

At the start of the 2018 season, DBSC found itself in a challenging situation. The near-hurricane of early March had swept away the plinth of the Hut on the West Pier and *MacLir's* port-side engine was out of action because of gearbox failure.

In consequence, racing from the Hut was cancelled for three weeks and, on Saturdays, while the gear-box was being repaired, the Blue and Red Fleets raced together from *MacLir* instead of racing separately. The Hut was fully operational by the second week in June and with luck its problem should not happen again.

The *MacLir* situation is more complex. The vessel was not new when we acquired her in 2000 and since then, with the passage of time, more and more money has had to be spent in keeping her in working condition.

This is not to under-rate the vessel's capabilities. It has stood up well to all sorts of weather conditions, week in, week out, year after year and still has lot going for her. But in less robust conditions and not at a frequency DBSC that uses its committee boats.

Nor should we forget the effect *MacLir* has had on the quality of the Club's racing. Up to 2001 most keelboat s raced from the Hut. Members were quite happy with that;, in fact, a survey in 2000 revealed that up to 83% of members were satisfied with the traditional West Pier starts – although, to be sure, another 64% were prepared to pay more for a higher level of race management,.

Purchase of *MacLir* ensued in 2000, followed in 2012 by delivery of a second committee boat, the totally refurbished former shell-fishing vessel, *Freebird*.

The result of all this is that DBSC members now have at their disposal what visiting international race officers have described as the best race management facilities in Europe. Racing for many

classes, in consequence, is of a standard you would expect at international championships. Two of our race officers, indeed, have officiated at the Olympics.. which is a measure of the quality of race management which DBSC members can expect at their regular Thursday and Saturday races.

But – and this is a big but - all this comes at a price. In the not too distant future members may be faced with an unpleasant choice: paying for the replacement of *MacLir* or returning to an earlier race management format.

Members can be assured that sponsorship options, have been and always will always be actively pursued, but our experience has been that major sponsorship such as we enjoyed in the past is now very difficult to come by. (In this respect, we are extremely grateful to Messrs. Sherry Fitzgerald and others for their generous support over the last few years).

I should add that *MacLir's* acquisition was funded by the generous sponsorship of Dublin Port and an equally generous subvention from the Sports Council. The *Freebird*, on the other hand, was entirely paid for by the Club's surplus funds generated during the boom years. Currently there is no such surplus - this year's accounts show a deficit.

#### **Boat Fees and subscriptions:**

This year boat entries and subscriptions amounted to 314 and 1235, compared to 317 and 1217 respectively in 2017. Boat and subscription income has been hovering at this level for some time. Despite the economic upturn, DBSC (and, it seems, sailing in general) shows no sign of returning to the peaks of the halcyon days when our boat entries topped 400 and membership 1700.

#### **Turnouts:**

Nor have turnouts for our regular Thursday and Saturday races returned either to those of the boom period. But they still remain at levels most

organisers of major regattas and events can hardly dream of. During 2018 Thursday turnouts averaged 127 boats and those of Saturdays, 94 boats. This – for Thursdays - approximated to 55% of the keelboat fleet entered and for Saturdays 42%.

Of some interest are the number of boats that compete in the different racing areas. On Thursdays an average of 63 Blue fleet boats race from *MacLir* and 57 boats from the *Freebird*. On Saturdays an average of 27 Green fleet boats raced from the *Freebird* and averages of 36 and 30 blue and red fleet boats started from either the Hut or *MacLir*. Given the current pressures on the Club's finances, the resources devoted to Saturday racing will no doubt merit a review by the incoming committee.

### **Race Management**

The Club's key resource, to be sure, has to be its panel of race officers. It's not everyone whose qualities lend themselves to this demanding role – the ability to think on your feet when unexpected situations emerge, a detailed knowledge of the extraordinary complex rules of sailing, insight into the Bay's variable (and sometimes vexatious) wind pattern the characteristics of the club's various fleets - not to mention supervisory skills of a high order. Our only complaint is that we haven't got enough of these paragons - there was an occasion towards the end of the season, when Ann Kirwan, our Rear Commodore, who has been in charge of the roster, was put to the pin of her collar to fill the various slots.

Ann is now moving up to Vice-Commodore rank and will be succeeded, I am glad to announce, by Eddie Totterdell. Eddie, as most people know, is a DBSC race officer of considerable experience and distinction. I am glad that the Club will have the benefit of his knowledge and expertise in overseeing and further developing this important activity in partnership with our Chief Race Officer, Jack Roy.

### **Results:**

The Club's results software, YR3, which has been serving DBSC members since the mid-eighties of the last century, was succeeded this year by Colin McMullen's update, Raceview.

It was originally planned to have the new system fully operational by the start of the season. Though much progress was made, the target was not reached for a variety of reasons. Colin, in the circumstances, found it convenient to take over the processing of the 2018 results himself while at the same time continuing to develop the system in the light of his own on-going operational experience.

It was not a totally novel approach to producing a software programme - something similar transpired during the development of YR3 - but it will have the merit of ultimately presenting us with a more practical and satisfactory programme than was originally projected.

One immediate benefit was better operator-committee-boat links and a consequent reduction in the number of queries from competitors. I am particularly grateful to the various record-keepers who co-operated fully and enthusiastically with the new approach. And, of course, to Colin himself who will continue to work on the programme over the winter months.

### **Cancellations**

The beautiful balmy weather during the summer of 2018 led, not unexpectedly, to the reduction of race cancellations. There was only one Saturday's racing lost due to excess wind and just two Thursdays. On the other hand, two Thursdays racing and one Saturday's days' racing were lost because of no wind whatever.

### **Protests**

The number of protests this year was much reduced compared to other years perhaps because the good weather put everyone in good humour or else, as our Hon. Protest secretary, Ray Duggan surmises (no doubt unfairly) Dublin Bay sailors are beginning to learn the rules. Time was when

up the Protest Committee had to deal with up to forty protests. This year they amounted to little more than half a dozen.

Ray is retiring this year as Protest Secretary and we thank him for the long hours he spent sorting out disputes between competitors. Also the members who served on the protest committee. Ray will be succeeded by Michael Tyrrell, who besides being a long-time DBSC sailor, is an experienced race officer.

### **The Harbour Board**

As members are no doubt aware, the Harbour Board is no more, its functions and assets/liabilities having been transferred to the Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Co. Council. .

There has long been a view, going back even beyond the last century, that a municipal authority is not the appropriate body to manage marine undertakings such as Dun Laoghaire Harbour. It was argued that its total focus and mind-set are directed elsewhere, to road infrastructure, housing, sewage networks etc. and not to totally different issues as marine engineering and shipping regulation.

That said, and having no desire to stir up the old argument; we are glad that the ownership issue has been resolved. We wish the Council well with its new responsibilities and look forward – in partnership with other harbour users- to a fruitful and prosperous future for Dun Laoghaire harbour.

We also wish to express our good wishes to the management and officers of the outgoing harbour board. DBSC has always maintained cordial relations with the Dun Laoghaire harbour management and staffs and we wish them all well in the future.

### **Gratitude**

This being my last year as Commodore, I must on this occasion make special mention of people who have been at my side over the years.

Firstly, there are the various flag-officers and committee members who to an extent not suspected by the generality of the membership have devoted an extraordinary amount of their free time to DBSC's affairs. We are all deeply in their debt.

I should mention particularly Joe Hickey, who leaves the committee at the AGM, after nine years dedicated service to DBSC. Joe's particular sphere of interest has been the Club's dinghy programme and we valued highly the commitment he brought to this activity. Also leaving us (for business reasons) is Helen McCabe, who has been invaluable on the committee and in coordinating the Green Fleet volunteer team.

Then there are volunteers who, whatever the weather and personal inconvenience, have manned the West Pier hut and Club's committee vessels. I must remember, too, the people who actually kept the boats operating: Ian Melden who solved many a knotty engine problem, sometimes actually drove the boat during races and yet found time to crew aboard the prize-winning 31.7 *Prospect*.

Among the drivers, there is also Brendan Dalton, who on one occasion this year alerted us to an engine problem that might otherwise have cost us a lot of money. Another regular, Jeff Brownlee, is away at present: he is in South Africa, working on the Mellon charity project, Stephen Wynne, apart from his onerous lifeboat responsibilities, also finds time to drive *MacLir* on Saturdays.

I should not forget, either, Fintan Cairns, race officer Henry Leonard and the teams of the Turkey Shoot and Spring Chicken series, who provide most enjoyable, popular winter sailing and convivial après-sail jollification.

I thank, also, the management and staffs of the waterfront Clubs, Irish Sailing and the harbour masters of Dun Laoghaire harbour, Captains Simon Coate and Tim Ryan as well as Dublin Port Harbour Master, Captain Michael McKenna.

Finally, some special people. During my period of office, Hon. Treasurers Ian Mathews and later Fleming kept us firmly on the path of financial rectitude and never let us stray from strict accounting practice.

Finally, and most importantly, we say good bye to Donal O' Sullivan, our ever hard-working Hon. Secretary, who has served in this capacity on the Dublin Bay Sailing Club Committee for all of the last twenty seven years.

Indeed even before this, Donal held the position of Protest Secretary and with two terms on the Committee gave us the best part of forty years of invaluable service to Dublin Bay sailing - shaping the format and keeping the aims and traditions of the Club foremost in members' minds.

We are indeed indebted to Donal for his wisdom and skill in navigating the complexities and pitfalls encountered each week during the sailing season and beyond.

Donal will be fulfilling a new roll, off Committee, that of archivist and historian to DBSC and we look forward to his contributions well into the future.

*Chris Moore,*  
**Commodore**