



Commodore's Bit

Ahoy

Marilyn, Jonathan, Josephine and I wish all Club members and their families a very prosperous New Year and success & enjoyment on the water for 2010, our 125th Anniversary Year.

A thought to carry you through the cold and wet days, it is only two months or so before we are racing again. The draft programme for 2010 (our 125th year in case I forgot to mention it) is emerging and it looks even better than usual both on the River and along our coastal waters.

Our winter programmer is being well patronised; as well as the traditional intra club skittles tournament, we have had talks by Lilly Neal (about her journey by train from Topsham to Beijing) and the Eel Man from the River Tamar (courtesy of the Cruising Association), we have had the Christmas Dinner, the Dinner Dance & Prize Giving, the Christmas Draw, the Children's Christmas Party and the start of the Club table tennis ladder (and extremely competitive that has turned out to be). Please keep an eye out for the next wave of events, the details will be on the notice board and will be emailed to those on my list (if you want to join that then ping tjbaker.exeter@virgin.net). A big thank you to all who have spoken at, or organised, or attended our events.

January 29th is the AGM and the official start of our 125th celebrations, so do please come along to the Clubhouse for the 1945 start, if for no other reason than to see your new Committee ensconced.

Peter Dunsford has penned a tribute to Martin Taylor who suddenly passed away in October. I would like to add a few of my own thoughts. Martin was your Commodore in our 100th year and all involved in those celebrations say it was the success it was because of him; from my own experience of working with him that does not surprise me. Martin was a most enthusiastic and highly skilled sailor. He won many trophies and was justifiably proud that he and his co-owner (Charles Potter) competed in every evening series race over the last few years. He will be sadly missed by the Club.

Lastly thank you for trusting me to do this job, thank you for all help and encouragement, but mostly thank you for making it fun.

Out.

Tim



Membership Matters

New Members

Please welcome new members who have been elected since the previous Tops'l. They are Sheila Cottingham, Ben Cloves, Janet Nicholls, Beverley Kenworthy, Bruce Greigg, Kelly Sykes, Alexander & Liz Harding with Thomas, Lucy & Samuel and also former member Bruce MacLagan who has returned from Australia. We look forward to seeing them in the Club.

Subs and charges

Except for a few outstanding charges the collection of subscriptions and charges is complete. 283 invoices were sent to members and their families resulting in 452 paid up members. There were 31 formal resignations and 10 persons who, at the Committee Meeting on 14th December were formally deemed to have resigned under Rule 14C. Those persons may not even be introduced as guests but their membership may be restored at the Committee's discretion at a future meeting but only on the prepayment of their Subs. The names of the resignees and deemed resignees are posted on the Club notice board (on separate notices).

Amendments to Club Rules

Your Committee has approved a review of the Club's rules for which adoption will be sought at the Annual General Meeting. The amendments are listed on the notice of the meeting and the reasons will be explained at that meeting. They are all in the nature of legal administrative adjustments.

A similar review of our bye laws is in hand to include such items as the use of the Topper dinghies purchased in the past season and the requirements of waste management legislation.

Philip Chesterfield

Hon. Membership Secretary

Devon Yawls

Highlights of the Year

2009 has been an excellent year for the Devon Yawls which has seen the Topsham fleet go from strength to strength. Several new boats have joined the fleet and 2010 promises further exciting developments with the Exe Regatta being hosted by Topsham Sailing Club and the National taking place at the Yealm YC.

The Devon Yawl 2009 Nationals took place at the Portland and Weymouth Sailing Academy. Andrew Hattersley and Willie Hamilton took first place in DY184. There was some exciting sailing to be had with strong winds and challenging conditions.

TSC Fleet won the Team Racing (Home/Away Matches) against the Yealm Fleet. This was well organised by Ed, Shane and Andrew. For the home match I would like to give particular thanks to Neal Ricketts for acting as race officer and to Katy Grant for the photography. Also many thanks to Jill and Eva for providing first class catering. The Yealm Yacht Club provided equally well managed racing for the away match with splendid catering after the event.

The Exe Regatta was well attended this year with near perfect sailing conditions off Dawlish.

Exmouth Sailing Club did an excellent job organising the event and we hope to get some more Yawls involved next for the 2010 Exe Regatta. The Yawls gave a good performance against the RS400s and 200s with some respectable scores. DY351 coming 6th, DY96 15th and DY339 23rd. Thanks to the TSC members involved in providing support for this event.

The Devon Yawl Ladies Helm race was won this year by Liz Stanley in 351. Many thanks to the Hattersleys for organising this and providing start boat and race instructions. Liz borrowed Ed's DY351 for this event but liked the Devon Yawl so much she decided to buy one for herself later in the season.

The final Tom Blanks race was held on the 18th September with Ed William-Hawkes and Tim Coombe winning overall first for the series in DY 351. Ed was followed closely by Shane Buckley and Trevor Greenslade in 349 who came in second position overall. Congratulations to all who took part in the series - number of yawls racing was significantly up on last year.

Congratulations to John Skelton for coming second in the Dartmouth Regatta Devon Yawl final results. Seems like there were a few more Yawls attending this year compared to last. John also did an excellent job of organising the TSC Yawl Only nights this year with thanks to all those involved.

The Summer Series (MacPherson Cup) was won by James McNaughton in DY96, followed by DY 184 and DY351 in third. I would like to thank

both my crews Lewis Banfield and Pippa Warrin for their support. The Autumn Series (Holman Cup) was won by George Buckley and David Hayes in DY307 followed by DY352 in second and DY100 in third place. Both these series were highly competitive with a good turn out of boats.

I am pleased to report the Bottoms Cup was very well attended. This is the only series, which is handicapped and was hotly contested this year with very little between DY 77, DY352 and DY 100. However in the end it was Richard Babbage and Bruce Greig in DY 100 who finished 1st. Jake Anderson in DY 77 came 2nd and 3rd place went to Liz Stanley in DY352. Considering Liz only bought the boat in October she has done remarkably well to achieve such a high standard in so little time. Well done Liz.

Many thanks to all those involved in supporting all the series throughout 2009. Particularly to Trevor Greenslade for acting as Race Officer on several occasions, Bill and Neal for safety boat duty and also to Shane who was on standby with the RIB.

In the New Year Jake, Andrew, Trevor and I will look at some potential course changes for the weekend series. So by the time we get to the March 23rd forum we should have all the new race instructions in place.

James McNaughton

TSC 2009 Devon Yawl Fleet Captain



Topsham Sailing Club
125 Years of Sailing



Cruiser Fleet Split

At the Autumn Cruiser fleet meeting there was a discussion about the split of the fleets. It was agreed that there were insufficient boats to justify a fourth fleet. Concern was expressed about the viability of the Bruford fleet at present. The Handicap committee had discussed the possibility of splitting the fleet in a different manner and the Cruiser fleet captain explained a possible breakdown of the fleets so that there would be a fleet for lightweight boats and two fleets for heavier boats (fast and slow). There was sufficient interest at the meeting to make it worthwhile circulating more details for members to review, consider and discuss, in order to seek more informed opinions as to whether this split should be adopted.

The handicap committee has long struggled to handicap boats at the extreme weights. There is a very limited wind strength in which both heavy and light boats sail to their handicaps. Light boats do well in light breezes and heavier boats excel in stronger winds. Examples from recent years include Calluna against Centaurs in the Bruford fleet, Jaguar 21s against the bigger Moodys in the Norton fleet and Trapper TS240s against the Fulmars in the Beach fleet. The boats tend to perform well in their conditions and badly when conditions don't suit with the end result that they often obtain a lot of good results and some very bad ones with significant handicap swings as a result.

It was surmised that this might be avoided by grouping the boats so that the lightweight boats sail against each other and the heavier boats do likewise. This would (theoretically) result in the boats all performing at their best in the conditions that most suit them and perform least well altogether at the other end of the wind range. This should result in less benefit (or disadvantage) being due solely to the wind strength rather than the crew skill and might therefore make it easier to handicap.

The range of boat-speeds resulting from this split may create quite wide ranging initial start times, potentially involving longer start sequences for the start boat, but even this would have the benefit of fewer boats being on the start line at any one time.

I circulated details to those for whom I have correct email addresses, seeking feedback. With one exception, that feedback from 28 responses was wholly in favour of trying these alternative arrangements, 2 with minor provisos to their support.

Further details need to be discussed, including the final split of boats into the new fleets taking account of comments received with responses, and proposed courses - for instance we will probably need to move the Clyst Mark further down river so that the faster boats joining the slower fleet don't lose out on the distance they sail each night.

In the light of the positive response to the alternative fleet splits, it seems highly likely that it will be adopted at the spring cruiser meeting, but, being such a significant change, it is something for that meeting to decide before it is implemented. Please therefore put March 24th in your diaries as the date for the spring meeting. As I write this, the nights are already drawing out (just!), so it's now downhill all the way to the new season. Time to get sanding, scrubbing, varnishing and polishing to get ready to go afloat!

Happy New Year to you all,

Neal Ricketts

Cruiser Fleet Captain



Three Peaks silverware comes to Topsham. Well

Dinghy Notes

The Autumn Dinghy Meeting proposed that next year the Dinghy Section would be run by committee with Lisa Woodward, as Dinghy Captain, chairing the meeting of the section. The members of the committee would be John Ostle - Secretary, Godfrey Whitehouse - Training, Tony Bradford - Care of Boats, John Domaille - Care of dinghies in the yard responsible to Yard Master and Pia Murrell - Food and Social arrangements.

This does NOT mean that those people have to do all of what is down to them. We can all help each other and see how it unfolds.

In the spring of 2009 The Commodore's committee passed the following terms of reference to guide the Dinghy Section in carrying out its business. I thought it would be sensible for all dinghy members to be aware of these terms of reference, as I do not think that most members will know about them

1. The General Committee authorises the Dinghy Committee to organise and manage Dinghy Sailing at Topsham Sailing Club.
2. The Chair of the Dinghy Committee shall be the Dinghy Fleet Captain.
3. The Dinghy Fleet Captain shall arrange a fleet meeting in the spring and autumn to brief the fleet members on forthcoming activities and review them at the end of the season. The dinghy fleet captain shall see that the dates of the meetings are selected early enough to be produced in the club yearly programme.
4. The dinghy fleet committee shall comprise the Vice Commodore, Dinghy Fleet Captain and others elected at any of the Dinghy Fleet meetings.
5. The Dinghy Fleet Committee as a whole shall arrange training, racing and social activities.
6. The Dinghy Fleet Captain shall have authority to act alone in all other activities relating to the fleet.

The Spring Dinghy Meeting is at 19:00 on Friday 26th March 2010 and the Autumn meeting is at 19:00 on Friday 22nd October 2010

Please see the AGM report for other matters about the dinghy section. Mainly about help from people like Dave Rochester, Pam and Colin Leach

I wish to thank The Commodore and all members of The Club for their kindness and help given to me during the last six years during which time I have been Dinghy Captain.

Thank you all.

John Domaille

Farewell to the Caribbean

By Trevor Coleman

Part 2 of several:

(In the previous episode they reached Kuna Yala ...)

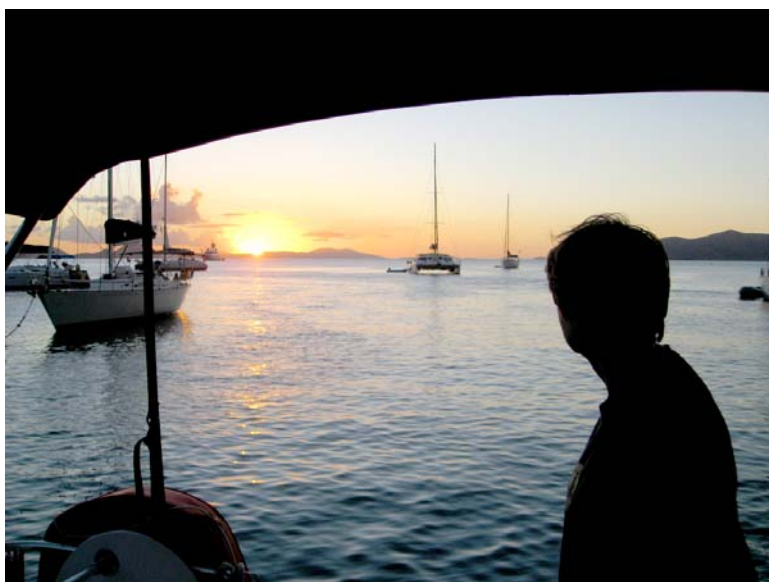
From here it is only about 100 nautical miles to Colon, the entrance to the Panama Canal, with some interesting channels and harbours inside the islands, where one can take short cuts.

Last year there was a waiting period of up to 56 days to pass through the Panama Canal due to strikes and commercial shipping being up to/or near capacity. This year we got through in 3 days, but only just because the Panama Canal Yacht was demolished at 3am, the morning after we arrived, in an eviction reminiscent of Swampy and the A30. This caused difficulties in collecting our warps and fenders and being measured in time to be scheduled to go through the Canal as quickly as possible. The day before we were hoping to get through the Canal was a public holiday in Colon, but despite this we were able to collect US\$600 from the bank in cash, and pay for the bond of US\$800 by credit card, which was refunded once we had passed through the Canal without causing any difficulties.

Yachts are now required to raft up in threes, which we did before reaching the first lock. The Panamanian Canal Company also insist that all yachts go up the first set of locks in the evening and moor in Gatun Lake to large mooring buoys, so that they can charge for 2 assistant pilots, one for the evening trip and another one for the following day. In 1973 we had an American pilot and did the whole trip in one day from beginning to end. We woke in the morning to the sound of howler monkeys in the trees, surrounding the lake and set off about 3am with the new assistant pilot.

We motored through the lake, via the Banana Cut, some 50 miles to Balboa, passing through 3 locks on the way down, one of which had a webcam, so that our friends could watch us going through the lock. We arrived at the Balboa Yacht Club at 4pm where our crew disembarked and caught their flight back to England.

We were in the Pacific at last! ... Cont. on page 6



Martin Taylor

A personal tribute by Peter Dunsford

Martin and I became friends in 1975 when I joined Topsham Round Table. Martin was the Founder Chairman of Topsham and went on to fill many high offices in Round Table, but he never lost his enjoyment of our local meetings at the George and Dragon, where he, Stewart (Breezy) Price and I often sat together in what came to be known as 'Spuddlers Corner'!

My first boating experience with Martin was a 'Fishing Trip' in 1976 on a very plastic little motor boat I owned at the time. We were joined by an old friend, Richard Spiller who later became a partner with Martin in *Slyboots*, the Westerly Griffon they bought. We had so much fun and so many laughs on this trip that it became an annual event, the last one taking place in July this year when Martin was on his usual excellent form.

The odd fish was occasionally caught, but it was more of a 'Three Men in a Boat' type of day, with landings to visit various hostelrys at Cockwood, Lymptone and Turf interspersed with regular games of 'Spoof' and 'Cribbage'!

In the late seventies and early eighties we sailed together a lot on Martin's yachts, *Lady C* and *Slyboots*, doing offshore racing nearly every Sunday in the summer and many a *Voya Con Dios* to the much favoured island of Alderney. I learned an awful lot from Martin, he was a real 'all round' sailor, and a marvellous skipper to sail with - always calm and assured (even when he bumped the odd rock!).

Being born and bred in Dartmouth, he loved Dartmouth regatta, where he raced for many years - he even crewed on *Antares* one year with Breezy and Chris Miller when we won the Cock a Leekie Cup! On many occasions, before the days of Health and Safety, he would invite his family and half the sailing club onto *Lady C* and later *Slyboots* to watch the fireworks from the very best spot in the middle of the river.

When Commodore Harold Norton died in 1980 the club had to suddenly come up with a new team at the top. Very regular meetings were then held at 'The Passage' (before the days of the Club Bar) to agree on the way ahead. Although Martin had not been a member of the club as long as many, the

consensus was that Bill Ricketts would be the man to take over as Commodore with Martin becoming Vice Commodore. This is how it worked out and after 3 excellent years under Bill, Martin took over in 1984 with the centenary year of 1985 just around the corner.

I had the pleasure of working side by side with Martin during the Centenary year when we put on all sorts of events. One of the highlights was the day the Topsham Sailing Club Fleet processed down the river in mast height order taking the salute from the other Exe Clubs at Lymptone and Starcross on the way to Exe Sailing Club where a celebratory lunch took place.

The Centenary Year under Martin's consummate leadership was a great year, bringing everyone together and creating a marvellous spirit within the club, something Martin was rightly proud of.

Martin was involved with the RNLI for very many years, he was a founder and the first Chairman of the Topsham branch and he recently became the new Chairman for the Exmouth Lifeboat Management Group. His work over the years for the RNLI has been simply extraordinary. When he wasn't doing his bit for the Lifeboats, he was often to be found helping others in different ways through his involvement in Rotary.

Despite various forays into Motor Boats, Martin loved his sailing and kept on evening racing in a variety of craft, and, as Charles Potter will tell you, he barely ever missed a race over the last ten years.

Through all this time he and Vicky, whom he married in 1981, were an inseparable couple and tremendously supportive of one another, with Martin brilliantly fulfilling the role of stepfather to Vicky's children. They greatly enjoyed their common interest in antiques, particularly at the Quay Antique Centre which Martin started with other TSC members in 1993.

Martin touched the lives of so many during his life, and gave so much to the community, that to say he will be greatly missed would be a massive understatement.

Peter Dunsford



Farewell to the Caribbean cont. from page 5

No sooner than we had negotiated a mooring off the Balboa Yacht Club (now rebuilt after a fire), than one of our 1972 crew Philip Finch flew in for 5 days, laden with Pimms and smoked salmon, and we took him to a lovely island called Chepillo, about 20 miles down the Panamanian coast, which was very rocky but had wonderful beaches and vultures abounded. We returned to BYC so that he could fly back to the USA to continue his lecture tour, after cleaning the propeller in 54 degrees Fahrenheit ! We then restocked ship from various supermarkets full of US goodies at Albrook Mall in Panama City and filled up with fuel and water at the BYC and bought a new butane gas cylinder as two of our camping gas cylinders had leaked after being over filled in Colon, luckily we realized the problem before blowing up the boat !

We cleaned *Takaroa* in Chepillo from the layers of oil and filth floating down from the Bridge of the Americas. We cleared customs, who actually came down to see us at BYC, and they all seemed to need 'paying off' and told us we should have entered Panama again at Balboa, even though we had already entered in Colon.

Jane then departed for the UK and Bill Holmes, an old school and sailing friend, joined for the long hop across the Pacific. The two of us set sail on Friday 13th March 2009 at 0720, with very little wind, so we motored off down to the Perlas Islands, which are now quite crowded compared with 1973. However, we found a good anchorage on the east side of Isla de Rey called Esperito Santo which another yachtie had recommended. The following day we did some early morning exploring through the Canal de Canas, avoiding a number of rocks with the aid of the chart plotter which was quite accurate here, before leaving from Punta de Coco, the most southerly point of the islands. It was a bit of a shock to have 14 ft tides and such cold water. We ate Jane's excellent shepherd's pie and caught a horse eyed jack, but let it go because it is not good eating. We later caught another fish but lost lure and line, and then caught a large squid and lost that as well !

After a good northerly breeze that lasted for 24 hours before dying completely, we motored at 2000 revs slowly towards Isla de Malpello, a deserted bleak-looking rock owned by Columbia, containing a military outpost, which did not even have a jetty to land on.

To be continued ...



What's he saying? Suggestions to the editor please for the next issue.

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Tim Baker

Commodore

Newest Recruit

welcome to the new arrival to the Skeldon (Niki and Dan) family. A 9+ pounder called Oliver, with a great future ahead of him. Niki, who crews for Herbert Macgregor, upon being asked what the prospects were for sailing next season, replied "Well, we'll just lash him to the mast and get on with it!". That's the spirit!

Burns Night Supper

Saturday January 23rd 19:30

A great programme of Scottish nonsense, music and fun.

Be sure to add your name to the sheet in the clubhouse soon because demand for this popular event is likely to exceed space.

Other Proposed Social Events

Winter/Spring 2010

13th February - Valentine Supper

13th March - Fitting Out Supper

Please keep an eye on the notice board for other impromptu events.



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Articles, photographs, adverts always wanted

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