

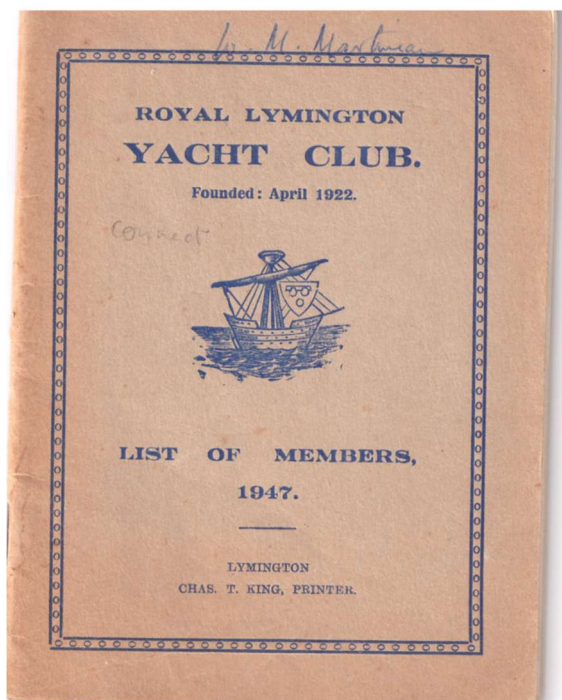
The Club's Silver Jubilee - 1947

We are about to enter our Centenary Year but what of previous celebrations, to mark our Jubilees, every quarter-century? Many of us remember the 75th (not sure what name such a Jubilee might have), in 1997, and a few will recall our Golden Jubilee in 1972 (more of that in a future article) but very few indeed would have been Members, as long ago as our Silver, in 1947.

In those post-war, grey days of reconstruction, rationing, shortages of materials and products, the ability to get onto the water – as cheaply as possible - must have been a God-send. The heavy snowfall early in that year, gave way to a blistering summer, followed by the happy event of the wedding of HRH Princess Elizabeth to Lt Philip Mountbatten, R.N.

The Club had only existed for 17 years, when it had to be shut down at the outbreak of war, with the Auxiliary Fire Service taking over the building. So, it is not surprising that the joyful resurgence of Club life, after victory and peace, would have preoccupied Members, rather than considering celebrations in a time of austerity, of a rather young milestone of 25 years, during six of which, the Club was closed.

There are few photos of Members' doings or of events, to illuminate this article – the few offerings include these images of the small Club Handbook of those days:

The image shows the inner page of the handbook, which lists the club's officers and committees. The title is "ROYAL LYMINGTON YACHT CLUB." followed by the names of the Patron, Commodore, Vice-Commodore, and Rear-Commodore. Below this are the Executive Committee and Sailing Committee, each with a list of names and their terms of office.

ROYAL LYMINGTON YACHT CLUB.

Patron: H.R.H. THE DUKE OF GLOUCESTER, K.G.
Commodore: Colonel The Hon. C. H. C. Guest.
Vice-Commodore: Major W. M. Martineau, M.C.R.E.
Rear-Commodore: G. C. Downing Fullerton, Esq.

Executive Committee:

	<i>To Retire</i>
K. A. E. Moore, Esq.	... 1948
Captain The Lord Teynham, D.S.O., D.S.C., R.N.	... 1948
Miss E. M. Rymer	... 1948
C. B. Goodhart, Esq.	... 1948
C. R. M. Stewart, Esq.	... 1949
Commander F. G. Hackforth-Jones, R.N.	... 1949
Vice-Admiral Sir Geoffrey Blake, K.C.B., D.S.O.	... 1949
The Hon. Mrs. Cecil Brownlow	... 1949
Mrs. M. F. Creagh-Osborne, M.B.E.	... 1950
H. G. Busk, Esq.	... 1950
Ian L. Carr, Esq.	... 1950
Lt. Col. G. C. G. Gray	... 1950

Sailing Committee:

Major P. B. Allott	... 1948
The Hon. Mrs. Cecil Brownlow	... 1948
Ian L. Carr, Esq.	... 1948
Rear-Admiral J. U. Farie, C.M.G.	... 1948
Major H. W. Hall, M.C. (Chairman)	... 1949
G. B. Gill, Esq.	... 1949
Lt.-Colonel J. D. K. Restler, O.B.E.	... 1949
P. G. Whately-Smith, Esq.	... 1949
Miss E. M. Rymer	... 1950
Brigadier S. T. Lucey, M.C.	... 1950
Lt.-Col. J. C. Hotham	... 1950
C. R. M. Stewart, Esq.	... 1950
Commander F. G. Hackforth-Jones, R.N.	... Co-opted
H. G. Busk, Esq.	... Co-opted

... from which, the eagle-eyed will notice that this copy was that of the Vice-Commodore, Major Bill Martineau (he went on to be Commodore in 1954). The inner page, listing the Club Officers, reveals a preponderance of military ranks and decorations, reflecting the era recently passed.

The previous year, the Club's first post-war season, had seen the resurgence of class and handicap racing. Post-war restrictions were easing and allowed more extensive cruising – the extremes of Sweden to the north, and Biscay to the south, must have seemed exotic, in their day. The Club programme included lectures, notable amongst which were famous names such as Humphrey Barton, who went on to cross the Atlantic in his Laurent Giles designed 25ft *Vertue XXXV* (her painting and his Rear-Cdre's burgee are framed, at the entrance to the bar), and who later founded the Ocean Cruising Club. Barton was joined on the lecture list by no lesser names than Eric Hiscock, Major 'Blondie' Hasler R.M., and Charles Currey, father of our own Annie Littlejohn.



The fresco, above, painted and given by Douglas Wales, depicting the many characters of the river and their boats, was mounted in the bar and can be seen, to this day, on the Island Room rafters. There were occasional dances, despite shortages of alcohol, and a caterer was appointed. The character of the Club was very much one of Members' self-help: transforming the building and its facilities – such voluntary effort also ran to deputising for the Club barman, when he went on holiday.

Just to reward your dedication, in following the link to this article, it would be appropriate to include one of the Club's wonderfully atmospheric sketch portraits – of the Commodore, during the 25th year of the Club:



Col. The Hon. C.H.C. Guest,
Commodore in 1947

Racing started and finished mostly at the Clubhouse, so was more of a spectator sport than today. A Regatta Fund was created to help pay for that aspect of Club activity, including an anonymous collection box for contributions, which was placed strategically near the bar.

Membership had increased steadily after the war: re-starting Club activity in 1946 had already attracted an increase in membership to over 450, rising further to 522 in 1947 – the target was to reach a stable level of around 800 Members. Does this sound familiar? The emphasis was to recruit new Members, who would cherish and

maintain the atmosphere of the Club, despite its growth in numbers. Different times but similar issues - the general aim was "to extend facilities equally to all sections of its Membership, so that everyone is given a good return for his or her subscription".



The Clubhouse, still with a wartime building on the south apron.

It is interesting to examine the demography of the Membership in 1947 and to consider how this made the character of the Club. Of the total of 389 Full Members and 133 Family Members, nearly three-quarters of them were local – i.e. lived near enough to come down for a drink at lunchtime or to an evening's racing. Many of those listed as Full Members were in fact spouses of Full Members – presumably those designated as Family were those less active on the water.

Of dramatic impact is the fact that, breaking down the Membership by date of joining, over 40% of Full Members had joined after the war (1945-47), whilst Family Members joining post-war made up nearly 80% of that category. Of the longer-standing Full Members, who were part of the Club from 1922 to 1939, 23 were Original Members and 25 Life Members (it is not recorded how the LM was defined). The other pre-war Full Members, who joined in the 1930s, amounted to 176. It is unclear if any Members ceased their Membership at the outbreak of war and were counted amongst the post-war influx, if they then rejoined.

The Flag Officers and Committee were keeping a special eye on the Town River Committee (under the control of the Borough Council) and its negotiations with the Southern Railway company, whose ferries plied the route to Yarmouth. The first double-ender car ferry the MV *Lymington*, had arrived in 1938 and had a capacity of 20 cars; it was about to be joined by a similar vessel, the diesel-electric paddle vessel, *Farringford*, capable of embarking 30 cars.

Afloat, most Members' boats were on river moorings, accessible by owners' dinghies, including many heavy dinghies; some sailing dinghies were housed on the Club's forecourt. Wherever one's boat, all Members would have met, passing through the Club, with its waterside facilities as the main focus. Conviviality amongst a small sized Membership would have been the order of the day. Returning ashore, the Club bar on the ground floor - immediately in front of the Club jetty - would have been the natural point of return (or should that be: of no return?) where the day's adventures would have been re-lived; tricky anchoring stories exchanged, or close fought battles dissected minutely.

Of other aspects of the Club - a third storey was being contemplated; a new category of Cadet Member was introduced, to allow young people to join (without entry fee), whose parents were not Members; an additional summer boatman was recruited; and the three Club-owned Lymington Prams were much in demand amongst Members. The only gesture towards a special celebration was the Grand Regatta Ball, with a live band and special, high-standard catering.

All in all, this sounded like business as usual, rather than a celebration 25 years of Club existence, with Members keen to get about their sailing activities. It was the next 25 years that were to form a major growth and establishment of the character of the Club. More, anon, of later jubilees, but just to reflect a little on that first milestone, you are encouraged to read the Club Bulletin for that year, to be found here:

<http://rlymyc-history.org.uk/bulletins/1947Bulletin.pdf>

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/>