

Major Pyne's death symbolised the end of one era and the beginning of another. His presidential year saw the transfer to Rock complete, and the establishment of class racing. But in his long association with the Club the debt we all owe him is immense. His presence at Gentle Jane made the formation of the Club possible, and his quiet influence in the background was appreciated by generations of young helmsmen. His belief in sound seamanship and integrity in application of the racing rules was exemplified in the way he sailed his boats, notably Gentle Jane, Westward and the Flying Twelve Firecrest, so often to victory. His

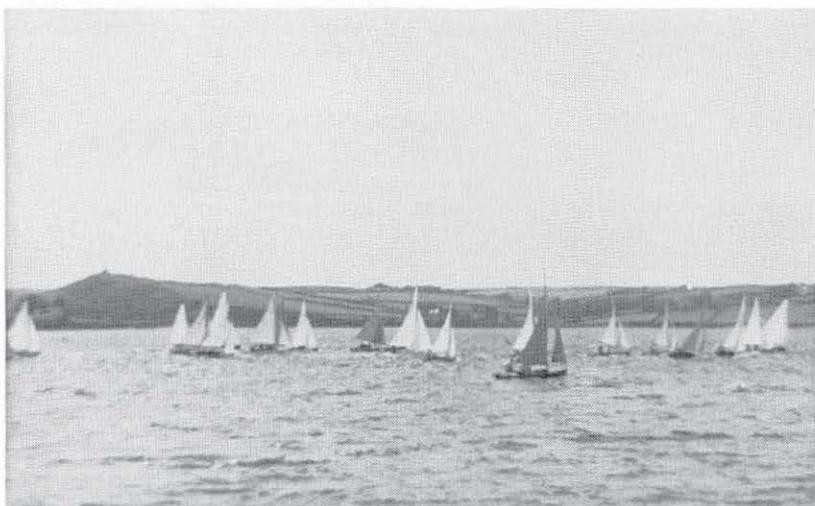


"Firecrest"

memory is perpetuated in two ways. One is the Pyne Trophy, sailed over the Zigzag course which he so loved. The second is the fact that his daughter, Peggy Hooper, still lives at Gentle Jane and continues to take a keen interest in all Club activities. The Adrian Hooper single-handed cup commemorates the sad death of her son Adrian, Major Pyne's grandson, who was lost at sea from a yacht off the Canaries in 1971.

The Alfred Church years saw major changes in the way racing was carried out. The explosion of numbers brought a new influx of keen racing helmsmen who again were to influence the development of the Club - people like Richard Beaven, Jack Howett, Arthur Willets, John Barris, Dr. Laws and many others. This encouraged the Club to institute Class racing for Enterprises, G.P. 14's, Wayfarers, and a little later Ospreys,

in addition to the "C" and "O" class Menagerie classes. The mass starts for the Commodore's Cup and Brea Buoy Cup were no places for the nervous at this time! Looking back we can see that this was the high point of the Club in purely sailing terms. 60-70 starters in one of the big cup races was commonplace.



The start of a cup race

Class racing was very keen. Sally Walton dominated the Wayfarers and then married her crew! Jack Howett, Andrew Barker and Adrian Hooper had some fine tussles in the Enterprises. Perhaps the keenest competition was in the G.P. 14's, a class with many excellent helmsmen like Denys Wainwright, Arthur Willets and Richard Beaven. The races had their lighter moments. Denys Wainwright had a Labrador dog, Oscar, who was a powerful swimmer and very independent. Besides taking himself off to Padstow on his own on the ferry, he occasionally swam after the boats and once actually put Richard Beaven about when he was having a close tacking duel with Oscar's master! How's that for loyalty! (He subsequently disgraced himself on the golf course by making off with the club captain's ball on the 18th green in an important match!).

This upsurge of sailing activity coincided with the foundation of Westerly Boats in 1961. Mr. Kempthorne Ley's boat hire business had been bought by John Looker in 1958 and three years later his two young men, Ken Robertson and Trevor Evans, teamed up with Ken Duxbury to form a new enterprise, Westerly Boats. Ken Duxbury was a remarkable character. An experienced deep sea sailor and prolific author, he had arrived in the estuary some years previously in his 40 ft. converted Whitstable oyster boat "Thyra". He fell in love with the place, sold "Thyra" and set up his own sailing school at Ferry Point. The two Kens and Trevor made a strong team for a combined

boat building and sailing instruction business, leaving the boat hire in John Looker's hands. Their first premises consisted of a shed rented from the Rock Hotel where their first boats, including mine were built, and a hut at Ferry Point for the Sailing School. Their fame as builders of racing dinghies quickly grew, culminating in the winning of the coveted gold award at the Boat Show. Ken Robertson showed the flag by his phenomenal success as a racing helmsman, winning no less than ten National Championships between 1962 and 1980 in Wayfarers, Ospreys and Scorpions (see Appendix). By 1967 the firm had done so well that they moved to their present premises at Pitome which enabled them to break into the international market with the production notably of Cornish Crabbers, Shrimpers and Traders.

The Club basked in reflected glory with this success of a local enterprise, and in particular with Ken Robertson's exploits in regional and national championships. It was perhaps unfortunate that a few years previously the issue of professionalism in an amateur club had been raised. However, a ruling by the R.Y.A. made it clear that only those who made their living from teaching sailing were debarred from taking the helm or crewing in club races. But they could be club members. This meant that Ken Duxbury could not race, although he was a valued member of both club and committee, but Ken Robertson could. We much appreciated his participation although we could never catch him!

In the autumn of 1965 the Club suffered a double blow. In September Capt. Halfhide, who had taken charge of starting and running races for some years, died suddenly. The following month, on October 17th, the Commodore Alfred Church died in hospital following a relatively minor operation. This was a totally unexpected shock. Alfred was a comparatively young man and during his short time as Commodore had revolutionised the Club. In the words of the minutes of the 1966 A.G.M. "He had transformed the Club from a small one operating from the beach at Gentle Jane to one of the foremost clubs in the West Country."

The death of Alfred Church ushered in a period of transition. Cyril Francis, formerly Vice-Commodore, took over temporarily and was confirmed as Commodore at the next A.G.M. A keen Rainbow and Wayfarer helmsman he had served the Club well as Treasurer and Secretary over a period of many years. He lived in retirement at Tregillan and saw very clearly the growing problems of running a club consisting mainly of holiday members with a shrinking number of active local residents who actually did the work. It was largely due to his encouragement, and also that of Harry Watson, that I was persuaded to become Commodore in 1967 - the first Commodore who did not actually live in the area.

At the time I took over I had been conscious for some years that some of the newer members were becoming impatient with the rather rigid attitudes of those who might be called the "Old Guard". For instance, Vera Buse recalls the "rebels" who organised unofficial Sunday races which were rather frowned upon in those days. Certainly the firing of starting cannons was forbidden on Sundays for fear of disturbing worshippers in St. Michael's Church. Again, Jack Howett remembers being gently admonished for getting in the Commodore's way! On another occasion, on arriving at the advertised time for the start, and finding the fleet already halfway to the first mark, he was told "Everybody who





LOCAL CHAMPION

*Ken Robertson at the helm of Osprey 760 "The Other Man's Grass". National Osprey Champion 1971, Runner-up 1970.
Pictures opposite show him tuning up at Rock, and above racing in Mounts Bay.
This boat won the Gold Award at the 1970 Boat Show, awarded to the best boat in the show in excellence of construction and finish.*

is anybody was on the line, so we started!"

However, the impression that holiday members were second class citizens was fast disappearing. Perhaps it helped to have a holiday member as Commodore! Paradoxically perhaps I was very keen to get away from the idea that we were just a holiday club, and to encourage local membership with all the year round racing. I was always sad that there was not more contact with the Padstow Sailing Club. This had been founded in 1955 by Jan Channell, who was farming in the area, and Bill Lindsay. They took to racing round our marks for which Jan received a rocket from Harry Watson! However, I believe they carried on nevertheless and relations have always been friendly.

I thought the best hope of establishing a strong local membership would lie in the development of the Osprey class. Most of the boats were locally owned and for a year or two were keenly raced. Sadly, however, enthusiasm waned and the best helmsmen found they had to travel to Mounts Bay for their racing and the class died out on our estuary.

During my brief spell as Commodore I was greatly indebted to three people. The first was June Hodgkinson-Smith, an intrepid Mirror and Solo helmswoman, who had been Secretary for some years. Sadly she had to give this up when I took over, but her knowledge and advice was invaluable and she has continued to take a keen interest in club affairs to this day. The second was David Bolton, who took over as Secretary at short notice despite living some distance away, at Port Gaverne. The third was "Skipper" Herring, the Vice-Commodore. "Skipper" was



Skipper Herring

something of an institution, given to lone cruising sails in his Flying Dutchman up and down the coast. He used to organise the Club Enclosure at Ferry Point, with Jane Diplock as his helper, and is also remembered for his endless games of ping-pong in the "Down Below" Club. This new venture, organised by Geoff Barker, was in response to

a demand for more social amenities for the young. Opinion was divided on the desirability of this and it was hotly debated at the 1967 A.G.M. However, in the event it proved to be a great success, using the present briefing room for the purpose and later moving to the asbestos sheds. It is interesting to note that many of the young who formed the backbone of the Down Below Club, families like the Cadburys and the Austin-Smiths are now, 20 years later, prominent members of the main club with families of their own.

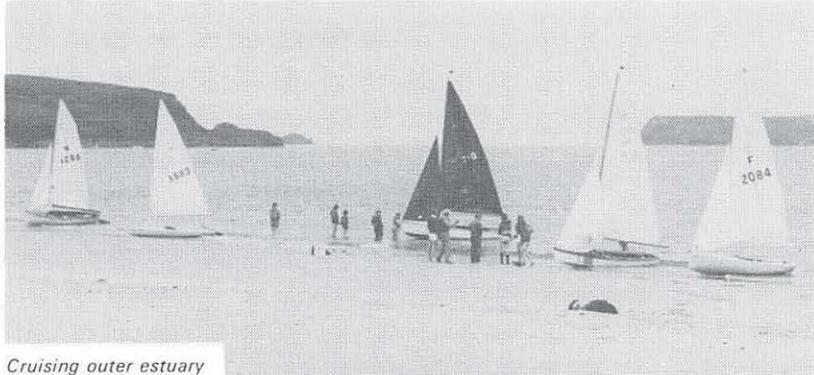
I have vivid memories of the Club during this period as an increasingly thriving enterprise. It was still primarily a sailing club for boat owners only, with six classes racing regularly. Roland Offer was a tower of strength in the starter's box. His experience was invaluable and helped to build up the Club's reputation to such an extent that national and regional meetings were increasingly held on the estuary, notably for Wayfarers and Gulls. The young were well catered for through Junior Cup races and especially with encouragement of the Mirror Class. School Sailing Clubs became affiliated. Wadebridge School used our marks during term time, and King's School, Gloucester, has a long tradition of sailing camps in the summer holidays dating back to 1957 and still continuing today. On the social side too there was much development. Having our own premises made it possible to introduce social evenings and lectures, and the annual dance became the event of the year. Sometimes held in Atlantic House, in 1967 it was held in Westerly's new premises and was a memorable occasion.

But the storm clouds were gathering. In the late 1960's three issues, in ascending order of gravity, faced us. The first concerned our rights to control the slipway onto the beach. We were much troubled by cars parking on the beach. The air was blue when the slipway was blocked by cars at racetime. On one occasion a car was parked on the beach at low tide while the owner went off in a motor boat. We watched, fascinated, as the tide came in and the car floated off and sank in a sea of bubbles. Efforts to move it had failed as it was locked. We had mixed feelings when the owner returned looking for his car!

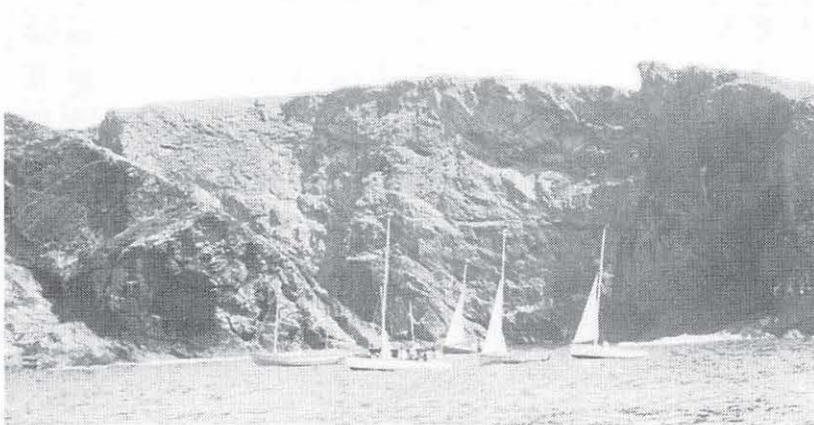
The second issue concerned our security of tenure in the Club House. At the time the building was leased from the Duchy of Cornwall by John Looker, who allowed us to use part of the building during the summer season. There was nothing in writing and it was a gentlemen's agreement. At the time we were negotiating for a more lasting written agreement, John Looker expanded his company, with new partners, to form the Rock Boat Co. This raised complications resulting in tripartite negotiations between the Club, Rock Boat Co. and the Duchy. To put it in a nutshell, the Club wanted security of tenure, the Rock Boat Co. had to safeguard their commercial interests and the Duchy were keen to see a Rock Sailing Club presence on the quay without jeopardising their own interests.

The third issue was by far the most serious. In May 1969 fate threw a bombshell into the works. It was discovered that the old warehouse building was in imminent danger of collapse. As a result we felt we could not use it except for the starter's box. As an emergency measure the Rock Boat Co. kindly allowed us to use their storehouse and workshop on the quay (long since demolished) as temporary club premises for that season.

ENCOURAGEMENT OF THE YOUNG – KING'S SCHOOL SAILING CLUB



Cruising outer estuary



Tregudder Gorge, led by Ken Duxbury in "Lugworm"



Lifeboat Cove, Trevoze Head

Fate decreed that in the middle of this crisis I was appointed headmaster of my school and as a result reluctantly felt that I had to resign as Commodore. Happily my old friend Harry Watson agreed to take over for a second term, and he was voted in at the A.G.M. of 1969. His three years in this period of office were difficult ones. It was a time of great uncertainty when the whole future of the Club was in jeopardy. We were truly "of no fixed abode", spending one year in the store on the quay, one year (1970) in the old Westerly Workshop behind the Rock Hotel, and then back into the store on the quay. Inevitably membership declined as we were unable to provide the expected facilities. But there was a great deal of determination to overcome our difficulties and provide a permanent home for the Club.

A number of sub-committees were set up to explore various ideas. These ranged from purchasing a large old hulk to act as a houseboat lying alongside the quay, to building a combined clubhouse and sailing school on club land at Ferry Point as a joint venture with Westerly Boats. But it was clear all along that the Duchy favoured a Club presence on the quay. By 1972 the Rock Boat Co. had left, moving their premises to Truro, and for the first time the Club became direct tenants of the Duchy.

We were fortunate at this stage to be able to profit from the advice of Mike Austin-Smith, who with his wife Inette formed a husband and wife team of architects of international repute. Mike, the owner of a graceful National 18, joined the committee in 1968, became Vice Commodore in 1971 and took over as Commodore in 1972. From the time the crisis first broke he was able to give us the benefit of his expert advice on the state of the building. I well remember the excellent talk he gave us on this at the 1969 A.G.M. To put it in simple terms, a century of tidal and weather action had weakened the foundations on which the building stood. For over a hundred years, twice daily, the rising tide had washed through the foundations where the large wooden baulks had completely rotted away. The east wall was bulging and liable to collapse at any time. The floor joists had rotted at the end and were held up by the floors they were supposed to be supporting! Numerous meetings were held in Cornwall and in London with the Duchy agents to try to decide what should be done. By 1972 it was clear that all parties were moving towards the position that the old building should be demolished and that the club would be granted a building lease for a new club house on the quay.

These imminent, momentous decisions caused the committee to look long and hard at the structure of the Club and its future. As soon as the storm broke subscriptions were increased by 50% in preparation for increased expenditure later on. In the meantime a complete revision of the Club Rules was authorised and the work was entrusted to Richard Beaven and a sub-committee who prepared the final draft. The major change was to end the requirement of sailing boat ownership for membership. In future membership was to be widened to include power boat enthusiasts and also anyone who was interested in boating activities. For the first time temporary members would be allowed. The aim was to widen the scope of the Club's activities and to change it from a club catering only for racing to one including all those with an interest in boating, whether sailing or power, racing or cruising and, hopefully, to exercise some control over water ski-ing which was

becoming increasingly popular. This latter was not achieved at once, but was to come later.

These momentous changes were approved at the 1972 A.G.M., but the future of the Club remained uncertain. At this meeting Harry Watson announced his intention to retire finally (but to continue as President) and Mike Austin-Smith was elected as the new Commodore. A new era in the history of the Club was about to begin.

FOUR COMMODORES – 1956–1972



Harry Watson



Alfred Church



Cyril Francis



Pat David

CHAPTER THREE

THE AUSTIN-SMITH ERA 1972-1983



Mike Austin-Smith

Mike Austin-Smith was Commodore for eleven years, second only in length to our founder, Admiral Rogers. The Rogers era saw the establishment of a thriving club based on Gentle Jane beach, with no premises. The Austin-Smith years saw the restoration of the old warehouse building and the establishment of a permanent site on Rock Quay. He was a colourful Commodore strongly supported by his wife Inette. Committee members remember with pleasure the many meetings in both his London house and at Penmayne Cross, meetings culminating in a civilised dinner presided over by their charming hostess. His crew members also recall his habit of dispensing brandy and ginger on the downwind leg in "Moonraker"!

When he took over, the Rock Boat Co. had left and the Club were direct tenants of the Duchy. The main building was in imminent danger of collapse and we could only use the starter's box. The Club room was in the old workshop building on the quay. The story of the restoration of the old warehouse is a fantastic one and, for the sake of clarity, I will deal with this first.

From the beginning it was clear that the Duchy wished to demolish the old building and grant the Club a building lease on the site. Regrets were expressed as the old building was such a familiar landmark in Rock, but at the time there seemed to be no alternative. Negotiations had reached the stage of an architect producing rough drawings for a new clubhouse when the whole process was brought to an abrupt halt. The Duchy had cleared the proposal to demolish with the environmentalists and went out to tender for prices for the demolition. Tenders had to be in by a certain date. This led to the rumour that the actual demolition was scheduled for this date! There was an immediate outcry by some local people, who persuaded the local M.P., John Pardoe, to get the building listed. This meant that the Duchy would have to apply for planning permission to demolish, which would almost certainly mean a public enquiry.

The Duchy were in a very difficult position. Initially they were furious and wished to fight the listing decision. But this could prove embarrassing as it might appear to be a public conflict between the

OLD ROCK



Porthilly Beach, from Marshall's Farm early 1930s



A busy scene at the turn of the century. Coal and grain were unloaded at the Warehouse.

Duchy and the local M.P. As a listed building they would be responsible for its preservation - an enormous commitment. At this stage Austin-Smith suggested to them that they should give the building to the Club and we would try to raise enough money to repair it. This they said they were prepared to do and negotiations to this end began.

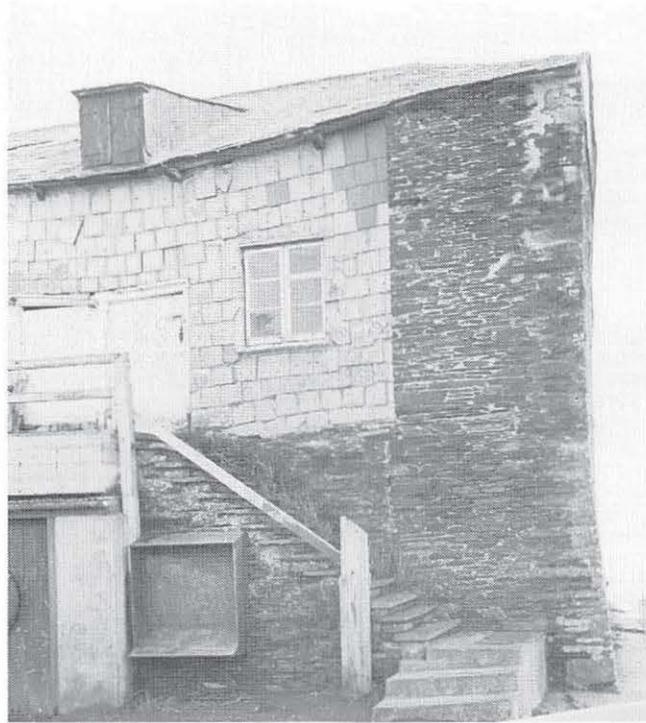
The first step was to ascertain whether repair was feasible. Little was known about the foundations of the building and, in particular, whether it stood on rock or sand. A feasibility study was urgently required and this in itself could be very expensive. To our great good fortune, in April 1973, an anonymous donor came up with an offer of up to £3,000 to enable such a study to be made. I have authority at last to reveal the name of our benefactor, without whom the whole project would have been stillborn. She was the late Mrs Ida Hawkes, who sadly died in the spring of 1987. She and her husband Jack and family had been members for about 30 years. With their cottage opposite the "wall" and later their retirement home up the road they have always been very much a part of the Rock scene. We all owe her a great debt of gratitude for giving us the means to start the enterprise.

Simultaneously, in the spring of 1973, a sub-committee was set up to negotiate with the Duchy. This consisted of the Commodore, Richard Beaven, George Hough and Jack Hawkes. They worked fast, and at the A.G.M. that year their plans were approved. Work now started in earnest. Although the lease with the Duchy was not finally agreed until 1975, the Club was offered a 99 year lease at a rent of £10 per annum. With this news, at the 1974 A.G.M. approval was given to launch an appeal. At the time the estimate was for £48,000 and the appeal was launched forthwith. By November we had £10,000 available or promised and other options were being considered. The first stage of restoration comprised making the foundations, walls and roof safe and developing the ground floor, leaving the first and second floors untouched for the time being.

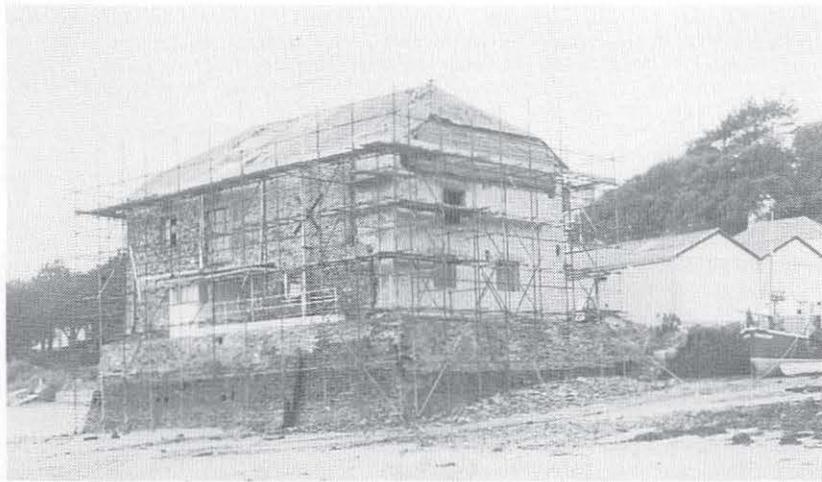
In fact these first plans were premature. By 1975 we had changed architects and Roy Sale, a local man, was now in charge. In May the negotiations with the Duchy were finally completed, giving us a 99 year lease at £10 per annum reviewable in 1996. By now, in a period of high inflation, the estimate for the complete restoration had risen to £64,250 with the initial work on stage 1 costing £25,000. Before commencing work we had to be sure of our financial position. Obviously it would be impossible for such a small club to finance the whole project, so the possibility of grant aid had been explored. The maximum available was 50% and this was achieved with offers of £8,415 from the Sports Council and the balance (up to £31,000) to come from the English Tourist Board subject to conditions. This meant that the Club would have to raise over £30,000 from their own resources. £10,000 was already promised and £6,000 could be expected from the sale of some land belonging to the Club. The Fund Raising Committee was working hard on ideas to raise the balance, including the sale of life memberships, the sale of slates on the roof, the 400 Club and many others. The Vice Commodore, Geoffrey Greaves, had got things going and was helped by many people prominent among whom were George Hough, Bob Hunt and Bruce Cadbury.

With all this information to hand a crucial committee meeting was held On April 17th 1976 to decide whether to accept the grants which

RESTORATION WORK



The building as it was



Work in progress – workshop sheds in background

having taken place in the Rock Institute due to the floor of this building being unsafe. It was in 1969 that Pat David had written to members to tell them that the Club had to move as a result.

It had taken 9 years to obtain a lease from the Duchy, raise the money and complete enough of the building work to enable the Club to open the new premises at the Jubilee weekend. That we managed to open then was due to the colossal efforts of our architect, Mr. Roy Sale, and our builders, Gordon Derry & Sons. The success of the bar is due to the hard work of the bar committee led by Sir John Palmer and our thanks are due to all these people. Also to Peter and Maureen Spencer who have worked unbelievably hard to run the bar and food counter. The improved facilities had attracted many new members and we are delighted to see them."

In the event progress was so rapid that the building programme was compressed into two years rather than three as originally planned. The result was that by August 1978 at the A.G.M. the Commodore was able to announce that the project was complete and all bills had been paid. The ground floor area was fully furnished and the cabins in the roof were in frequent use by visitors and also by organised groups doing research work or engaged in adventure holidays. These cabins have been a boon for visiting sailors at open meetings.

As a perpetual reminder of this great project a special trophy was presented to the Club by the builders and the architects. This is the aptly named Renovation Trophy to be sailed as a pursuit race in August each year, during Camel Week.

The provision of a fine new Clubhouse and a permanent headquarters transformed the Club. But, as Ken Robertson remarked, "Now your problems will really start - you have got to run it!" Inevitably finance would be a worry. Two years earlier, in 1976, two decisions had been taken in anticipation of this. The first was to raise subscriptions against forecast rising running costs, and it was hoped that with the improved facilities together with the introduction of power boat, non-boating and temporary members overall membership would increase. Already this was happening, and by 1978 we had 474 members, 133 more than the year before.

The second decision was to apply for permission for a licensed bar. This had been considered before and had always been turned down, partly because of the proximity of the "Rock Wall", traditional centre for social drinking in Rock. The idea was still opposed by many older members, for much the same reasons as they opposed racing on Sundays, or indeed race starts before 10 a.m.! But times were changing and wiser counsels prevailed. The bar was installed and, as mentioned already, was in full use in time for the 1977 season including, horror of horrors, a fruit machine! Bar profits helped on the financial side and it now had to be faced that all our operations had to be viewed from a more commercial viewpoint than heretofore.

It was realised that the whole administration of the Club needed to be reviewed to make it more efficient and to cope with running a much larger organisation. Gone were the days when a few holiday makers and local residents, assisted by people like Jane Diplock who had been a

a great help behind the scenes, could manage a small sailing club operating from the beach. Mike Austin-Smith tackled this question with vigour, in two main steps. The first was to reorganise the system of flag officers. He inherited an organisation whereby there was a Vice Commodore, supported of course by the class captains and committee. The Vice Commodore at that time was Geoffrey Greaves who played a large part in the renovation programme. A new post of Vice Commodore Power Boats was created, occupied for many years by Sidney Hill. In 1975 the Rear Commodore was Cyril Francis, to be succeeded by Sir John Palmer in 1976, the year in which Mike Regan took over from Geoffrey Greaves as Vice Commodore Sailing. These five were stalwarts of the Club in these years and beyond.



Denis Hapgood

The second step was the introduction of paid officials. Already in 1975 Martin Hough had become the first paid duty officer as a holiday job. He was followed by Peter and Maureen Spencer who ran the bar and galley from 1977. But the biggest change was the appointment of a General Secretary/Manager. Denis Hapgood was appointed to this post in 1977, and held it until his sudden death in 1986. Denis was a remarkable character who, with his gruff manner and smoking his pipe, looked a veritable sea dog. But he had a heart of gold and was a tower of strength at the centre of club affairs. As a Padstow Harbour Commissioner he kept in close touch with local nautical affairs and was much respected by all. His funeral service at St. Minver in January 1986 was attended by a vast gathering of local people and club members, many of whom had travelled from all over the country to pay their respects.

Simultaneously, Mike Austin-Smith was also reorganising the committee structure of the Club. He envisaged separate committees for different areas of the Club's activities and by November 1977 the new structure had been set up and the new committees met for the first time. These consisted of the Management Committee, chaired by himself; Sail Racing under Mike Regan; Power Boats under Sidney Hill and the House Committee under Sir John Palmer. These meetings held over a weekend in early November were very important in welding the various interests of the Club together, but were exhausting for the Commodore and the Secretary who sat in on them all!

With so much emphasis on rebuilding and reorganisation, what of the sailing during these years? The new rules adopted in 1972 had clarified the position about cup races and trophies. The most important races at that time were still the Commodore's Cup, the two Brea Buoy cups and the Pyne Trophy. The Ladies Challenge Bowl and the Junior Cup and Goblets catered for special needs. With the development of class racing over the previous ten years Challenge Cup day saw cup racing

for five different classes - 'C' and 'O' handicap classes, Wayfarers, Enterprises and G.P.14's. These five classes also had Burgee cups awarded for consistency over the season - the best six races to count.

The next few years saw many changes. From 1973 the Commodore's Cup, for 34 years awarded to the first boat home, was now instead to go to the first boat on corrected time, thus giving everyone a chance. The first boat home was still to get a special prize, thus preserving the tradition that this race sought to find out the fastest boat on the estuary. But perhaps the most notable changes were the introduction of Camel Week in 1974 and the enormous proliferation of new cups and trophies. Between 1973 and 1983 no less than 21 new trophies were presented by a great many kind and generous people. There are too many to describe them in detail (a list can be found in the Appendix), but some examples are - the Adrian Hooper single handed cup, in memory of Major Pyne's grandson who was lost at sea; the Ancient Mariner's cup for the oldies or not so young, and a little later the Gunn Cup for Catamarans. This cup originally came from Jack Howett's father-in-law, Mr. Gunn, who was an Olympic athlete, indeed a medallist, in the 1920 Games.

The great increase in cup races saw a reduction in the number of series prizes, an old concept with each series spanning one tide cycle. These continued early and late in the season when fewer people were about, but the central few weeks were dominated by cup races. The most popular period of all was Camel Week which, from 1974, became one of the premier regatta weeks in the West Country, with a cup race every day. These innovations have proved most successful and the events have been well supported over the years.

Sail boarding, or wind surfing, was becoming increasingly popular. There was an understandable reluctance by the old stagers to welcome this new dimension in sailing and for a time wind surfers were not welcome. After all, how could you apply the rule of the road when it was not clear, even to novice wind surfers themselves, in which direction they were going next? However, the attractions of an easily transportable and exciting sailing machine were obvious, especially to the young, and the Camel Estuary was said to provide ideal conditions for this new sport. So wind surfing had come to stay. The Club gave them every encouragement to introduce sailboard racing and an open meeting was held in 1980 which attracted 32 entrants. This sadly proved to be a false dawn and to date no real progress in organising sailboard racing has been made. However, this has not deterred sailboarders from having their fun, especially off Daymer Bay and on the Doom Bar, both areas frowned upon by the authorities.

The organisation of racing owes much in these years to Jack Howett, who was Sailing Secretary for most of the period until he retired in 1979. Mike Austin-Smith recalls how when he first took over he found a notice on the door saying: "No racing until September because no volunteers for Duty Officer." He spent the whole of that holiday sitting in the starter's box working out instructions for duty officers and, with Jack Howett, kept racing going during his first few years. Jack had been a prominent member of the Enterprise class for many years, and its class captain. In the "all in" handicap cup races I always used to reckon that Jack was the one to beat. If one did so one was in the running for

a prize! As a racing helmsman he was a model of consistency. He was a strong advocate of committee boat starts to give a true beat on the first leg. For some time the congestion of boats on the fixed starting line and the increase in numbers of moored boats had caused difficulties. Accordingly, in 1974, it was agreed that committee boat starts should be tried, using the rescue boat for the purpose. Not long after, Jack managed to obtain for the club a suitable boat for the starts, thus freeing the rescue boat for its essential purpose. This boat was a familiar sight until very recently.

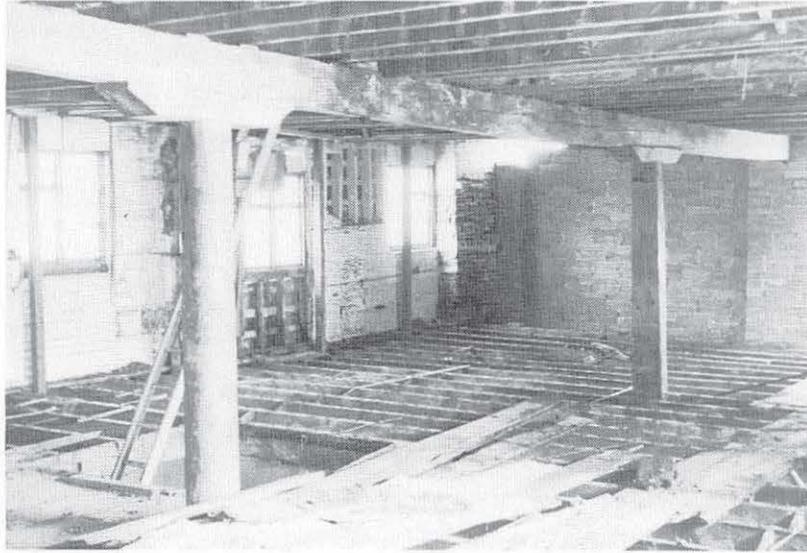
The sailing had its lighter moments. Martin Hough recalls that in his first season as Duty Officer he set a course including a leg from Tregonce to Padstow on a falling tide. During the race the banks appeared and the Padstow mark dried out. The fleet had to choose between taking the long way round tacking down the Padstow channel, favoured on this occasion by Dr. Laws, or by taking a short cut across the sandbank, carrying their boats! History does not relate who did best!

Martin Hough tells another story with a backlash against himself. In 1978, six weeks after his marriage, he crewed for his wife Lynne in the Ladies Race. Rounding Tregonce she missed the toe straps and fell overboard. Martin didn't even notice as he was holding the main and jib sheets (surely not allowed!). As the boat bore away out of control he capsized, to see his wife swimming 50 yards away. The boat's name? "All Hell let Loose"! No comment!

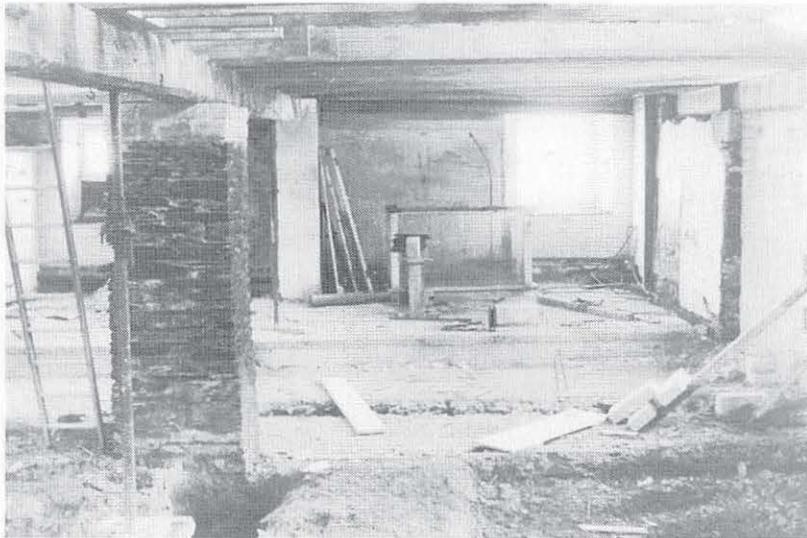
Another famous occasion was when Andrew Barker sailed his Enterprise across the Quay, between the Clubhouse and the cottages, on an exceptionally high tide. I am not sure if this was another short cut!

Following in the steps of Ken Robertson, Andrew Barker is the outstanding helmsman produced by the Club. Ken Robertson tells me that Andrew is considered one of the top 20 helmsmen in the country. Details of his successes appear in the Appendix, but to have been selected three times for the Olympics, twice National champion in Fireballs and Ospreys and, crewing for Laurie Smith, seven times national or world champions in various classes speaks for itself. On top of this, as a successful boatbuilder, he built the Fireballs which have won five national or world championships. He has represented U.K. in six countries overseas from U.S.A. to Russia and Thailand, and at the time of writing is taking part in the World Fireball Championships in Adelaide. Despite all this he still considers Rock to be his home!

The pattern of sailing at Rock was changing. Class racing was beginning to decline in popularity, but in addition to sailboarding there was a big increase in open meetings for individual classes, notably Lasers, Gulls, Kestrels and Catamarans. The improved facilities of the Club and the beauty of the estuary made Rock a popular venue for these meetings. The Bowden Laser meeting over Easter weekend is always a spectacular affair, with many thrills and spills in the cold and boisterous conditions usually encountered at that time of year. Another development was the introduction of cruiser racing. This was a direct result of the growing popularity of Crabbers and Shrimpers, built by Westerly Boats. The Shrimpers, in particular, have established a tradition of open meetings at Rock, beginning in 1980 and still continuing today. This has



First floor – Club room



Ground Floor – Changing room area

had been offered and give the go-ahead to the whole project. Despite strong reservations from one or two about the wisdom of such a small holiday club undertaking such a large project, the great majority of the committee were overwhelmingly in favour of the bold approach and making a start.

The die was now cast and work started that summer, a year later than originally envisaged. The plan put forward by the architects, Parkes Lees, Rickard and Sale of Camelford proposed a 3 year programme, summarised as follows:

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Year 1 - 1976-7 | Renovation of main structure, including foundations and roof. Creation of club room on first floor. When complete to demolish old shed on quay. (Still in use for 1976 season as club room). |
| Year 2 - 1977-8 | Create ground floor changing rooms, lavatories, store rooms etc., and build internal staircase. |
| Year 3 - 1978-9 | Complete accommodation on second floor. |

This programme was designed to allow the racing to continue without interruption, and for the 1976 season the Club room on the quay was in use for the last time.

By August 1976 work had started. The builders were Gordon Derry & Sons of Wadebridge, who did a first class job. The old building was quickly surrounded with scaffolding, strengthened with steel girders and the worn away foundation pier reinforced with concrete where the old baulks of timber had rotted away. All through the winter the work continued, and such good progress was made that a formal opening of the new Clubhouse was achieved by June 1977, appropriately enough on Jubilee weekend. On the 13th August 1977 the A.G.M. was held for the first time in our own Clubhouse. As this was such a historic moment I felt it would be right to include two extracts from the Minutes of that meeting in this history:

"Before the meeting commenced the President, Mr. Pat David, asked to say a few words. He said this was a historic occasion to be holding this meeting in the new Clubhouse. He would like to pay a tribute to the Commodore, Mike Austin-Smith, who had been the main driving force to make it all possible. The circumstances leading to the restoration of the Clubhouse had begun when he, Mr. David, had been Commodore and few members would appreciate the amount of work entailed in this project. Only the energy and enthusiasm of Mike Austin-Smith had kept things moving and he was sure members present would wish to join with him in thanking Mike for his tremendous efforts. This statement was received with much applause."

Later in the meeting the Commodore said: "It was a great occasion to hold this meeting in our own Clubhouse since we had never really owned one before. We had used this building until the summer of 1968 on verbal arrangement with Mr. Looker, but we had no written agreement or lease. The last A.G.M. held here was in 1967, the 1968 meeting

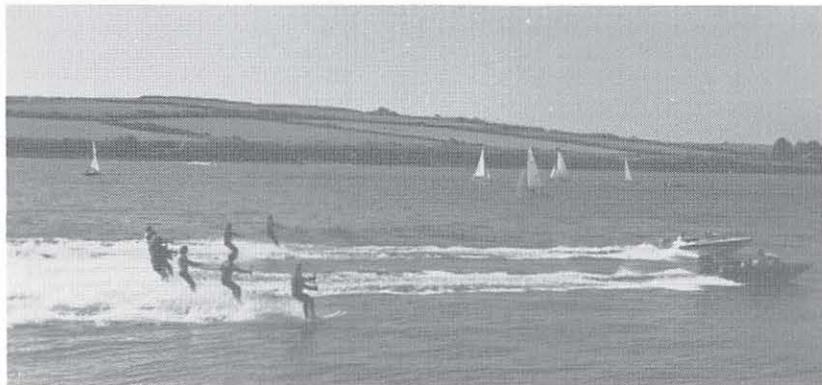


Andrew Barker at the helm of his Enterprise

meant the Club taking on responsibility for racing out to sea, despite problems posed by the Doom Bar.

Perhaps the biggest change in this period, after the Clubhouse, was the amalgamation of the Water Ski Club. This was achieved in 1980 after protracted and difficult negotiations. The whole question of control of water ski-ing had a long and troubled history. It is a complicated story. The North Cornwall Power Boat and Ski Club had its origins in the early 60's when a group of enthusiasts got together. They started off Cant Cove but soon moved to the sandy Cassock Beach under Brea House. With the growth of the sport and increasing congestion both the Duchy and the Padstow Harbour Commissioners (P.H.C.) became concerned about control and safety aspects. When the Sailing Club adopted the new rules in 1972 allowing all water users to become members it was felt the time was ripe for our Club to assume responsibility for water ski-ing as well as sail racing.

Accordingly, in 1972, negotiations for amalgamation of the two clubs began. But they failed for two main reasons. The first was because at that time the Sailing Club had little to offer in the way of premises and facilities, and Ski Club members quite naturally did not see why they should have to pay a much larger subscription. The second was because of a dispute between the Ski Club and the P.H.C. over ski areas. The Ski Club operated off Cassock Beach and wished to move to the smoother water of Cant Cove, where there were fewer sailing boats.



Three views of water ski-ing between Cant and Porthilly