

Captain's report to members - November 2024 AGM

It was with great regret that in September, for health reasons and on the advice of my consultant and family, I resigned as Captain of ECYD and other stressful appointments. It was a matter of 'today, not tomorrow'.

Thank you and a welcome to all those who have taken the time and trouble to join us here at Littleton and welcome to those who join us by Zoom. Last year we were, in retrospect, too ambitious in trying to involve those on-line and also simultaneously show a presentation. We had not appreciated the poor local Wi-Fi. We have taken that into account this year and also done a trial run and expect a smoother on-line experience.

My sincere thanks to your committee who picked up the inevitable burden, in particular our club treasurer John Figgures. Few members will have any idea of how much he has over so many years done for the club and helping to maintain Freyja. His finger prints are all over her, as are those of the brilliant Yacht Husbands we have had and the small band who have helped with maintenance since we purchased Freyja in 2005.

ECYD had been in the practice of replacing our yachts every 5 years and purchasing a quality, true blue-water cruising yacht was seen as a stretch. But the club recognised that because of the cost it would be 8 or even 10 years before we would replace her. We have looked, but nothing has come near. Instead we have upgraded her. Bow thruster, sails, ovens, new electronics; to mention just a few items. And recently a cockpit canopy.

In so many ways Freyja is nearly as good as she was 19 years ago.

Last year ECYD faced being dissolved for the lack of a full committee, in particular a yacht husband.

Happily that was averted, though the sudden resignation of the new yacht husband in early spring set us back on our heels. Thanks to a very small group of members Freyja's winter maintenance was completed and launched, though it meant we lost most of the early plans we had for experience and skills courses.

In May Freyja set off for the Baltic, starting the run across the North Sea from Lowestoft to Den Helder, Heligoland, transiting the Kiel Canal to Rendsburg.

Follow on crews spent time exploring the Danish Islands and the north-western coast of Germany.

We would have liked to have kept Freyja longer in the Baltic, but in the absence of a strong take-up of charter slots, and rather than incur marina charges while lying unused, we decided to shorten Baltic cruises and bring her back to the UK early. Our thanks to the skippers who amended their plans accordingly. Can I stress how important it is that members ensure that they insure that their holiday insurances cover 'enforced change of plans'. Most do, but you do need to have holiday insurance.

Homeward bound saw Freyja back through the Kiel Canal, the Frisian Islands to a handover at Enkhuisen. On the way to Amsterdam and the so convenient and now much improved Sixhaven marina, Freyja visited Lelystad to visit the replica sailing ship Batavia and then Muiden at the southern end of the Markermeer. Probably a first for ECYD. Then home from IJmuiden, off-shore to Breskens and the overnight run to Ipswich.

Once home members explored the near waters off Harwich, Bradwell and the Walton Backwaters being favourites.

Early August saw a 10-day dash across the North Sea to Ijmuiden, Amsterdam, Lemmer, Den Helder and home via Lowestoft.

Followed soon after with Freyja returning to St Katherine's in the Pool of London where the crew stayed for a couple of days and saw The Mousetrap.

Season ended with cruises to Lowestoft, Titchmarsh and Bradwell. Including a short cruise to Woodbridge, crossing the very tricky Knoll Bar at the entrance to the River Deben.

Taken in the round it has been a fairly successful season, though there were charter slots unfilled.

Next year remains an open question: where do members wish to sail, and in particular CSSA's Approved Skippers?

Depending on what happens at the 2024 AGM today we will have a sailing programme to put to members early in 2025. While the Baltic has been an understandably favourite cruising area for ECYD, southern England, the Channel Islands and the French coast and even further south to Spain are well-known waters to us.

ECYD must be a member's club, attracting new members. Our Crew Bureau has been helpful in placing those without a regular berth and some skippers have been enormously generous in offering berths to them.

May I take this opportunity of reminding all ECYD and CSSA skippers that the club welcomes Junior Members to sail with us. So please bring the family. Few if any of our cruises are just for ruffty-tuffy, salties. We even have two child-size lifejackets available.

I wish to thank the 2024 committee for what they have done this past year to keep ECYD afloat. With a special thanks to those who have done to keep Freya in such good condition and responded to curing the few problems any sailing yacht experiences in any season.

Although I shall not be able to sail on board Freyja again I am happy to continue helping where I can. Looking after and correcting charts and maintaining the now more up-to-date membership list. Until I can pass them on. Both are simple, no more than an hour a month!

Finally, as I look back over more than 20 years of sailing with ECYD, I want to acknowledge the role of our original founders of the club. They 'owned' both the club and our early yachts, but reached out and drew in so many to join them. Sadly that no longer seems the case. Some would say we are now just a 'charter club'. I hope that will change and I was so pleased to see new names on charter documents. It's up to you, past and present members if ECYD is to persist. All of us have a role to play.

I wish you all fair sailing and look forward to hearing of your adventures.

Jeff Herschel
November 2024