

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF EAST COWES SAILING CLUB

22 FEBRUARY 2018

Attendance

The 48 Club members in attendance were welcomed by the Commodore.

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from the following members: Andrew and Rebecca Buchanan, Patti Urry, Elaine Greer, Carol Casson, Lorraine Nixon, Graham Tracey, Nick and Jill Bredon, Peter and Jane Brand, Guy Shelbourne, Jane Paull.

Obituaries

The Commodore recorded the sad losses in 2017 of Eric Caws (Vice President), Stuart Buchanan (Hon. Treasurer) and Colin Smith (long-standing member).

Approval of Minutes of the February 2017 AGM

Minutes of the 2017 AGM were agreed to be a true record of the meeting and were signed by the Commodore.

Commodores Report

We, again, had a very successful year with lots of activities on the water and ashore and lots of work to improve our club. And again, that could not have happened with the involvement of our members. I'd like to thank my colleagues on the committee for putting a lot of hours and hard work into helping me to lead this club. A big thank you as well to all members that have given up their time to carry out work for the club. The club has never looked so good. We can be very proud of what we've achieved.

We also had a year where we've lost 2 very valued officials. Eric Caws who has been longstanding member of the club and one of the Vice Presidents and our Treasurer Stuart Buchanan. We miss both of them very much.

A club is only as good as its finances and we are amongst a small minority of clubs that have a healthy bank account. That makes it possible to carry out improvement works. We were able to renew our mud mooring and are currently improving the upstairs of the centre stores. For the first time we will have proper storage facilities for club items, a sails store, we will be able to keep our kitchen equipment dry and there are more possibilities. Ideas are very welcome. Also, thanks to Dave Casson, who brought our electrical system up to standard including a complete re-wire of the Centre Store.

Last year I reported that we were looking into building a proper kitchen but after much deliberation and taking members comments into consideration, it was decided not to go ahead with. The number of events just does not justify the expenditure. However, the equipment is there and can be used to heat ready-made food.

With regard to our dues, we took a different approach this year. We've decided not to have a bar any more but asked members to bring their own drinks. It proved to be very popular, attracting members that would not have come otherwise. We also had our very popular fish & chips supper and one event where a group of ladies prepared a fantastic light dinner. A big thank you for a very successful and enjoyable dinner.

Fitting out, Laying up and Christmas events are very popular and very well attended. The laying up supper and the prize giving were again combined and held at the Golf Club and for the first time in a long time we were able to award fishing trophies again.

We could and should have done more. Looking ahead, there is a meeting on the 1st March to discuss the possibilities and to create a social calendar. All members are welcome to participate.

We are a Sailing Club with lots of sailing events. The events that went ahead were very well attended. Unfortunately, some of these events couldn't go ahead due to the wind. Admittedly one boat always stands out and wins most trophies but it can happen that a bath tub with a sail can beat even the fastest boats. So, if you have a sailing boat try it out for yourself. Members expressed the wish to participate in rallies and we therefore appointed Dave Nixon as the Cruising Coordinator within the Sailing Committee. Several rallies were organised, to Keyhaven, Marchwood, Gosport and even an Accidental rally. Rallies are open to all boats whether sailing or motor boat. It's a great way to get away for the weekend, have a great time and enjoy good company. The complete sailing calendar can be found on our website. Join in!!!

Our fishing fraternity was very busy as well with lots of fishing competitions throughout the year. From the accounts these events could do with more fishermen participating. It appears that some fishermen fear to lose. It's a great day out and prizes can be won. The prizes are sponsored by the East Cowes Tackle Shop.

We also refreshed our club website and it seems quite a success. Big thanks and well done to Joseph Moore.

This year we have to say good bye to several members who resigned their position in the club due to personal reasons. Their enthusiasm and commitment will be sorely missed. A big thank you to Malcolm Shaylor who managed the Danny H crew for the past 3 years, to Patti Urry, our Honorary Secretary and John Barnes, our Rear Commodore Sailing. I hope they will still stand beside us to give their valuable advice.

Although we are a good club, we do have our issues. Our biggest is members participation at the club. Some of our members prefer to pay the levy instead of carrying out duties.

Admittedly the membership fee plus the levy are still lower than the lowest of one of the other sailing clubs. However, the levy would not cover the cost of hired labour in any way. That's unacceptable and unfair to those members who are giving more than 10hrs a year. That has to stop. We are not a marina and if that's the way those members think about the ECSC then they should pay marina prices or get a marina berth. All members with storage must make an effort to organise their duties. We just don't have the resources to do it for you.

With regards to members participation, we are looking for crew for Danny H to support the Thursday night racing and any other events.

Another issue is the paying of the membership fee on time. By mid-January we had numerous members that still hadn't paid. The notices are being sent out by mid-November and the fees must be paid in full by the 1st January. That's plenty of time and it's the same year after year. It creates unnecessary work for the Committee. Just as a reminder, all Committee members are volunteers. Doing this job is in addition to our lives and day jobs and no salary.

It appears that some of our members treat the club as their property and think they have the right to do whatever they want. We have seen it again several times this year where suddenly dinghies appear in the yard without the permission from the Stores team. We are all familiar with the rules. So why does it happen?

It's always hard to accept that a minority spoils it for the majority. To address the above issues a working group has been created. More info in due time.

Every year, the committee has to evaluate club expenditures and like with everything else, costs are rising i.e. insurance, crown commission, harbour dues. We always try to cover the costs only increasing fees at a nominal rate just to meet the extra expense. In this respect and after lengthy and hard discussions, and taking into consideration that the mooring/storage fees haven't increased in 2 years, it was decided to increase the Mooring/Storage fees this year.

And finally some statistics:

Members carried out official club duties:

2015: 63 – total hours: 1017

2016: 76 – total hours: 1389

2017: 60 – total hours: 926

Membership fee lapses and resignations
2013 – 95 members lapsed
2014 – 29 members lapsed, 33 resignations
2015 – 39 members lapsed, 16 resignations
2016 – 33 members lapsed, 15 resignations
2017 – 18 members lapsed, 25 resignations

Treasurers Report

Dave Casson presented the accounts for the year ended 31st December 2017 on behalf of the Acting Hon. Treasurer, Andrew Buchanan. Andrew was thanked (in his absence) by the meeting for stepping-in following the passing of his father Stuart.

Dave reported that despite being unable to access the club bank accounts for a period following Stewart's passing, access was now restored and the club finances were being administered without issue.

Dave noted that Andrew, who had studied for a degree in accountancy before following a different career path, had judged the club to be in a healthy financial state. The final accounting statements had been prepared and audited by professional accountants and signed by the Commodore.

There were no questions about the accounts.

Any Other Business

Conal Greer read-out the paper he had submitted 21 days prior to the meeting in accordance with the rules on the submission of AOB.

The paper is reproduced below and will be available on the website.

2018 AGM – Any Other Business – *Planning for the Future*

Introduction

ECSC is in many ways a near unique entity – certainly on the Medina, for example we enjoy: -

- Under cover storage and secure yard facilities.
- Financial stability/solvent
- Relatively Stable membership numbers
- Direct access to the river
- Centenary room
- Fully serviced Pontoon and deep-water hammerhead berthing
- Secure low-cost moorings for small boats etc.

However, the Club does have liabilities and there are numerous risks associated with running the Club and its facilities. For example –There are major external cost pressures on the Club which are beyond our control; the Clubs pontoon and hammerhead facility is ageing and refurbishment/replacement in due course will be costly; changing membership profile.

With these points in mind, the overarching objectives of the General Committee are; -

1. To maintain the Club and its facilities in the present, as being safe and serviceable for use.
2. To make contingency arrangements/adequate financial provision for the future.
3. To make year on year improvements to Club facilities and activities where these will benefit existing members and encourage new membership enquiries and to promote active involvement of members regardless of their boating interest.
4. To ensure that the Club as an entity and all its resources are preserved for future generations.

What makes a Club?

A simple definition - an association of people who are dedicated to a common task, interest or activity, an organization which provides mutual support and companionship – **See Rule 3.** With this definition and Rule 3 in mind – ECSC has a proud heritage/tradition, of being a self-help enterprise, with regards to all aspects of the Clubs management, organization and maintenance of its facilities. This approach has kept costs low and the Club solvent with sizeable assets to its credit.

Similarly, you will be aware that the *operating costs* of the Club are not just fiscal but requires a considerable investment of effort and time – and that means dependence on volunteers.

Over the years this approach has enabled the Club to not only maintain and develop its facilities, but most importantly for all of us, keep the cost of membership and indeed moorings relatively low – certainly by Solent standards, together this has enabled hundreds of people to enjoy boating of one kind or another.

So, what are the emerging issues?

Regrettably, over recent times there has been something of a shift in the attitude of members towards the Club as a social enterprise where people should take personal responsibility for the Club and do their bit to keep the facilities etc. up to scratch.

People are either, less willing or perhaps less able to volunteer and undertake tasks about the Club; there is a **walk-through mentality**, i.e. simply using facilities but without making an active contribution to maintenance /social engagement.

Secondly, the demographic of the Club shows an ageing population of members – albeit with time to give but less physically able perhaps to take on all of the maintenance tasks about the yard etc.

In common with other Clubs in Cowes and the Solent in general, the enthusiasm for joining a Club as a long-term commitment and getting involved is falling.

Finally, whilst there is money in the bank – it would not be sufficient to cover a major repair /replacement programme – in particular the pontoon and hammerhead arrangement.

What can we do?

Before we get to a crisis point (as for other Clubs I can mention), the question is - **What steps can we take now to protect the Club against future shock.**

Broadly speaking there are 3 areas where changes and contingency planning can be undertaken; - (in no particular order)

1. **Exercise strict financial prudence and forward planning** to ensure we have the money to cover all of the Clubs potential areas of property risk. This may have an impact on the cost of membership and the cost of services that the Club offers its members, but not necessarily.
2. **A reduction of the burden on individual volunteers** – e.g. through getting **more people to undertake tasks about the Club on a reliable basis** and where necessary, paying for essential maintenance tasks to be undertaken, i.e. better organization of work parties and maintenance schedules etc.
3. **Develop a new approach (at least for this Club), to the way in which new full members are admitted to the Club**, with the aim of admitting and retaining only enthusiastic/interested and active members and pulling back from the reputation of, *ECSC as being primarily a convenient, low cost boat yard.*

The Committee will begin work to develop options for change, which in due course will be put to the membership for approval/implementation.

Early Notice of an E.G.M.

In keeping with the Club Rules, the General Committee will need to communicate on the options for change, any changes will need to be adopted by the membership (i.e. voted on); in turn there may also be a need for revisions to the Club Rules.

Therefore, later in the year it is likely that an E.G.M. will be called and in advance of that Notices Published – **please take note.**

The following are amongst some of the issues that will be considered: -

- A revised *time-line* for renewal of membership and payment of berthing and storage fees.
- Better management of debts to the Club/debtors.
- The possibility of – an *Opt in or opt out arrangements* to the 10 hours of Club Duties/operation of the Levy, with up-front payment for opting out.
- A Probationary first year before full membership is agreed – to ensure the applicant is committed to the ethos of the Club.
- Better management of Club Duty roster/work parties.
- Revised Joining and Membership fees.
- Revised Storage and Berthing Fees.
- Annual forward planning regarding the Clubs maintenance and investment plans – scheduling and cost etc.

Feb 2018.

Election of Officer's and Committee Members

The Officers and Committee Members for 2018 are:

President:	Glyn Davies
Vice Presidents:	Alan Abrook, Danny Hatfield, Tony Cole
Commodore	Torsten Richter
Vice Commodore (House)	Conal Grier
Rear Commodore Sailing	John Garlick
Rear Commodore Social	Paul Walker
Rear Commodore Stores	Mike Tennuci
Rear Commodore Fishing/Motor Boating	Richard Davies
Hon. Treasurer	Dave Casson
Hon. Secretary	David Nixon
General Committee	Andrew Buchanan, Mike Harvey (Health and Safety Officer), Dave Bonham
Non-Committee Positions	Karen Walker (Member Administration). Joseph Moore (Webmaster).

All positions were elected unopposed.

The Commodore invited informal applications from members with an interest in the Club's finances to take up the new non-committee position of Deputy Treasurer. The Deputy Treasurer would work closely with Dave Casson and step in (for example, at General Committee meetings) if he were unavailable.

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 21 February 2019 at 1930 hrs.

The meeting closed at 2022 hrs.