

NSW 16FT SKIFF ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF CLUB COMMODORE'S MEETING HELD 20/6/15
AT MANLY 16FT SKIFF SAILING CLUB

Meeting opened at 1.25pm (having been preceded by inspection of the new "China" skiff at 12.30pm and which had been taken for a sail).

PRESENT: Lloyd Mulholland (Chair), Michael McMahon, Riv Robson, Andrew St John, Danny Anderson, James Griffiths, Robert Flanagan, Robert Wasson, Clint Bowen, Grant Windsham and Phil West.

APOLOGIES: Peter Kershaw (PH), Grahame Dingle (PH), Grant Wakefield (Drum) and Mark Graham (NSW President).

CLUBS REPRESENTED: Belmont, Manly/St George, Drummoyne and Middle Harbour.

Lloyd thanked the Commodores, or their representatives, for attending. This is the thirteenth year that this forum has been held and the consensus continues to be that it is still worthwhile on an annual basis as it provided a valuable means for clubs to share information and ideas.

Riv Robson (**Drummoyne**)

- Riv gave apologies for their Commodore Grant Wakefield as he is away overseas (Germany);
- Their 16ft skiff fleet and TS16's race on Saturday and the Juniors and yachts still sail on Sundays;
- Their 16ft fleet had remained at 7 regular starters each week this season;
- They have a fleet of 6-8 OK Dinghies which sails regularly and continued to be one of their stalwart fleets for the Club;
- In their Juniors they still have around 24 Sabots all together;
- The Flying 11 fleet has increased to 5 each week;
- There is an Open Class fleet with about 9 Cherubs;
- The TS16's (Hartleys) this season have had an average fleet of 9-10 boats;
- Learn to Sail Program continued this season;
- The Club has about 10-15 yachts racing fortnightly on a Sunday during the sailing season, and about 50-55 racing on Tuesday evenings during DST;
- The initiative amongst the sailing clubs in the Upper Harbour area to work more closely and collaboratively has continued this season, with a combined yacht fleet of between 40-45 yachts racing in the Winter season and combined races during the Summer season for their Junior fleets;
- The Club has a new full-time Sailing Manager, Alexandria South, following the passing of their previous Manager, John Dunne. Alexandria has been in the position for about six months and has focussed a lot of her time on the encouragement and training of Juniors;
- Club is still trading very well, with consistently good trading results and an approximate net profit of around \$200,000 in the last year.

James Griffiths (**Belmont**)

- Indicated that their 16ft fleet had remained about the same as last season, with around 22 boats registered and sailing;

- Next season they expect their 16's fleet to increase to around 26 boats with some juniors coming through;
- James mentioned that their prizemoney structure includes start/finish money and is very much focussed on the handicap results, with the amounts being spread right through to last place; the average skiff, racing all races, would earn an average of around \$10,000 for the season;
- The Club continues to enjoy a well organised structure under the sailing administration team of Jacqueline Bell and Danny Anderson who are still very focussed on developing a pathway to lead their younger sailors through to the 16's;
- The Club is still offering grants, subject to certain conditions, for Juniors moving up to 16's (up to a maximum of \$2,500 per person, if the junior has sailed with the Club for at least 10 years); the take-up of the scheme continues to be lower than expected, despite the fact that 3 juniors could potentially combine their grants to buy into a reasonable quality second-hand 16ft skiff; the Board is still not clear why there has been a low take-up of this initiative; in addition, the policy is currently up for review;
- Another initiative of the Club has continued whereby to encourage 16ft crews to seek out a junior as a fill-in crew there is a 2 minute handicap bonus per person; a skiff can only use a particular junior for a maximum of two occasions each season;
- The Club's Board of Directors have recently launched a comprehensive review of all the Club's sailing activities, including Sail Training. This follows a tragic and unfortunate accident last February where a young sailor died whilst out sailing on Belmont Bay. Whilst the accident did not occur during an organised activity by the Club, the Board wants to ensure that all their sailing procedures and structures are sound and any risks have been eliminated or minimised. As a result their Sail Training Program is currently on hold, despite being sold out through most of the season and some trainees moving through to the Pelican fleet;
- Their Pelican fleet has continued in popularity this season with 33 registered boats and an average fleet of 25; still race on Saturday mornings, with two Divisions – Adventure Training Squad and a Racing Fleet;
- There are 23 registered F11's with an average fleet of 15 who race on Saturday afternoons, still with an encouraging overlap of some of the older/more experienced Pelican kids;
- The 29er fleet has 5 boats registered with about 4, on average, racing each week (Club has 23 years age limit for males);
- Cherubs (about 15 registered) have around 11 racing each week; an age restriction of under 25 is in place on the Class within the Club for a crew to be eligible to win the Club Championship and earn travel assistance or other financial support; the aim of this initiative is to encourage sailors to move through into the 16's;
- There is now a fleet of about 15 Lasers sailing regularly (about 31 registered), many of whom are ex-skiff sailors and parents of kids in the junior fleets;
- The Club is still trading well with another very strong year;
- The Club is currently undergoing a \$6 million renovation to convert the old boatshed and auditorium area of the Club to a boatshed bar area and also substantial layout changes to the poker machine area and food serving area and the creation of a child friendly area within the Club; work should be finished by the start of the sailing season.

Phil West (**Middle Harbour**)

- Their fleet for this season had 11 registered 16's; no indication, at this stage, of any new boats next season;

- The Club is aware that the level of prizemoney, particularly start/finish money offered by the Manly Club, has had some impact on their ability to attract new sailors; this is not a criticism of the Manly Club, but just an observation (in this regard, Michael McMahon suggested to the meeting that perhaps the Manly and Middle Harbour Boards could have a joint meeting to discuss what could be done to minimise this situation because it was certainly not Manly’s intention to attract boats away from Middle Harbour as rigging space in the Manly area is already limited);
- Phil mentioned that some of their older sailors were very interested the new “China” skiffs;
- Their fleet of 29ers have been racing on Sundays, but will move to Saturdays next season to encourage a closer relationship with the 16 fleet sailors;
- They still have good numbers in their juniors – Optimists (about 16) and MJs (about 10, with no sign of increase, at this stage);
- Unfortunately, the Flying 11 fleet did not race this season, with many having moved through to the 29ers; any enquirers to this Class were referred through to the Manly Club;
- The Optimists are used as their Learn to Sail training boats; their training courses are always full;
- With this sort of interest, the Club is introducing a Tackers Program which will attract some financial support from Yachting NSW and, whilst it is ultimately aimed to encourage sailors to follow an Olympic type program, they are hopeful that it will benefit all sailing within the Club; it also means that the Club will not have to place as much reliance on parents to maintain their sail training program;
- The Club is happy to host major Regattas and are keeping their eyes open for any opportunities that are on offer; they hosted the 2014-15 MJ Nationals and have now applied to the Australian 16ft Skiff Association to host the 2016/17 Nationals;
- The Club has continued to improve its financial position, continuing to consolidate its relationship with ZEST function group which has now been in place for about 5 years;
- Profits have been reinvested back into repairs and infrastructure improvements; this winter they are replacing the rigging deck and ramp as parts of the old structure were significantly affected by worm and wood rot;
- A new Secretary-Manager has come on board to help manage this situation; Mark Willson who originally had the role has left and, being a sailor, has moved on to the Board of Directors; the new Manager, Robbie Geammal, who has now been in the position about 3 months, has an extensive food and beverage background;
- The DA lodged by the “Catalina” complex on the southern side of the Club to erect a marina in front of their building has been rejected by the Council. It would have been 102 metres long and ended up extending half way across the MH Club, restricting their boats getting in and out of the beach area adjacent to the Club. Phil mentioned that fighting this DA had consumed an extensive amount of time for himself, and in particular, their President, Peter Tinworth, but the outcome had been worth the time and resources. The Club is now looking at some way that they could afford to buy the “Catalina” property, but it would cost at least \$2 million and have minimal return for that investment, except that it would put any idea of a marina to bed, as the area would be controlled by the Club.

Grant Windsham (Manly/St George)

- The **Manly** Club’s fleet remained at 22 registered skiffs this season, with 14-16 regular starters; next season, they could increase by up to 2 skiffs, with more sailors coming through from the 13’s;

- The prizemoney budget for the 16's has been slightly increased this season; start/finish money has been increased but the handicap placing money has been limited to 1st, 2nd and 3rd; as a result next season an average skiff, starting and finishing most races with some handicap placings could expect earn about \$9,000 in prizemoney over the season;
- There was a fleet of 14 13ft skiffs regularly sailing again this season; expects a slight drop next season, with some going through to the 16's and not as many juniors moving up from F11's;
- Flying 11 fleet has remained around 25 boats, although slight reduction in numbers is expected next season;
- MJ fleet was around 27 boats, with at least the same number expected next season;
- The Club will be hosting the MJ 2015/16 Australian Championships;
- Boat storage is at a premium and this is still limiting the size of the Junior fleets to some degree;
- The Learn to Sail programme was again outsourced to an external entity and has continued with some flow through benefits to the MJ fleet. The principal from the Learn to Sail company has had to move back to the UK for family reasons, so the Club has now merged its Learn to Sail with the company operating in conjunction with the Manly Yacht Club. Grant mentioned that the Skiff Club has built a good working relationship with the Yacht Club this season, in particular with their juniors. The Yacht Club is now changed direction with their dinghy sailing to focus on Olympic classes.
- The Club completed major renovations at the commencement of last season and these have proved very successful, with Club trading increasing to a higher level than expected, to the extent that all debt associated with the work has even been paid.
- At **St George**, there was a fleet of 5-6 16ft skiffs racing each week;
- There were 18 Moths, 15 MG's and NS's and a small fleet of 8 Skates;
- Junior sailing is still a concern with no regular races for MJ's or Flying 11's;
- Trading wise, the Club is still trading in the black;
- The DA for rebuilding plans lodged by their business partner, Doltone House, has now been approved, and it is hoped that work will get underway and be finished within about 2 years.

Written report from Grahame Dingle (**Port Hunter**)

- There were 4 skiffs sailing regularly during the season with same number hopefully this coming season;
- There were 3-4 Manly Graduates, 2 regular catamarans, but sometimes there were between 4 and 6 regular Flying Ants;
- The weekend of the 16's States was a huge weekend for the Club and the largest turn over for a weekend regatta for quite some time. Thanks to those who turned up.
- The MG Association approached the Club at the start of the season with the view of holding the MG Nationals in January 2015. It looked to be across the line, but they had opposition from several members who had concerns about the shipping movements. It went to vote and decision made to go to Gosford. Decision was then made to hold MG States at Port Hunter. These were held the weekend after Easter and by all accounts everyone was more than happy with the facilities, especially those who had not previously been to Port Hunter. Shipping for the weekend was not a great issue.
- T4 coal loader proposed for the Port has had PAC recommended approval but they have acknowledged that with the down turn in demand it will not be required until at least 2023. Grahame has spoken to some in the know and it is possible it may not be required

at all. Time will tell. So shipping is not expected to increase and the Club just has to live with it.

- The Club has managed to hire out the premises on a number of occasions this season which has help with the club finances.
- The bottom line is the club is financially down a little on last season as the roof on the boat shed was replaced. Whilst Orica did help with some finance, most came from the Club.

Illawarra – no delegate in attendance, nor was a written report received.

No reports also available for **13ft skiffs** or **Queensland 16's**.

GENERAL BUSINESS

1. “China 16ft skiff” - Rob Wasson and Clint Bowen gave a brief update on the Australian Association initiative for a cheaper 16ft skiff from China. The prototype hull arrived in early May and has since been rigged by Clint and with the assistance of Robert Atkins. The boat was taken for a sail prior to this meeting and was also available for inspection by the club representatives attending this meeting.

On behalf of the Australian Association, Rob expressed his appreciation to the Belmont and Manly Clubs, the NSW Association and Robert Atkins for the financial assistance and time donated towards the project. The meeting also recognised the time and personal financial commitments that both Rob Wasson and Clint Bowen have put into bringing this project to fruition. With the price of a new, quality skiff being around \$45,000 it is hoped that our numbers will increase again.

2. Rule changes and proposed changes - Rob mentioned that the Australian Association had recently circulated changes to the Class Rules. Amendments have been received for these and they will be recirculated to the clubs for voting. The first involves an amendment to the reefing of the mainsail, the second rudder frames, and the third to clarify the role of the Specification Committee Chairman appointed by the Australian Association to ensure that any matter is coordinated in a timely manner as some matters have previously not been dealt with as the committee appeared to lack direction.

Two further matters were also recently circulated to clubs to discuss and consider whether changes might be considered for the rules. Rob stressed that these were NOT notices of motion and were for discussion only at this point. The first proposal is that batwing mainsails be accepted up to 110 degrees. Currently, they cannot be greater than 90 degrees. Rob Flanagan commented that the Class needed to maintain a modern look and this change would help ensure that.

The second was a \$200 per boat levy to help raise funds to secure the \$15,000 minimum prize money needed for each Australian Championship. Clint Bowen highlighted the problems the Australian Association is experiencing with finances needed for the funding of future projects towards stabilising the Class into the future. Currently, the only income stream is race entry fees for the Australian Championship. A member club voluntary levy was discussed with the agreed outcome being that the Australian Association forward a future plan to the clubs and that it will be at each club's discretion on what dollar value it wishes to donate, based on their own financial circumstances.

3. Kegs at Australian Championships - Rob identified that the practice of clubs donating a “keg” was causing some issues each year. The donation at the Championship presentation involved a person just nominating their club as a donor. The venue then had to chase the payment from the clubs. It was agreed that there be a trial of the payment being made by the Australian Championships based on clubs paying a set amount of \$500 in advance (prior to the Championship) to the Association.
4. Second hand gear - Rob Flanagan mentioned that in the 18’s, second hand gear appeared to circulate more readily through the fleet. This was probably assisted by the fact that the Class only sails from the one base at Double Bay. He recognised that there is a section on the skiff website, but felt that it was not readily used. Clint indicated that, at Manly, items do seem to make their way through the fleet. Delegates agreed that, in many ways, if one is “in the network”, they do seem to benefit from second hand gear. It was agreed that the appointment of a “second hand gear co-ordinator” at the Association level might help facilitate this process.
5. Aquatic Licences - there was discussion on Aquatic Licences that NSW Maritime require each season. It seems like just a money raising exercise for no real gain. It was agreed that any approaches to the State Government on this would really need to be directed through Yachting NSW.

Lloyd again thanked all those who attended and agreed that it had once again been a worthwhile exercise. He particularly wished to thank the Manly Club for hosting the meeting and supplying lunch for the attendees.

Meeting closed 3.15pm

NEXT MEETING – to be held at the Middle Harbour Club on Saturday 18 June 2016, commencing at 12.30pm.