
History

Weathering many storms, the club's history -

To attempt a 'short history' of the Inchinnan Cruising Club would be as dangerous as trying to condense the Old Testament into a couple of pages. The following notes merely outline the work and enthusiasm of hundreds of officials and members who made the ICC what it is today – a unique organisation by any standard which has weathered many, many storms in an amazingly democratic manner....

A couple of years after the event, a 'special note' on the foundation of the club was entered in the minute book by Tom Christie. This note records that the first Commodore was John Carmichael, who owned a boat called 'Almeria'. The membership roll for 1932 to 1933 included 36 names and a list of 30 boats.

It is also clear that the choice of a name for the club was discussed at length at the first meeting of budding members. The two most popular suggestions were: Blytheswood Cruising Club and the Inchinnan Bridge Cruising Club.

What's in a name?

We may imagine today that the choice of a name should have been a simple matter. Not so! There was a slight matter of political expediency to be considered. For one thing, the island was owned by the Blytheswood Estates and, for another, the tenant was Mr George Goodfellow who operated what he called the Gryffe Motor Slipway as a commercial venture. A receipt dated March 1934 records that Oswald J Houston paid Mr Goodfellow £2 for the storage and launching of 'De Rue' that year.

Considering that Mr. Goodfellow was a bridge-keeper at Inchinnan and that he was smart enough to realise that a club on his premises would be a good thing, it is probably no coincidence that the first name chosen was "the Inchinnan Bridge Cruising Club".

All for under a fiver.

The first Annual General Meeting of the Club was held on 12 April 1933. It was noted by the treasurer, Arthur Sinclair, that 36 members had paid a subscription of two shillings and sixpence (12 ½ pence!) to make a total of £4.50. On the debit side of the balance sheet there appeared familiar items – wood (£1.20), angle irons (37½ pence), and creosote (2 ½ pence).

There were some important decisions made at the first AGM. The entrance and the annual subscription fees were fixed at 12 ½ pence. Another proposal came in the form of a new rule (already!) put forward by Tom Christie: "The Club burgee will be flown only when a member of the Club is on board"... and that was nearly 50 years ago!

The early days

The words "waiting list" first appeared in the minutes of February 1938. By this time, membership had risen to 83 and the space available was decidedly cramped. Hauling-out was a problem from the earliest days of the Club. Already, some boats were too big to be handled by the existing gear, and there is some note of a few owners of small boats complaining that they should not be asked to pay the full annual fee.

By 1938 the Club had taken over the lease of the island; purchased all gear belonging to George Goodfellow; and had been given an assurance of tenancy for "at least three years." The validity of the lease was brought into question when the Club attempted eviction of 'pirates and squatters' from their land. During a fairly expensive court case it was discovered that Blytheswood Estates had actually sold some land to Paisley Harbour Trust when the Cart was diverted and canalised. Unfortunately, it turned out that the offenders were squatting on land owned by Paisley Harbour Trust (who didn't care less). The case was thrown out and costs awarded to the defenders.

A nation at war

By the time all the furore had died down, Britain was at war with Germany, and the club settled into a routine of fire-watching and maintenance. They were difficult years. Boat owners were called to the forces (some never to return), sailing activities were severely restricted and by 1943-44 only a handful of elderly, dedicated men were left to handle the affairs of the Club.

When this work was completed the Club began an extensive land reclamation and improvement programme. In fact, when the southern portion of the island was bought from Paisley Burgh Council one of the conditions of sale was that the property should be cleaned up and its appearance improved.

The dumping and in-filling (much of which was done by Club members), was part and parcel of the general cleaning-up operation, but before the job could be carried to its logical conclusion it was necessary for the Club to purchase what used to be known as the "small island". This was done by making yet another offer to Blytheswood Estates.

Improving the property

Hindsight suggests that Lady Luck was once again looking over our collective shoulders... it was indeed fortunate that the "pirates" never discovered that the small island could have been bought for £20, otherwise the story might have been different!

Purchase of the small island made the in-filling of the old (diverted) river bed a distinct possibility. This meant that Club property could be consolidated by linking Bridge Isle with the small isle. But there was not much point in doing that if the old enemy could not be removed, and so it was decided that the time had come to take strong action against those who tried to take advantage of the Club's property and facilities. An ultimatum was issued: "Join the Club or remove your boat/wreck from ICC property".

After the war

When the war ended there was an immediate upsurge of interest in boats. Club membership increased rapidly again and, having learned a lesson from the 1939 legal proceedings, it was decided that action must be taken to gain complete control of the island. This was a long, drawn-out exercise, because the boundaries of various pieces of land were not clearly defined. Ordinance survey maps were either non-existent or long out of print, and it took more than two years to establish the whereabouts of all the owners.

In August 1949 the Club offered £100 for the portion of land owned by Blythswood Estates. This offer was accepted, but the deal was not completed until February 1950 because the Club's lawyer was at the same time negotiating the purchase of other land the Club wanted to control. By April 1950 an "agreement in principle" had been reached: the Club was to purchase from Paisley Burgh Council all of the remaining original island, with the exception of the bridge-keeper's house and garden.

Rebuilding for the future

By October 1950 the legal formalities had been completed and a planning committee had been formed to put forward proposals covering the extension and realignment of the transverse. After much discussion it was agreed that the slipway should be completely re-built, the south traverse re-aligned and extended as far as the fence, the north traverse extended to the dinghy slipway, and the winch provided with a new anchorage – a new motor winch with a Ford Model T engine had been installed in 1949, but it was felt that its base should be strengthened to match the proposed new slip.

Of course, the Club jumped at the opportunity to obtain this lease. It not only "legalised" reclamation already carried out, it gave the Club control over the foreshore to the low water mark ordinary springs – meaning that no-one could use the beach without permission. It also meant that, within carefully defined limits, the in-filling programme could continue and Club property could be further improved. An important clause in the lease... meant that the then newly built clubhouse would not have to be moved!

A modern cruising club

And so the work went on. The Model T winch engine was replaced with a Gardner diesel. The slipway was once more extended. Mains electricity was installed with 110v plug points along the traverse. A workshop was built, and fitted with vices, a power drill, a grinding machine and welding gear. The clubhouse was extended to provide better kitchen and toilet facilities... and eventually a bar. And virtually all of this work was done by club members who seem ever willing to devote time and labour to the well-being of the Inchinnan Cruising Club.

A unique organisation? Certainly. Without a shadow of a doubt – in yachting and boating circles it has no equals. We can look forward with confidence to our next 75 years.