

## The Origins of the Club Starting Platform

Have you ever crossed the start line at the Platform or just sailed by, leaving or returning to the river, and wondered what and when were its origins? The Historian pondered these notions but could find no-one who had any recollection of them, so started some digging of his own.

Here it is, in all its modern glory, manned and fulfilling its function as the Club's offshore base for starting (and finishing) races:



Photo credit: Paul French

Conventional land maps are notoriously unreliable regarding the details of estuaries and especially the inter-tidal zone, between the lowest low water and the top of what is left of the marshes. Some folk say they could recall being able to walk out to the Platform – but why would such a structure be placed so close to the marsh? Others infer from the shading on maps (and even some charts), the whereabouts of HW and LW marks but the only reliable evidence is from old photographs, particularly aerial ones.



This rather indistinct view down the estuary to the Starting Platform, with the Club discernible on the right, dates from the late 1940s.

The mud flats in the upper reaches of the river suggest it is not much above low water. Even then, the Platform is way out from the water's edge, so pre-war memories of walking out to it might be a little inaccurate.

Early in its existence, the Club was preoccupied with its own creation and that of its Clubhouse but it wouldn't have taken many years before its level of activity justified

something as grand as having its own Starting Platform, but not until the 1930s, most likely. The research started in earnest with the Club's own archives but these really only exist (or at least, those that we possess) from the post-war period. Most of the useful data is contained within the Club Bulletins, which are found here:

<https://rlmyc-history.org.uk/publications/bulletins-2>

From these documents, which recorded an outline of all the doings of the Club, one can pick up references to the Platform being in considerable need of renovation, after the war. Hardly surprising, given that it would have had no attention during the conflict but at least that indicated the structure to have existed in the 1930s. But when – and did the Club build it, or acquire it, as it had done the Clubhouse?

Sleuthing then went in the direction of the UK Hydrographic Office. Surely, they would have explicit details of the Platform's arrival and its purpose? The initial answer wasn't promising: no such structure existed on the 1895 Chart of the Western Solent, but it did in 1965 ... so it must have been built sometime between the two. Right. Further prodding and with a little encouragement (but not so much as might elicit a bill for their labours), the Hydrographic Office went that extra mile (or at least several cables).

The UKHO sent extracts of the two dates of chart quoted but the absolute golden nugget came was found in a unique and antiquated working document – the manuscript log of chart corrections for the area. The pages provided started in 1928 and went up to 1946, the most promising period when the Club might have created the structure. No evidence was found of a previously existing structure, so attention homed in on the detailed entries of chart corrections in the 30s. Amidst the myriad and detailed items - almost Dickensian in their recording - were two small line items, which are permitted to be copied here and to reside in our own archive:

**Extract from the Corrections Ledger of the UK Hydrographic Office - file ref: NMR 5-1-2040 Solent (NM Ledger in 1940s) – reproduced with UKHO permission**

Page identity: 2040 [the Admiralty Chart reference for Western Solent] - with columns thus:

Engraver		Chart dated	CORRECTION	Authority for Correction	Cancel or N.M
Sent	Ret'd				
25/6/35			<i>New chart publd.</i>		
July 17		8.1	<i>Amend Newtown rifle range danger area</i>	H3733/34	
VAB		11.11	<i>Ins. Sewer at B<sup>n</sup> Gunward Bay.</i>	H4286/35	
" 8		12.2	<i>Ins. Stage, 35° 1.8c. from Jack in the Basket B<sup>n</sup>.</i>	H7341/35	
1936			<i>at B<sup>n</sup> 35° 1.4c. do.</i>		
Jan 13		2.2	<i>Ins Causeway East Cove. &amp; off Fringby.</i>	H824/35	

From which, it may be interpreted that from the new chart published on 25<sup>th</sup> June, 1935, the subsequent corrections were logged, on 8<sup>th</sup> November, 1935:

- 12.2 *Insert Stage, bearing 35deg, 1.8 chains distant from Jack in the Basket Beacon; & Beacon, bearing 35deg, 1.4 chains distant from Jack in the Basket Beacon. The authority being: H7341/35*

Viewing the later, 1965, Chart, the Platform is referred to as a Stage (defining the structure, rather than its purpose), together with its off-lying distance mark – both having diamond marks, confirming their racing pedigree. The Stage gave its name to the adjacent, No.1 post, then also called Stage Boom.



This image, courtesy of UKHO, is an extract of the 1965 edition of the West Solent Chart.

So, our quest is ended ... we know the Starting Platform was built in 1935, for racing duties; it has been a Club feature for over 85 years. Who would have thought it?

Graham Clarke, Club Historian

**Centenary appeal to all Members** – please dig out any items, photos or memories of early Club life, that may be lurking in the recesses of cupboards, lofts or minds. All will be gratefully received, carefully looked after and promptly returned, once copies taken for the archive. Please email the Club Historian from here:

<https://rlymyc-history.org.uk/contact-page/> or phone 01590 671177. Thank you.

The History pages on the Club website are found here: <https://rlymyc-history.org.uk/>