



**SBC**

# The Small Boat Club Kingston upon Thames

Newsletter: 15<sup>th</sup> October 2022

## Commodore's Message

Hello,

We are now approaching the tail end of the year when we think about winterising our boats, tidying up the island and making the most of the clear days we have left on the river. There are, however, a number of events to look forward to.

On Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> we have the Commodores Cruise at 12 noon. The last in my tenure as Commodore. As previously, I will be bringing a few bottles of fizz to wet the palates of those in attendance.

On 30<sup>th</sup> October and 6<sup>th</sup> November we have two Working Parties. We will do a tidy up and lock down on the island (albeit it will remain open for those who want to use it over the winter months). Please make sure to keep one, or both, of those days free to help. Some light refreshments will be made available.

Then, on the 19<sup>th</sup> November, we have the AGM and Laying-up Supper. This is a great opportunity to look back on the year, see how the club is progressing, and look forward to next year. As always, there will be the opportunity for those attending to book their duty officer slots for next year, to catch up with others, buy a few raffle tickets, maybe get an award or two....and possibly step up for a committee role? Vaughan will be stepping down from the Committee at this time, Gay will be stepping down as Membership Secretary, and I am stepping down from the Committee. We need some fresh minds to help with running our little Club. At the meeting, a subsidised meal will be provided. As per Gavin's WhatsApp message, please let Matt Harrison know what your food selection is and make your payments (£5.50 per person) to the club's bank account with a reference of AGM. Bring your own drinks!

More information on the events can be found in the new Events section of the club's website: <https://smallboatclub.co.uk/events/>

Many thanks to all of you who have contributed to the Club this year carrying out duties, maintenance, attending events and generally making the Club a welcoming place to be. By way of a little light relief, our in-house author Mick has written a light hearted piece for your entertainment later in this letter.

See you all soon

AJ

## **Val Mordue**

We were sad to hear that Val Mordue had died on



24<sup>th</sup> September 2022 after a period of ill-health. Val joined the Small Boat Club in the early 1990s with her daughter Carey and granddaughter Libby. They were near neighbours of Val Baldwin and her sister Janet. Val had a little motorboat *Chloe*, most noticeable for the steering wheel mounted

on its roof! Val soon became a very active member of the SBC, held several officer posts and was involved in the 2000 renegotiation of the lease for Stevens Ait. She was a very energetic person and enjoyed organising events for Club members. Gerry remembers a Cocktail Evening – several people probably don't.... *Chloe* was sold in favour of a slightly larger craft *Llamedos* – think about it. But, sadly for the SBC, the family decided to move to Birdham, near Chichester, and Val enjoyed more rural activities: growing vegetables in her 'polytunnel' and caring for her llamas. Some of us have lost a good friend.

Rest in peace, Val.

Linda

## Remaining Duty Days for 2022

16th October J. Roscoe (Commodore's cruise)  
23rd October A. Gray  
30th October Committee Member (1st Island Closing Working Party)  
6th November Committee Member (2nd Island Closing Working Party)

### "Moaning Myrtle's Corner"



When doing your Duty Officer day, please remember to complete the log book.

If you are bringing non-members to the island, please remember to sign them in as guests.!

Please only light barbecues on the paved area in front of the Clubhouse. It's particularly important that we don't have barbecues lit near boats or Astro turf.

Thank you.

## Reflections

I get up, wander over, and begin to perform the evening ritual of shutting the night outside. I pull the cord to lift the blinds, then flick the catch on the window. Droplets of rain that have gathered on the top of the window fall and

wet my hand as I pull it to, a sudden breeze squeezes its way through the remaining gap, forcing my head and shoulders into an uninvited shiver. The evening outside is already dark and the pounding rain and punching wind give the distinct feeling that winter is coming. Far too soon I fear this will be a much more common turn of events, the window will sometimes not open to full stretch, probably even remaining closed at times, the blinds will be spending less and less of their lifespan set to an open position, and yours truly will be donning more layers of clothing whilst warming one's toes against a radiator.

Just around the corner it seems young Jack Frost will be frantically knocking for dear John Snow begging him to come out from hibernation and disrupt the nation with his powdery icicles. The thought of it disgusts me!

Don't get me wrong there are parts of winter I kinda like, Hot toddies with single malt whiskey, slow cooked stews and ... erm.....well well, that will do for now, but you get my drift, you see I am not totally averse to Adverse weather it's just that with it, it brings about the end... yes the end... dare I bring myself to say it THE END of the boating season! I know I know just putting those few words together in a sentence is difficult enough so let's forget about that for a bit, let me get back to the job in hand and try and transport you back to sunnier times, the reason for my pen to paper is to Share with you some of the joy our beautiful river has bestowed upon me this season, some of the closely guarded secrets she has held close to her bed have been entrusted to me and I now entrust them to you. The following can be read with the complete knowledge that everything you are about to read is TRUE, real experiences, real life, real fun, absolutely everything is true, apart from maybe the bit about me liking bits of winter, which in truth is rather mildly speculative.

*Secret Number 1*

THERE ARE FISHES IN THE THAMES; I'VE HEARD EM!! (I have seen them as well but that's not such a gripping title)

I know you weren't expecting that but it's true, I told you it was, and it is. It's not that I have an extremely keen ear, nor am I versed in the language of carp, but after a few light ales with friends on the island I bid my farewells and retired for the night on my boat. I was awoken from my slumber as usual, the call of nature overpowering the desire to snooze as always, on returning to my cabin and snuggling back into my duckdown I heard a new and unfamiliar sound, a gentle tapping, then fierce tapping, then again gentle, right on the hull where I rest my weary bonce. (I know what you're thinking here, it was morse code from a gifted perch saying "oi pugwash there's an eel caught in a shopping trolley wheel down by Teddington lock are you gonna save him or what??", it wasn't like that)\_

I awoke the following morning, and, after much discussion with very learned friends, discovered that the

sound I had heard in the middle of the night was of a fish spawning her eggs. She had been tapping her body against my hull to help with her proceedings. I can only imagine the gentle tap tapping must have been said fish giving birth to twenty or so hopeful offspring, gently coaxing them out reassuring them things were okay, explaining where to go and what to do and how to survive in their new surroundings, and then the fierce thumping on the side of the hull would surely have been the getting rid of whatever was left!

And there it is, just by being there I had been a rather drowsy, somewhat drunken midwife to a family of carp. (Not really resume stuff unless you're going for a position in marine biology, but I still wonder how the kids are getting on).

### *Secret Number 2*

Jeeps Dude, is that a TURTLES head! (Not what you're thinking!)

Margaritaville and I decided that a weekend upriver was long overdue, (although it probably wasn't but it was a great way of justifying it to ourselves, this was based on very loose algebra, lots of beard stroking and a general counting of digits) and so minimal preparation ensued and off we went. This somewhat informal, thrown together outing took us to a mildly regular haunt upstream, whereupon we met with one of our friends, a fiercely devoted river dweller who has spent far more time on the river than yours truly but probably not as much as Margaritaville, (although one cannot be sure, for as with any self-respecting craft her real age is somewhat of a mystery.. What a gal.X)

After minimal persuasion and restocking of refreshments said friend and his beloved guitar joined our joyful troop and we all merrily headed up to Windsor. The beginning of our journey was filled with constant chitter chatter and mild amounts of supplies which gently slowed into a rhythmic hum as we fell harmoniously into river pace. The locks mellowed as we trickled upstream, and became no more than a pleasant chore, an enjoyable means of getting from place to place. We passed through Old Windsor lock, and it was on starboard side of the last stretch that we saw it... That little area can look a tad rural, and it was one of those moments where no words were uttered but an exchange of glances said it all. "Dude, was that a frigging?" Man, I'm glad you're thinking that 'cos that's what I thought, would be a fair interpretation of what had been said, (if it had been said). I pulled the throttle out of gear, the boat slowed, and we began to manoeuvre around. As we completed our circle and bought the boat up for a second glance there she sat, bold as brass, sunning herself on a log in Sunningdale: a four-footed, hard shelled, head poking out turtle would you believe! (Yes, you would, 'cos it's true). "Well I never" was said, "not in all my years on the river have I ever seen one of those" was added. "Shall we write a song about it?" was uttered, "Don't be a knobhead" completed the exchange of words. We stared

at the unmoving creature for the allotted amount of time, cheered a beer, sucked up the feeling of being quite privileged then hit the throttle and continued onward with our journey.

### *Secret Number 3*

Suckering suckatash (????)

Dear Pocahontas decided to get involved on this next adventure, and so with much much more meticulous planning, suitcases laden with supplies, charts plotted, and correct attire adorned I thought we might be off..... I sat through the briefing wearing a wry smile trying to nod in all the right places and make murmuring sounds of agreement at appropriate times and after what seemed like an age it was finally decided that we should head for the river Wey. Upon entering Thames lock we were amazed at the sheer feat of engineering it must have taken to construct such a place, given that it dates to the 1600, s. This lock consists of two stages both under very friendly and accommodating lock keeper supervision. The first is a kind of holding pen and gets a little choppy when the water is dumped from the second stage, and the second itself is quite narrow but good and deep. After fixing the bow and stern lines to the jolly lockkeepers boat hook and subsequently finding ourselves safely held on we were afforded a moment to appreciate the outstanding craftsmanship of the immense wooden gates that stood dauntingly in front of us, these monsters are changed every twenty years or so and the very thought of the work and planning that goes into such a feat is truly mind blowing let alone the time, thought and man power it must have undertaken in its first construction.

We rose on our floating podium and then were treated to an overwhelming backdrop which was purely and simply breathtaking. The stunning vista that was gently emerging, held lush green foliage on either side, gently poised atop the riverbank, a perfectly glass like sheet of water lie ahead effortlessly holding immaculate reflected images of the stunning treeline, even the few boats moored along the bank added to the picturesque scene, looking both sleepy and contented as they sat motionless on the side. It truly felt as though the whole scene had just been finished, surely there was an artist lurking somewhere out of shot having just completed the finishing touches ready for our arrival. We sat in the lock keeper's cottage and after a minor tutorial about the do's and don'ts of such a waterway we were then awarded the fine and prestige key of windlass. It was a simple handover completed with a genuine smile and words of encouragement but, somehow with this key it felt as though we had become the new custodians of this truly wonderful place.

We gracefully chugged along the twists and turns of the river marvelling at the beauty of nature, passing through locks unaided like seasoned pros until we finally arrived at what can only be described as a bridge too far. We approached with caution and as we did dear

Margaritaville decided to grow a few inches at exactly the same time said bridge decided to shrink a few, the nearer we got the exact measurement could have been taken using Margaritaville's protruding headline and one or two cigarette papers, a quick glance from Pocahontas sealed the deal and the boat was soon performing a river version of a three point turn, and that was when we saw it..... well not exactly then but literally moments later as we headed back downstream, a slithering twisting creature effortlessly slipping through the waterline, holding a direct line of collision with the bow, we dropped out of gear and floated around as it reached the boat, it then swam alongside port before heading off to the reeds near the bank, a good foot and a bit in length it struck me it may be an eel - but do Eels swim on the top of the water? Trying to make light of the situation I said to Pocahontas, "Hey, babe, what do you think of my snake?" "Nothing more than a glow worm" she replied - and with that we headed off to the pub.

#### *Secret Number 4*

Ooo, look; there's a mink! (it's not, it's a Primark sheepskin)

Quite simply secret number four is as plain as that, I was chatting with the lock keeper at Sunbury when he pointed it out "look behinds you" he said, he was quite a portly fellow with a west country accent very pleasant and rather good at mink spotting as it turns out. The little fellow scurried across the lock and slipped away near the portage, which was great for two reasons really, the first being up until that point I'm not sure I had ever seen a mink, let alone one going about its business in its natural habitat. The second is it made for good conversation about good conservation. Now no offence intended here but some lock keeper chat can get a little samey, it can sometimes be likened to cab driver chat, not generally in content you understand just sometimes a little repetitive, for example: "Good morning", "Morning", "gorgeous day isn't it", "wonderful" "have you been busy today?" "fairly, but given it's the weekend not that bad" "great, what time are you on till?" "6 o'clock sharp, Last boat at 5.30" and that's generally about it until the obligatory thank you on the way out, but now my friends you have something else up your sleeve, should the conversation begin to stale in the future you could always add "so, have you spotted any minks lately?" anyway, enough of that, lets see what secret number 5 has to offer.

#### *Secret number 5*

Phenomenon (do do, do do do do do ) NB: think Muppets\_

Well, I'm not exactly sure this qualifies as a secret of the river, but it certainly was an event that happened on the river, but then again once I've told you lot it's not really a secret either, not only that but I have already told a few of you which means it probably wasn't much of a secret to start with, probably just best to get on with it.

Here goes, picture the scene, it's a Friday, an early finish from work just after lunchtime'ish, beautifully bright and sunny day, cloudless sky and nowhere to be at any given time, what does one do with himself at times like these? Well as one can imagine the list of options is vast, how to choose correctly is the art, one could pay some attention to the mounting stack of paperwork sitting on the desk, one could do some banking and bill paying, maybe clean the car its absolutely filthy and in need of doing, one could shop for the week ahead, clean the house, start the decorating, the list is endless. It was whittled down to just two options within a matter of seconds, option 1 take the whole canopy off, option 2 just take the sides off and roll back the front.

So, there I was bobbing along, merrily on my way to Hampton court, the Bluetooth speaker was in full flow, churning out an eclectic mix of musical entertainment, the chiller had provided the ice-cold beer, the shades were on and suncream applied, life was good, and then it happened..... just as I approached Thames Ditton Marina I became fixated on a happening, this happening was about 20metres in front of the boat, on the Starboard side, near the riverbank, it was a good metre or so in diameter and can only be described as a ferocious eddy,(or a happening, seeing as I just called it that), when I say fixated I really mean fixated, I was approaching quite rapidly to this strangely odd phenomenon trying to work out what was causing such a stir, not bothering to look up as I advanced. Suddenly and without warning it hit us, dear Margaritaville was suddenly hurled across the river, the canopy started fiercely and uncontrollably flapping around, my sunglasses case circled sky bound in front of me at a rate of knots and myself and surroundings suddenly became covered in a hefty dousing of water! This whole experience must have only lasted a matter of seconds, but dear Margaritaville and I were left looking soaked, stunned and bedraggled, it seriously looked as though we had just made it through to the comfortable side of a force nine!

Somewhat bemused I looked around at the riverbank, in every direction I looked everything was as still and as calm as it had been just moments earlier, trees basking in the midsummer sun, motionless boats moored at the side, piercing blue sky with not a cloud in sight, "Didn't see anything mate" seemed to be the response from wherever I looked, "Aliens" I said to Margaritaville, beeliens I think I heard her reply, "Not sure if they're real" I said, "Alright then, sealions" she said, "I don't think I saw any of them" I said, but I'm beginning to believe anything's possible!

*Mick Shoulders*

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