



Strangford Sailing Club  
Seafront Road  
Strangford  
BT30 7LS

5<sup>th</sup> December 2020

Dear Members

As the Christmas period approaches and in lieu of our traditional annual presentation dinner, I thought this would be an appropriate time to reflect on the highlights of our 2020 season and give some thought to our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year in 2021.

To our new members who joined this year, welcome. I hope you enjoyed feeling part of a special little sailing club, as we all worked together to traverse the restrictions and guidelines of the pandemic, and essentially get in as much sailing as possible between the Lockdowns.

The 2020 sailing season actually started with a bang! or should I say a beep, as my laptop warned me I was OCS at the start of my first Virtual Sailing Regatta. I am not a PC gamer, but this sailing game proved great fun for those SSC members who teamed up to play during the Lockdown. If you get bored over Christmas, have a go at getting past the sailing school training, and then you can take on the best in the World, all for free! <https://virtualregatta.com>

When the National Trust re-opened their estate on the 3rd June, thanks to the hard work of the SSC Committee, we were ready for action. Genuine excitement to be back on Strangford Lough. I remember listening to our first fleet of junior sailors as they hit the water, lots of chitter chatter and big grins all round. It's wonderful to see the benefits that sailing brings to these young sailors. The ability to mix with friends again (at a distance) after many weeks of home schooling and semi-isolation.

We managed to squeeze in one training course this year and held a mini prize giving at the end of the series for our overall winners. Well done to Chris Reilly, Toby Coole and Oisín Hull for picking up the Club silverware in 2020. The RYA Youth Championships was held at BYC in September and I have to congratulate all our junior and youth sailors who took part. Fantastic turnout and a first-time event for some of our younger members. Congratulations to Conor McVeigh for making it onto the podium, securing a 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the competitive Laser 4.7 class.

I owe a great deal of thanks to our junior parents for making junior sailing happen this year. To adhere to the restrictions, Superstarters, Toppers and Laser fleets were split up into small numbers, coordinators were assigned to each fleet, and junior parents coordinated sailing sessions. This provided many great sailing opportunities, compressed into a shorter season. These sessions get captured with pictures and videos uploaded to our Facebook page, if you haven't had a recent look on our page, it's well worth having a review of our 2020 posts. See our Facebook page here.

<https://www.facebook.com/StrangfordSailingClub>

The Flying Fifteen fleet followed suit in June, and we teamed up with our neighbours in Portaferry Sailing Club to run the Saturday and Wednesday series. A huge well done to Tony Breen and Ngaire Jackson who joined-in on club racing this year, onwards and upwards! Later in the season the FFs enjoyed the Boston Trophy series hosted by PSC, and then onto our own Down Jewellers series. Winners for the 2020 Down Jewellers series were: 1st. Hammy Baker and Peter Chamberlain, 2nd. Peter Lawson and Chris Hannon and 3rd. Shane McCarthy and Jeremy Rodgers. Many thanks to the entire race team for supporting this event.

The 'Castleward Cooler' Winter Series started in October and is scheduled to run up to Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> December. It has been a great success with a good turnout and visiting Laser sailors from other clubs. Many thanks to Colin and Wendy Conway for use of their Committee boat, Race Officer Gerry and safety cover provided by Andrew, Danny, Malcolm and Larry, amongst others. This year we adopted the 'Its Plain Sailing' online platform to register boats for these events and take payment online. Who would have thought SSC would become so tech savvy so fast. Thanks to our Hon. Treasurer John Findlay for setting this up. <https://www.itsplainsailing.com/club/strangford>

I acknowledge we have not been able to host any social activities this season and I know we all missed our Regatta and Bar Buoy events. A number of cruisers did however launch for the season. Did anyone venture off to a remote safe harbour? Remember to email in your cruiser log for a chance to get your hands on the coveted 'Strangford Scope' trophy! Email [secretary@strangfordsailing.com](mailto:secretary@strangfordsailing.com) with your entry.

Sadly, this year there have been a number of past members and friends of SSC who passed away during the season. In particular, I would like to express my condolences to the families of David Maxwell, Tony Lyon, Willie Shields and Brian Black. May they rest in peace as our thoughts go out to their friends and family during this Christmas period.

SSC is purely a volunteer-run club and we are grateful for the continued efforts of our Committee and members. I'd like to say a big thank you to the regular team of volunteers who help keep the clubhouse and grounds looking ship-shape. Large sections of our slipway were repaired during the summer and it's great to have a community of helpers behind you to keep the slip clean and safe for everyone to use. To Tommy and Oliver who never miss an opportunity to brush the slip, thank you!

Welcome to William Findlay who joins our Committee this year as Vice Commodore. Unlike me, he actually knows how to sail and is apparently handy at fixing cars, trailers, boats, etc. so no doubt he will be an asset to the Club and I look forward to supporting William next year.

Now as I'm sure you are all aware, SSC has been commended and publicised by the RYA for our 'Safe Return to Boating'. Which in turn encouraged us to submit an application to the RYA and Yachts and Yachting Club of the Year 2021 competition. In any normal year, it is unlikely our small club would be able to compete with the larger clubs across the Northern Ireland RYA zone. However, this year as a small and agile club, we have done super well with our preparations during the Lockdown. We were the first club on the lough to get back on the water. Assessing and mitigating against the risks, documenting our guidance, providing safety videos to our juniors, were all vital components to ensure that our sailors got safely back on the water, directly after the restrictions were lifted. Our application focused on using innovation and technology to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19. I am not surprised we won-over the judging panel with our application, so thank you to Jane, Gerry, Sean and Leon for their contribution.

I am delighted that SSC has been selected as the RYA Northern Ireland Club of the Year finalist. The competition moves forward with a public vote to crown the overall UK winner. We are competing against 9 other GB based clubs, so cast your vote now, spread the word amongst your friends and family, colleagues at work and let's make our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary a year to remember! Voting closes 25th January

2021. The award presentation will take place online at the RYA Virtual Dinghy Show on 27th February when the overall winner of the RYA and Yachts & Yachting Club of the Year Award 2021 will be announced! Voting is online at the following link: <https://awards.yachtsandyachting.co.uk/rya>

Looking to our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2021. I hope the positive news on vaccination will provide us with the freedom and safety to socialise, allowing us to host a full calendar of events. However, the vaccination programme is at such an early stage, it is too soon to know how next season will shape up.

We are approaching the end of 2020, a year that no one could see coming, unexpected in so many ways, and that left no one indifferent. We have faced many challenges, we have learned a great deal, and we all have hopes and dreams for the New Year.

Let us be optimistic and plan for the best, reflect on what we do well and consider fresh ideas to improve our club for the future. On that subject, I would really appreciate your help by asking you to provide feedback on Strangford Sailing Club by completing a short online survey – see link at bottom of page.

On behalf of the SSC Committee, I'd like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year and I look forward to seeing everyone at our AGM, proposed to be on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> February 2021, subject to confirmation.

Kind regards

Tony McLaughlin

Commodore

Strangford Sailing Club

To vote for SSC, scan this QR code with your smartphone or type this link into your Internet browser:

<https://awards.yachtsandyachting.co.uk/rya>



To complete the SSC member feedback survey, scan this QR code with your smartphone or type this link into your Internet browser

<https://bit.ly/3mIqWnb>

