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Making Waves

the Newsletter of the Benfleet Yacht Club

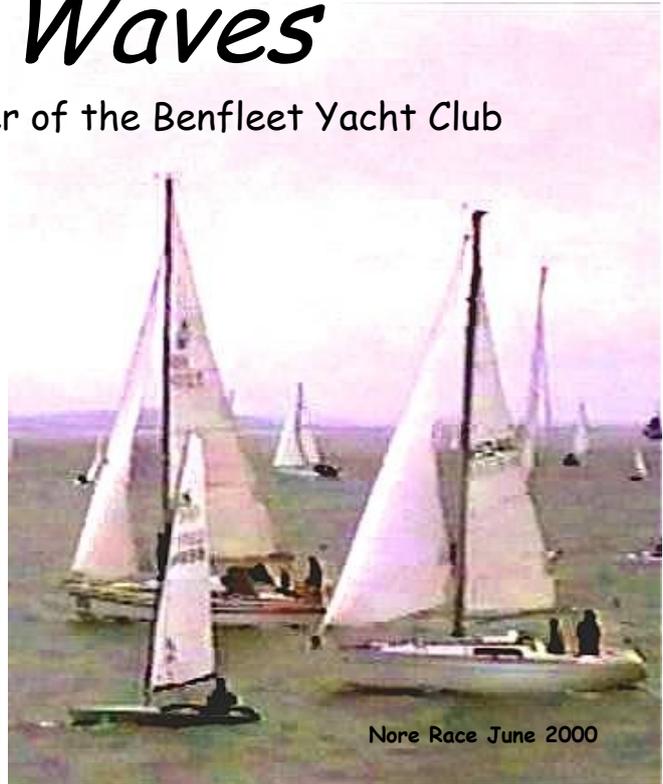
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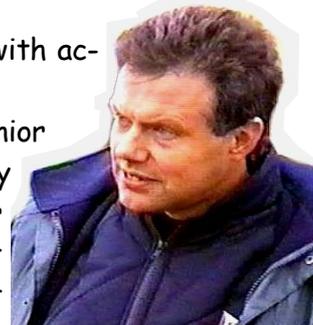
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No contest for Commodore: John Hancock leads again.

Commodore John Hancock was recently re-elected unopposed and with acclaim! He reported at the AGM that the club is thriving.

"There has been a large increase in the number of cadets and junior cadets due to the popularity of dinghy sailing. Others are amazed by the success of dinghy sailing at the club considering how little water we get! These young people are our investment in the future; yacht sailors in the making." Records show the total membership to be at about the same level as five years ago.

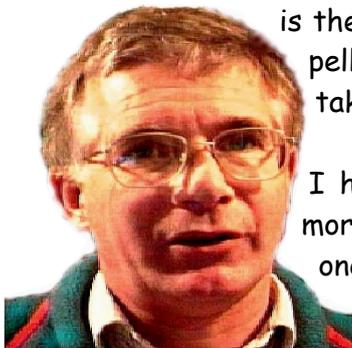


Ten pounds minimum membership fee was put to the AGM and agreed on a show of hands. Some felt that this was a big percentage increase for the membership categories affected, but the majority agreed with the motion that it will tidy up the accounting and bring in a little extra cash to help balance the books.

Mike Cox, deputy treasurer, explained that as young members grew older they moved through several categories and that made charging the right amount quite difficult. "Also, ten pounds is hardly a lot of money to pay today for membership of such a good club" It was hoped that retired and country members would still retain their membership and links with the club.

Some family members do not seem to be on the books. Full members were asked to check that wives and children were signed up as Lady Associates or Cadets as appropriate if they intended to use the club. At £10 per year, it is a real bargain!

The club is strong because the people in it are so varied in their ideas and needs, and yet they all get support from each other through their shared interest in one subject, sailing. Few people actually *need* to sail. It is not even an obviously sensible idea! Cold and wet, it is the slowest way of getting between two pub bars. And yet it has a compelling, almost magical hold on people. Some sort of mild insanity overtakes them and they put to sea in wood and plastic.



I have tried to capture the spread of ideas by diligently interviewing more or less willing subjects, mostly in the club bar. Dirty work but someone has to do it! I thank them all for sharing their thoughts with me.

For authoritative information you can turn to Steve Millward's Report on the 2001 Sailing program, page 6. And to feel the passion of the Nore race you must read Ted and Leslie Perkin's account on page 7. I thank them for their contributions.

The aim of this newsletter was to have a light touch, with lively and entertaining content. I hope you like it, but if you have better ideas then you are very welcome to take on the job! Phil Bostock, Guest Editor.

Lady members give so much to the club and make the social scene come alive. I asked **Wendy Webster**, Vice Commodore, for her ideas. Now, you may know that Wendy's rowing prowess has scared off most male challengers in the annual tender rowing race, so she is definitely not the token woman on the committee!

" My grandmother was one of the first three Lady Associates in the club when it was first invented. I think it is time to look again at the membership classes. Times have changed."

Do you have a view on the membership structure? Shall we adopt more gender neutral arrangements with the ladies at last getting a vote or do you like the tradition and good old-fashioned dignity accorded a 'Lady Associate'? Let's hear your views.

Drinking and sailing will be banned as part of a crackdown following the 'Marchioness' tragedy in the Thames. The same alcohol limits as driving will apply when the vessel is in motion. The police will have power to test, and potentially charge, anyone they suspect of being drunk in charge if a boat or other water craft.

Cadet Week is 9 years old this year. The first cadet training was for 17 youngsters over a weekend. The statistics for 2000 are very impressive.

There were 55 cadets sailing 38 boats in five groups supported by over 60 people per day for a week! There were 5 groups of 3 support boats, each with two people, including 9 instructors. There were two St John's ambulances on standby and thankfully they had an easy time. Each day 120 people consumed 60 lbs of potatoes, 30 lbs of meat, ate 200 bread rolls and drank 4 gallons of juice concentrate.

The course followed a recognised RYA syllabus and is widely recognised as being the very best cadet training event in the east of England. 2001 should be a great year! The hard work and the credit go to John and Sue Hancock, Paul and Helen Field, Rob and Alison Scriven, . . oh so many people I wish I hadn't started to list them! Thanks to you all even if I haven't mentioned your name.

Splashing out

Several members have bought boats recently. I wanted to know how they made their choices. **Paul Wiggins** recently bought a 'Limbo 6.6'. "I have raced this type of boat before and enjoyed it. It's a good looking boat. I like the lines of a mini-tonner". The Limbo 6.6 is a popular light-weight cruiser/racer with good performance. Accommodation is compact but cosy. He had to repair the hinge of the swing keel helped by his dad, Hugh. Paul plans to compete in the local races.

Ian Campen is an early riser. "5.30 am is normal", says Ian. "It's great to be up early when you are on a mooring." His wife Carol is less impressed with the disturbance. So they traded up from a 'Seamaster 815' to a Kelt 9m. This gave them a double quarter berth aft cabin. "I wanted a stub keel and centreplate, not a bilge keel, and good handling. I also wanted no work to do - but failed dismally!" He has repaired the rudder and replaced and rewired the instruments.

The Seamaster is described as 'no greyhound but has solid, vice-free performance'. The Kelt has a long waterline and high aspect ratio sails to give good performance. So the Campen's should now both rest well and race well.

Colin Gillings has moved up to a Beneteau First 235 from his previous 18-

foot boat. The Nore race for him was a bit wild and exciting. Now he has new sails and rigging, and repaired the rudder so there may be more control next time. Colin is also talking about motoring up the Thames without the mast, maybe to Lechlade. But he and his wife have some motoring planned around Europe before then.

John Hancock is soon to launch his boat into which he and Sue have put years of work. There will be flags out that day. It is a one-off 24 ft mini-tonner with a fractional rig and fin keel. He had to separate the GRP mouldings, replace a bulkhead and re-assemble it. He plans to call it 'Highlander', a canny reference to his thrifty construction. "It will be launched sometime in 2001", predicted John. Others have suggested he call it 'Jackanory', as it reminded them of a fictional, storybook project! They will even be welcome to the launch apparently!

Gary Dean is a very recent club member. Gary has bought an old Kestrel 15.5 foot dinghy that he is repairing and cleaning up. It looks great. He will be sailing in the creek this summer. "There is also a Kestrel class event on the Blackwater. I might enter."

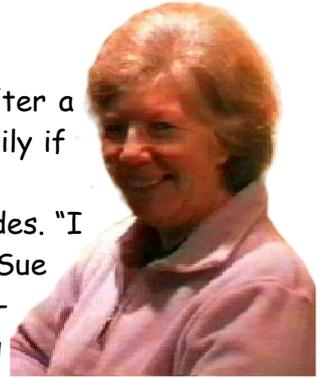
Several other people have changed boats and have other projects that I will report in the next newsletter with luck.



Getting personal. What are people doing this year?

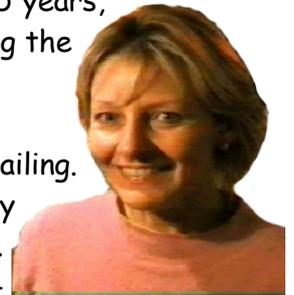
Sue Cox is no 'born again' sailor. "I'm terrified", she confided. But after a smooth trip to Queenborough she decided that she might join the family if a few changes were made, so 'Firefox' is having an internal makeover.

Now there are two separate cabins with a toilet en-suite from both sides. "I don't have to sleep looking at the loo now!" For her first year cruising Sue and Mike might take a look at the Medway first. Sue thought Ellen MacArthur was brave but quite mad. No risk of a competition developing there then, but 2001 should see some family fun in 'Firefox'.



Bill Mantripp doesn't sail much now but enjoys the friendly club atmosphere where people talk about boats. "A lot of single people use the club. It's a very good place to have nearby." With an average age of club members 65 years, there must be many people who make good use of the club during the day.

As Topper owners, **Christine Burroughs** and her family enjoy their sailing. But the highlight this year will be a week long cruise from Bodrum, Turkey with a 50 foot catamaran, a Quasar with Mum and Dad, Jim and the kids. "We will have a Turkish au-pair as well. Luxury! I am really looking forward to it"



Friday night. It looked like party night for the **Cadets** in the wet bar, with more than a



dozen young people bubbling with energy. Music. Talk of the last race. "I didn't capsized!" "Only three finished." "I capsized five times!"

"This is a great place to hangout but it could do with a better sound system." They squeezed a tape into a portable and some dodgy noises sprung out, some of it musical.

They are looking forward to the spring series, Cadet week, mud wrestling, sailing to Canvey point and lots more, sailing Toppers and Lasers. Luke, Lisa, Ash, Shell, Laura, Vicky, Lucy, Cath, Nick,

Alican, Rich, Mat, Ant and "Chris who woz not here".

A group in the bar sail together, **Gavin Watkins** explained. He sails 'Arpeggio', an Anderson 22 with a lift keel and keeps it on the Blackwater now on a swinging mooring. "The keel sticks out a foot so it's best if it doesn't dry out, though I have to row 50 yards." He might try the Calais Rally this year, and then maybe go on to Normandy for "some real food!"

Steve Milward looks at the 2001 Sailing Programme.

On behalf of the Sailing Committee I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to this year's sailing programme and welcome as many of you as possible to the variety of locations / events organised.

For those early in the water the shakedown cruise to Queenborough starts off the season in April, which is swiftly followed by a cruise to Chatham Marina for the bank holiday. This is the first season of operation for Chatham Marina and is ideal for visiting the old Naval dockyard, which is an excellent day out.

The first major cruise of the season is the Calais rally, which normally attracts around 30 boats from Benfleet. The club is well known for achieving the greatest turn out of boats to this event, but of course there is always room for more. Calais has a terrific beach from where you can stand to watch the grey rollers waiting to greet you on your return and if that is not scary enough, you can survey the conditions from the top of the lighthouse. On the Saturday afternoon, the Commodore will do his best to ensure you have a memorable stay with a social, providing plenty of food and drink. For those of you that are new to the Calais rally, there will be a briefing at the club on Friday 18th May

Stangate is another venue frequently visited by Benfleet boats and in June we will be returning for the annual Cheese and Wine. This event provides the ladies the opportunity to take over command of the boat and race to Stangate for the Petticoat Pot. The Cruiser Captain will provide the cheese and wine and last season was host to over 70 members aboard his cruiser, proving this to be a very popular event.

The major event of the season for the club is the Nore Race, which this year takes place on Sunday 1st July. For any new members not familiar with the Nore Race, it is an open race of approximately 16 miles around the cans, starting and finishing from the Pier, with a single mass start for all classes. The race is aimed at all types and standard of sailor: whether dinghy or cruiser, racing or pure cruising. It is a pure fun event; take it seriously if you want, or just relax and go with the flow. Who knows, you may be in for a surprise result; it's happened numerous times before.

The first Nore Race took part in the 1920's, racing round the Nore Light Vessel anchored in the Thames Estuary between Southend and the River Medway. We are grateful to the Dauntless Boat Company for their continued support in both sponsoring and supporting the race for the third year running. This year we are aiming to improve the start for all competitors by using banners for greater visibility in place of the traditional flags. Also new for this year is the style of marquee for the prizegiving, which will hopefully give us a much improved dance floor and a race photographer not afraid of the cold.

One other cruise / race worth a special mention is the McCarthy Trophy to London in September. This is returning to Limehouse Basin for the second year running, as this proved to be very successful last season, with a social evening/dinner in the Cruising Association headquarters.

Besides the club organising its own races, we hold a number of cruiser racing events in conjunction with other local clubs: Island YC, Leigh SC and Essex YC, known as the Combined Clubs Cruiser Series (CCCS). Most of the CCCS races take place in the Thames Estuary, usually finishing at a port where there is a Pub, however, one race takes the fleet into the River Blackwater. Any new member wishing to take part in these races will be more than welcome. We would like to see more members from Benfleet competing in these events to stop the other club's (especially Island YC) from taking any of the prizes.

We also have a successful dinghy fleet, with around 25 boats regularly, and sometimes up to 40, racing in the creek. Many of these dinghy sailors are cadets racing in Optimists, Toppers and Mirrors. It's encouraging to see a good number of Cadets seeing through the complete Winter Sailing programme and featuring well in the collection of glass and silverware. The club has 1 GP14, 2 Optimist and 3 Mirror dinghies available for any member to use / race, so there is no excuse for not being able to get out on the water. The sailing committee would be interested in hearing from anyone able to put some time in to servicing these club dinghies.

It just remains for me to wish you all an enjoyable sailing season wherever you may venture.
Steve Millward (Sailing Secretary)

Views of the Nore race

"South Westerly 5 to 6 occasionally 7 in gusts, Veering Northerly later." Just the sort of weather forecast to get you jumping out of bed at 4 in the morning to take part in a sailboat race! But this was no ordinary race. This was the 'Nore' race. An event organised by the Benfleet Yacht club, where we have been

members for more years than I care to remember. And the Leisure Owners Association had gone to the expense of providing a trophy for the fastest Leisure boat. Strong wind warnings would not have been taken as a viable excuse if we had just rolled over and gone back to sleep.

You may ask, dear reader, why get up at 4am for a race due to start at 10? Well, our Leisure 29 PELAGIC is on a half tide mooring up Benfleet creek, if we didn't get away on the 6am tide we would have missed all the fun. We had arranged to meet our race crew Pam and Alan Tovey (ex LOA members -- who sold their 23SL to concentrate on Grandchildren) at 5 o'clock. This ungodly hour duly saw them loading their kit on board.

The race was sponsored by the Dauntless boatyard, who offered free mooring facilities to any race entrant. This would enable racers, from other areas, to get to Benfleet the week before and leave in the following week. A brilliant idea, except they forgot that the boats would have to get away on the early morning tide. The gates to the boatyard were locked shut! PELAGIC spent a good half hour, ferrying crews, from the Benfleet Yacht club, to their boats in the Dauntless moorings, so that they could join in.

We always, take the opportunity to, get everything 'down below' settled and put away while we motor out into the Estuary. This trip was no exception. In fact, extra care was taken, to make sure, that there was nothing loose that would fly about when things got exciting. It was pretty obvious that things would get exciting as the anemometer was registering 20 to 22 knots of wind and we were still in the lee of Canvey island.

The anchor was dropped upstream of Southend pier (the race start point). PELAGIC bucked and tossed in the waves. Romantically "Like a thoroughbred horse ready for the fray"; actually to remind you that this day was not going to be a 'Walk-in-the-Park'. After coffee and a

discussion on race tactics, "Hang on for grim death and follow the boats in front," it was time to raise the anchor. This proved to be really easy, despite the conditions; thanks to the Windlass fitted in the winter lay-up.

With full sail set, we joined in the pre-race turmoil. This always happens, near the start line,



as boats jostle for position, time their runs to the start, etc.. It seems to me, that there is always an abundance of testosterone, during race start manoeuvres. It is not a place for the faint hearted. [Do not let this put you off from entering the *Nore* next year. There are plenty of family crews who deliberately 'hang back' from the start and still manage to enjoy a day racing]. I was sent below, to be out of the way and leave the cockpit cleared for action. Full sail was a little excessive. It is an experience to look up, out of the window and be looking down on to the waves, when normally one would expect to see sky.

Our run up to the start at 10 am was perfect. Unfortunately, we had forgotten to tune the VHF to channel 37. We had, therefore, not heard that the race had been delayed by 20 minutes to allow a squall to pass through. The race officer had decided, quite rightly, that if a disaster was to take place it would be better if it was at the start, where all the support boats were, rather than 2 or 3 miles' down tide. The information about the delay was, of course, displayed at the pier head. We had missed this, in all the confusion of boats milling around and the wind blowing the signal flags away from our observation. The headsail was partly rolled in, to

improve the PELAGIC's balance and we clawed our way back across the start line, to start the process all over again. Needless to say our 2nd 'start' was not as good. Apparently, we had been caught on Port tack by a number of craft and this had forced us away from where Ted had planned to be. (Not *his* fault, of course.) We crossed the line 3 minutes after the start, totally surrounded by others. This first leg, a relaxed 'downhill' affair, was filled with plenty of inter-ship banter such as "If I hold the end of your *Genoa* out for you, will you let me get round the mark first." From this you can tell that the boats were *very* close together. At least, I could come up from below and take my place in the cockpit.

Due to the conditions, we were now racing around a shortened course. In the strong winds, the first downwind mark did not take long in arriving. As a crew, we got ourselves sorted out in the cockpit, because the next leg was a reach across the river. I sat in the back quarter, to be out of the way, (also it's the best place to keep look-out). Ted took the helm; Pam and Alan occupied the cockpit front where they could work the sails. Once these were set to Ted's satisfaction they would clamber up onto the windward side in true racing tradition.

We had full sail set at the start. Boy! was this excessive on the next (windward) leg. PELAGIC leant over to at least 35°. (Lesson learned - If the boats' sails are designed to suit 12 knots of wind and the wind is stronger, then, by definition, the boat is over canvassed - and you should reef.) We rolled in the headsail by 25%, which helped. Although it now seemed that we were not going to be competitive enough to win the race; we were determined to beat any other Leisure's, to get that LOA trophy. We had only seen one other Leisure all day but had lost sight of it before the start. I was tasked with finding where it was. Of course when I finally found it, it was way out ahead of us. They must have had a really good start.

We had settled down into a routine as we tacked our way up the Kent coast. So I suggested, that as it was past Noon, and we hadn't eaten since 4:15, that now would be a good time to have lunch. To say that Ted disagreed would be an understatement. By now he was really into his stride as skipper, adrenaline flowing. He was driving PELAGIC along as fast as he could. Even if that meant pushing his crew to the point of

mutiny. It seemed to me that he was never satisfied with the sail set. When we eventually had them set, somewhat near to his satisfaction, he wanted to change tack. It was only the Racing rule that says, "You have to finish a race with the same number of crew on board, that you started with." that stopped us throwing him overboard. We were, however, slowly overhauling the Leisure 23SL. When we finally rounded the upwind mark we had overtaken them.

The sun came out and the wind calmed down to more sedate lower end of a Beaufort force 4. If we were to be in with a chance we needed to fly the Spinnaker. I took over the helm whilst Ted went forward to get the Spinnaker gear ready. Several things then happened at once. The spinnaker pole was put into position. The wind veered to the North and its speed increased. PELAGIC was now flying along at well over 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ knots. A Horizon 26 right behind us, who had flown their Spinnaker the instant they rounded the mark, promptly broached. PELAGIC's crew universally decided that 'discretion was the better part of valour' and refused to hoist the spinnaker. Fortunately, Ted agreed, took down the pole and came back to take over the helm. This was the most exhilarating leg. We unrolled the Headsail to its fullest extent and on a very broad reach, charged down to the last mark with the log reading 6.9 knots. At last, I could go below and breakout some refreshments, "Tea and Cake anyone."

The headsail was shortened by 25% again as we rounded the last mark. This was another beat up to the finish line. We tacked out into the Thames to get the benefit of the tide. In hindsight, we should have taken the inshore route. The wind was veering more and more to the North (as predicted). It was heading us. Those that went inshore, including Gary Coogan in his Leisure 23SL *Helvetia*, found that the wind shifted to their advantage. We raced him to the line and only managed to beat him by 7 seconds.

With our time 'clocked' we could relax. The sails were furled as we motored back to our mooring and I went back into hostess mode. The race, for us, had taken 3 hours, 5 minutes and 59 seconds. I expect that we (Ted) will spend, at least, 9 months talking about it and 3 months planning for the next.

Leslie Perkins

Moor and more.

Using the word 'mooring' in a sentence in the bar seems to get the immediate response "Talk to **Keith Cushing**". So I did.

Keith is the Bosun, although his wife says he hasn't got a bosun's whistle! He is best placed to know about the launching, mooring, recovery and storage of boats.

"This year all the bank side moorings are taken with a waiting list. Also most trot moorings are taken with only four or five vacancies." The trot moorings follow the line of a steel cable on the bed of the creek and give fore and aft attachments to hold the boats in line. "There are a couple of moorings at Two Tree left; one very shallow, one deep." Being this busy is a good sign for the club.

There is a different crew each day for launching and recovery operations with four

or five members in each crew. "We can schedule five or six launches or recoveries per tide, although we can only take two keel boats per day because they need the deep water. Hauling out takes longer than launching."

"Safety is the most important consideration. These boats are heavy so you have to respect them. We make sure the engines are running smoothly before they motor away as we don't want them floating out to sea. I wish it were easier to keep people, children mostly, away from the wire as we are launching. We have to keep a very careful look out."

Keith can day sail in the estuary or to the Medway with his family on his Sabre 27 from Two Tree Island. More often he uses his dory for outings with his son. "Fishing - but we don't catch much!"

Bouncy slide at the Commodore's Tea.



Catching crabs at the Commodore's tea party.
(All returned safely to the water)

Club costs in summary

The basic lay up cost for Winter (Oct to Mar) or Summer (June to Sept) is 19 pence per square foot, length times beam.

So a 28 ft boat with 10 ft beam costs £53.20 and a 24 ft boat with 7 ft beam costs £31.92 as examples.

For building lay-up add 50% and for hire of a concrete pad add 100%.

Dinghy pads are £11. Club trolleys are £11.

Mooring costs depend on boat length and mooring type.

Trot moorings are £3.10 per foot (but add 4 ft)
28' costs £99.20. 24' costs £86.80

Deep jetty moorings are £6.20 per foot.
28' is £173.60. 24' is £148.80

Shallow jetty moorings are £4.75 per foot.
28' is £133.00. 24' is £114.00

Mud Rill moorings are £1.70 per foot.
28' is £47.60. 24' is £40.80