REAR COMMODORE SAILING – REPORT FOR AGM 2021

General – For the second year running, our programme of activity was significantly impacted by the pandemic. Following the 2020 AGM we briefly emerged from a short lockdown, only to head back into a long period of lockdown at the start of 2021 and this curtailed much of the sailing programme through until the Spring. When lockdown lifted, we were swift to be able to resume racing using the pursuit race format together with volunteer duty race teams to provide safe organisation on and off the water. By mid-summer, as restrictions progressively eased we were able to return to the full sailing programme and we have managed to sustain a full summer series of racing. Indeed, turn-out for Sunday racing has been encouragingly strong and we have regularly recorded entries in the high 30's and recently as high as 47 boats. My thanks at this point are extended to all members of the Sailing Committee, comprising the fleet captains, that have provided the decision-making body for the type and level of activity that we have been able to provide in recent months. The fleet captains are as follows:

- Fast Fleet – Olly Hopkins
- RS Aero – Charlie Sansom (standing down at this AGM).
- Slow Fleet – Geoff Silcock
- Supernova – Brian Smith
- Laser – Mike Dyer
- Cruising – John Murrell
- Power Boats & DutyMan Manager– Nigel Fletcher
- Sailing Secretary – Rick Plummer

For the coming year, we will need to appoint a new RS Aero Fleet Captain and I have also proposed that we introduce a Youth Captain, which Lucy Haydon has volunteered to fulfil. I would also like to invite a nomination from our swimming membership to join the Committee.

Race formats – From a sailing calendar perspective, the AGM falls half-way through the year which runs from Apr – Mar. The new Winter Series has just started and we are very optimistic that we will run the published programme until the end of Mar 22. The Sailing Committee will meet in good time before the end of each series to confirm the format for the subsequent series; do keep a lookout in Bowsprit for updates to the programme. Please pass any thoughts or preferences that you might have to your fleet captain in good time.

Dutyman – for this year and because of Covid-19, we have only asked for volunteers to populate the race duty programme. We will continue this approach until the end of Mar 22. From Apr 22, we will revert to asking all members (except those that have paid the duty opt out fee) to complete at least one duty at the Club. This is not onerous and it is the only credible way that member's club can sustain a racing programme. Members will be sent a link in Jan 22 where they can choose which weekend they would like to volunteer for. Thereafter, the DutyMan Manager will populate the gaps in the programme from those that have not volunteered – it is therefore in your interests to elect which Sunday you would prefer to volunteer for. You do not need any prior experience to volunteer for an Assistant Officer of the Day (AOD) duty role. Thank you to Rick Plummer and Nigel Fletcher that collectively oversee our duty rota.

Open events – as the Commodore has briefly mentioned in his report, following the loss of the early season open events, we were able to host our first open event of 2021 in July for the Supernova fleet and this has since been followed by successful events for the CVRDA, the Ladies RS Aero Championships, the Byte Inlands and a recent Laser event. We hope to host the Bowmoor Bubble at the end of this month for our growing RS Aero fleet. Thank you to everyone that has supported the Open events as sailors or duty crew for this season. Hopefully we will see a return to a full programme in 2022 and potentially a new open event for our emerging Comet fleet…

Youth Sailing – Our youth sailing programme was swift to get going again as soon as we were allowed back to the lake. Thank you to Fabiana for pulling together the administration and to our young coaches (and one or two 'less' young…) for providing the programme. We are looking to continue the success of our 'Hour of Power' coaching prior to R1 on Sunday mornings together with some better targeted training on Saturday's through until the end of this calendar year and then starting again in the Spring. We also hope to see a return to a more formal coaching week during the summer half term, albeit perhaps part of a Regatta week that might offer something for all members young and old[er].

Other sailing activities: Away from racing, we have reintroduced the popular Cruising Saturday's under the guidance of fleet captain, John Murrell and the Ladies who Launch initiative. These will both feature prominently in our plans for 2022 so please keep an eye on Bowsprit in the new year. We welcome initiatives to get all members on the water and recognise that not everyone wants to pursue the racing pathway. There is scope to do much more with the cruising fleet if there is sufficient interest. Please do speak with me if you have any further ideas.

Windsurfing, wind foiling and winging – one of the phenomena of the pandemic has been the resurgence of windsurfing as a sport and the emergence of foiling in it's various forms. I have found myself (courtesy of two cunning teenage boys) getting hooked on windsurfing and it has been a pleasure to welcome new members at the club who pursue this branch of our core activity. The Training Principal has highlighted in his report that we are now accredited to deliver the RYA Start Windsurfing syllabus and our first 3 courses this year were sold out within 24-hrs. A huge thanks to Maisie Harkess for supporting these courses as our Chief Windsurf Instructor. We now need more ladies to give it a go (just laying the seeds for a New Year's resolution for 2022…). There is an active and very supportive WhatsApp group for 'windies' of all persuasion which gives great advice for beginners, development opportunities for intermediates and it provides a quick means of letting the group know when people are venturing to the Club or further afield.

Outdoor Swimming – another hugely popular activity in recent years has been the development of an outdoor swimming membership. Our outdoor swimmers are inspirational for their commitment with many participating throughout the year. During the pandemic when we were forced to operate an activity booking system, we were able to offer a greater level of access than normal as the swimming 'windows' helped to punctuate the sailing sessions and to control overall numbers on site. The removal of the booking system has had a negative impact on the swimmers as they have been forced to swim either early morning (with access to whole lake) or late afternoon (with restricted access to the western end of the lake). For safety purposes, our insurance company insists that we separate swimming from our core sailing activities either by time or space. We have a proposal to provide greater access which requires some work services to be completed. We hope to achieve this at the forthcoming working party on Saturday 16th November after which we will publish a revised policy which should provide safe access to all members during the working week and outside of school holidays. Please bear with us just a little while longer. As mentioned above, it would also be helpful to have a swimming captain that could join the Sailing Committee so that we can exchange thoughts and ideas – please speak with me if you are interested.

Wind and Weed… Our nemesis… Apparently 2021 was the lightest winds on record for summer months since 1961… It seemed that whenever we organised a formal event, the wind disappeared. Not much we can do about that, but lets all keep our fingers crossed for some good F4 gusting F5 for the next few months. Weed is our other challenge. Sadly our lake has 2 invasive weed species which we seek to control with 2 methods; firstly an Environment Agency approved dye which filters the UV light preventing the weed from growing and secondly we employ a contractor to cut the weed if it gets beyond control. We have managed this with mixed success this year but we are fortunate that we can afford to maintain our programme of dye application and we have already pre-booked a cut for the summer of next year. For 2022, we may even revert to a working party or two to ensure we have good lean access to our lake.

And finally… Given all of the challenges presented by the pandemic, I think we can reflect back on a successful summer and autumn period. The membership is strong, racing participations is up, our youth programme remains healthy and interest in other activities from cruising to the emergence of foiling and winging seems to be going from strength to strength. Key to our future success will be new members coming forwards to take on committee positions so that we continue to be reinvigorated with new and fresh ideas. Do please give this some thought and come and chat to any of the committee.

John Banbrook