

Commodore's report 2026

As I come to the end of my three year tenure as Commodore I am taking the time to reflect on what a productive three years it has been. I have been very grateful for the support of the many members of the General Committee and sub-committees (many of whom have been a part of the running of the club throughout this time).

Sadly, during this time we have suffered a number of bereavements. It has been a great honour to provide the premises for many of the wakes, giving family and friends a chance to reminisce and share photos. I hope our sailing community continues to provide a place of friendship to those who have lost loved ones. I have very much appreciated the company of many of you, both on and off the water since the loss of my Dad in 2023.

On the water we have seen an increase in dinghy sailing and gig rowing. The gig clubs have hosted several successful Harker's Yard races, and introduced new Summer rowing events to the club calendar. We also rent the clubhouse to an external rowing coach from which members from both rowing clubs have benefited. It is great to see both clubs thriving. First, WivGigs invested in a 2nd gig, then Corsairs in George (the Pembrokeshire Longboat). During 2026 Corsairs will be taking delivery of a 2nd gig, which will enable even more (friendly) inter-club rivalry between the clubs. I am also delighted that more of the rowing club members actively volunteer around the club.

Dinghy racing has been keenly contested (and I am particularly proud of the fact that we have more women racing and participating generally in the sailing programme than three years ago!) We have a thriving cadet group and I was delighted to be part of the support team for the Mersea Summer camp in 2025 which was a thoroughly enjoyable occasion. We also have a more active social sailing programme which has enabled the club to get more new sailors into dinghies, both crewing and helming. In our Centenary year one of the highlights was to see 13 of the WOD fleet proudly parade past the clubhouse during the Summer Celebration event in June. Then in August the club hosted the WODs 90th Anniversary 4-day race series, where all 13 were again in action across the extended weekend. With a team of volunteers, we successfully used Viking as a Committee boat to run the races by Alresford Creek, which gave the opportunity to

run 2 races most days thereby creating an exciting extended race series. The club is hopeful that the WOD race series will become an annual event (with a 5 day event already planned for 2026.) The success of the “remote starts” is also being extended into the club’s general racing programme, with the Summer Laser, Rivals & WOD Challenge race series being the first to benefit.

The biggest single investment, which members approved was for the installation of solar panels. As a result, the club has made significant savings in electricity costs, which is good news for future investment into the club, but also good for our environment. In the most productive 6 months of 2025 the panels generated over 5,600kwh of electricity. An unforeseen bonus has been that for 5 of those months our usage fell below the government’s “large user” threshold which meant we didn’t pay the climate levy and our VAT rate was reduced by 15%, generating additional savings of over £170, an additional saving the club will benefit from every year. With export tariff rates increasing in the last twelve months, I will be working with the Hon Treasurer to secure even more financial benefits from the panels in 2026.

We have invested extensively in new equipment to benefit the club’s water-based activities, particularly with regard to safety equipment. We purchased a new RIB (with outboard), a new outboard motor for the other RIB, and two new launch trailers for the RIBs. We have also purchased new pipework and cabinet to enable the diesel pump to be installed on the pontoon to enable hard cleaning across a wider range of tides (no longer restricted to around high water). We have made access to the canoe racks easier to reduce the risk of strained backs. Most recently we have purchased a weather station, which has taken the guesswork out of preparing the club’s daily sailing risk assessment which was introduced in 2025. We have also invested in safety equipment for the lifting group. A number of the yacht moorings are now in need of some refurbishment, and there is some evidence that there would be demand for vacant moorings if they were ready for use. GC have therefore approved expenditure to refurbish four moorings to encourage new yachts (and potentially new members) to the club.

2024 saw the clubhouse turn 30 years of age. Inevitably, the building and its decoration have required some refurbishment. During 2025 we invested in new curtains and carpets and were delighted to receive an original painting by Jamie Dodds to adorn one of the clubhouse walls. We installed a new chiller cabinet which required some adjustment to the bar worktop, so that has been sanded and revarnished to look like new! The toilet lights have been replaced with new LED units, and we have just

replaced all the upstairs windows following an extensive tender process with a number of suppliers to secure the best deal for the club. The old hard hut has had an external refurbishment and repaint as has the main clubhouse tractor and boat shed. The car park also received some attention with all the car park bay concrete blocks painted, weeding and new gravel laid to discourage new weeds. The club has also been doing its bit for the environment by installing bird boxes, composting and sensitively keeping bushes and hedges tidy to maximise flowering and fruiting for wildlife. The club are proud to host the Rivercare canoe and equipment, and we have also been participating in a water sampling project with the university, the results of which are linked on our website.

I now turn to the social scene of the club which has seen so many fresh ideas and all the very best of the club's traditional events rolled into a packed programme. Lanza lunches became a regular Sunday treat, and 5 o'clock Friday was introduced, becoming a popular end to the week for many members to enjoy a drink on the patio in the early evening sun. We started our Centenary year celebrations with a club history night hosted by Alan Tyne reading from the club archives on 1st March. The Summer Centenary Celebration was held on a glorious sunny day in June with many given the opportunity to get afloat before enjoying a bbq and live band ashore. In November we hosted our Annual Dinner with our guest speaker Dawn Smith joining us just two weeks before she was off to prepare for her row across the Atlantic. Dawn lives locally in Burnham-on-Crouch running a sea-training school when she isn't rowing oceans. She now holds yet another World Record for crossing the Atlantic, this time for the fastest row by a mixed pair. Truly inspirational!

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who has helped around the club across the many projects I have outlined above. Many have also committed their time to the day to day running of the club through running the bar, running the many social events, covering race day and launch day duties as well as giving their time at our Spring and Autumn working parties. And thank you too for participating in the club's activities to make it all worthwhile! A member's club, run by members, can only thrive through the dedication and participation of its members. It has been an honour to guide the club during the last three years and watch it flourish. Our founders would I believe, be very proud of the club they conceived in 1925.

Julie-Anne White

Commodore

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