

# The Early Days



The origins of Emsworth Sailing Club date back a long way. At the start of the 19th century Emsworth was experiencing a bathing boom, with good use being made of its sea-bathing machines. In 1810 Robert Harfield, a mercer benefitting from the fashion for sea-bathing, sought to expand his business by offering hot baths as well. He established a bathing house at the end of what is now Bath Road.

The house itself was bought in 1858 by Henry Cribb, who converted an old oyster bed south of it into a pool which would retain the water when the tide ebbed (see 'Taking a Dip' below).

## Early Clubs and an important conversation



James Parham with the Stansted Challenge Cup which he won outright in 1874 having won the Dredgerman's Race in the Emsworth Regatta during the preceding 3 years.

During the 1880s, regattas were regularly held in Emsworth, and in 1885 Emsworth Boating Club was sailing six 16ft half deckers in the harbour.

In 1888 members are recorded as dining in their Bath Road clubhouse, but that club soon

died a natural death. At the instigation of Mr Mant, a new boating Club was formed in 1895, but by 1902 that, too had ceased to exist.

Then came the First World War, and two Guards Officers - Major George Cecil Whitaker and Viscount Bury (right), later the Earl of Albemarle - who were stuck in the trenches, were discussing what they would do when the War was over. They felt sure that many young officers would like to become helmsmen once peace came.



## The birth of Emsworth Sailing Club

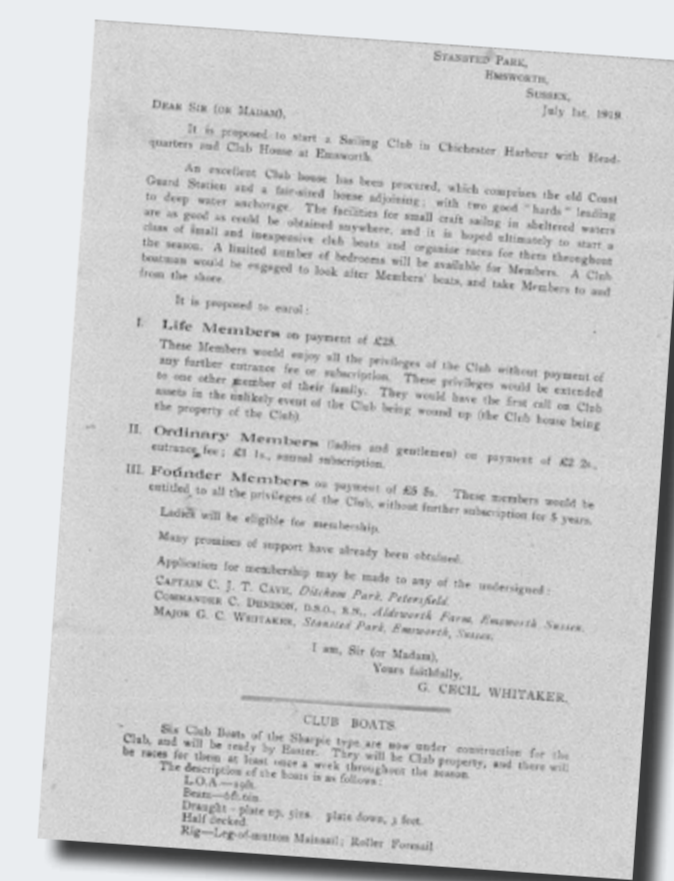
By 1918 the Bath House had become neglected and was bought by Daisy Maud Duffield. Soon after the war, Major Whitaker spotted Bath House and persuaded Miss Duffield to sell it to him and a number of his friends, who had agreed to form the management committee.



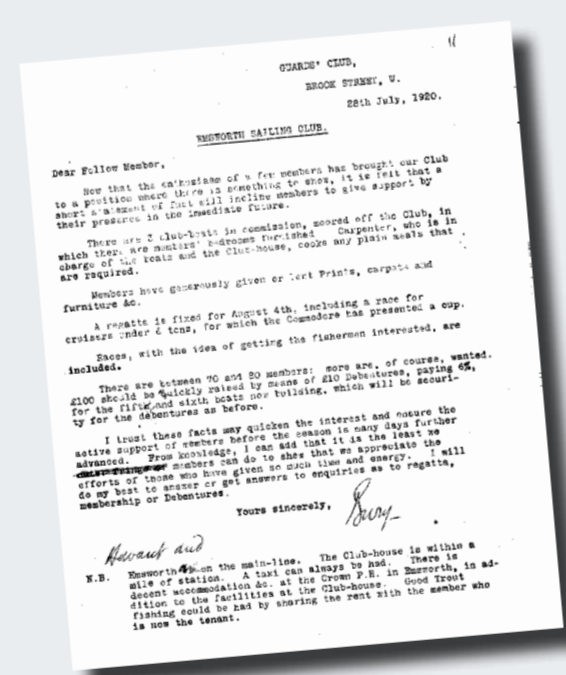
*'Our dream has come off for I have secured a house as a Club station and a small fleet of light boats to start with on Emsworth Harbour'*

*taken from a letter from Major Whitaker to Viscount Bury*

The committee held their first meeting on 21st June 1919 and Major Whitaker lost no time in writing round to invite membership applications.



Amongst the 32 founder members were many of Major Whitaker's friends, many of whom were to give great service to the Club. Notable amongst them are Commander Denison, Edward McEuen, Charles Cave and his family and the Yeo family. Charles deputised for Major Whitaker as Commodore during 1922 whilst the latter was away.



Club life flourished. Couples were appointed to act as stewards and boatmen; meals and bedrooms were available. Ladies were made welcome from the outset.



## Women on the Water

By 1923 out of a total membership of 74, 10 were ladies. Many became proficient at the helm and their names, including that of Miss Yeo, a founding member, appear regularly in the racing logs, often as winners.

## Major George Cecil Whitaker



Major Whitaker had been born in 1880 into a wealthy family with a successful clothing business in Yorkshire and a huge wine and export business in Sicily. Educated at Eton and Oxford, he bought Stansted House and married Margaret Emma Maitland in 1912. The house remained their home until its sale in 1924 to the Earl of Bessborough, who became the 3rd Commodore of the Club in 1926.

Between 1908 and 1914 Major Whitaker was heavily involved in yachts and yachting, and was patron of a number of clubs, as well as being a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron. During that period he owned three notable schooners - including the celebrated *Margherita* (below).



## Taking a Dip



The site of this pool is under what is now the terrace.

Throughout the century, swimming has played an important part of club life. The provision of bathing facilities is included amongst the objects of the club, and for many years those facilities comprised the tidal pool which Henry Cribb had made from an old oyster bed. In 1965, after many years of debate, it was replaced when the terrace was extended and a purpose-built pool incorporated.