



WIVENHOE SAILING CLUB NEWSLETTER



Christmas 2020

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WIVGIGS AND WSC

We are very pleased to welcome Wivgigs members into the club. In January of 2021 all Wivgigs Rowers will become full WSC members and will continue to operate their Gig 'Audacity' from the New Hard. Their Joint Captain, Katie Hadgraft, has written an introductory letter to the Club which is reproduced below.

Annual General Meeting

Unfortunately, 2020s' AGM in March was postponed and an 'on-line' AGM was conducted in September. Although this was deemed successful from the number of votes received, many members felt that there were areas where improvements could have been made. Your General Committee is now considering ways of holding next year's AGM in March. It is likely to be a very simple AGM with only the Club's Accounts and Officer nominations tabled. Your General Committee will keep members informed should the situation change.

A Letter from the Commodore

This year has been very hard on all of us, not least those who have had to self-isolate and have been unable to visit the club on the few times it has been open.

We have had to cancel many of our social events including the Annual Dinner and the popular Row and Ramble and with uncertain times ahead we have made no plans to carry out next year's social events until Government restrictions allow.

However, with the help of our many dedicated volunteers we have managed to get on the water a few times with the dinghies and even had the bar open on occasions. Thanks go to our new Vice Commodore, Julie-Anne White and husband Nick for all the help and enthusiasm they have given to keeping the waterborne activities running. Thanks also to Dave Souch for his indefatigable work on the maintenance of the club boats, to Linda, Kenny, Fiona (our Club Secretary) and Derek for providing safety boat support whatever the weather, to Carole, Myrna and Midge for keeping us provisioned and to all the members who gave up their time to take part in the Hard Working Parties and slipway cleaning. Mention must also go to Derek Greenham, Dave Matthews and Alan Tyne who are now managing Clubhouse maintenance. And finally, to Eric Strudwick, our former Hon Secretary, for all his support through these difficult times in helping the new General Committee get going. There are other many members who have also helped and our thanks go out to all.

Wishing members a Merry Christmas and a Happy, Healthy and Active New Year on the water and elsewhere.

Chris Wood. Commodore WSC



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Wivenhoe One Design News

It has been a successful year despite the pandemic with 6 boats afloat which have enjoyed some close racing and social sails.

The W.O.D Owners would like to welcome Dave Souch as the new owner of Osprey, no.19. Dave is doing a winter refit on Osprey and hopes to get her launched by Easter to rejoin the rest of the fleet at WSC. All being well we should have 10 boats afloat in 2021 including Ranger no.3 who hasn't launched for several years. We currently have 2 boats for sale, Peewit no.7 and Puffin no.8. Contact the WOD Association for more information at wivenhoeonedesign@gmail.com

Chiquita no.15 is currently undergoing a full rebuild in Brightlingsea after being rescued from Ipswich in 2015.

The Association Currently owns Dorothy no.9 which is available for members to hire for £10 per use to cover maintenance costs.

WSC Sailing news

It has been a successful season despite the restrictions the pandemic has brought on us, the members have enjoyed lots of sailing in both races and social sails. A big thank you to everyone who has volunteered for Safety Boat and Race Officer duties. Racing kicks off again in January with the Frostbite series for the hardy sailors.

Trophy Winners

May Mug - Adrian Green: Noname,
Sykes Trophy - Rob Maloney: Elise
Rat Race Trophy - Adrian Green: Noname
Mick Goody Trophy - Nigel Cook, Alcyone
Bostock Cup - Rob Maloney, Elise
Scaly Capstan - Adrian Green, Nonamee
Sainty Memorial Cup - Adrian Green, Nonamee
WOD Cup - Nigel Cook, Alcyone
Thelma Worsp Plate - Adrian Green, Nonamee
Winter Series Cup 2019 - Nigel Cook, Alcyone
FrostBite Cup - Nigel Cook, Voyager
Winter Series 2020 - Steve Nesbitt - Thunder.



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A Letter from Wivgigs

Why not try out rowing with WivGigs?

WivGigs would love to introduce any WSC members who'd like to try out gig rowing to our much-loved gig Audacity.

We would be very happy to run a complimentary Come and Try session for any WSC member who'd like to see if rowing would help them get onto the water when sailing is not an option. No previous rowing experience is necessary and it's easier than you might think to start. We have safe and easy access to the water via the WSC Hard and we'll teach you everything you need to know once you are in the boat.

If you have any questions, or would like to book a slot, just get in touch with us via our email address - wivgigs@ymail.com - and we'll arrange a suitable day and time depending on crew, tides and the variable Wivenhoe weather of course. We're out every weekend and often during the week.

We're looking forward to sharing our love of gig rowing and Audacity with you!

Katie Hadgraft. Wivgigs Joint Captain



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Obituaries

Sadly we lost some of our members this year:

Dave Peck joined the club 10 years or so ago and was a very supportive member of the lifting group. Dave was a very talented self-taught artist and we have one of his paintings hanging in the top deck. He was an enthusiastic member of the Sunday lunchtime senior members tipple and talk group!

Ian Hunter was a long-time member of the club and an active member of the Gilbert and Sullivan Society in Wivenhoe.

Dennis Ilsley remembered 10th January 1926 - 17th July 2020



Dennis was born in Acton West London in 1926. The outbreak of war interrupted his secondary education and he joined the Royal Navy in 1943 and was assigned to the Royal Naval Patrol Service, otherwise known as 'Churchill's Pirates' or Harry Tate's Navy. This was a very special service indeed, with its own rules, regulations and exclusive 'Silver Badge', which Dennis always wore proudly in later years. Its fleet consisted of hundreds of requisitioned trawlers, whalers, drifters, paddle steamers, yachts and tugs. Dennis served aboard 70 foot Fairmile motorboats on minesweeping duties around the UK coastline, and took part in 'Operation Taxi' as part of a decoy D-Day invasion fleet.

Dennis married Frances in 1947 when he was demobbed. This December they would have been celebrating their 73rd Wedding Anniversary! Dennis and Frances retired in 1988 and left West London to live in Wivenhoe. They very soon joined Wivenhoe Sailing Club and enjoyed many years of sailing, socialising and volunteering at the club. They could always be relied upon to be first on the dance floor to get the evening going at an event.

Dennis enjoyed pottering on the Colne in his little Lysander 'Sea Holly' and introduced all the Grandchildren to the river and sailing. He particularly enjoyed the yearly Ostend Rallies. Weeks spent at sea in the Navy had blessed him with a great constitution, he spent much time in the galley cooking up bacon sandwiches and brewing endless cups of tea on many a North Sea crossing.

Dennis was great fun to be with, and always the life and soul of the Ostend parties. His exploits are fondly remembered by many, particularly his capacity for a whiskey or two and his singing and dancing on tables!

Dennis was a wise, kind and generous man with an easy and charming manner, and never lost for words, he could talk on any subject and always had a compliment or comment for the ladies, and gents alike, said with a big twinkle in his eye.



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The Black-headed Gulls of Rat Island

Where have they gone? Those of us lucky enough to have launched our boats and sailed off down the river this past year might well have noticed the strange silence and almost complete absence of Black-headed gulls on and over Rat Island. A few Herring and Greater-blacked gulls had possibly nested on the highest lumps of the island?

It is a really good job that the Black-headed gulls are long lived birds, some known to be 28+years old! Most of the Black-headed gulls seen on the main river nearby were adult birds with just a few juvenile birds amongst them. This was the result of some breeding success on the nearby marshes. In the 1980's when I used to assist Dr Simon Cox(author of the New Guide to the Birds of Essex)ring the young birds , there were 5000 pairs nesting on the island and you had to take great care not to tread on the well camouflaged nests. It is interesting to note that there were virtually no breeding successes in the Walton Backwaters this year where some 4000+ Black-headed gulls bred in the past!

What is a possible reason? There used to be what were called 'bird tides' most years in the past when the spring tides in late May/June were slightly lower than the usual spring tides for a variety of reasons and did not cover Rat Island. This allowed the birds to nest successfully. Such tides seem to have gone in recent years. We now seem to have many more big tides!

There are many more predators around and more disturbance. Marsh harriers (Up to 33 have been counted wintering on the Langenhoe marshes)and Peregrine falcons hunting or flying over the island cause great disturbance, as do foxes on nearby sea walls.

And human disturbance! Waiting on the island for your turn to ski etc. Waves from power boats drown nestlings and young birds when they can't fly and become trapped under the sea-purslane and shrubby sea- blite that cover the island. Letting a dog go ashore there doesn't help! Maybe other factors such as essential parts of a chick's diet have disappeared. Nobody can say for certain. Will they nest there again?

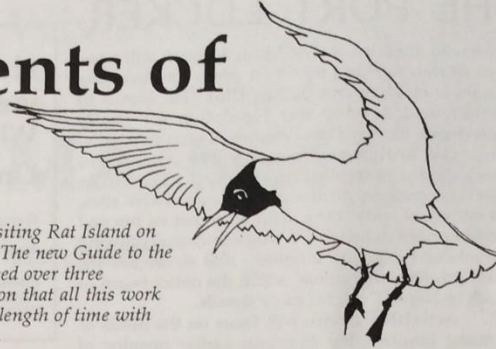
Tim Denham



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The residents of Rat Island



For over twenty years Tim Denham has been visiting Rat Island on our River Colne with Dr Simon Cox, author of 'The new Guide to the Birds of Essex'. During this time they have ringed over three thousand Black-headed gull chicks. The realisation that all this work by a member of WSC has been going on for this length of time with scarcely any of us aware of it, is quite surprising.

In this article Tim tells us something about the bird we cannot go down the river without seeing, yet of which most of us remain almost totally oblivious. Meet 'Larus Ridibundus' - the Black headed gull.

Measured from from the tail to the tip of its bill the Black-headed gull is 14.5 inches (35 cm). In summer it has a chocolate hood which it uses in display - lowered and thrust forward it signals aggression, held up and turned away it offers surrender. In many parts of Britain it is the commonest gull, yet the prefix 'common' belongs to another gull. Its wings are silver grey with black-tipped white flight feathers. These are the big primary wing feathers - used by some for tickling!! Its beak, legs and feet are blood red. There is a black terminal band on the white tail of immature birds. It is the only gull to show white leading edges to the outer wing feathers in all plumage. All species of young gulls have flecked brown backs and wings when juvenile and the bigger birds take several years to lose them.

Black-headed gulls are sociable birds, spending their entire life in large groups. They are the least 'sea-minded' of all the gulls for although they frequent estuaries and coasts, they follow the rivers back inland to fields and farms far from the coast. They have developed an excellent ability to live near man. They also get on very well with other birds. They may be seen in large numbers with rooks and lapwings and with parties of other gulls and wading birds. Some say they appear more at home in the town park than flying over the open sea.

We know from coloured rings on the birds' legs that the birds feed in winter in the same place every day.

The Black-headed gull can be seen in Iceland and right across temperate Europe, Russia and Siberia. It breeds mostly in the North and West of Britain and Ireland in colonies of up to 20,000 birds! Colonies give protection and all gulls in the colony are able to take advantage of local food supplies.

There are strong colonies of Black-headed gulls in East Anglia and a reference to birds breeding on Pewit Island in the Backwaters in 1662.

Before 1880 Black-headed gulls were only seen around the Thames estuary but from that year, because of hard winters, they started to move up river around docks, parks and embankments and by the end

of the century were regularly seen all along the Thames and its tributaries. The bird became widespread in the early 1900's and by 1917 they were catching bread thrown to them from a hotel window! Large winter roosts grew up on reservoirs and a breeding colony was discovered on a London sewage farm.

In 1901 four colonies in Essex were known, including that on Rat Island. The colonies totalled 200 pairs. In 1938, six colonies totalled 1,600 pairs. In 1958, seven colonies totalled 4,500 pairs. In 1973, nine colonies totalled 6,500 pairs. Rat Island's population increased from 2,000 pairs in the 1960's to a peak of 5,000+ pairs in the 1980's. There has been a slight fall recently.

The Black-headed gull's breeding site is usually close to the water, just above high water mark. The nest is a collection of sticks, grass, reeds and sedges. If the ground is damp, the nest can be big. A clutch of 2-3 eggs is laid towards the end of April. In rare cases 4 eggs have been recorded. Considerable variation in colour and markings is common. The eggs are incubated by both members of the pair for 22-24 days. There is only one laying so big spring tides can be a disaster. It's a good job they are long-lived birds.

They feed on fish, worms, carrion, beetles, dragon flies, snails and seeds. When ants are swarming they attempt to catch these. They will also rob other feeding birds. Post breeding dispersal takes place with our breeding birds to various parts of the country where they are joined by a huge Autumn influx of continentals from as far as Czechoslovakia and Russia. Some wise Rat Island birds winter in the South of Spain. One summered in Norway!

As a world species the black-headed gull is not a common bird - unlike the Mallard duck!

As you will have gathered, Tim is an enthusiastic nature watcher. He has some fascinating, more detailed, statistics of his and Dr Cox's observations and will be happy to talk with anyone who would like more information.