

XOD – Class Captain’s newsletter – February 2011

To those of you who I have not seen recently, I wish you a Happy New Year and, to everyone in the Class, an enjoyable and successful Centenary on and off the water.

Although more detail as regards the events and activities of the coming year can be found in the Minutes of our Class Committee Meeting on 15th February 2011 and on the website, let me highlight a few things.

Centenary Events – pre Cowes

The Yarmouth Division got things off to almost¹ the best possible start with a fantastic ‘X-Factor’ Ball² at the Royal Solent. It was an excellent evening with superb food and³ very good wine. To the relief of many, your Class Captain’s commitment to the ferry⁴ precluded any excursions to the dance floor. The next significant social event is lunch at the RMYC on 27th March.

For the rest of the social and sailing programme, please refer to the website or the local Divisional Captains. I will single out only one pre-Cowes event for special mention. That is a race at Lymington (start time c 1630) on Friday 3rd June 2011, which will be the anniversary of the first ever race of the XOD Class off Hythe. It is hoped that there will be a good turnout for that event, from Lymington and elsewhere. Those who cannot bring their own boats but would like to race should get in touch with Rory Paton and we will try and accommodate you somehow. It is particularly hoped that the fleet that day will include X 5, Madcap, one of the original seven (or, possibly, eight) boats that competed in the first ever race in 1911. There is even talk that we might dress for the occasion in Edwardian yachting costume⁵.

Centenary Brochure and Marketing

Ted Roose and his Marketing Committee have continued to promote the Class in various ways⁶. He also continues his search for major and minor sponsorship and I encourage all of those who have not yet put their hands in their own pockets to consider whether you can help. As the Class Committee minutes record, members will soon receive roundels (to apply to the mainsail) and battle flags for boats on their moorings⁷.

¹ The qualification reflects the fact that your Class Captain makes the habitual annual error of enduring an alcohol-free February. On some evenings (such as that one) it does not seem a very bright idea.

² Some older members may be oblivious to the clever play on words and allusion to the young person’s light entertainment TV programme of a similar name

³ For all I know

⁴ The discerning student of local – and, dare I say, internationally significant – issues of environmental law will be well aware of the author’s wholehearted and selfless commitment to this particular service.

⁵ Otherwise known as contemporary dress for members of the Royal Yacht Squadron

⁶ For more details, see the minutes of the February MarCom meeting on the website

⁷ Spares will be available for use as bunting at Divisional events and large (2.8m x 4.0m) banners. Artwork for Class logos and other centenary designs will also be available from Divisional Captains

One publication which is likely to be available for distribution in April is the Centenary Brochure. Your correspondent has written the history and information section and those who are interested in reading that sooner rather than later will find it attached hereto.

Cowes Week – On-the-Water

I would like to say a particular thank-you personally – and on behalf of us all – to Peter Taylor who has negotiated with the Cowes Week authorities on the basis of the brief we gave him. He has achieved a great deal, as you will see from the minutes of the last CC meeting.

The key factors are

- We have our own dedicated Race Officer, Simon Hands, throughout the week
- When we use the Alpha (Squadron) line it will be extended to about double its usual length. There will be an outer end Committee Boat⁸ some 2-300m beyond Alpha.
- The Squadron line will be angled to suit wind and tide: but it is likely⁹ that we will still have the benefit of Transit lights.
- Our firm intention is to use the Squadron line for the start and finish of the Tuesday/Wednesday/Thursday¹⁰ series unless conditions are dead against it (in which case there *may* be flexibility to go to a Committee Boat – but it is not assured).
- The probability is that the Thursday race will be scheduled to start at 1015 or 1030¹¹: other races in the mini series (and rest of the week) will start at the usual time
- HRH Princess Anne is not able to come to the evening dinner but is willing and able to come to the breakfast event on the Squadron lawn¹² and to start our race if at 1015/1030.
- If and when we do have Committee Boat starts they are likely to be in the Brambles Bank/Eastern Solent area as usual with a long (800m) line with Committee Boats at each end¹³.

Cowes Week – Off the water

Again, I encourage you to look at the minutes of 15th February for more details. But in summary

- We have finally abandoned attempts to display X 1: the conditions imposed and costs associated with this very good idea just made it all too

⁸ Almost certainly Jeremy Willcock's Nelson: we are truly indebted to Jeremy for this.

⁹ Tests are to be undertaken shortly

¹⁰ Thursday not so certain for a Squadron Line finish especially if we have an early start time

¹¹ Unless we decide the previous evening or even that morning that the weather conditions make this unrealistic

¹² Which we have therefore re-instated

¹³ For more details, see the minutes of 15th February

difficult. But we hope to have at least two boats displayed and dressed overall off the Haven at least for the Thursday dinner

- On the Sunday, before the Yarmouth Dinner, there will be the usual Evensong Service at which the Xs may expect a special mention
- There is a VIP/Media Reception on Monday evening at the Royal Corinthian
- There will be a Drinks Party on Tuesday evening at the Royal London, but with limited numbers (details from Tina Scott or Div Captains)
- On Wednesday from about 1430 there will be a Crew's Party for *all* White Group members at the ISC.
- On Thursday evening we have the big dinner at the Yacht Haven. In the absence of HRH, this can be less formal than we had previously envisaged and we hope it may be possible to get ticket prices down to around £50 per head.

Centenary Book

This is to be (we expect) a high-quality, coffee-table book celebrating the Class in its centenary year.

We expect that the price will be around £25 to £30 per copy and an idea of what you can expect to read/see within it appears below. We hope it will complement Richard Field's great work (that being concerned exclusively with the history of individual boats within the Class: it promises to be a fascinating read).

Writing of the Centenary Book is well under way. Early reviews have been entirely favourable¹⁴ which is very encouraging. Very simply, we expect it to be a well illustrated celebration of the Class in its Centenary Year. However, to succeed it needs to be properly and enthusiastically supported¹⁵. Since we intend to publish in time for this year's AGM, you would be right to think it will not only be a book to buy for yourself but will also make an ideal Christmas present for friends and family.

As an indication of current contents, the book includes the following chapters

- Introduction and background to the Class
- Why has the X prospered?
- Who sails them?
- A summary of the years 1909 to 1945, 1946 to 1995, 1995 to 2011
- Building the X
- How the Class is run

¹⁴ By way of example, a Mr N, writing in the (Lobstershire) Guardian says "*I cannot praise it highly enough. This great work deserves to be up there with Shakespeare and Dickens in the highest pantheon of English literature* [Editor's Note: 'up there', I imagine, in the sense of being on a shelf with books he has evidently never read]. Mr V Nock from Lymington writes "*He's told me to say it's brilliant. I know what's good for me. It's brilliant*". Mr W Dundson contacted us from the saloon bar of the Old Chinese Gybe in Pennington with this glowing endorsement "*I don't read much these days, apart from sailmakers' names. I did try reading a chart recently, but that wasn't a complete success.. I expect it's complete b*****s but I do know our lives won't be worth living if we don't buy it. What? My round again...?*"

¹⁵ = BOUGHT – in bulk

- Future of the Class: all change or no change?
- Reflections on the Class by notables such as Peter Baines, the Jardine twins, Ian Lallow, Jeremy Lear (of the Victorys), Neil Payne, Stuart Quarrie, Simon Russell, Eric Williams and John Wilson.
- A description of life (and racing) in the six Divisions as they stand in 2011, looking at racing, boats and personalities with a particular focus on the last five years. Each Division has provided its own author for these sections.
- A description of centenary events before and leading up to Cowes Week
- An account of Cowes Week itself, on and off the water
- Lots of photographs¹⁶
- A guarantee of eternal youth.¹⁷

William Norris
19th February 2011

¹⁶ A word to the wise here: if you want to be sure of having a nice photograph of your X in the Book, you might consider providing Paul Fisher (who has been kind enough to allow himself to be persuaded to co-ordinate the illustrations) with a photo in which your boat appears immediately next to Beatrix, particularly if it is obviously about to be overtaken by her or is otherwise at a disadvantage.

¹⁷ As patented by Meanings of Yarmouth