

Firstly, I would like to thank you Ross for your leadership as Commodore for the past year, your management of the project and finally the build of the new changing rooms and Training Centre. It was a bold but essential decision to continue to progress with this part of the Club Development and we thank you Ross, for your very valuable contribution. We appreciate it has been a busy year for you but your continued interest and support in racing, training and all staffing matters has helped the club to flourish and maintain our goals going forward.

(Ross was presented with a voucher and bottle of red wine).

Members,

I would like to thank you for your vote of confidence and giving me the honour of being your Commodore.

In 2001 I took my first role for the club as Sailing Secretary and since then I have supported both sailing and house committees as well as Wayfarers and Cadets and I would like to thank all of you and the staff who have generously given your time and enthusiasm to support me.

I am delighted that with the experience of our manager Ian and our dedicated staff we now have a thriving Galley and Bar which, as we heard today is in a much stronger financial position. The overall quality of our meals has greatly improved, in fact it is usually excellent. Wednesday, Friday and Saturday evenings have become a date in our diaries and this is also bringing in new and repeat bookings for external events.

With the dedication of our beachmaster and the Yard staff we are starting to improve the appearance of our club again and we hope you will see a noticeable difference in the months to come.

The most important element of this club, is sailing, whether this is

cruising solo or trips with the cruiser class, racing on Saturdays or Sundays or just messing about in boats with the Tuesday Group. So, going forward, as well as taking on the overall leadership that the role of Commodore involves there are key areas that I wish to focus on, that I believe will improve the experience for you all and will help to attract new members.

Training

There are limited opportunities for us to increase the number of moorings but I personally believe we can increase our membership and share our love of sailing by offering training to new members and improving the skills of others so we can be certain of a very positive future for Medway Yacht Club.

We have this fabulous new facility and we must make it a vibrant centre for learning. It is a known fact that Sailing is recognised as having a positive effect on communication skills, teamwork, confidence building and mental health issues.

So, with the support of the Vice Commodore, Philip, volunteers and a new Chief Instructor we will to deliver a full programme of sailing, power boat, first aid and VHF courses. We will extend our welcome to more young people, building on the number of youngsters that have loved the new and very successful youth group and during the week days, invite local businesses to use the training room for conferences and team building skills. External event hire will generate much needed income from this new club asset.

If you value your time here on the water and would like to support us, maybe you would consider volunteering and becoming a trainer or sailing coach? A wide group of skilled and experienced volunteers is a key component to ensuring club activities remain sustainable.

Memberships

Medway Yacht Club is a member's club and we will not deviate from this but we employ 10 permanent members of staff and 12 casuals, with a turnover of over seven hundred thousand (£700,000) so we are also a business, complying with all the health and safety regulations, insurance costs, boat movements and maintenance, a bar and galley etc etc. All this requires effective management and robust finances but with this in mind the Management committee will be taking another look at our membership categories. We are very aware of the age demographics of our members and the impact of ever-increasing costs in everyone's lives so we understand the need to make your membership acceptable.

Technology?

Whether you have embraced technology or not, this is another area I wish to focus on. It is vital that the club has a vibrant website and following many requests from members, a booking system to suit our modern world with busy lifestyles.

With the support of Rear Commodore, Quentin, we will be finding a suitable booking system that initially allows members to book training courses online and this will extend to online registration for regattas and other open meetings, reserving the scrubbing trolley and booking a meal in the Galley.

An effective website is paramount to the club's success whether this be for promoting all the facilities the club can offer, ensuring you can all find out the details of events and training courses, getting those all-important race results, or the basic essentials for a day's sailing, the tide and weather forecast for the River Medway.

Our website needs a fresh approach to achieve these goals.

Once again, I thank you for giving me this opportunity to be your Commodore. I shall do my best and I hope that you will support us, as Flag Officers and the management committee as we make decisions, often challenging, in this ever-demanding world of global instability, changing lifestyle trends and pressure on family lives and finances. We have a very exciting year ahead with a calendar full of sailing and social events. We look forward to seeing you at our Christmas dinners over the next couple of weeks and again at events in the new year. Please join the Flag Officers for drinks on New Year's Day and come and find us for a chat if you have anything constructive to offer!