



Royal Artillery Yacht Club

10th November 2025

Commodore's Update and Membership Survey

Dear Members,

It is both a privilege and a great honour to write to you for the first time as Commodore of the Royal Artillery Yacht Club. I take on this role with pride, enthusiasm, and a deep sense of responsibility.

Let me begin by paying tribute to my predecessor, Colonel Tony Neylan. His tireless dedication and steady leadership guided the Club through testing times, and we all owe him our gratitude. On behalf of the membership, I wish him every success as he embarks on the next chapter of his career with Leonardo.

As I step into this role, I have reflected on what makes our Club unique. Our purpose is clear and enduring: to get as many Gunners as possible out on the water, building confidence, seamanship, and leadership, whether through inshore disciplines, offshore racing, or demanding adventurous training expeditions. This is the link that binds us to the Regiment and the place where we deliver our greatest value.

Challenges and Committee Changes

Of course, we must also be candid about the challenges we face, most notably the condition of our two offshore yachts. This is not an issue we can set aside, but it is one we are already addressing. We now have a revitalised team both on and off the water. Alongside Lt Col (Retd) Jon McCleery as Rear Commodore (Offshore), SSgt Max Wilkinson as Coxswain of Boats, and LBdr Jack Harrison as Bosun (supported by Bdr Ed Middleton), we also welcome a new Vice Commodore, Lt Col Jean Sebastian-Cormier, recently returned from Estonia. We have merged membership and bookings into a single, more efficient function under Capt Tom Walsh, and Maj Tim Haskell has kindly agreed to take on responsibility for training. Together, this forms a strong and committed committee; however, we are already actively identifying a succession plan and would welcome more volunteers from across the membership to help shape the Club's future, noting both the secretary and treasurer are due a break in the not-too-distant future.

The impact of this refreshed team is already being felt. Processes are being restored, standards are rising, and I would particularly highlight Max's immediate contribution, made possible through the generous support of his Commanding Officer, Lt Col James Bouttle.

In the immediate future, St Barbara has been lifted for essential maintenance over the winter, ensuring she is ready to deliver for Ex Mediterranean Ubique in 2026. This ambitious expedition, driven forward by Capt Ross Beeby, is shaping up to be another excellent opportunity for our soldiers and officers to experience demanding and rewarding Adventurous Training overseas.

Hull Replacement Plans

Looking further ahead, we must also address the long-standing question of hull replacement. While much of the conversation has focused on St Barbara, I believe there is real value in considering the future of both yachts together. The aim must be to identify the most opportune moment to sell and replace them in a coordinated way, acquiring complementary hulls that together meet the full spectrum of the Club's needs, from training and charter to adventurous sailing and racing.

Membership Survey

To help shape these decisions, we are launching a short online questionnaire, accessed at the link below. This will become an annual exercise, designed to help us better understand our membership: who you are, how you use the Club, and what you want from it. Each year, it will also explore specific issues, such as yacht replacement or which events and activities we should prioritise. Alongside this, we will run focus groups to engage our more junior members and those representing the future of our Club. Together, this feedback will inform a clear strategy for the years ahead.

Once the membership has endorsed a way forward, a smaller, empowered team will be tasked to deliver the agreed solution. I know many of us hold strong opinions, and I, too, have my own. But what matters most is that we approach this debate openly, base our discussion on facts, and remain mindful that today's Army and AT environment is very different from when St Barbara V was first procured.

I am excited for what lies ahead. Our Club rests on strong foundations, laid by those who came before us. With your continued support, I am confident we can strengthen those foundations still further and ensure that the Royal Artillery Yacht Club not only endures but thrives in the years to come as the premier service yacht club.

Please do take a few minutes to complete the questionnaire by the end of November 2025; your views really do matter.

[Click here to complete the RAYC Members Survey](#)

Ubique,

Nat Webber

Colonel

Commodore, Royal Artillery Yacht Club