

EPILOGUE

'Change is the law of life and those who look only to the past or present
are certain to miss the future.'¹

Matt Ingham's Fiftieth Anniversary speech with its four themes and a question now exercises the minds of the squadron committee and its membership. The issues facing the club are no different to those that face other clubs. What is the ideal number of members? How will increasing the membership alter the dynamic of the club? How to continue to support and provide for the needs of its current membership? How to entice new members, firstly to join, and then to become active participants? And how to keep costs reasonable yet continue to develop the club's resources in these financially difficult times?

The Newhaven Yacht Squadron is also part of the wider Bass Coast and Western Port community and, as such, is affected by the same issues that concern these communities. This area is experiencing massive development so 'perhaps it is time for a support group to be formed for the entire Island to address our lack of infrastructure to cope with a very evident expansion on the island.'² With an increasing population – both resident and visiting – stresses on current resources both on land and sea are obvious. Locals wait until the visitors go home before going out fishing. 'We will let all the tourists go home and get some space between the boats out here.'³ The Phillip Island Bridge is a source of irritation to anyone who routinely tries to get on or off the island during periods of high activity. Its single lane access frequently has traffic backed up to Anderson or back to Cowes. Even the bridge's pedestrian walkway can no longer cope with the traffic on it according to local Herb Fowler. 'Well, if there's a scooter going up from this side and one comes from the other side, one has to go back. Of course, (for the pedestrians) they haven't got to build a total bridge. They only have to put new pylons out – say 25 ft – and join that to the existing bridge.'⁴ And locals are certainly not short of ideas to fix the traffic problems such as building a tunnel to join San Remo to Newhaven. The squadron would need to be part of such a group and that would require some of its membership to volunteer to represent the squadron's interests and be actively involved in any ensuing discussions.

An important issue that looms is the expiry of the squadron's lease in 2018. In previous years, clubs had faced the prospect of having foreshore rates and club rates escalate with the additional fear of having their property taken over by the state and then leased back to individual boat owners without any recompense to the club and with all future earnings returning to the state rather than the club. In the past, these issues were dealt with by a united group of clubs who argued strongly that continued private ownership of these properties returned more to the local community and, therefore, the state. Clubs such as Newhaven Yacht Squadron, run by people who had the interests of the club, and the community, at heart ensured that both the club and the community would flourish and that pride would be fostered in the area in a way that a distant bureaucracy could never hope to replicate. 'We are providing a service that is saving them a fortune. We have one hundred and eighty-eight boats here. If we didn't exist that would be one hundred and eighty eight people who want to use the public ramp and other facilities. There would be a demand for

improved facilities. We are providing a service and we are providing training and water safety and do our own rescues.’⁵

The squadron also needs to determine its core business in the twenty-first century and not be tied to the past. ‘One of the issues as far as having off-the-beach regattas is the lack of parking facilities. Since they have developed the boat ramp that has put a lot of pressure on parking here. Also, the demographic who is joining are people in their 50s to 60s and 70s and should we be ignoring them and looking for a market that is not there and we can’t cater for?’⁶ New members are introducing their grandchildren to the club but getting these children to experience sailing, boating and fishing may prove difficult. ‘I had lunch here yesterday and there were a couple of kids just playing on the computers for the hour and half that I was there and I was thinking “What a beautiful day and they are sitting here wasting it.”’⁷

Protecting and encouraging biodiversity is fundamental to the long-term protection of ecological and social needs of any community and this is an issue that Westernport Water and Bass Coast Shire are promoting. It is one that is not foreign to the squadron’s own beliefs and has been promoted and supported by its committee and by the actions of its members. The squadron also respects the need to protect and enhance public utilities and has previously involved itself with helping to upgrade and enhance the public access areas around the clubhouse and marina. It has made its own facilities available to community and council groups at no charge to any of those accessing the club’s assets. The squadron has actively invited the community into its club in particular on Open Days. Members have made themselves and their boats and yachts available to those interested visitors so that they could experience a different side of Western Port. ‘Visitor Rhonda Barnett said that to see San Remo, the bridge and Phillip Island from the water was just fantastic. “It gives you a very different perspective,” she added.’⁸ These community event days have also lured back descendants of previous members such as Corrina Miller, who brought her three children to see the club where their great grandfather George Taylor had been a commodore. Hopefully, such visits by members of the public will result in a group of people with varied interests and of varied age groups wishing to join up and actively participate in the running of the club.

As always in clubs, it is the work of the few that benefits the whole membership and the Newhaven Yacht Squadron is no different. ‘The secretary has got about twenty hours of unpaid work a week. Now, if we get bigger that just increases that work. Then if we go down the stage where we get paid employees then suddenly your fees go up, we lose a few members and that means your base cost will need to go up and so on. You would certainly be going away from what the original concept was – having a boating experience that is affordable.’⁹ From the very start of the squadron, members – both local and visiting – have volunteered their time and expertise and the club has grown in strength and in the amenities it has been able to offer. Newhaven Yacht Squadron is now an integral and well-respected part of the Phillip Island community and the Western Port sailing fraternity. The future of the club depends on emulating the essence of the deeds of the past and on adapting to the changes that will occur in the future.

If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always got.¹⁰

Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we've been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.¹¹

¹ John F Kennedy, Frankfurt, 25 June 1963

² Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser, 16 January 2013

³ Butch Legge interview with Wanda Stelmach, March 2010

⁴ Herb and Janet Fowler interview with Wanda Stelmach, April 2012

⁵ Commodore Noel Street interview with Wanda Stelmach, March 2012

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser, 16 January 2013

⁹ Commodore Noel Street interview with Wanda Stelmach, March 2012

¹⁰ James P Lewis, *Working Together: 12 Principles for Achieving Excellence in Managing Projects, Teams and Organisations*

¹¹ Barack Obama, Senator, Super Tuesday, February 2008