

## **50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY SPEECH**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Your Worships the Mayor and Mayoress of Maidstone, Cllr. Peter Parvin and Mrs Parvin

Officers and Cadets from the Maidstone Sea Cadet Unit

Representatives from the Royal Naval Association

Representatives from Demelza House

Club members and their partners

Ladies and Gentlemen

### **2. WELCOME TO THE CYGNETS MBC 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

Comprising of the river marathon and barbeque

### **3. SHORT HISTORY OF CYGNETS MBC**

Lack of time has prevented me from carrying out a full review but here is some basic information

Formed in 1959

Initial waters were the lakes owned by Aylesford Paper Mills – these lakes I suspect now form part of the Leybourne Lakes Country Park complex.

Following negotiations and an agreement with the Maidstone Borough Council the Club moved to its current waters in Mote Park and from where we continue to operate

The current membership of the Club is in excess of 120 and we cater for just about all the various boating disciplines which make up the model boating world

We have a very full and varied programme as well as specialist regattas open to visitors from other Clubs and organisations

The Club is very often a focus of interest to the general public and we pride ourselves on, as well as promote, good public relations. We have excellent working relationships with the Maidstone Borough Council, The Maidstone Victory Angling Society and until they closed down the Maidstone Sailing Club

Long may our good public relationships and working relationships continue.

### **4. BACKGROUND TO RIVER MARATHON, HMS KENT AND DEMELZA HOUSE**

Middle of 2008 the Club committee started generating ideas on how to celebrate the Club's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Many ideas were instantly discarded but one would not go away and the Cygnets River Marathon was born.

Initial idea was to sail a "normal" model from Tonbridge to Allington Locks but after many think tanks it was decided to build a special model to do the journey

Now the decision had to be made as to what to build – definitely a warship because of its speed and hydrodynamics – what size? – eventually it was decided to build at 1/36 scale model of a Type 23 Duke Class Frigate – at 1/36 scale the model would be just under 4 metres long and half a metre wide - the model you all saw on the river today

After some research it was established that a current type 23 Duke Class frigate named after the Duke of Kent existed - HMS Kent pennant number F78 – our model was then named HMS Kent for obvious reasons.

We now had the event, the model but we needed a charity to support. One of the real HMS Kent's charities for which its crew raised funds was Demelza House – and so, again for obvious reasons we adopted the same charity

So now we had the event, the Cygnets River Marathon, the model of HMS Kent and the charity Demelza House to support us.

Now we had to construct the model

## **5. CONSTRUCTION PROGRAMME**

We obtained a set of drawings, at 1/72 scale, of HMS Norfolk, a type 23 frigate in September 2008

We held our first construction meeting early in October 2008 which all parties interested in becoming members of the construction team attended. The only way we could achieve the running date of today, 11<sup>th</sup> July, was to divide the construction into modules and have a person responsible for each module.

Construction continued into the winter months and the first couple of months of 2009.

The hull was completed by the end of February and all the modules were also in a very advanced state

HMS Kent was launched on April the 19<sup>th</sup> and her commissioning trials started. The results from the day were encouraging and we knew we had a winner – the motivational boost given to the project team by the model's performance was unbelievable

HMS Kent's second trials were held on May the 3<sup>rd</sup> and on June the 7<sup>th</sup> we conducted a six hour endurance run on Mote Park Lake. We used a control boat for the first time to simulate the conditions we could expect on the river – during the trial it was estimated that we covered some 20 miles.

HMS Kent's shakedown cruise took place last Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> July – she was now ready for the marathon.

Additional detail continued being added to the main modules – during the past few days the windscreen wipers were added to the bridge section and on Thursday afternoon the final sealing of the coamings to the hull was carried out.

Only a team effort of massive proportions made it possible for HMS Kent to be the handsome model you saw on the river today – remember last September she was just general arrangement drawing and that was not at the scale to which we built.

A remarkable achievement by all concerned

During this period of intense activity we also managed a visit to HMS Kent whilst she was on refit prior to her latest deployment to Iraq – but how that was achieved was another story.

During the period of construction many other activities were going on behind the scenes – licence payment to the Environment Agency, the Environment Agency defining their requirements for the river marathon, Risk Assessments, etc. organising sponsors and suppliers, meetings with Demelza House representatives, organising publicity etc.

One of the requirements of the Environment Agency was that the model had to be led down the river by an escort boat and the control of the model had to be from a launch following the model. The supply of the control launch was not a problem as our Club Vice Chairman Jack had a suitable boat and made his services available.

The escort boat presented a bit of a problem and it was decided to approach the Maidstone Sea Cadet unit. They were most enthusiastic and agreed to become part of the project and as you saw today they provided both the escort boat and the Mayors launch. We offered three cadets the chance to skipper HMS Kent provided they were prepared to come to our Club meetings on a Sunday morning and learn how to handle a radio controlled model boat. The Sea Cadets joined us from the day of the launch of HMS Kent in April and have been training with her, and us, ever since. We congratulate Steph., Gemma and Matt on their contribution to the project.

## **6. THANKS**

The Mayor and Mayoress of Maidstone for giving of their time to be here today

The Mayor of Tonbridge and Malling – wishing us bon voyage at 07.30 am this morning.

To the Environment Agency – for their assistance and for allowing us the use of this garden for our barbeque

Officers and Cadets of Maidstone Sea Cadets – thanks to Dee, Nick, Peter, Steph. Gemma and Matt

To Demelza House for their support – I hope you have made a lot of money

To our sponsors and suppliers who gave their products to us free or at vastly discounted prices

My very personal thanks to:

The Project Management Team – Paul, Jack, David and Matt

The Construction Team headed by David Shirley

The River Team headed by Jack Diaper and assisted by his son Simon

The skippers – David Shirley, Alan Noble, Les May, Trevor Bright and the sea cadets Steph., Gemma and Matt – I also had a little dabble

Matt and his team for the organisation and management of the barbeque.

Finally my own very special thanks to the wives and partners of the Club members involved in this project – I am sure you would have liked to have throttled them, and me, at times. You can have your husbands back now but please look after them because I might have another crazy idea again in the future.

## **7. FINALLY A TOAST TO CYGNETS MODEL BOAT CLUB ON BEING 50 YEARS YOUNG – MAY THE CLUB CONTINUE LONG INTO THE FUTURE**

Thank you very much.