

## COMMODORE'S LOG - DECEMBER.

Ladies & Gentlemen, it is December, and this is my last Log of the year. Not only that, but this is also my swan song because, like Cinderella, at the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve, my fairy coach turns back into a pumpkin, as my term of office as your Commodore comes to an end. I shall become just an ordinary member once again, although not quite, as I shall become a Past Commodore, which is a new pathway for me to explore!

Because this is my last Log, it will be a little different to the usual format, starting with a bit of a summary. I must admit that I am surprised that the last three years have gone so quickly (although with slow patches, when things have not been going to plan!). On the positive side, the major benefit to us, with the generous support of your debentures, was the purchase of 12, Old Coastguard Road next door, thus protecting the Club from unfavourable development and giving us a base for potential future expansion. There were also a number of building projects, including the complete refurbishment of our restaurant and kitchen, new automatic glass doors to our front entrance, glass balustrades to the terrace, an overhaul of the gundeck and the rebuilding of both carpark entrance walls, together with new signage.

We have upgraded our cctv system to improve security and introduced a new database, to provide better administration and, in the very near future, increased access for members to online restaurant reservations, function booking and the ability to top-up funds on membership cards. Plans are already developed for the new boatshed toilets and showers and a new training room - but that is for next year!

As a bit of a contrast, we have had a bumpier ride with our clubhouse staff, with only two stalwarts in the shape of our Chief Steward, Richard Langdon, and our Accounts Manager, Natalie Nowell, carrying on from when I started! Virtually everyone else in the clubhouse has joined us in the last twenty months, including Neil Lewis our General Manager. Neil has spent over a year reorganising our Club paperwork and procedures to make us legal and now has turned his attention to getting our catering operation running as economically as possible, but still providing the quality of food and service that we expect.

We also parted company with our Head Chef and our Restaurant Manager. Greg Etheridge took over as Head Chef and Oktay Orak became our restaurant manager. They have also taken time to find their feet, form their teams and get used to a private club situation, but recently I have received nothing but good feedback on their work, particularly at functions, so I am hopeful that next year will be relatively trouble free.

I cannot leave out our Administration Office! Early in 2017, our two long service ladies, Frances and Deborah, decided that it was time for pastures new. Fortunately for us, we found two very worthy replacements in Maggie Newbould and Pat Reed, who have familiarised themselves with all our

strange ways and are now firmly in control of that department. Lastly, I have to mention that our Yard staff have been perfectly stable and maintained a very strong team throughout my time, looking after all of our marine activities!

Returning to the present and talking of our new database, it is taking some time to transfer all members' details, which in turn is delaying the issue of the annual subscription notifications. They will be issued shortly, but your patience is requested!

Staying with this month, works have now progressed in the boatshed to create the improved storage facilities I have previously outlined. At the top of the shed, the new yard store is proceeding well and should soon be ready to receive much of the club's equipment. Quotes are coming in for the proposed mezzanine structure immediately beside this area to form our new, all-purpose training room, which should begin in January. Work is also moving on to divide the old shipwright's area into three separate sections, which will all have different uses.

On the social scene since I last wrote, we enjoyed an excellent Traveller's Tales from Peter Forbes on the 28th November and a Christmas Craft Day, hosted by Maggie Newbould, on December 4th. A coach trip to see the Christmas lights at Longleat took place on the 6th, much enjoyed by those who went, but numbers were less than expected. It is frustrating to the organisers when this happens, particularly when specific requests are made for trips of this type!

On Saturday, the 9th, we held our traditional 'Port & Stilton' Dinner, with almost 100 members and guests attending. A superb meal was enjoyed by all, with music provided this time by an excellent duo, who even had most people dancing by the end of the evening. This was a break from tradition, which was a disappointment to some, but this was still a very good event. Last Thursday, nearly 90 members took the boat to Brownsea Island to enjoy our traditional carol service in the little church. A really beautiful service, despite the slightly wild weather conditions, with a warm drink and lunch at the Club afterwards.

Last Sunday we held our grand Christmas Draw and my congratulations to all of the winners. The proceeds are all going to the very local cancer charity, About Face. On the same day we also held our annual children's party, with entertainment by 'Krazy Ken' and a visit by Santa in his steam car! From the noise up above and the occasional drift of dust from between the bar ceiling tiles, a very good time was had by all and I, for one, was very pleased to know how large the supporting steel beams were above the Bar lounge! Despite the foul weather, my grateful thanks must go to Richard Knott and Graham Scrivens for turning out in a partly open vehicle to keep the legend alive!

Looking forward, we still have our Christmas music evening this Friday evening, with appropriate cocktails, our Bar will be open for a short session on Christmas Day, courtesy of our Chief Steward and then there will be a large Brunch event on Boxing Day. We complete the year with our New Year's Eve dinner and mock casino, and dancing for those who still have the energy! Into the new year, there is

a further Brunch on New Year's Day, when you can meet the new Commodore. In January, there will be two Happy Hour evenings, with extra menu choices, an excellent Traveller's Tale on the 30th, and new Pilates and Zumba classes for those who have decided that they must take themselves in hand.

Moan of the Month - I really, really had hoped that I wouldn't have to mention anything at this festive time of year, but the old chestnut of members and guests has reared its head again. Could I respectfully remind you all that guests may only enter our premises, if accompanied by their introductory member and properly signed in. There have been two or three occasions in the last couple of months, when guests have arrived before their introductory members and have found it difficult to understand that they have, strictly speaking, no rights to even enter the clubhouse, let alone use the facilities. There has been some unpleasantness to staff, who were only doing their jobs. Please be very conscious of our restrictions in this matter.

And now I hope that you will allow me to finish off this last script with a little personal philosophy in respect of our Club. To slightly misquote the actor, Michael Caine, "not many people know this....", but it has been my fate to have been on the front line of virtually every major development of the Club over the last 35 years, from designing our Yacht Haven in the mid 1980's, through managing the reconstruction of the harbour-front elevations of the clubhouse, enlarging the function room and gundeck, to altering and refitting our kitchens and toilets (twice!), to leading the team who organised the Haven and boatyard extensions eight years ago and finally, the projects mentioned earlier above. I only mention all this, because I am passionate about our Club and feel that I have earned a right to express an opinion on our organisation.

I feel that we are all privileged to be members of a senior, Royal yacht club, one with a serious past history and with traditions and standards to be proud of. That is not to say that we should not move carefully with the times and modify the qualities of our Club to suit. I believe that we have managed to successfully achieve this over the decades and have kept the special 'something' that is the RMYC intact and healthy. Many other senior clubs find themselves in difficulties at this time, with declining membership and finances. The RMYC appears to be bucking that trend, with stable numbers and a sound financial position. Through all the changes of time, our rules and bye-laws have been the glue that has kept our Club what it is, and it is incumbent on all of us to respect those regulations, much as it is down to us all to respect our fellow members and staff. That is not to say that our regulations should not be reviewed on a regular basis and updated as is seen fit. However, in the meantime, we should respect what is there and, if a member feels that rules should be modified, then he or she should put themselves forward to join a committee, so that an issue can be properly debated and taken forward. Enough said!

That just leaves me to record some thanks. First and foremost, to my wife, Jackie, for supporting me throughout my term of office and for being much better at mingling and meeting with new members than I am (must be the Diplomatic upbringing!). Jackie, in turn, would like to thank all of the 'Flower Ladies', who have joined her in keeping our public spaces attractively decorated, particularly Jan Harvey, who has supported her from the beginning and been a fantastic help through everything. She

has also appreciated all the support from a wide variety of members and staff over the past three years.

Second, to everyone who has served on the General Committee and all the sub-committees through my time and for all the help and advice that you have given. I much appreciate that you are all volunteers, who have chosen to give up your time to help with the running of this club. This club would just not work without our volunteers, even though that service sometimes brings them into conflict with other members, who may not agree with everything that is being done. I, for one, am extremely grateful that people are still prepared to come forward to help. I must particularly mention Jo Tatham, who has been a key part of our Social committee for the last 8 years and has been responsible for the success of so many of our events. Jo is also standing down this month and we owe her a huge vote of thanks.

Third, but by no means least, to all our staff, who look after us so well. From the ladies in the administration and accounts office, to the catering staff in the kitchens and restaurant, to our ever-attentive bar stewards and, as always, to the Yard team who handle the launching and recovery of our boats so professionally. My sincere thanks to you all for your attention and patience in dealing with us!

That really just leaves me to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Prosperous New Year. It has been a privilege for me to serve as your Commodore and I would like to thank everyone who have sent their kind good wishes for my retirement. I leave the Club in good shape and in good hands. I look forward to seeing many of you out on the water next summer - I will be the chap without worry lines across my forehead!!

Very best wishes,

Simon Gregory.