

BOD Sailing Report

Autumn 2007

You hardly need me to tell you that in its 80th year the BOD class is emphatically on the rise.

In a summer of strong winds the average turnout for the Racing Programme was 7.6 boats and on the occasion of the 80th Anniversary/ CYC Regatta, all fourteen moorings were empty. In addition several all-in handicap races were contested, the BSC Thursday pursuit series attracted an average entry of 5.5 and many cruising miles were enjoyed. Corporate Yachting featured for the first time with invited crews enjoying an exhilarating sail to Rowhedge and a very good lunch. The fleet is smartly turned out, motivated, organised and fun, it makes a great many friends and takes them sailing. We have a well deserved reputation on the waterfront and a positive outlook for the future.

The present surge in activity is due to earlier foresight, and the investment of time, effort and money on several fronts. From restoration and maintenance of existing boats, to race management, class rules and of course the production of the new GRP boat, which in my experience is indistinguishable in potential speed from the current top boats. We must also acknowledge the commitment of those stalwart owners who refused to give up on the class through leaner times.

All of which brings us to the point where, for example, our enthusiasm is shared by Olympic champions Poul Hol-Jensen and our own Reg White, both of whom add a further dimension to the class with their skill and experience.

Fleet Growth

In such an enthusiastic season much is learned at all levels and I hear lots of talk amongst owners of refinements and improvements to their boats. I can also report that the fleet continues to grow steadily - we hope that John (Mullins) will have a chance to sail in his own new boat (C 50) after such a long stint on our behalf. And we are pleased to welcome Jack Willis and family with "Sarah Louise" (C 50) and Bob and Rosemary Richardson with "Sabrina" (C 42) both purchased from storage and soon to be sailing again. A "baseline" tuning guide to help everyone get their boats going well is soon to be published. And as the fleet builds it is likely that measuring and especially weighing will need to be discussed at the AGM.

(Lots of boats - so get your mooring applications in early; Brightlingsea Harbour 01206 302200. Alternatively I have basic dimension drawings for a drysailing/centreplate installing/scrubbing trolley which needs to be built in steel by a qualified engineer. Barry Bountain, Speedline Trailers, 01206 307788, has a copy and may have already built one for Nick Readings.)

Refinements rather than changes to the Racing Programme and courses may be needed for 2008 and your views will be very welcome at the AGM.

Clearly the aim, set out at the 2006 AGM, of adding an achievable number of Sunday races, free of duties, to the obligatory BSC Pyeliet Week and CYC/Rowhedge/Wivenhoe Regattas has worked. Pyeliet Week by Tom's party. Although we can't invent a BOD Birthday every year the CYC Regatta will surely remain popular as a traditional end to the summer season. What a wonderful event it was this year, - Colin Spikesley ran a super race from the tower and then Marilyn and Mike with champagne, cards, flags, and that iced clincker built cake, unique in maritime history; - thanks.

There was also much enthusiasm, and free beer, for BODs at Wivenhoe Regatta, and the crowd at Rowhedge cheered all of us. Both events were packed out afloat and ashore and we had surely the youngest ever BOD racing crew (Sophie and James) amongst the fleet of seven. These events offer different racing, an appreciative crowd and a wonderful day out. Our needs are well understood by the organisers and I feel sure that given good weather are likely to attract double figure entries next year.

Sunday Racing

Turning to our own Sunday class racing, the number and dates of which we can partly control: undoubtedly a concise programme, good publicity, and increasing confidence in the turnout has led to some very competitive racing.

Of the thirteen Sunday races programmed until 30th September, two were lost to strong winds leaving an average of 5.3 for the eleven races sailed. Of these, one, sailed in a force six, attracted two and another, clashing with cruiser fixtures a week before Pyeliet week, three. All the rest fielded between five and eight.

While we are unlikely (yet!) to match the double figure entries achieved for our "events" I take the view that reducing the programme to, say, ten selected Sundays, probably all afternoons, would be about right and would still allow for losses to bad weather. Maybe, as a compromise, one or two BSC all-in handicap events could be either included or added. I am sure that these would be well attended and enjoyed by BODs but the pressure on our own fleet turnout would be reduced.

Clearly this is all a question of finding a realistic balance - sufficient races to hold a momentum but not so many that the fleet becomes fragmented. In spite of the weather this year was very good and my impression is that, provided we publish a good programme in good time, the response in 2008 will be even better.

Picnic

The picnic on the Sunday at the end of Pyeliet Week didn't happen because it was raining stair rods; Mike included it in the programme, at my suggestion, remembering the super all in CYC excursions to second beach some years ago. I suggest we include it again, and maybe invite the cruisers and whoever else? There is no catering or organising to do, if the weather is good it will just happen.

Racing Courses

Busy as the season has been the wind has not yet blown from every direction on race days; - and at least eight of the sixteen courses remain untried. Nevertheless while one or two minor refinements are noted for the next reprint, as far as is possible the courses work as intended, providing good beats and runs, when correctly set for the wind direction. (Please comment)

Unfortunately, easterly and westerly winds, with the tide across, and the estuary geography restricting the length of the beat, can also be the most unpredictable, and prone to shift. On several such occasions we have laid the windward mark on one tack in what is, by then, a steady breeze with the ideal course two numbers off.

The Sailing Club are managing multiple class starts on these occasions with total reliability. But factors such as an observed difference between some (especially easterly) wind directions at the BSC race box, and in mid estuary, and the need to select the course over half an hour before our start, clearly play a part. A windshift during this period is difficult to cope with and impossible after the start. But we persevere and the Club is now equipped with a wind-compass on the rescue boat which will at least help resolve the wind-bend problem.

The wind-aid in Batemans Tower does hold true for mid estuary and with only BODS starting our less formal but more immediate course selection process has been successful (even with the Tower unmanned). Many thanks again to Nick and Richard Readings for their support with the rib, frequently under considerable time pressure.

On two occasions and for different good reasons windward-leeward courses straddling Batemans Tower line have been set at short notice. Both were very close races and the format is very much to be repeated, possibly with a pre-written protocol to restrict the length of the starting line with the rib/committee boat.

Supply of Boats

The introduction of the GRP boat adds a totally new dimension. Being a product of some quality, demand may be steady rather than spectacular - nevertheless the future of the class is assured as it has ever been. Possibly for another eighty years, who knows?

Of the 38 wooden boats built since 1927 eight are confirmed destroyed (2, 3, 10, 12, 13, 19, 22, 41) but there is much more optimistic news of the remaining 30 than a year ago. Fifteen are now in the racing fleet. Twelve more are owned, locally, or by association members, either sailing intermittently, long term rebuilds, or

"available from stock" (I have a small stock myself!)
That leaves only three, 9 "Bidt", 15 "Merlin", and 26 "Krystina"
in the bush.

And Finally

Thanks to everyone on BSC duty list, same again next year?; and
also to the crew list, which really worked and will, with your permission
be repeated (or, also with your permission, a full owners/crews/etc.
contact list would be helpful).

The racing this year was genuinely competitive, rounding the Lee
mark of one race in Ryefleet week, for the first time I can remember
in a BOD it was necessary to tack up to clear the running fleet. (I
had been over the line anyway, but there we are!) And on one windward-
leeward race off Batemans line four of us finished overlapped after
nearly two hours. Again to no avail as it happened as "Egret" had
haunted the horizon just ahead of all of us pretty much throughout.
So thanks to everyone who sailed, from Reg Bloom, who I think is our
senior competitor, to James, and to Sophie who is certainly the
youngest.

And last of all thanks to Jean, and in the 80th year of the class
thanks to the designer, her father, Robbie Stone. There may be other
similar boats, but at Brightlingsea, this is our boat, beautiful, fast
and versatile, either sitting at anchor within paddling distance of
second beach or affording us true competitive sport.

Malcolm Goodwin
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STOP PRESS

* Welcome to Adrian Gibbons with "Blue Peter" (C 31) - another addition
to the active fleet recently purchased from storage.
* "Jean" (C 1) is to be exhibited, with other classics, at the first
revelal of the Earls Court London Boat Show, 1st to 9th December 2007.
The show, and the classics stand, is sponsored by White McKay.
(This is firm at the time of writing, so long as we can resource all
the Exhibition requirements and regulations.)

* AGM is on Sunday 9th December, 11 a.m. at the Colne Yacht Club.
Details will be mailed very soon.