If you do use it, please remember to re-charge after use and, whilst it is temptingly portable, please remember to return it to the locker and don’t take it on any trips.

A number of our members have been on or around the island over the last few weeks and have been posting us with updates and pictures of our craft (and the wildlife) in emails and on the WhatsApp group. Thanks to all. James also caught an artist on the Surrey bank doing a painting of *Gadabout*.



Linda has also been busy nudging me for updates to the newsletter but also dealing with an increasing number of applications to join our Club. Maybe, with the lack of foreign holidays this year, folk are realising that they can have a lot of fun closer to home. A number of applications are for families with youngsters. If all goes well, it would be good to look into revitalising our Cadet activities.

Also, we had a second “Honesty Quiz” on 18th June hosted on Zoom. This time Sussan and Simon took the honours! A little less well attended than the first but hopefully, enjoyed by all those that were there. We will look into hosting zoom events a bit more

during the “closed season” to try and keep our



members socialising!

We have a Committee meeting scheduled for Tuesday 7th July. New member applications will be on the agenda and we will be looking at how we might open up our island, do a clear-up, and start to catch up on all the tasks that have been postponed. We still have the intention to have a Club funded meal when we are able.

A major item, and new facility for anyone with an interest in canoeing/kayaking; James, our president, is to coordinate the provision of a new canoe/kayak rack for members. If any of you have an interest, current or potential, to use this, could you please contact James and let him know. The numbers and dimensions of craft would help decide just what is required. We have in mind a figure in the region of £50 per boat per year should this go ahead.

Finally, some of you have been venturing further afield in your boats these last few weeks. One of our members, Mick Shoulders, took his boat *Caldwell* for a run up to Cliveden Woods and back. Mick has kindly written up a report for us and Part 1, his upstream adventures, is included in this newsletter, Part II will be in the next.

A quick reminder of some useful websites:

The Club’s Facebook page
<https://www.facebook.com/SmallBoatClub.co.uk/>

The Boat Safety Scheme’s news web site
<https://www.boatsafetyscheme.org/about-us/news-and-press-releases/news-releases/>

The government’s website containing information on the River Thames
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/river-thames-locks-and-facilities-for-boaters>

In June, the fishing season re-opened which reminds me of the old saying “Give a man a fish and he will eat for a day. Teach a man how to fish, and he will sit in a boat and drink beer all day”.

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

AJ

Cliveden Woods Part I – The Adventure Begins

Captains log 22/06/2020

Weeks work postponed, weather perfect, partner working, what will one do with oneself?..... an adventure springs to mind, a getting to know each other session, just the little boat and I!

Supplies loaded (beer and peanuts) fuel tank topped up, safety checks carried out, no obvious leaks: time to head upstream.

A lovely little meander up to Molesey Lock and moor behind a Seamaster 23 waiting for the Lock to become free. After a short discussion with Phil & Sarah (Seamaster crew) it turns out the EA are carrying out essential works on the gates, lock closed for 2 hours. Damn the dam!

Not to worry – there is a local supply shop selling beer and peanuts, better to be safe!

Two hours pass quite quickly when one has no agenda, talking with Phil & Sarah we all decide to operate the locks together up to Staines which turns out where they also have decided to spend the first night. Perfect. Until then I had no solo lock experience and it was great to be able to share the burden with a friendly couple (and beer and peanuts).

We duly arrived at Staines, waved goodbye and went our separate ways, me mooring with friends and they outside the Swan.

After an evening of catching up, chewing the cud, and ploughing through the supplies with friends I awake to a gorgeous bright morning and poodle off down through Bell weir lock, mooring port side as I pass through and stop for a fix of coffee and sausage sarnies, to set me up for the day ahead.

I arrive at old Windsor Lock which is one of the annoying ones, in as much as you moor up port side before entry and do two laps of the lock to get it open for craft. However, having done this and manoeuvred the little boat into position, I turn to see another boat approaching which just happens to be my newly formed friends Phil & Sarah!

We spend the day slowly cruising up river with the blistering sunshine and beautiful views, passing acres of pristine grounds of home park and with Windsor Castle coming into view it seems that with each twist and turn the striking scenery of the Thames just becomes more and more stunning. Passing Windsor racecourse port side and the woods and vibrant greenery which adorn my starboard, life was just superb: a truly wonderful time.....

True to form when everything is going great there comes a curve ball, on this occasion it is in the form of an ear bursting shrill from the little boats alarm system, which totally spoils the moment. Panic sets in from the captain wondering what on earth the little boat could possibly need, surely we weren't that low on beer and nuts!! Luckily Boveney Lock came into view and we limped on and moored up for some inspections. With the Captain's extremely limited knowledge a methodical check of areas ensued, fuel okay, beer and nuts okayish but of course room for improvement, no water inside the little boat (other than the litre or so bottled for oral hygiene and accompanying the rum) then... Bingo, checked the oil tank really quite low, enough to make any vessel scream I'm sure. Luckily the very slapdash forward planning had allowed for some wiggle room and was able to refill with a couple of litres of marine oil stowed, phew problem sorted...?

Well to a fashion, we motored along fine and then a repeat of the dreaded shriek, time to stop for a while. Suddenly, the blistering sun and beautiful surroundings had become punishing heat, with nowhere to moor! Then an oasis on the horizon, Windsor Marina comes into view, surely a problem solver there. It turns out a mechanic in shining armour was not required, the little upset boat and myself managed to moor up just past the marina (port side) in some shady woods. With some rigorous pumping of the bulb and squeezing of a few pipes the issue seemed to be cured. Enough drama for one day, time to cool down, set up camp toast some peanuts and get very involved in the remainder of the supplies!

Day three ahead and time to see if the dodgy Captain's tinkering had done the trick. Breakfast digested, peanut hangover subdued and with extremely depleted supplies it was time to move on. The engine on the little boat seemed happy enough and was now getting her regular intake of oil the captain had other things on his mind! We chugged through Bray Lock and into Windsor and Eton Riverside, found a mooring opposite the Promenade, full of paddleboards, day boats, Kayaks, sunbathers and the likes, supplies imminent! A very cooperative co-op supplied the new supply of beer and peanuts, sadly no marine oil, the little boat would just have to make do!

We then meandered through Maidstone and bobbed into Boulters Lock, finding it hard to believe we were just a few land miles from home and yet the whole feel of our new surroundings was somewhat tropical.

Pushing on to Cliveden woods was so worthwhile, a superb mooring on a little island between the dense greenery made the whole adventure so far just perfect. With the music turned off and the supplies in full swing it was time to just laze in a puddle of beer and nuts and adore the melodic sounds of nature.....**Complete Bliss.**



Mick Shoulders

.... continuing the series from Gerry on the history of the Club

The Clubhouse goes up in flames, 1993.

On a July evening in 1993 around 20:40 hours our boathouse went up in flames. It took just over an



hour to burn to the ground. Fred Orford, one of our members, was still on his boat: he was able to



move several boats out of the creek and away from the fire with help from boaters who were on the 24-hour moorings. The Fire Brigade arrived on the Middlesex side of the river but couldn't get



their engines near the river. With generator pumps they were ferried across to the island, but too late to stop the fire. Incidentally, it was just a few months earlier on the Surrey side that they held an exercise hosing water way out into the river!

One of the 24-hour boaters said he saw smoke then flames come from the Middlesex side of the boathouse, and at the same time saw a small boat leaving the end of the island with two people in it – he was the only person who saw this). ☺

Within a few weeks (in August) the then Commodore, Lucilla Phelps, started a steering committee, to move forward and plan a new Boathouse.

The committee consisted of Gerry Taylor, Doug Stuart, Mike Lelyveld, Jerry Pike, Rod Mackay, Neil Phelps and John Chance. Jerry Pike would draw the plans for the new boathouse.



It took nearly three years to clear away the old burnt boathouse, then have the building plans passed by the EA. On the plans we called it *Clubhouse*, but the EA would not pass the plans unless we changed it to *Boathouse* – and they held the plans back for six months until they told us! Then we had to get the insurers to release the money so we could start to build.



Duty Rota (all volunteers – thank you) for July & August

5 th July	Trevor Savage
12 th July	James Manthel
19 th July	Stephen Gilmour
26 th July	Simon Price
2 nd August	Mick Shoulders
9 th August	Andrew Juric
16 th August	TBA
23 rd August	Bill Benham
30 th August	TBA

Please send articles, notices & photos for future

Newsletters to

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