

HAPPY
Retirement!



THANK YOU RACHEL

On Saturday night we said a fond “farewell” but not “goodbye” to Rachel as she retired from her role as Vice President.

Many people won't know how involved Rachel has been with the Otters, I certainly didn't, so I wanted to share her Otter Story:



Rachel has been part of the Otters for around 50 years now, having first become involved way back in 1972 or 3 as a parent. Two of her three children (Sarah and Paul) were keen Otters – Rachel's other son 'Tig' really wasn't into sailing!

Back then, the club was really very different to today – more like a summer camp for boarding school children than the weekly club for local children that it is today, with many of the Otters sailing in Scows.

Cadets were for the more serious competitors – the club back then hosted the Cadet Nationals in August – meaning that many people came here to develop their sailing ability and train for competition.

However, for the Otters, Otter week was the only time the children trained – there was no coaching at all that time, and certainly no weekly training.

This all changed when, in 1988 Rachel, working closely with the wonderful John Mears, changed the club into a teaching club, with John, who was a brilliant sailor and coach, teaching on the water – and I understand there were lots of sweets involved which always went down very well!

Rachel and John introduced sailing and training every week – so the club really blossomed!

Training took place in cadets and the newly introduced oppies, with the older sailors sailing lasers. The club had great coaching and some well-known and respected young sailors (including of course John's children, the Mears boys) who were worth racing against!

Rachel and John introduced some of the changes that you all still enjoy today – including the introduction of sailing for our youngest Otters on a pond instead of straight on the river, building confidence in a safe environment, Otters in Squibs which you all enjoyed recently, and the water games we all know and love during Otter week. Rachel also introduced the medal system which we've enjoyed seeing you all receive this evening.

As well as this, Rachel and John also refined the Otters approach to safety - from the introduction of safety boats – hosting a ball to raise money, mandating buoyancy aids on the pontoon and in boats - which was previously unheard of, to the upgrading of the swimming test - which sounded truly terrifying prior to Rachel's changes and which I'm sure she'll be delighted to tell you about if you ask!

Rachel was management secretary until 1994, teaching on the pond for 5 or 6 years after leaving this post – and even created 'Mr Tricky Wind' – a character who was turned into a series of cartoons drawn by Mick Hill, to help teach children about changing winds!

Rachel was Awarded the RYA Community Award in 2005 – for all that she had done for the Otters – her nomination recognised that Rachel had been helping to run a training programme for novice sailors for 25 years and carried this role out brilliantly. The nomination went on to say that 'She explained complicated things in a language that 7 year olds can understand, took advice, listened carefully and threw in all her energy, As a result, she became a well-loved institution at the Corinthian Otters'.

For the past 18 years, Rachel has continued to dedicate her time and energy to the Otters, becoming vice president in 2006, and has decided that, as the Otters was ready for change back in the eighties, it is now ready for change again.

We wish her a very happy retirement from her Vice Presidency!

By Donna Kennedy
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