



Chairman's Report 2008

As the year draws to a close, we can reflect on a very successful year, in particular our best ever finish in the national 24hr Race and the award of St Helens District Sports Council Club of the Year. However, this has only been achieved through the efforts of many members, young and old and for me the real prize has been seeing an active and vibrant club demonstrated in so many ways throughout the year. As I try to capture the highlights, I do so in the knowledge that I will inevitably make some omissions and so I apologise now, but safe in the knowledge that mention will have been made in the regular newsletters so ably produced by Trevor Fillingham and more latterly, Richard Critchley which helps to keep us up to date throughout the year!

As we started our 51st year, the first stage of the changing rooms upgrade was completed with minimum disruption and minimal cost, led by Derek Lee and his band of willing volunteers. This enabled us to maximize our available space and provide better facilities for the Ladies – further work is planned for this winter. The verandah was also refurbished with new glass and thanks are due, in particular to Geoff Rusk and Trevor Fillingham for undertaking the work. On the water new buoys were installed by Alan Boardman and agreement was reached with the Anglers for unrestricted all year round sailing for a trial period of 12 months – I do hope you feel it has been a success? In the boat house, Robert Dickinson and his sons' Peter & Russell, meticulously refurbished the club Composite – I could only watch and admire their skill!

Our RYA accredited Training Centre ran a successful sailing course for 10 pupils of Rainhill High School, in early April in difficult weather conditions, followed by possibly our most successful ever 'Beginners' Course' with 40 participants, including 20 juniors – the latter which are our 'lifblood'. A successful taster session was also run later in the year for Eccleston Mere Primary School. For those of you who have attended our Tuesday night 'free and easy' sailing, you will know how much joy this brings to the youngsters and as a club we should be particularly proud that we are playing our part in introducing young and old to the joys of sailing – for me, that is what we are about. To help with this, a grant was obtained by the Juniors to enable the club to purchase 2 Lasers. As ever, I cannot over emphasize the importance of the Training Centre to the club, not only from an income point of view but also as a source of new members. There are too many willing volunteers to thank, but it would be remiss of me at this stage, not to personally thank Trevor Fillingham, the centre's inaugural Principal who stepped down this year as Principal and from the committee, for the fantastic work he has done for the club. Rob Jones came to the rescue and stepped into the breach to temporarily act as Principal in support of Derek Lee, Dave Greenall and Dave Wilson, our other Senior Instructors. I am pleased to announce that Dave Greenall has agreed to take on the role of Principal for next year – please support him by helping out whenever you can.

The better sailors amongst us (and I don't include myself in that category!) were flying the flag for the club and special mention should be made of our growing Junior section, in particular, Becca Cox & Anna Hampson who have travelled some 6500 miles to regional and international events, including the World Topper Championships in Ireland. With London 2012 on the horizon – chase your dreams girls, we are very proud of you! Our juniors also showed spirit at the 12 Hr Race where an injury to Becca meant an endurance test for the remainder of the team. Becca with 5 trophies and Alan Roberts with 2 were eventually rewarded for their perseverance with their haul of trophies at Bassenthwaite SC week in August. Towards the end of the season, Alan Roberts and Rob Lea won the Enterprise national inland u 18's championship and to cap it all, Becca was chosen as St Helens & District Sports Council Young Sportsperson of the Year.

On the senior front, Steve Blackburn & Royston Taggart and their respective crews, Nick Hampton and Diane Roberts continue to shine with Steve currently lying 2nd in the North West Top Helm Series and Royston 4th – not surprisingly Steve won our Open in May and Royston was 2nd. Ray Lewis and Peter Marsh won the Menai Straits 'Swellies' race from Beaumaris to Caernarvon.

Back on land, our 'Maintenance Day' in July, exemplified the spirit within the club, with numerous volunteers turning their hand to tidying up the compound, removing rubbish, fixing the jetty etc. The sight of John Porter in his tree felling gear still brings a smile to my face and we could not have cleared the old school compound without Dougie Greenall and his JCB. My thanks are due to everybody who participated.

In July, we also held a sailing event with the local Round Table, on a glorious summer's evening (one of the few) which was a great success raising £250. When added to the money later raised on our Charity Day held in September when 14 boats participated, this meant we were able to present 'The Lilac Centre' with a cheque for over £1000. As a Community Amateur Sports Club I think that this is an important aspect of the club which we should be proud of, and as usual, much work is done by Freda Lunt and our Ladies section to make this possible.

As mentioned at the beginning, the 24 Hr Race was a great success, with the club finishing 6th overall from 68 boats (3rd Enterprise) – how fitting that we should win the Eric Brown Trophy, one of our founding members. Well done to the 'A' team and their 'Captain' Caroline O'Brien – you have set the standard but I expect even better next year! Our 'B' team finished a very credible 54th and continues to give all members the opportunity to sail in a prestigious national sailing event. Thanks to 'Captain' Ray Lewis and his team for making this possible. On the Lakeshore, we must have one of the best marquees -notice how other clubs are copying us! This was only possible through the work of Trevor Fillingham, Alistair Sutcliffe and Alan Boardman to name a few, and as ever where would we be without the catering and culinary skills of Cliff & Karen Waine to whom we are, as always extremely grateful.

Financially, as the Treasurer's Report will demonstrate we are in a very good position and the launch of the '100' Club in April, now with 30 members, will further help this.

On the water this year, we have seen more boats than for many years, further testament to our thriving club and the growing 'Solo' Fleet is likely to further enhance this. In addition, we have also introduced a winter open series.

At this stage of the report, we should also take a few moments to remember those members past and present who have passed away this year - Colin King, Ken Green & Bob Fletcher.

So as I draw this report to a close, despite our modest numbers, we can reflect on a vibrant, active and financially sound club, playing our part in the community but above all giving everybody the opportunity to sail. I can think of no better example than Alan Roberts who came to us as a young and boisterous teenager, and who has now joined the Royal Navy to serve his country – We wish him well and I would like to think our club played a part in this.

Malcolm Armstrong
Chairman
November 2008