

Sail-World.com News

2006 Inter-Club Commodore's Forum

17 Nations at second Inter-Club Commodores' Forum

2:31 PM Mon 29 May 2006



'Commodores, Flag Officers, flags, and lions at the opening of the 2nd Inter-Club Commodores' Forum' [Guy Nowell ©](#)

Last Saturday 27 May the flags of 17 nations were raised at the Royal Hong Kong Yacht club to mark the opening of the 2nd Inter-Club Commodores' Forum.

The Forum has attracted 82 participants, including Commodores, Flag Officers and General Managers from 27 clubs, hailing from 18 countries. The ICS was inaugurated last year by the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club.

Subjects under discussion include 'Strengthening International Ties', 'Sailing and its Role in the Community' and 'Sail Training and Youth Programmes'.



Commodore Inge Strompf-Jepsen, RHKYC - [Guy Nowell ©](#)

On Sunday the Forum delegates raced for the first Commodores' Cup – in Etchells, and in the worst downpour since, well, last weekend! The Royal Danish Yacht Club breezed home winners, and the photographer gave up because of

poor visibility!



Commodores' Cup 2006 - the wettest sailing in Hong Kong since last weekend! - [Guy Nowell ©](#)

Panel discussion today and the Forum will close this evening with a Gala

Dinner at the RHKYC.

Sail-World Asia will be providing a full round-up of events, both formal and social, at the close of the Forum.

Participating Clubs:

Asia

Aberdeen Boat Club - HK

Hebe Haven Yacht Club - HK

Kinabalu Yacht Club, Sabah, Malaysia

Manila Yacht Club, Philippines

Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club - HK

Royal Selangor Yacht Club - Malaysia

Royal Veruna Yacht Club - Thailand
 Shanghai Boat & Yacht Club, China
 Yacht Club of Puerto Galera, Inc - Philippines

United Kingdom
 Madoc Yacht Club - UK
 Royal Naval Club & Royal Albert YC - UK
 Royal Yacht Squadron - UK

Europe
 Norddeutscher Regatta Verein, Germany
 Royal Danish Yacht Club - Denmark
 Royal Norweigan Yacht Club - Norway
 Societe Nautique de Marseille, France
 Yacht Club de Monaco - Monaco

Australasia
 Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club - Australia
 Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron - New Zealand
 Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron - Australia
 Southport Yacht Club - Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia

USA & Canada
 Burrard Yacht Club - Canada
 Marianas Yacht Club, Guam
 Royal Vancouver Yacht Club - Canada
 Seattle Yacht Club - USA
 West Vancouver Yacht Club - Canada

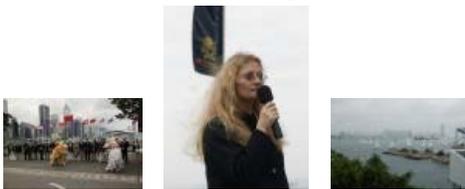
Africa
 Royal Natal Yacht Club, South Africa

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Sail-World.com News

2006 Inter-Club Commodore's Forum

2nd Inter-Club Commodores' Forum

9:10 AM Fri 2 Jun 2006 GMT



'Sir Nigel Southward, Vice Commodore RYS' [Guy Nowell ©](#)

Vic Locke, Santi Kanchanabandhu, Olivier Decamps, Li Quanhai and Heinz Rautenberg.

Opening the session was Vice-Commodore of the Royal Yacht Squadron, Sir Nigel Southward, who

From 27-30 May 2006 the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club hosted the 2nd Inter-Club Commodores' Forum. Inaugurated by the Royal Vancouver YC last year, the Forum provides an opportunity for Yacht Club Commodores and Flag Officers to meet and exchange information and ideas on topics of mutual interest.

The Forum opened with a flag-raising ceremony and traditional Chinese lion dance on the evening of Saturday 27 May, and continued on Sunday with the inaugural Commodores' forum Cup, raced on Hong Kong harbour in Etchells 22s (see separate story).

The programme for Monday and Tuesday consisted of two days of panel discussions, which brought together Commodores from Europe, North America, Australasia, South Africa and Asia.

The first panel discussion was on 'Strengthening International Ties'. Moderator for the session was Fred Kinmonth and the six speakers presenting were Sir Nigel Southward, Lowell Chang,

introduced the RYS's most famous regatta, Cowes Week. Sir Nigel explained how this regatta is a co-operative effort between 10 member Clubs in Cowes. Run from a purpose-built regatta centre that provides a first class venue, this event has over 1,000 boats racing in 37 classes. But this event is not just about racing: it is a huge and successful festival, and Cowes (which is only a small town) hosts over 8,500 competitors and 10,000 spectators for the week-long regatta.

'This is one of the largest participation sporting events in the world, and it generates a great deal of media interest with over 500 accredited media at the event. The benefits to the current sponsor, Skandia, are unquestionable, and it generates a great deal of income for the local economy.' Sir Nigel concluded 'sailing has over the past few years had a significantly higher profile in the media. All Clubs will benefit from this renewed popularity, and we commended the RHKYC for having the foresight to hold this Forum.'

Lowell Chang, Past Commodore of the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club, explored the importance of Interports as a significant way of strengthening international ties between Clubs. Since 1952 the RHKYC has had an active programme of Interport Regattas, and Club members have forged close relationships with several international clubs as a result. 'Fun is the most important aspects of these regattas, and although it is the competitive racing that initially attracts the participants, it is the social scene and the chance to meet fellow sailors from different cultures that is one of the major benefits of Interports.'

Cross-cultural experiences were also seen as one of the major attractions for participants who take part in regattas held in the South- East Asian region. Vic Locke (another Past Commodore of the RHKYC, and founder of the San Fernando Race) highlighted the many attractions of sailing in the region. Warm tropical waters, a relaxed atmosphere and inexpensive cost of living means more and more participants are drawn to the Far East. Blue water classics such as the China Sea Race take sailors even further offshore than the Sydney to Hobart Race, and Locke said, 'there is little that can compete with sailing in the South China Sea under moonlight in warm tropical conditions.' He believes that the San Fernando Race (which alternates annually with the China Sea Race) is successful because 'there is not much to do at the other end except sit in a tropical bar and exchange race stories while enjoying the medicinal benefits of the local rum.'

According to Santi Kanchanabandhu, Commodore of the Royal Varuna Yacht Club (Thailand), the attraction of sailing in a tropical paradise is also the key to one of Asia's most successful regattas. The Phuket King's Cup has grown from a handful of competitors in 1987 to a week-long event that sees a fleet of 80-100 boats enjoying competitive racing and magnificent parties. 2006 will see the celebration of 20 years of the King's Cup, His Majesty the King of Thailand's 80th birthday, and the 60th anniversary of his accession to the throne. Kanchanabandhu believes that this year's regatta will be bigger than ever. 'The event not only promotes sailing, but is a major boost to tourism on the island. A new Sunsail charter fleet has recently become available and international competitors are proving that this is a popular addition to racing classes.'

Yacht chartering was the theme for the next speaker's presentation. Olivier Decamps (Sales Director for Simpson Marine, agents for Beneteau in Asia) highlighted the need for a competitive racing fleet in the Asian region. 'Such boats need to be suited for the 'light airs' Asian sailing conditions, and presently the only boats available for charter are cruising boats.' Decamps believes that there is a growing interest in developing a racing fleet that can be sailed in the various regattas in the region, and the expansion of the Asian racing circuit. Many people are now looking to charter rather than buy boats for racing. 'Asia is years behind the European market in this area. Until now people have preferred to own their boats rather than charter, but if a competitive one design fleet, such as the First 44.7 were adopted, then racing such a charter fleet would encourage top-flight sailors to compete on level terms.'

Sailing on a competitive level still has a long way to go in China, according to speaker Li Quanhai, Deputy Director, China Water Sports Administration. Li explained that sailing,



Li Quanhai, Deputy Director, China Water Sports Administration - [Guy Nowell](#) ©

as a leisure sport is still new to the Chinese. 'I have been involved in sailing for over 20 years, and even I am surprised at the speed of the development of the sport in this country.' Mainland China has 18,000 km of coastline and over 6,500 islands, and these water resources offer ideal conditions for cruising and racing. Li explained that it has only been due to the recent improvement in people's living standards that there has been an associated interest in sporting activities. 'This is especially evident in the coastal regions, with the development of international-standard marinas such as the Qingdao International Yachting Club, Shenzhen Yacht Club, and an aquatic Olympic park that is currently under construction in Rizhao, in Shangdong Province.

'Unlike Europeans who start sailing as children and then progress to bigger boats, we Chinese have embraced sailing at all levels.' China has an entry in the current America's Cup, China Team, a partnership with the French AC sailing team Le Defi. Li did point out that one of the factors hindering the development of sailing in China is the lack of small to medium size sailing clubs. Li believes that China's recent exposure to

sailing such as its involvement in the America's Cup, the recent visit of Ellen MacArthur during her Asian Record Circuit, and international regattas including the Hong Kong to Hainan Race all promote sailing to the Chinese population. According to Li sailing is definitely 'taking off' in China.

The final speaker for this session was Heinz Rautenberg, Past Commodore of the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club. RVYC hosted the Inaugural Commodores' Forum in 2005, and their vision at that time included the establishment of International Council of Yacht Clubs. It was proposed that the objectives of this Council should be the development and encouragement of fellowship among yacht clubs, the discussion of topics of mutual interest and delivery of increased benefits to ICYC members. It was envisioned that the activities of the Council could include conducting forums, facilitating joint activities such as rallies, cruises and Interports, and any other activities consistent with the objectives of the ICYC. Rautenberg briefly outlined the benefits, eligibility, and structure of the proposed ICYC and asked delegates to consider

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2006 Inter-Club Commodore's Forum

2nd Inter-Club Commodores' Forum, part II

1:07 AM Fri 2 Jun 2006



'Roger Tupper, Director of Marine, Hong Kong Government' [Guy Nowell ©](#)

The Forum consisted of two days of panel discussions, which brought together Commodores from the Europe, North America, Australasia, South Africa and Asia.

Monday's second ICF panel discussion looked at 'Sailing and its Role in the Community.' The moderator for this session was Vincent Wong and the presenters were Roger Tupper, Dr Alan Lau, Rex Harrison, Gert-Jan Nieuwenhuizen, Carlo Ravano, Marc Frilet and Mark Houghton.

The port of Hong Kong has always been a key factor in the economic development of the Hong Kong SAR. Roger Tupper, Director of Marine, Hong Kong Government, looked briefly at the history of marine activities in Victoria Harbour, and then talked about how this hub port services the SE Asia-Pacific region and acts as an entrepot for the mainland of China. 'Hong Kong Harbour is one of the busiest container ports in the world, as we support the Pearl River Delta region which is one of the world's busiest manufacturing centres.' Tupper explained that activities in the harbour have changed over the years, and much of the commercial shipping and port operations are taking place in the western regions of the harbour, which has deeper

water. Traffic in the central and eastern harbour approaches are now mostly light commercial shipping, passenger cruise ships and recreational water activities such as sailing. This mixture of pleasure and commercial activity in the heart of Hong Kong is essential to the continued vibrancy of the harbour, and with its back drop of high-rise buildings and mountains, Hong Kong Harbour is

still regarded of the most dramatic and beautiful harbours in the world.

Dr Alan Lau, Past Commodore of the RHKYC, also talked about Hong Kong Harbour - but this time in respect to Club's submission to the Harbour-Enhancement Committee in response to their call for public participation in the Envisioning Stage of the Wanchai and Causeway Bay waterfront. Over the last several years the RHKYC has been intimately involved with the public consultation process, working with the District Council, the Harbourfront Enhancement Committee, the Harbour Business Forum and no less than seven public forums and two community-working groups. The Club has attempted to identify exactly what the general public would like to see made of the Hong Kong harbour-front, and convey that information to the relevant authorities. In the process the RHKYC has made itself visible as an interested and responsible body in the local community, prepared to come forward with constructive and viable suggestions for the development of the area, to the benefit of the community at large and not just the Club itself.

Harbour diversity was also the theme of Rex Harrison's presentation, 'Sydney: the Harbour City'. The Commodore of the Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron explained that his Club has actively championed the concept of a working harbour. ' We have supported the Port Authorities and the NSW Department of Planning as we believe that it is the diversity of water activities in the harbour that is vital to its vibrancy. There is no point having a harbour full of nothing but tourist vessels, so we need to balance the recreational and the commercial interests to keep the harbour active and interesting.' Harrison highlighted the different usages of Sydney Harbour which hosts passenger and container terminals, fish markets, an extensive ferry transportation system and a thriving water sports and sailing scene that makes it one of the most interesting harbour in the world. 'Icons such as the Harbour Bridge and the Opera House make this harbour a memorable landmark of Australia, and I believe that yacht clubs can be powerful pressure groups, and need to be proactive in liaising with national and local government bodies to protect and encourage recreational uses of the harbour.'

Sail Amsterdam is another example of a working harbour that has become a community resource. Gert-Jan Nieuwenhuizen is the Sales Director Asian Pacific for Port of Amsterdam SRO. The city of Amsterdam has a long maritime history of over 700 years. It has ceded its place as the first commercial centre of the Netherlands to Rotterdam, but in turn Amsterdam has found a new role with the Sail Amsterdam Festival which began in 1975. This five-day festival sees 2.6 million visitors celebrating in and around the harbour. The aim of the festival is to attract tourism, promote Amsterdam cultural heritage and celebrate sailing and marine vessels. The event in 2005 saw 57 tall ships, 2 replicas, 560 'heritage' sailing yachts, 5 modern and 4 navy ships parade through Amsterdam Harbour. The next event is in 2010 and visitors from all over the world are invited to come and celebrate 'Sail Amsterdam' with the Dutch community.

History is also the keystone of the Yacht Club de Monaco. Francesco Grimaldi founded the principality of Monaco in 1297, and in 1997 the Grimaldi dynasty celebrated its 700th anniversary. The adventurous Prince Albert I founded the Monaco Oceanographic Museum in 1901, and also gave the principality a port, which would be 'able to offer shelter to the numerous yachts on the Côte d'Azur.' In 1953, H.S.H. Prince Rainier III founded the Yacht Club de Monaco. Carlo Ravano has been on the board of the YCM since 1966, and Commodore since 2003. The YCM is an active participant in the Ramoge Commission, an marine environmental initiative between St Raphael (France), Genoa (Italy) and Monaco. The constitution of the YCM requires that it 'best serve the interests of tourism and promote the Principality' and develop itself to an international level. The Club is noted for its classics regattas, and hosts many large (over 120m) sailing and power yachts. The sailing season starts in May with the Primo Cup, and finishes with Classic Week in September. YCM runs an active sail training programme, and the harbour has recently been enlarged by the installation of a 330m floating breakwater.

Marc Frilet is the President of the SNM (Societe Nautique de Marseille). SNM was founded in 1887, and for nearly 120



Marc Frilet, President, Societe Nautique de Marseille - [Guy Nowell](#) ©

years its Clubhouse has been a floating wooden barge in the Old Port of Marseille. Historically, as commercial marine operations moved to bigger premises, the Old Port became more focussed on recreational water users, and the SNM barge is now surrounded by the 400-plus yachts of SNM members. With a view to optimising the tourist, environmental and recreational usage of the Marseille waterways, the city council invited existing users to submit proposals for the further development of the area. SNM's proposals involving regattas and other water-borne activities were enthusiastically endorsed by the council, and now the council and the SNM have entered into a public-private partnership which lays down the obligations and expectations of both parties.

On a less grand scale, but definitely focused on the community, is the Hebe Haven Yacht Club of Hong Kong. HHYC is a small club of 875 members, located in the village of Pak Sha Wan, near Sai Kung. The club is a substantial local employer. Vice Commodore Mark Houghton described how, starting in 2002, HHYC has now run three 24-hr dinghy races, and raised and donated to children's charities in Hong Kong no less than US\$210,000. The races were modelled on an event developed some years ago in Southport, Lancashire (UK). Relay teams sail the boats (Toppers, Topaz, Optimists, Stratos) for a full 24 hrs round a 0.7 nm triangular course inside the sheltered area of Hebe Haven. 'Shirley Robertson, the British Olympic double gold medallist participated in last year's event, which didn't do our visibility any harm at all. There are three sorts of people who turn up for the event – the serious sailors who want to win, the junior sailors who get as much fun out of being up all night as they do out of the race, and the remainder who come for the festival, carnival atmosphere, with stands, sideshows and stalls all over our

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2006 Inter-Club Commodore's Forum

2nd Inter-Club Commodores' Forum, part III

1:05 AM Fri 2 Jun 2006



'2nd Inter-Club Commodores' Forum in progress, Compass Room, RHKYC' [Guy Nowell ©](#)

The Forum consisted of two days of panel discussions, which brought together Commodores from the Europe, North America, Australasia, South Africa and Asia.

Tuesday's panel discussion concerned 'Sail Training and Youth Development.' The Moderator was Sam McBride (Rear Commodore ((Club), RHKYC) and the panellists were Paul Dalton, John Anderson, Alistair Skinner, David Charlesworth, David Jennings and Chris Otorowski.

First up for the day's presentations was Paul Dalton, RHKYC Youth Sailing Class. Paul outlined the structure and operation of the YCS, noting that the Club presently employs a Sailing Manager, a Sail Training Manager, a Senior Instructor, and 49 Instructors and Assistant Instructors – not all of whom are 'operational' at the same time. Junior Sail Training at the RHKYC begins in Optimists, continues in Topaz dinghies, and progresses to Lasers and then Laser 3000s. The programme recognises that at the 'top end' a junior programme needs to include a fast and exciting boat (the 3000) to retain the interest of young teenagers.

Adult Sail Training starts with Laser Stratos dinghies, and is very often constitutes the skills-acquisition programme needed before a new sailor heads straight for the keelboats and cruising boats. RHKYC courses are not restricted to Club members, but Dalton noted that (sadly) the number of non-members subsequently joining the RHKYC was very small. A contingent of RHKYC Juniors members recently competed at the Asian Sailing Championships in Doha, Qatar, and there will be an RHKYC presence at the forthcoming ISAF Youth World Championships in Weymouth, UK.

Commodore John Anderson of the Royal Freshwater Bay Yacht Club (Perth, Australia) followed on with information about the RFBYC's High Performance Programme. Perth is 'a very long way' from Sydney, home of the Australian Institute of Sport. The HPP was set up in 2004 to assess this problem, and is a joint initiative between the Royal Freshwater Bay, Yachting Western Australia, Yachting Australia and the Western Australia Institute of Sport. The objective



John Anderson, Commodore RFBYC -
[Guy Nowell](#) ©

of the HPP is to increase the numbers of Western Australians participating in Australian national squads and teams, to provide the facilities and training for WA athletes to be able to compete in international events, and to provide career education and personal development counselling in the important formative years for youth sailors.

On-water infrastructure and facilities are provided for the HPP by Royal Freshwater and other WA-based clubs in an endeavour to spread the programme as widely as possible. Off-water support resources are provided by WAIS, and the four partners in the programme provide funding equally. After only two years of operation the programme has produced the winners of three national dinghy championships, put six WA sailors into the National Squad, scored a second place in the Australian Laser rankings, first and second places for selection for the ISAF Youth Worlds 2006, and begun to identify youth sailors for possible participation in the London Olympics (2012).

Alistair Skinner, founding Commodore of the Shanghai Boat and Yacht Club, has been obliged to approach sail training from an entirely different angle. 'The China Yachting Association only addresses the elite sector of sailing. We are the grass-roots end of sailing in China.'

The SBYC was founded in 2002 with six Wanderer dinghies purchased from the RHKYC, and has since acquired three more boats. With a membership of more than 100, the SBYC runs monthly Open Days to introduce sailing to absolutely anyone who is interested, and was delighted to be the busiest stand of all at the recent China International Boat Show 2006 in Shanghai. 'We are promoting a passion, not a product,' said Skinner.

David Charlesworth, Commodore of the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron, took the panel presentations back to the more 'top end' of the sport. RNZYS's Match Racing programme trains young sailors in a very specific discipline. Charlesworth pointed out that with an ISAF Grade 1 event costing something in the order of US\$400,000 to run, attracting sponsorship is an essential part of a development programme. As is recruiting volunteers: 'At a G1 event there will be more Race Officials and helpers than there are competitors' he noted. 'There were no SE Asian participants in this year's ISAF Nations Cup Regional Finals,' he pointed out, 'but we look forward to some regional entries for our Youth Match Racing Series in February 2007'.

The Royal Vancouver Yacht Club has 'created sailing programmes for the very young progressing through to support for sailors racing at the international level,' explained RVYC Commodore David Jennings. 'And for the majority of young sailors – who do not necessarily have Olympic aspirations – the RVYC strives to encourage participation in the life-long sport of sailing.' RVYC programmes begin with 'Wet Feet' at age five, through Optimists and on to 420s and Lasers (8-16 years). 'The 65 members of the Club's youth racing team also sail the 29er, 49er, 470 and RS:X windsurfers, and compete at the highest levels.' The Club has a Junior Executive with a Commodore, Vice-Commodore etc responsible for social events, fundraisers, and junior cruises to the RVYC outstations, with the intention of integrating young members into the mainstream of all Club events and activities. Junior members are strongly encouraged to crew on keelboats and 'big' boats.

Four Martin 242s form the core of the Club's 'Active Intermediates', a programme designed to retain and foster the sailing interests of the 19 to 36 years' age group. 'We found that during the period when a young person started university until they became settled in their career, many of them would lose interest in yacht club life as they did not have the means of the opportunity to

stay involved.' At the very top of the programme, RVYC crews have competed in no less than 19 Olympic Games since 1932, winning medals five times, including Ross MacDonald's silver medal (Star class) in 2004. Politics and geography conspire to leave Western Canada short of national-level coaching resources, so the RVYC attempts to fill the knowledge gap by sending Club coaches to elite international events. 'In this way our athletes get continued support, and our coaches get to maintain their learning curve.'

Chris Otorowski, Commodore of the Seattle Yacht Club, described the 'principally cruising' activities of the SYC members, and provided an overview of the geography of sailing in the USA. 'We have 60 committees at the Seattle YC,' he quipped, 'so there's not much for the Commodore to do.'

Discussion from the floor was active, interesting, and intense. Subjects raised included ways to bring into line different sailing and boating qualifications/certificates from around the world, the establishment of Junior Interport regattas, increased communication between Australian and Asian clubs, the grass-roots junior sailing programme created by the Puerto Galera Yacht Club, insurance, safety and risk management, the promotion of sailing in schools, and the promotion of junior or youth sailing programmes through the media.

The lasting and overwhelming impression created by the Panel Presentations and the ensuing Q&A was one of a committed and focussed collection of people, determined to make the most of an opportunity to exchange views and expertise on the subjects under discussion. As David Jennings, Commodore RVYC put it, 'as Clubs, we only compete on the race course.'

At the end of the Forum a show of hands decided that further Forums should be held on an annual basis. Marseilles, Freshwater Bay, Natal and Seattle offered to host in 2007 (Chris Otorowski said that his 61st committee needed something to do), and another show of hands gave it to the Societe Nautique de Marseille.

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