

Albert Sailing Club: Committee Report

Annual General Meeting: May 16 2020

I am privileged to present this Committee report on the activities of the Albert Sailing Club for the year ended 31 March 2020.

Whilst this has been a rewarding year to be Commodore in many ways, it has also been a year of significant challenges. I began my term as Commodore leading a sailing club that wasn't actually sailing due to low water levels in the lake. I'm ending my current term as Commodore leading a sailing club that isn't actually sailing, despite having a full lake, because of the impact of the Corona Virus and the subsequent temporary closure of the club.

Despite this, the year has seen much activity centred on the club and its future, and I mention a few significant points below:

Sailing Program (Steve Dunn, Rear Commodore)

"Winter Series

With regular combined racing with Albert Park Yacht Club (APYC) and low water levels at the beginning of our Winter Series in 2019, the first 5 races were abandoned. Eight races were then successfully run once the water level reached a sailable depth in mid-July. With 50 or so boats entered across the series, with many competitors regularly swapping between classes and only sailing one or two races in the series, the outcome was that Series finished with only one first place overall series result, which was in the Impulse class.

Bill Hooper and Commodore's Series

Our two club specific events are now a combined event with APYC: the Bill Hooper Series in September last; followed by the Commodores Series in January. These were well supported with participant numbers in the high 30's for both events.

Summer Series

The Summer series format, now changed to align with APYC, resulted in a number of abandoned races due to inclement weather and the Corona Virus shut down. The new format comprises an ASC/APYC combined Handicap and alternating Championship race each scheduled day of the Summer Series. The Series was scheduled commencing October last year up until our AGM. For the Summer Series handicap, five races were completed out of a potential eight, with seven races completed out of a potential nine for the Summer Series Championship. Improved water levels and weather resulted in 80 or so competitors entered in each series, with 40 to 50 boats regularly sailing each race day.

Replacement RHIB's

After extensive research and discussion, the club purchased late in 2019 an Aurora V3-20 rescue RHIB and Mercury 15HP motor from Ribforce marine in Brisbane as a first step in replacing our aging RHIB fleet. This RHIB now operational has replaced one of our older RHIB's which has been transferred to APYC.

A successful grant application enabled the club to acquire a further replacement RHIB, a 3.6 meter AB Navig and Mercury 30HP motor (required to support a suitable prop guard that can cope with the weed on our lake). This new RHIB and motor are currently in storage in Melbourne awaiting delivery to the club when Coronavirus restrictions are lifted. Much of the credit for achieving this goes to Stephen Lincoln and Paul Farrell for the huge time and effort required to research and organise delivery, and to Peter Bennell for our successful grant application."

Cindy's comment: and to Steve for all of the work he does in coordinating our sailing activities.

Training/Juniors (Rod Thomas)

"The club was again active in training programs and activities in 2019/20, but with smaller numbers than in 2018/19 which was an exceptional year.

For adults we had two 2 week Better Sailing programs for newer members with six in each program. There was a 5 week Learn to Sail program in Spring with 3 participants.

For juniors we had an array of programs.

- * There were *school holiday programs* in July and October with 6 in each program.
- * Term 1 and Term 4 *Green Fleet programs* on Saturday afternoons had 3 and 6 participants, respectively.
- * A new *ASC/APYC/Boatshed youth development program* in Term 1, sailed in Pacers, had two ASC juniors.
- * The *three club International Optimist boats* acquired in late 2018 were sailed by six ASC juniors on most Saturdays across the year and Sundays in winter.
- * ASC again hosted the *Victorian Optimist Association winter training* program on Sundays from July to September with 30 juniors from ASC, Mornington and Bellarine peninsula clubs. The Laser Association also had a number of Laser 4.7 Try Out sessions at ASC on Sundays in winter.

Our more advanced junior sailors sailed mainly at Port Philip clubs in the Spring and Summer months, with the club well represented by junior members in National and State championships in Laser 4.7, Optimist and Open Skiff classes. Philip Cripsey, Tana Deyell and Hamish Gilson sailed their International Optimists in the 2019 New Zealand championships and at least one other overseas regatta. Philip finished 2nd in fleet of over 200 Optimists in Estonia, Tana first in the Vanuatu Opti championships, and Hamish placed well in a regatta in Thailand. All three have now moved on to youth classes and we wish them well in their sailing be it at the Lake or elsewhere.

Don McKenzie and Rod Thomas are instructing and coordinating these programs, with Boatshed Instructors for junior programs. (This is an area where more assistance is required as we have dropped from 4 instructors and a coordinator 18 months ago).

Our Discover Sailing Day in October saw over 100 people going for a sail in club Quest, Zest or Pacer boats. There was good support from 20 odd club members on the day but relatively few new members as a result of these efforts."

Cindy's comment: These programs would not be possible without the contribution from our instructors and trainers, and I would particularly like to thank Rod and Don for their ongoing efforts in this area.

Strategy and External Relations

We've continued our liaison with Parks Victoria and other park users in relation to securing an ongoing, sustainable water supply and the control of the aquatic vegetation. Parks Vic recognises the problems but faces competing interests in relation to lake water and currently has a lack of financial resources to identify and implement a permanent solution. We hope to see a combined meeting of lake users and Parks Vic in the near future to jointly work on this issue.

We are a member of the Albert Park Community Sporting Tenants Association and continue to ensure that the needs of lake users, as well as land-based entities, are taken into account during the discussions at these meetings. We also liaise with a number of other external bodies/people in relation to our activities and to advance the cause of lake sailing and our club.

Social Activities

September saw a successful Picnic Day for club members and their families and friends. All enjoyed some sailing, a picnic on the lawns in front of the club and some typical Picnic Day games. Our annual Trivia Night was held on October 26th and again provide to be a fun, entertaining night for all. December saw the first combined Christmas event between ASC and APYC, with 70 – 80 members and families from both clubs getting together to celebrate the season and the end of another sailing year. Our after-sailing BBQs continue when weather permits and good fellowship is always enjoyed on a Saturday even in the worst of weathers.

Unification

I was the facilitator for the hard-working strategy group during the year, with representatives from both ASC and APYC (Rod Thomas, Don McKenzie, John Whelan from ASC, Peter Naismith, Paul Taig and Grant Haggett from APYC). This group has been working on plans for the potential unification of both clubs. With a huge amount of input from the group, and some advice from an external legal firm, the group developed a proposal which they felt was desirable and feasible. Information documents were circulated to all members and plans were made to conduct Special General Meetings of both clubs on May 16th 2020 to vote on whether the clubs would unify or not.

Unfortunately, the closure of both clubs due to Corona Virus restrictions has seen a hold on these Special General Meetings. It was felt important that all members be provided with the opportunity to attend information sessions and the meetings in person. The proposal will be re-activated as soon as both clubs are open and operational again.

Financial Results

The financial results for the year are set out in the Financial Report and the Treasurer's report. We continue to obtain results close to budget each year, despite membership numbers diminishing over time. This is largely due to our efforts in finding alternate income sources from our training and development programs, and ongoing efforts to ensure our expenses are minimised. Neither of these outcomes would be possible without the significant contribution from our volunteers, and I acknowledge all club members for their efforts to keep this club one run by volunteers.

We are in the fortunate position of having a significant financial reserve and this will be important in allowing the club to weather the current difficulties with the club being closed and hopefully recommence club activities in a continuing sound financial position.

SEDA and school liaisons

Our long-standing and sound relationship with SEDA has continued during the year and we will shortly need to consider whether to enter into a new lease with SEDA in 2021. In conjunction with APYC, we have also had discussions with various local schools during the last year. The outcome of these discussions is that the Albert Park College is now conducting some of their school program from the APYC clubrooms during each week. This brings both clubs into close contact with a large cohort of students and parents, and the opportunities presented by this arrangement are yet to be fully developed.

The Future

The CoVid19 pandemic that has currently closed the club presents potentially one of the biggest challenges the club has ever had to face. At this stage, we have no knowledge of when the club will be able to open again or of when sailing will resume. This is particularly frustrating given the current high water levels in the lake, something that we sailors don't see as often as we'd like. The committee is aware of the significant financial and social impacts that the pandemic will have on our members and is investigating all possible means of keeping our members engaged during this period and exploring options for a level of membership fee relief in the coming membership year.

Once operations re-commence, we will be voting on the potential unification with APYC, and the outcome of this vote will have a significant impact on the club and on sailing on the lake, whichever way the decision goes.

A further challenge for the future is to see our members more engaged with the club, either sailing or simply enjoying the other aspects of our club. Let's work to encourage some of our non-active members to come along and sail in all conditions, knowing that we have rescue crafts available, hot water in the changerooms, and good companionship at the end of each Saturday.

Acknowledgements

It would be almost impossible to quantify the contribution made to the club by volunteers. Without naming specific people for fear of missing someone, club members and their families do our : boat maintenance; operation of the galley and bar; repairs and maintenance of our clubrooms and yards; operation of the tower each Saturday; compilation of duty rosters year-round; race management and rescue boat duties each Saturday; organising and helping with our working bees; editing, compilation and distribution of the quarterly Mudpuddler; weekly production of Snippets; coordination of our marketing and promotional activities; running of our social events, and a multitude of other tasks. I acknowledge and thank everyone who has contributed to the club either on a regular basis or just once or twice over the course of the last year. Without you all, this club would not continue.

Of course, particular thanks go to our flag officers, Secretary and Treasurer and other committee members. Not only do these people meet each month year-round, but they are also invariably at the club each Saturday helping out and, in between, responding to a multitude of emails and other requests as well. I also pay acknowledgement to Jack Woods, who has been our Membership Secretary during the year even though he is no longer a formal member of the committee.

And finally, to our members. Without you, we wouldn't be a club. The next few months and possibly the next year will be particularly challenging for us all. But with the strength of our friendships and our common love of sailing and all it represents to us, I have every confidence that sailing at the lake has a long and enjoyable future.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cindy Tilbrook". The signature is written in a dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Cindy Tilbrook
Commodore