Solent Sunbeam Newsletter 12/2023

Something to mull over during the long winter nights and "Twixmas" break – our new look Newsletter.

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From the Class Captain

By Roger Wickens

The Solent Sunbeams have celebrated their Centenary Year in style. It seems a long time ago now but cast your minds back to the three magical days in June when the weather gods smiled upon us all. Two days of a memorable regatta, racing on the first day in the Harbour and the second out at sea in Bracklesham Bay. We were joined by five boats from Falmouth and this resulted in a record 35 boat start line – quite a sight.

On the third day a Pageant of Sail with our Harbour seemingly full of Sunbeams all trying to stay in numerical sail number order. The writer was guilty of running his boat aground and falling out of line.

And later on the same day a fabulous 1920's themed party at ISC.

This year was the last of Ollie Gilchrist's three years as Class Captain. Thank you so much Ollie for your fun leadership – the Class is in rude health – and now you have a beautiful model of the "rocket ship" Sky to admire throughout the winter months.

Our AGM took place on Guy Fawkes Day and very commendably not a single firework went off in the meeting! The minutes have been circulated but for those that may not have read them or attended the meeting I congratulated Jerry and his Team for the three years spent in planning our Centenary celebrations, Alan on the rebuilding of Mystery, Martin on his restoration of Joy, Peter on taking the oldest and very first Sunbeam Dainty to the South of France for the 18th time, and the Taylor Family on their launch in September of the

newest Sunbeam Odyssey. I also specially thanked Phillip for his invaluable seven years of service to the Class as Vice-Captain.

Going forward we have a packed racing program for 2024, with maybe nine boats planning on making the trip to the Falmouth Sunbeam Centenary celebrations in August. Falmouth have devised a super program of events, a very economical launch etc. package has been arranged by Mylor Yacht Harbour, and the Falmouth members have offered to help get our boats there and back. Even if you cannot take a boat with you, I am sure you would enjoy the experience of being there for this Centenary. These things only come round every hundred years!

We have a wonderful team of Class Officers who make up our Executive Committee – ExCom for short. We have planned a new look newsletter, with various Class Officers contributing their bit. Jerry will talk about the sailing, Jacqueline the socials, Robin the results, Martin the technical expertise, and James the PR. Graham and Nikki will be keeping watch.

We have some new Class trophies. Gayle has very kindly donated some of her Father's memorabilia, and so we now have an elegant cup for the Fleet winner of the V6 HW series, and prizes also for the Silver Fleet winner of the V6 series, the April Goblets, the Chisholm w/e and the Chittagong w/e. Gayle has also donated a Crew Biscuit Barrel to be awarded each year to a deserving Sunbeam crew. The decision is down to the Class Officers, and how difficult this turned out to be with really worthy candidates. The prize will be presented at the Class cocktail party in the Spring.

Happy Xmas from me. Roger Wickens – CC

Social Updates

By Jacqueline Evans

Supper & Quiz Evening – Saturday 13th January at the Ship Inn, Itchenor – book now to avoid disappointment! **Please come especially if you are less confident on the Rules. Hopefully it will be a fun way of learning together**. All multiple choice answers. Details of the evening and how to book have been circulated via e-mail and the Sunbeam Social WhatsApp, but any questions please contact Jacqueline_evans@btinternet.com

Winter Walk and lunch – Sunday 25th February, with lunch at The Star and Garter, East Dean. Further details (including the walk route and how to sign up) will follow in the New Year.

Winter Cocktail Party – Saturday 16th March – Viv and Anna Williams have kindly agreed to host the party at their home in Emsworth. Details will be circulated in the New Year.

Meet the Member

Thanks to David Grylls (Tiffany, V71) for agreeing to be in our first ever "Meet the Member" feature. We asked David a few questions. Here is what he had to say:

1. What was your first sailing memory?

Looking back, family holidays in Cornwall on the Helford River form my earliest sailing memories. My father encouraged my sister and I to sail from an early age - venturing out at the age of 5 in a converted 7' pram dinghy built by a close family friend where we experienced our first single handed adventures. We truly felt it was just us alone at sea, until on one occasion, unable to make way to windward in a summer easterly breeze, my father appeared out of nowhere to recover us and tow us back to the safety of the nearby village of Durgan.

I later appreciated that we were never quite as alone as I had thought with Dad keeping a watchful eye on us from afar!

2. What is your sailing high point?

In one sense, my high points could be listed off as a series of adventures ranging from sailing from Falmouth to Sardinia (and back) aged 21 in my father's 33' boat to sailing to the Azores single handed and many other highlights...

However, the most lasting happy memories are sailing with my lovely family and friends - all of whom seem to have a misplaced confidence in my abilities! It always feels rather special when those close to you "sign up" to sailing adventures - be they more adventurous or just picnicking at a favorite anchorage.

3. What is your sailing low point?

Interesting question! Apart from underestimating the competitiveness of the Sunbeam fleet (🤣) and finding the Winner Bank last summer to be surprisingly hard underfoot(!) it would have to be making landfall in Arcachon, South West France.

Back in 1985, and armed only with rather vague RDF equipment, I misjudged our distance off the sandy peninsula called Cap Ferret narrowly escaping from the surf - bumping the keel just once. We spent the rest of the night anchored 5 miles offshore playing cards and drinking whisky - too wired to sleep. Moral of the story is when the pilot book says it is ill advised to make landfall at night then it is probably best to be compliant!

4. What interesting fact might fellow Members not know about you?

From aged 16-21 I served in the Merchant Navy, becoming an engineer officer qualified to lead watches on both steam turbine and marine diesel ships while serving on large crude carriers for BP Shipping. My routes were mainly from Europe to the Persian Gulf with a few trips further afield. In 1979 we got mixed up in the Iran-Iraq war transiting the Straits of Hormuz fulling laden whilst being buzzed by fighter jets.

Our funnel sported the colours of the Ango-Iranian Oil company which was not particularly helpful! Seems a long time ago now with our union negotiating a 50% pay rise for us as long as we remained in the war zone. Looking back, I am not really sure that was an appropriate risk adjusted return... but it all seemed fine at the time.

News update…

I am sure you will all wish to congratulate James on producing this beautifully presented "new look" newsletter. I was simply blown away at the professionalism that it has involved. Thank you so much James for this fresh idea. I suspect that you should all consider yourself warned about his new "Meet the Member" slot! Well done to David for leading the way with this. Who next, we should all worry?

We also owe a big thank you to Neil for the amazing way in which he is tackling the collection and preservation of our Class records. I hope he will explain this project to you all in a future edition. Meanwhile could everyone please try to bring up to date the information about your own boat in the "Boatology" section of the website.

Roger