

Minutes of the Conway Club Committee Meeting

13.30hrs Tuesday 17th June 2025

At the offices of Verdantix Ltd, London

Present

Paul Heaver – PH	President
Matt Burrow – MB	Vice President
David Fawcitt – DF	Vice President
Rob Tubb – RT	Honorary Treasurer
Steve Barnet – SB	Honorary Secretary
Dai Davies – DD	
David Pye – DP	
Tony Minns – TM	
Mike Wild – MW	
Alfie Windsor – AW	
Simon Douglas Lane – SDL	Honorary Padre

Paul Heaver, President, chairing, opened the meeting and advised that he had some very sad news to relate. Chris Smith (58-60), Club President from 2013-2017 Crossed the Bar suddenly on Saturday, 14th June. All those present indicated their shock and sadness.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from:

John Noble – Immediate Past President

Mim Smith – Dinner Secretary

2. Minutes of the Committee Meeting 3rd December 2024

The HonSec had circulated the minutes of the December meeting to all Committee members prior to the meeting.

3. Matters arising from Item 2

It was pointed out that it was stated that we were at a stage of not trying to raise more funds. This is not strictly true as the cost of The Cadet is only part covered by the Teaser Club and there is an annual shortfall of £5k.

4. Hon Secretary's Report

There have been thirteen Members, now unfortunately fourteen, who have CtB since issue #89 of The Cadet and also Rupert Paget, younger brother of the Marquess.

I forwarded a full report to the Committee prior to the meeting and did not want to go through it word by word. The basis of the report, however is as below.

When I took over from Tom Mason as Hon Sec in January 2021, he sent me several shoe boxes of Index Cards detailing each individual Club Member. During Covid lockdown I went through them weeding out those that we knew were no longer with us. At that time, I found approx. 117 who had CtB. The cards were also relocated to Really Useful Boxes, less likely to fall apart. There are three main categories, Members, Missing and Deceased. During March and April, I have gone through both the Members and Missing boxes. In conjunction with Penny Reeves, I have carried out a review of the current membership, checking my Index Cards against Penny's database (which also has a Missing section) and established that 60+ have Crossed the Bar. I was also able to update Penny with addresses and email addresses where available.

The list from above has been passed to Penny and Mike Reeves and there will need to be some mention/explanation in The Cadet, perhaps not in July but January 2026. To be discussed.

Using the microfiche, I have also added date and place of birth to Member's cards where the information is available.

There are currently 991 active Members of the Club. That is paid up Members who receive The Cadet and where it is not returned. Of those, 86 (8.7%) were born overseas, the majority, 31 from E Africa – see below.

Cadets born overseas originated from:

E Africa 31, W Africa 1, N Africa 2

Burma/Malaya 7

Far East 4

Australia 2

India/Pakistan 9

Gulf 3

S America 7

N America 4

Europe & CIs 13

The current membership reside as follows:

England	562	USA	24
Scotland	63	Canada	35
Wales	105	New Zealand	33
N Ireland	2	Australia	81
Eire	9	Malaysia	4
IoM	6	Argentina	2
Channel Isles	6	El Salvador	1
France	13	South Africa	17
Spain	5	Liberia	1
Portugal	4	Namibia	2
Germany	2	Bermuda	5
Belgium	2	Singapore	1
Malta	1	Hong Kong	2
		Philippines	2
		Thailand	2

I also went through the Missing box and have established 127 who have CtB. There are a further 55 who unfortunately can reasonably be assumed to be no longer of this world. There are 22 aged between 95 & 100, 19 between 100 & 110 and 14 over 110 including 2 at 130+. These are all for whom we have found no records of having died. There are still 490 in the Missing box, 19 of whom had annual subscriptions.

Interestingly, and sadly, of the Missing 203 were there in the 60s and 25 were there in the 70s.

4a. GDPR Report

Nothing to report.

5. Hon Treasurer's Report

Conway Club - Treasurers Report for 17 June 2025

Bank accounts (as of 9 June 2025)

Current:	£ 16,369.50 (includes £688.50 Port Fund)
Savings:	£ 1.00
Cash	£ <u>217.15</u>
Total Financial Assets	£ 16,587.65

Current account total includes a £6k donation to support the next 4 editions of The Cadet. The donation came from an OC who wishes to remain anonymous

Investment Portfolio: £78,751.37 Fiske market valuation including a cash element of £377.22 as of Q1 31 March 2025 (Investment Sub Committee to advise if any detail required)

All 2024 Fiske valuation reports have been forwarded to Clive Plummer for scrutiny in preparation of the 2024 Annual Accounts. The remainder of 2024 financial records will be passed to Clive on his return from holiday at the end of June.

Annual Dinner & AGM 2025 Mercure Hotel Bedford

Financial update as of 9 June 2025

Income

Ticket sales including Bletchley Park travel and entrance fees
£8,965.50

Expenditure

Hotel deposit
£ 500.00

HSBC Bank

Running smoothly with no issues.

5b. Teaser Club

There are currently 124 active participants plus a further 11 who are less than 6 months overdue.

This gives us a potential annual income of circa £6.6k which after prize money contributes £5.6k or approx. 50% of the annual Cadet production costs.

Given the gradual reduction in subscribers we should perhaps consider an annual drawdown from the investment portfolio of circa £5-£6k

A draw was made and the following were winners:

£500	Roger Murch (55-57)
£200	Tony Braithwaite (47-49)
£150	Archie Smith (64-66)
£150	Kenneth Rankin (53-55)

6. Investment Committee Report

The Committee were provided with a detailed review of the investment portfolio by the fund managers, Fiske & Co. This showed that there was a steady but slight increase in the value of our stock which stood at £84k. There was some talk as to whether we continue with stocks and shares as managed by Fiske or put everything into a Building Society. This would make it easier to draw down money as required and some interest may be made on the monies kept there. There was a query as to whether a Building Society would be amenable to opening an account for a club. To be investigated.

It was agreed that we would put forward to the AGM our thoughts on transferring the stock to a BS or Bank account for easier access. We have circa £80k left, we expect the Club to close in 7 years and between now and then a decision has to be made in regard to running down. Between then and now, we are going to dispose of that £80k for social events, keeping The Cadet going for issues that the Club is interested in. The Cadet, however is the primary issue, it is something that every Member gets, through his letterbox twice a year.

At the last AGM, we asked the Members to come back to us with ideas as to what we could spend the money on. Alfie Windsor asked if we need to form a sub-committee/working party to look at our finances and how they may be used for social events or other purposes. Rob Tubb, Simon Douglas Lane, Paul Heaver and Dai Davies agreed to form this group.

7. Branch Co-ordinator's Report

MH advised that this item should really be the 'Overseas Branch Report' as the UK branches tend to report directly to the editor of The Cadet. We have lost one branch in the last six months as the Vancouver Island has closed. John Palliser OC reported that the joint Conway/Pangbourne/Worcester/Botha group were down to 7 Members. There are vibrant groups around the world but they are mainly groups of like minded mariners rather than OCs, OWs etc.

8. Shop Report

Sadly, the shopkeeper reported that since January of this year sales have declined yet again year on year, this is now becoming very much a trend.

At the time of writing this report, 1st June 2025, only ten orders have been received compared with fifteen last year at this time, and the value of those orders are generally much smaller. No orders have been received since 24th February which was for two caps (£16). Such a spell without any orders is unprecedented.

It should be considered, is this generally the way retail sales are going or is it that our members are getting older and 'can't be bothered'? However repeating the comments from the previous report, with the 'The Passage Plan' being published, has this has promoted 'The end is nigh' attitude?

It is hoped that the shop will remain active until the bitter end, and although not overstocked at this time, what stock is being currently held must be disposed of, sooner rather than later. Later might just be just too late!

Should "when it's gone, it's gone" now be the way forward and incorporated into the 'Passage Plan'. Attached was the Shop Valuation dated 1st January 2025 which has not really changed since that date.

Viewing this document, it is felt the Committee should be considering options to entice members to spend, perhaps for the last time, now or in the immediate future. Considering the amount of funds held by 'The Club', ways should be considered to entice further sales - financially being the obvious one.

Free package and postage – Average cost per order is around £3.50.

Percentage discount per order.

Clothing markup be reduced although it should be remembered that this is to order only.

Certain items gifted to those members attending the AGM, for instance Alfie's book.

Sale of clothing currently held in stock and listed on a separate page in 'The Cadet' – January 2026.

General reduction of all items in stock.

These are just some ideas, but other thoughts would be most welcome. There is nearly £7,000 of stock, at cost, that has to be disposed of.

The shopkeeper suggested selling items at cost price, however it was queried whether, given the current retail situation, this was in fact too expensive and should we be looking at 'discounts'. Due to the amount of stock held, the Committee was asked if we were prepared to lose money just to get rid of it. The shopkeeper pointed out that anything ordered and not in stock would require to be paid for as usual. It was put forward that it may be beneficial to lose £2.5k to £3k rather to be left holding £7k stock unsold.

A notice to be placed in The Cadet with the reduced prices and free postage with the proviso that anything not in stock that is ordered to be paid for at full price.

9. Cadet Editor's Report

The next issue of The Cadet is due out in late July. Many short articles have been received, longer stories would be appreciated. A few articles had to be truncated in issue 89 so these will be finished in 90.

There are some prolific contributors as always who predominate, these OC's are sincerely thanked otherwise probably there would be no continuance of The Cadet. To keep the publication going a supply of material is required.

In March, the editor wrote to principal Committee members with a proposal for an increased number of pages, in line with issue 89, and the approximate cost. The HonSec notified him that this had been approved. We may be able to fill the 48 plus 4 pages but this gives the editor flexibility to an upper limit.

The cover proposal was circulated to principal Committee members in April, this originated from the NW Conway branch. Approval was given. The South Georgia backdrop with the three CMNT cadets holding the Conway ensign taken from the Sir David Attenborough (SDA) is certainly interesting. A short description will be given inside. Interestingly Robert Bellis Ch. Off. (left in the picture) is now relief Master on the SDA. The next cover 91 may well be my original suggestion of Sydney Harbour Bridge, with Trevor Haworth's 47/48 Captain Cook cruise boat.

It is interesting to compare our print magazine with the online versions produced by Worcester, Pangbourne, Warsash & Botha (held by the HonSec). We seem to be the only old sea school still issuing a printed magazine/newsletter. Ours, of course, is also available online to Members. The editor advised that versions of the other cadet school magazines are available to all, including OCs, online. He suggested that we make The Cadet available to Worcester, Pangbourne, etc. online. The consensus at the meeting, however, was that The Cadet should be available to Conway Club members only and a vote taken confirmed this by a majority of 9:1.

Masefield Prize – Mount Kelly School.

Request to increase sponsorship to £75.00 per annum from the current £50.00. The history of this prize is part of Conway's involvement with Mount Kelly, well covered by Paul Wright (63-65) in previous issues of The Cadet. Originally the book prize for Creative Writing was sponsored by the HMSCT, this was transferred to the Club in 2019. Since its inception many years ago the figure has stood at £50.00 for one pupil. The school, quite rightly, consider prizes should be given to both sexes, which was the case in 2024, therefore requested is a small increase in sponsorship to £75.00 effective when the next payment is made. This increase was agreed by the Committee.

The headmaster writes a thank you letter to the Club's President together with the pupil prize essays judged by staff members.

Club Silver

There have been suggestions that the Club Silver be disposed of to suitable organisations. The editor made a request that Mount Kelly School be

considered. If the committee agree then the proposal can be discussed with Mount Kelly during the President's and his visit to the school in September. This is covered later in these minutes.

The Committee thanked Mike Reeves, the editor of The Cadet, for his continued and much appreciated work.

10. Canadian Coastguard College Report

Paul Heaver, President, together with Chris Smith, former President had been invited to the Awards and Graduation ceremony for the class of 2025 from the Canadian Coast Guard College in Sydney, Nova Scotia. Chris Smith, however, was unable to attend. The Awards ceremony was held on Friday 6th June.

On Saturday 7th June 2025 the Canadian Coast Guard College in Sydney, Nova Scotia held their annual Graduation ceremony including the award of the Conway Gold Medal, formerly the Queen's Gold Medal, now the King's Gold Medal. On the day the winner of the 2025 Conway Gold Medal and the John McCulloch memorial Award was Keegan Buchanan Vernon, Navigation Officer for the Atlantic Region.

Although he already been so told by Chris Smith, Paul was greatly impressed by the high esteem in which the Conway King's Gold Medal is held by the CCGC. This was reinforced by the fact that it was the last and most anticipated award.

Paul and his wife have been invited back to the 2026 Graduation ceremony, Paul will again be attending as President of the Conway Club.

11. Passage Plan, Awards Scheme

The awards scheme consists of two parts including the ground rules for how the scheme operates.

We are going to award the cups, they are going to be for an agreed purpose for which there must be a transfer agreement. The sub-committee dealing with

this have concluded that we implement the scheme in phases. We award some cups this year, some next year the and balance of the cups – ones of little value, be disposed of either by offering to OCs or scrapping. The proposal is to award the 13 most prestigious cups this year and we are honour bound to report to the AGM to say that this is the plan, these are the ground rules, this is the phasing, phase one is this year, these are the cups we are proposing to 'get rid of' or donate straight away. The AGM should be asked to approve this. The proposed 2025 cups are:

- **The Worcester/Conway Boat Race Challenge Cup** – to Pangbourne College for rowing.
- **The Mitchell Cup** – to Tenby Sailing Club for tba, probably best sailor in the 13 to 17yo, i.e. the age of Conway cadets.
- **The Werner – Kershaw Memorial Sports Challenge Cup** – to Tenby Sailing Club, alternatively to Royal Welsh Yacht Club for the Castle to Castle rowing race
- **The Vaynol Trophy/Drew Cup** – to Kelly College for tba
- **The Roberts Football Challenge Cup** – to Merseyside &/or North Wales Sea Cadets for inter unit competition
- **The Junior Sports Challenge Cup** – to North Wales Cross Country League for a youth award
- **The Wilson Reid Challenge Cup** – to Ogwen Valley Mountain Rescue Team for tba
- **The Drew Memorial Cup** – to the Canadian Coast Guard College for tba
- **The Graham Hobson Memorial Cup** – to the Maritime Academy of Malaysia for their equivalent of smartest top or cadet of the year
- **The Spittlehouse Cup** – to the Welsh National Sailing Academy for best young sailor
- **The Broadbent Cup** – to the Birkenhead Sunday Football League for tba
- **The NcNab Cup** – to perhaps ask Alec McNab to nominate a NZ recipient for this cup.
- **The Conway Calcutta Cup** – the Kolkata Port Trust Pilot Service – for best Leadsman

It was also agreed that we should go to the AGM and say that this is what we are doing rather than that this is what we propose to do. It should be noted that it is

to be agreed between the recipient and the Conway Club as to what the cup is to be awarded for. A note to go in the upcoming issue of The Cadet indicating our proposals.

12. The Main and QB online Chat Groups

The matter had been raised as to the operation and policing of the online chat groups. A Committee member had become aware of politics being discussed on the Main group and queried this. Rob Tubb, who is one of two people who monitor these sites, advised that they are both totally independent of the Conway Club and the sites are in fact owned by Rob. Both he and the other monitor, Phil Van Bergen are aware that things occasionally get political, racist or out of hand. If calls or emails are received by them or the HonSec, they will look at the issue and notify the guilty party. Contributors have been suspended from the site of occasion for inappropriate posts, a yellow card so to speak.

13. Committee Members remaining on the Committee

All Officers and Committee Members indicated that they were willing to continue to serve on the Committee.

14. Committee Members on and willing to remain on the Trust

I had been approached by Felicity Smith in February/March regarding Committee members willing to stand on the HMS Conway Trust. We agreed that there was a sufficient number on their Committee, however this will have changed following Chris Smith's passing. This to be discussed in December and/or the AGM.

16. Llanedwen Memorial Window

The window is going ahead. The Diocese of Bangor and the Church of Wales have approved the window. There was a lot of to-ing and fro-ing regarding the structure of the window and they brought in an expert on stain glass windows

which complicated the design but it is now all approved. Installation date is booked for 18th April 2026. The Friends at their meeting the week prior to the Committee meeting now have a fixed price quote for the window of £16,000. Donations have now been received just in excess of £2k from Club members, some of which is Gift Aided so the Friends will get about £2.5k. An advert will go in the July edition of The Cadet from which they hope to elicit a response. The Friends require to find another £12k in order to pay the bill and they are committed to doing that. The Club has been asked by the Friends if we would be willing to contribute up to half, i.e. £6k. AW had pointed out to the Friends that the Club is a social Club but that he would put the request forward. This was discussed and it was reiterated that we are a social Club with the funds raised by Members, for Members. It is likely that now that costs are known, further donations may be made. AW will revert to Friends and advise that it is under consideration but is unlikely to be anywhere near their request for £6k.

17. 2025 Dinner Arrangements

The Dinner Secretary, Mim Smith was unable to attend and had forwarded a report to Simon Douglas Lane. This year we are staying at the Mercure Hotel in Bedford with a Saturday morning excursion to Bletchley Park. So far (17th June) bookings were 57 but this might be slightly more now as RT had reported more in money received related to the dinner. Virtually 100% of those booking for the weekend had also booked to go to Bletchley. Mim has asked that any member of the Committee who is coming but hasn't booked to do so ASAP. Last year the raffle tickets were included in the Welcome Pack and RT reported that this resulted in a considerable drop in funds raised. SB and SDL put forward that we revert to the previous system of going around the tables selling tickets.

For 2026, Mim has flagged up the idea of going to Ironbridge. There is the chance of visiting the Black Country Museum and also the Severn Valley Steam Railway with which SDL has some connections. She has looked at the Holiday Inn and the Mercure. The Holiday Inn is slightly more expensive but the rooms are nicer and the banqueting rates are very similar. Opting for the weekend of 16th to 18th October rather than 7th to 11th sees reduction in price of approx. £20 for a couple or £13 for a single.

There was some discussion as to how the Club might be able to subsidise the event, say by reducing the couple cost from £432 to £399. Without knowing the potential numbers attending, this is very difficult to evaluate. It is a matter that shall be investigated further. Last year, certain elements of the dinner were paid by the Club however it was agreed that we did not wish to use the 'drinks vouchers scheme' that was used in 2023.

SDL to advise the Dinner Secretary that we are happy to go for the Holiday Inn on the weekend 16th to 18th October and that we propose a subsidy of some form, yet to be decided.

18. AOB

MB asked on behalf of the Conway Merchant Navy Trust that once the Club winds down, can the CMNT have the Club logo. AW offered the opinion that the Trust is probably the legal owner anyway.

AW stated that one of the items in the Passage Plan was the disposal of the Club's documentation. He had spent three days in Birkenhead at the chapel going through the Club papers. The Friends have a number of the Red Books (address books) together with a number that AW has. There are a number of the printed Newsletters from 1975 to 2008. There is also a complete inventory of every single item that Conway held at closure, 100 pages long even detailing boxes of white chalk. A decision has to be taken as to what needs to be done with all this.

19. Date, Time & Place of Next Meeting

The Next Committee Meeting will be held at the office of Verdantix Ltd on Tuesday 2nd December 2025.

Steve Barnett (65-68)
Hon Secretary
The Conway Club

24th June 2025