

John Lewis Partnership Sailing Club:

Commodores & Admirals



7



March 2023



Y.C.M. SNAGGE, O.S.C.
COMMODORE 1951-1962.

Geoffrey Snagge was our first Commodore (from 1951-1961) and, when he retired from that role, our first Admiral. He joined the business from an unusual background of a former Gurkha and seaman (gutting fish on a trawler). He had his own boat, Arvon, and was a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron, no less. Because he was keen on sailing, he mentioned that to Spedan Lewis over dinner one evening.

Spedan jumped at the idea of what a good thing it was for Partners as a whole to sail, to bring sailing within the range of ordinary people. Geoffrey was then tasked with setting up the sailing club and had our first yacht, Ann Speed, built.

He gave the buoy he had on the Beaulieu River to the sailing club as a gift and it is still used and enjoyed by members today.

He also gifted the club a bell, The Arvon Bell, to be used to call order at meetings and dinners.





The next four commodores were

- Geoffrey Rimer from 1962 -1965,
- George Walton from 1966-1967
- Jimmy Owen-Thomas 1968 -1972³
and again for 1975 (see next slide)
- Jeremy Grindle 1973-1974

Note:

If you know any more information about these gentlemen and even photographs, we should be delighted to hear it!

Clockwise from top left





- Jimmy Owen-Thomas 1968 -1972
and again for 1975

Jimmy Owen - Thomas, with his Naval background and a sound appreciation of the Partnership, was ideally suited for his six years as Commodore.

George Henry Lee, Liverpool, lost their Mersey Mylne from her moorings overnight in a storm in 1967. A Scandinavian Folkboat development called a Folkdancer was chosen to replace the Mylne and Ulla Owen - Thomas, Jimmy's Danish born wife, named her Finnjenka, which was a country dance from her childhood.

The Club flourished with Jimmy as Partners generally began more and more to realise that the amenity was open to be enjoyed by everyone. The fleet was updated with the purchase of an Albin Vega, Norama, and the seeds were sown for the still present Bowman ketch, Sabeema.





Above with John Draper, Admiral and the Chairman's wife, Deborah Anne Lewis at the launch of Norama III in 1985

Denis Bayly

from 1976 -1985

Denis was always a keen sailor and whilst he worked at G.H. Lee, as the Partnership's shop in Liverpool was called, there were two small yachts. The fact they had them was due to his influence at the time.

He was an accountant and became Deputy Chief Accountant for the whole business (retiring in 1990).

His claim to fame and achievement must be making the reputation of the club more egalitarian, making all feel welcome from whatever background or job title.

That he grounded the boat on every trip he made is a completely unfounded allegation!

The Chairman invited Denis to become second Admiral of club at end of 1998 season, a year before his death in December 1999.





Martin Sands

1986-1990

Martin had been a Commander in the Royal Navy including Captain HMS Carysfort 1965-66 and also specialised in Military telecommunications.

He joined the Partnership in 1974 and initially worked in IT developing a JL stock control system before coming General Manager of the London Distribution warehouse at Clearings, behind Peter Jones, and oversaw the move to Park Royal.



He was instrumental in aligning the club with the Royal Yachting Association ensuring we were all trained to the 'gold' standard.

He is a lovely man who's night attire aboard would be a sarong, stemming from the time he spent in Far East. He also baked the bread for his family.





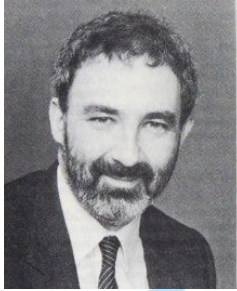
Tony Stoller

1991-1995

After an early career in local radio and a senior role in the Independent Broadcasting Authority, Tony joined the Partnership in 1985 and rose to become MD of our JL shop in Southampton.

He then became the Chief Exec of the Radio Authority from 1995 until it was succeeded by Ofcom in 2003.

Tony was awarded a CBE for services to broadcasting in 2004 and completed a PhD in 2015. He is now a Visiting Professor in the Faculty of Media and Communications at Bournemouth University



He and his wife, Andi, enjoyed sailing their own boat from the south coast.





Robert Fraser 1996-2002

Robert Fraser worked in HR at JL, Edinburgh and Bristol, before moving, first, to run Brownsea and then Odney and Winter Hill.

Every year the club holds a Robert Fraser weekend to celebrate Robert who died in 2009.

A much loved character known for his great sense of fun. He was also a gentleman and very good sailor.

“Sometimes an element of chaos would come out of a sailing weekend with Robert”; “In true Robert style, we started with the elements of a plan and made the rest up as we went along!”; “Robert Fraser was the epitome of what I thought a Commodore was all about”; “had the all too rare knack of making everyone with him feel at ease no matter what the circumstances”

Those quotes sum up the man to perfection. RIP





Patrick Stonehewer 2003 - 2008

Patrick took over from Robert Fraser (both seen at the launch of Norama in 1997 with Chairman, Sir Stuart Hampson).

He first clambered into a dinghy on a Derbyshire lake in his teens and then did a competent crew course. Having joined JLP he discovered that it had a sailing club and all that it had to offer. He did a shorebased Day Skipper course one winter which stood him in good stead for a summer cruise. He then joined the training scheme and became a skipper in 1990.

He considers himself fortunate to have sailed not only in the Solent and surroundings, but at both ends of the Channel, on the West Coast of Scotland, well down the west coast of France, as far north as Shetland and through the Low Countries. Thousands of miles and hundreds of days.

He oversaw our move to Universal marina and the replacement of the Sadler 34's, Ann Speed IV and Deborah Anne, with the HR34s.

His proudest moment as Commodore was to receive a letter from a club member expressing her thanks for the opportunity to sail on a Summer Cruise along the north Spanish coast, something which she never dreamt she would have the opportunity to experience.





Lis Gray

2009 - 2016

Lis was introduced to sailing in the 80's whilst working at a Waitrose branch which had a skipper as Deputy Manager and Lis was hooked. An advert in the sailing club newsletter for a summer cruise sparked an interest and she sailed some 250nm with the illustrious Mike Forbes as skipper.

From then sailing on training trips with Dennis Bayly and Martin Sands (both her predecessors as Commodores) as well as recreational trips with many other Partners. Being interviewed for a role at WR head office her interviewer was surprised how many people she already knew there - mainly meeting through the sailing club.

Lis oversaw the replacement of our two Sadler 29 yachts, Norama and Jeroma with the HR342's in 2014 and she feels that the strength of the club comes the commitment and dedication of all members working for the benefit of the club using combined skills and contacts across the business.

Lis is seen here awarding the new Admiral his 'flag'





Kevin Whiston 2017 - 2022

Starting his sailing career whilst a scout and then moved to an Enterprise dinghy later with family.

Having joined Waitrose he started yachting on Sabeema in 1995. He was asked if he fancied a weekend sail. The skipper was John Richards and Kevin was hooked. He quickly joined the sailing club training scheme and then progressed his way through the various certificates.

Some of his memorable moments include waking up for the first time ¹² on the Beaulieu buoy at 0530, with all the wildlife feeding at the river's edge. His first Channel crossing as 'Skipper' with Andy Gissing and the numerous encounters with dolphins off France, Channel Island and most recently Brighton in 2022.

During his period as Commodore, nothing gave him greater pleasure than seeing other Club members succeed/develop within the Club.





Paul Hogan 2023 - ???

Paul joined JL and then moved to Waitrose.

The club has been a part of my life for a long time. I was working in John Lewis Welwyn circa 1997 when two friends, Paul Pollard and Steve Barnum convinced me a cruise to Alderney, one Easter Weekend would be a good idea. Tim James was the skipper, we were on the old Sabeema II and I have to say I was hooked after that trip. It was so good that they repeated it for a good few years.

Since then there have been many highlights in his sailing career - summer cruises to Ireland and France, collecting Sabeema and the new 34's from Sweden, racing in Cowes Week, chartering the Farr 40's, passing his Yachtmaster Practical, shooting stars, wild deer at Beaulieu. But, he says, "perhaps the best is the people I have met in the club along the way".

Oh, and the time I set off the DSC MayDay alarm sitting at the chart table the morning of one club race!

Nuggets on previous Commodores is difficult. What I would say is that Robert Fraser was the epitome of what I thought a Commodore was all about.



We also have an Admiral



John Draper 2011 - 20..

John was sailing singlehanded delivery trips in 1961, became a JLP skipper in 1962 and stood down last year, some 60 years later. His enthusiasm is legendary and has introduced so many of us to sailing.

For many of his years in the club he was a Flag Officer - mainly as Vice-Commodore from 1970 to 1987. He sailed the longest summer cruise of 833 miles over 2 weeks in 1984: Falmouth - La Rochelle - Plymouth.

Before him were:-

Denis Bayly (1998-1999)

Geoffrey Snagge (1962-1984)



All ably supported by 6 sailing secretaries

1. Jan Nieder 1977- 1991
2. Pauline Fidge 1992
3. Lou Burton 1993 – 1995
4. Lesley Moorey 1996 – 2006 and 2008 - 2011
5. Caroline Shier 2006-2007
6. Alison Mears 2011-2021
7. Cherie Dodd 2022 - 20..



John Lewis Partnership Sailing Club Archive

Many thanks to all these Club Officers for their work over the years.



The archive is in **need** of more and better photos and information. Should you have anything that might be of interest please send to JLPSCArchive@gmail.com - obviously with **dates and names attached!**

We plan to post this onto the jlpmemorystore.org.uk sometime in the, not too distant, future.

Tim Pritchard Jones and Tim James

