

Bilgewater

April 2020



LOCKDOWN

No fun edition



Bilgewater March 2020

Committee Members

Committee Member	Portfolio	Contact
Paul Weaver	Commodore	027 288 8554
James Hepburn	Vice Commodore Race Officer Trailer Yachts	021 477 324
Jim Pasco	Treasurer	021 143 1199
Nigel McCarter	Secretary Handbook	027 856 8940
Wayne Johnstone	Compound Convener Quartermaster	027 623 6366
Brett Goddaard	Gulf Classic convener NZTYA and WTYA liaison	021 937 547
Russell Osborne	Webmaster Facebook administrator	021 056 4551
Rob Connor	Social coordinator	0274 873 494
Murray Pearce	Sponsorship liaison Race Officer Keeler	0274 951 223
Keith Paine	Handicap convener	02041905420 027 665 9678

Non Committee Members

Dean Herrmann	Safety, Tuition	0274 374 001
Dave Whitburn	Compound Manager	09 292 2073
Mark Sargent	Bilgewater	021 173 2702 sargent.mark@gmail.com

<http://www.waikatoyachtsquadron.org.nz>
waikatoyachtsquadron@gmail.com

P. O. Box 4263
Hamilton East
Hamilton 3247



Bilgewater March 2020

Commodore's Report

These are strange days indeed...

I never thought I would be writing about a nationwide lockdown or a worldwide pandemic but that's the reality facing us all currently.

The government's message is that we all stay home, avoid all non-essential travel and, most relevant to our squadron, stay off the water.

For us this means we have cancelled all Nog and Natters and on the water events until further notice. This is obviously very disappointing but absolutely necessary to protect members of the squadron and their families.

The committee has established an alternative method to hold the monthly meeting using an application called ZOOM. This has worked well and enables us to continue working in the background.

Depending on the duration of the lockdown, the prize giving and the AGM could be affected but we will keep everyone posted.

On a brighter note Hugh Beecroft has finally worked out how to use Facebook so expect to see plenty of new posts from him. And just because we can't be on the water doesn't mean we can't share stories, pictures and video on the WYS Facebook page and to Mark our amazing Bilgewater editor, which many of you are already doing, so keep up the good work.

Sincerely,

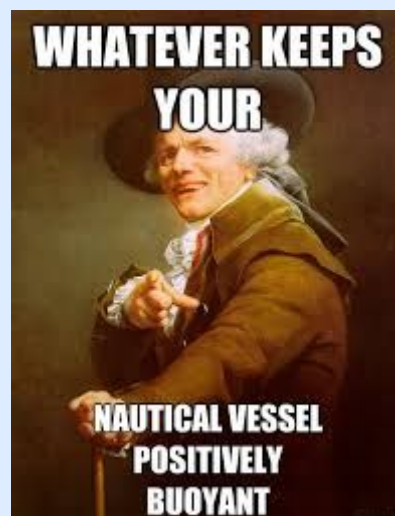
Paul Weaver





Bilgewater March 2020

Me Mes





Bilgewater March 2020



The short version of JFK and PT109

By Nigel Lancaster

Given I have recently posted on F/Bk some photos and comment on a visit to Gizo in the Solomon Islands in 2014 I thought I should round that story out. This is only a brief synopsis of my understanding of events as they relate to the PT109 story.

After leaving the town of Gizo where we went through customs & immigration Different Drummer had anchored off a small island known locally as Kennedys Island, charts refer to as Kasolo Island near Fatboys Resort for those who have sailed these waters. We had endured some hours of persistent sales pitch by locals who bring their wood carvings and stone sculptured animals to trade with yachtsman but as with many locals they also had a tale to tell about their family involvement in the events that unfolded in the local waters during WW2.





Bilgewater March 2020

We were about to traverse Blakett strait from Gizo To Noro and one need only look at local charts to realize what a hazardous place the Solomon Islands are for shipping, massive reef systems everywhere but away from the islands the seas are incredibly deep. In a word what a place to fight a massive sea battle. So Blakett Strait was the scene for the battle between a number of American lightweight patrol boats and the approaching Japanese navy. Apparently an extremely dark night in August 1943 and during the encounter PT109 was rammed by a Japanese ship and after many hours of swimming with his men they came across this island. By all accounts Kennedy was an excellent swimmer and was indeed instrumental in the saving of his crew. Some days later after an encounter with local islanders he had them take a message and were later rescued by US forces.



The interesting side to this tale is that in the next day or so we were to meet islanders who all claim to have a grandfather who had rescued JFK and his crew and I don't doubt for a moment that there remains a lot of truth to their stories as there may well have been a group of young lads in dugout canoes who were involved in this great rescue. However I put it to one particular chap, just imagine the world 20 years later if your grandfather hadn't rescued the crew and they had all perished. With all the good will in the world they were never going to relate to the fact that granddad had in fact rescued a future US president.





Bilgewater March 2020

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