

# The RCC Centenary Beaulieu Meet 2023

Tim Barker



Members and their guests gather after the Centenary lunch

This year marked the centenary of the first Royal Cruising Club Meet on the Beaulieu River. The Club celebrated this landmark in style with one of the largest gatherings of members and their yachts.

On Sunday 29 July 1923, the lovely 46ft Albert Strange designed *Tern III* swung to her anchor off Gins Farm in the Beaulieu River. Her owner, the ever esteemed Claud Worth, Vice Commodore of The Royal Cruising Club, would have surveyed with satisfaction the fleet of 22 member yachts stretching up the river towards Gilbury Hard. This was the first gathering of the Club to take place in the Beaulieu

Nico joins the army of helpers

Marquee for 400

Tim Barker (author)



## Tim Barker

River and it was, by all accounts a very successful Meet. The Vice Commodore entertained many members on board *Tern III* which, as flagship, on occasions had as many as 20 visiting dinghies tied up astern. One might imagine Worth, who remained Vice Commodore for the next 14 years, reflecting on the happy Meet and thinking 'That was splendid. We should consider repeating this next year.' And so started the tradition of holding a regular Beaulieu River Meet of the RCC.

It was not the first Meet held by the RCC, but it was the first held in the Beaulieu River. The first Meet took place in Falmouth in 1894 with another Meet held the following year in an anchorage at Calshott which was an unhappy occasion. The anchorage was exposed and uncomfortable, the holding was bad and few member yachts attended. Perhaps put off by this experience, over the next 28 years just three further Meets took place, two in Hamble and one off Brownsea Island.



A photo of the Beaulieu Meet first appeared in the RCC Journal ninety years ago (RCC Journal 1933)

The Beaulieu River Meet has been held annually since 1923 with few exceptions, no Meets took place between 1939 and 1945 when all members' yachts were laid up for the duration of the Second World War. More recently as we can all sadly remember the Meet in 2020 was cancelled due to Covid pandemic restrictions and the Meet in 2022 was officially cancelled out of respect for the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, although some yachts that were already on passage to Beaulieu did meet up unofficially.

For three years from 1936 to 1938 the Meet was held jointly with the Royal Naval Sailing Association.

It was Paul Heiney, our last Commodore, who perspicaciously noted that the first Beaulieu Meet took place in 1923. This centenary event was so eagerly



## The RCC Centenary Beaulieu Meet 2023



Canapé Queens at work ...

... making 300 canapés



Centenary cake donated by Heather Howard



anticipated that it was prematurely and erroneously written up in *Roving Commissions* 52 recording the 2011 Beaulieu Meet, variously described as the centenary of the Beaulieu Meet and the 100<sup>th</sup> Beaulieu Meet, neither of which was the case. So the weekend of 8–10 September 2023 was thus selected for the real Centenary Beaulieu Meet, one of the largest gatherings of members and their yachts ever, organised with superb efficiency by the Organising Committee chaired by our Vice Commodore, Tim Trafford. Expressions of interest were so high that plans had to be rapidly changed; larger marquees hired, locations moved and orders with the wine merchants trebled.

The celebrations were to kick off with a Parade of Sail of the fleet on Friday afternoon, consisting of 57 member yachts (including James King's diminutive sailing canoe *Robin*, home built from cast off bits from Charlie Watson's *Saecwen*). Given that RCC members are renowned for never getting beyond the 3<sup>rd</sup> line of an email, let alone complying with instructions, it was always going to be a challenge for the Parade of Sail Master, Steven Anderson, to get his ducks in a row. Someone likened the task to trying to herd eels. Steven's job was made all the more interesting by a tanker driving through the fleet during the period of assembly on the south side of the Solent. But by 1430 all was in order and the fleet sailed in line astern past the flagship, Bobby Lawe's splendid *Huahine*, which



A fossilisation of past Commodores aboard *Huahine*. (L-R) Nigel Wollen, (Bobby Lawes), Monique Browne (Antony Browne's widow), Henry Clay, Kit Power and Nick Chavasse (Commodore) was anchored off the entrance to the Beaulieu River. On board *Huahine* were the Commodore, Nick Chavasse, and a fossilisation of past Commodores who were to take the salute of each yacht dipping their ensign as they passed. Whilst each passing yacht had to dip their ensign just once, the flagship had to acknowledge the salutes by dipping its ensign 56 times. Mike Pidsley was appointed Dipper-in-Chief on the flagship, an honourable but exhausting responsibility.

The author observed the Parade and the fleet's entry into the river from the beach below Lepe light house and can report that it was a moving marine spectacular.

Parading past the flagship *Huahine* .... and encountering shipping transiting the Western Solent







Parade of Sail, the Isle of Wight in the distance. Below, detail from the painting by Martyn MacKrill

Because of the very large number of yachts and particularly given the restrictions now imposed on anchoring in the river to protect the Posidonia grass, it was impractical for the whole fleet to anchor or raft up in the river as in previous years, so most of the fleet proceeded to Bucklers Hard Yacht Harbour where David Russell, the Berthing Master, expertly oversaw the berthing of some 40 yachts alongside two pontoons. The massed fleet of the RCC now safely berthed and dressed overall, it was time to party.

The main event of the Centenary celebrations was the buffet lunch on the Saturday. The typical weather conditions for most Beaulieu Meets is squally, cold and wet. The dress code is generally foul-weather gear and woolly hats. Not this





Two marquees for the 400 members and guests



Portsmouth Shantymen.

Four foot pans of paella



year it wasn't. We were benefitting from an Indian Summer, a record-breaking run of very hot, endlessly sunny days. It could not have been better. The dress code for the lunch was amended from 'Smart Nautical' (reefers and summer ties) to 'Tropical Nautical' (open-necked shirts, and shorts will be fine).

Kick-off was at midday under the large open-sided marquee at Bucklers Hard with sparkling wine being served with exquisite canapés prepared by a team of no fewer than 21 volunteers headed by Hilary Keatinge. Appropriately nautical music was provided by the Portsmouth Shantymen who were all in splendid voice.

There was another small marquee close by where three monstrous paella pans were being used to prepare lunch for more than 400. The quality of the food was quite exceptional, and it was all washed down by ever more wine which was flowing like a river.

After lunch the Commodore was piped to the microphone by Rory



## The RCC Centenary Beaulieu Meet 2023

Trafford (no suggestion of nepotism here, even though Dad was running the whole show - Rory's playing was brilliant). The Commodore warmly welcomed us all and, after audaciously taking credit for the perfect weather conditions, he gave a hugely informative talk about the history of the RCC Beaulieu Meet and the very long-standing and warm relationship that the Club has enjoyed with the family of Lord Montagu, the Harbour Masters past and present of the Beaulieu River, the Royal Southampton Yacht Club and the Beaulieu River Sailing Club. All were represented at the lunch as our guests. The Commodore thanked each one and made presentations to them marking the occasion. He also thanked the enormous team of Club organisers and volunteers who had made the weekend such a memorable success, including, but in no particular order:

Hilary Keatinge and her wonderful team of 20 Canapé Creators

Heather Howard who donated the wonderful



Rory Trafford piping in the Commodore



Lord Montagu raises a Centenary tankard.

The Canapé Queens





An elegance of Commodores' Ladies past and present cut the Centenary Cake (L-R) Bindy Wollen, Penny Power, Margie Chavasse and Sue Nockolds, watched by Tessa Mackenzie-Green (Hon Sec)

Centenary Cake. Heather was also credited with the idea of the land-based Grand Marquee celebration which worked so well.

Steven Anderson, Parade of Sail Master

David Russell, Berthing Master

Jane Russell, organiser of the Cadet BBQ on Friday and the Gins Sunday Carvery.

Tessa Mackenzie-Green, Hon Secretary, numerous diverse responsibilities, tireless as ever.

And especially Tim Trafford, Vice Commodore, who was Chairman of the Organising Committee. The Majordomo. The buck would have stopped with him, but there was no need for it to stop anywhere – the entire event was seamless.



After the presentations, the RCC Centenary Cake was ceremoniously cut by an elegance of Commodores' Ladies past and present, then we all went outside for a mass photograph taken by Chris Elliott and his drone.

The party then slowly wound down whilst the Portsmouth Shantymen continued to entertain us, voices lubricated by barrels of real ale, now accompanied by a chorus of members armed with song sheets.

Our wonderful Cadet section – the future lifeblood of the Club – was very well represented throughout the weekend. They had their own raft-up of seven yachts in the river (handy for a

Tropically attired Tim Trafford chaired the Organising Cmte



## The RCC Centenary Beaulieu Meet 2023

mass seamanlike inspection of their anchors – recreational swimming not being permitted in the river) and they were very active helping refill glasses and handing out canapés at the Centenary lunch. They held a BBQ at Gins Farm on the Friday evening, and the RSYC also hosted a Carvery lunch for a number of our members at Gins on Sunday.

But the Cadets were not the only volunteers. It is estimated that more than 100 members volunteered their services in one way or another on land and on the water in ensuring the smooth running of the weekend's celebrations. That is no fewer than 25% of those attending. All of them unsung heroes, owed a great debt.



The Toast

The Centenary weekend Meet was as historic as it was enjoyable, commemorating a now very long-held tradition of the Club. The organisation required was immense but, in perfect conditions, the whole event was an absolute triumph. The weekend will be remembered by all present for many years to come. Arthur Underhill and Claud Worth would, I hope, have been surprised and delighted. And, as we have been reading the account of that first RCC Beaulieu Meet a hundred years ago, it may well be that the account of this, our Centenary Meet, will also be reviewed and analysed by members of our Club in another hundred years to come. To record the Commodore's toast at the Centenary Beaulieu Meet Lunch: "For Fair Winds and Friendship – The Royal Cruising Club".

The following statistics are recorded not only for historical record but as a target for future RCC Meets.

RCC members attending:	about 400
Members volunteering their help:	>100
RCC yachts attending:	65
Number of yachts participating in Parade of Sail:	57
Canapés made :	3,000
Weight of paella served:	150 kilos
Bottles of wine consumed:	288
Litres of lager drunk:	127 (384 bottles)
Pints of real ale (mainly for the Portsmouth Shantymen):	200

Acknowledgement: for much of the historical detail I am indebted to our Hon Archivist and past Commodore Christopher Thornhill.

Photographs: the Editors were spoilt for choice thanks to Sally and David Batten, and Tim Barker, Christopher Elliott, James Morrow, Clare Pimm, Angela Reid

Tim Barker



RCC boats taking part in the Parade of Sail

Albatross  
Almira  
Avocet  
Boandaro  
Boreal  
Bouton d'Or  
Caprice  
Diamond Blue  
Dipper of Lorne  
Ellida  
Fidget  
Flycatcher of Yar  
Galliard  
Gazelle of Itchenor  
Gemervescence  
Gladeye III

Hornpiper  
Huahine  
Inversanda  
Jacana  
Jacaranda  
Kestrel  
Lalji  
Lazy Life  
Lily  
Lydia  
Marguerite  
Masquerade  
Meandro  
Merry Mood  
Morgan Le Fay  
Muffin  
O'Barquino  
Osprey of Falmouth

Owl  
Pastime  
Puffin  
Raider  
Robin  
Robin of Cowes  
Saecwen  
Sea Jade  
Skat  
Slamat  
Sofia  
Spellbinder  
Starship  
Tai Tai  
Tertia  
Tiger C  
Tiger Rose  
Tinfish II

Titian  
Troubadour  
Whirlaway of Percuil  
Zephyr  
Zwailer

Other RCC boats attending the Meet

Abie  
Andrillot II  
Charm of Rhu  
Coriander  
Easy Rider  
Gaivota  
Osiris  
The Otter  
Veryan  
Victoria  
Wish Hound II



The official painting of the Parade of Sail by marine artist Martyn Mackrill (RCC)