

Why should I use Twitter to keep myself informed by GWSC?

There is an attitude of mind which makes comments like “Twitter is just one of those useless things to keep teenagers amused and playing with their phones”, “I never use social networking”, “what’s Twitter?”, “all this stuff is rubbish and not relevant to me”.

All of the above may or not be true but **here is why you should think seriously about using Twitter to get quick updates from your sailing club.**

Firstly, let me explain briefly what Twitter actually is. It is a way to post very brief updates (160 characters maximum) about anything. This could be “I am getting up now” or “I am going to bed now” or “I am having Rice Krispies for breakfast”. If that’s what you want to do, fine. It can equally be used for very useful things like “The wind is blowing force 3 and it’s sunny and warm, get yourself up here”.

A Twitter user will send messages out to his or her followers. If you care, these are called “Tweets”. These messages can be sent from the Twitter website, a PC application like Tweetdeck, or – and here’s the neat bit – from a mobile phone. Hence Tweets are limited to 160 characters!

Likewise followers can receive these Tweets from people they follow - such as GrafhamSailing – on the website, in an app, or, most relevant to the discussion here, on a mobile phone as a text.

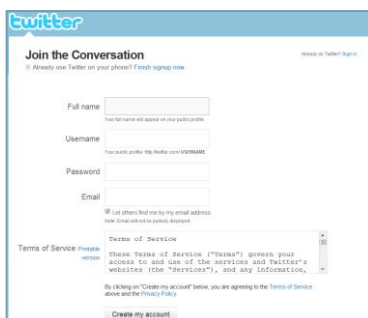
So, let’s assume that the club wants to get a message out to as many of its members as possible right now. If those members have a Twitter account and they have set it to forward messages from Grafham to their phone, they will all get the message immediately. All the club has to do is to send one message.

Some questions and answers:

- *How much will this cost you?* Nothing apart from a couple of text messages in setup.
- *Do you have to engage in social networking apart from GWSC?* Definitely not, unless you want to.
- *How much time will this take?* About 10 minutes to set up the free Twitter account and connect it to your mobile phone. That’s it. You need never log on or touch it again. You don’t have to send Tweets yourself.
- *What would the club use it for?* Well, for example:
 - ✓ Communication with members, keeping you informed and reminding you about events, meetings, etc. and helping to keep the club active and alive
 - ✓ Telling you about things which might be important – such as the fact that the weather is so bad that the water is closed or that it is so good that you REALLY want to be here.

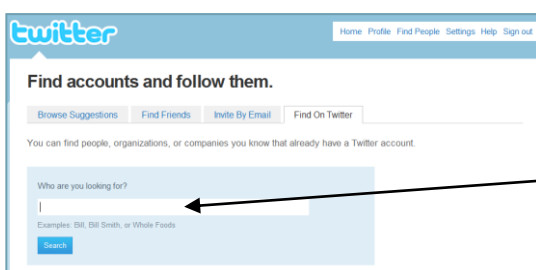
Twitter will not replace other forms of communication such as newsletters, the yearbook, the website and the forum. It is, however a form of “push” technology. We can push things out to busy members when they would not otherwise remember to check the website or the forum (“pull” technologies). This will help to keep your club alive and active. The more followers that it has, the more useful our Twitter account will be.

So, how to get on to Twitter?

A screenshot of the Twitter sign-up form. The form is titled "Join the Conversation" and includes fields for "Full name", "Username", "Password", and "Email". There is a checkbox for "Let others find me by my email address" and a "Terms of Service" link. At the bottom, there is a "Create my account" button.

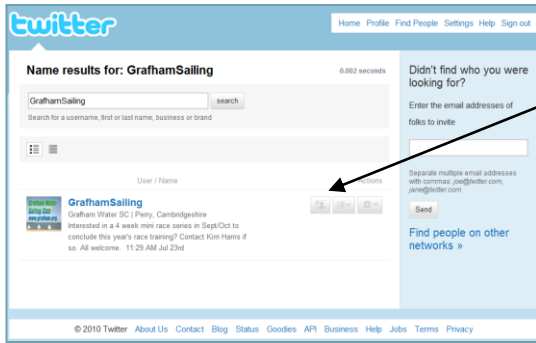
If you already have a Twitter account, you can skip this first bit. If not, then here is how to create an account.

Go to www.twitter.com and click on the orange “Sign up button”. All you have to give is your name and email address and think of a username. For example, my username is “kimentrix”.

A screenshot of the Twitter search page. The page is titled "Find accounts and follow them." and has a search bar with the text "Who are you looking for?". Below the search bar, there are examples: "Bill, Bill Smith, or Whole Foods". A "Search" button is at the bottom left. An arrow points from the text "Type in 'GrafhamSailing' and click 'Search'." to the search bar.

Now, log on to your Twitter account and start following GrafhamSailing. Click the menu option “Find People” at the top of the page.

Type in “GrafhamSailing” and click “Search”.

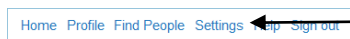


You will get a result like this.

Click the icon with the head and the plus sign to follow GrafhamSailing.

You will be rewarded with the "Following message with a green tick".

Now, the really useful bit, to set it up so that you receive messages from GrafhamSailing (and only GrafhamSailing – unless you set it otherwise):



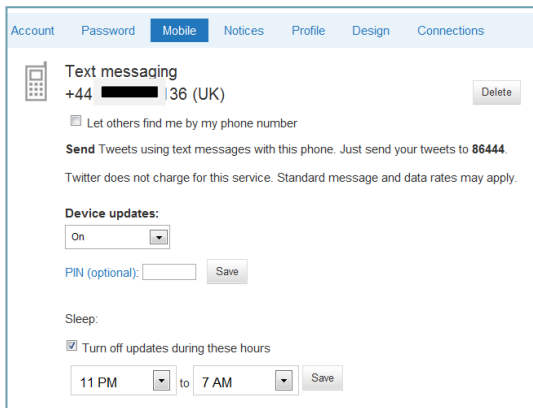
First some general settings. Click the "Settings" option at the top of the screen.

The first thing you will see is your general settings screen. Set this up as you please. If you want to not be found on Twitter, uncheck the "Let others find me by my email address" option. Be reassured that your email address will not be shown anywhere.

Now click the "Mobile" option in the menu.



Enter the fields shown as you wish. Here are my settings.



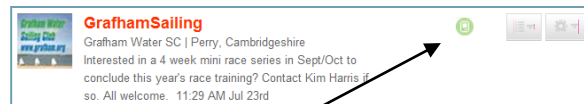
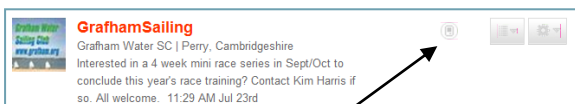
There is a validation process that the system will go through to link you up. It will require you to send validation messages from your phone to the number given but that is the only cost. However, it's worth remembering that you might want to turn off device updates here when you go abroad if you are charged to receive texts when roaming.

Note that this can all be controlled from your mobile phone. See the information on the right.

For further information on all this, click on the Help button at the top of the screen or go to <http://support.twitter.com/groups/34-mobile> for the mobile phone stuff.

Once you have set up your Twitter account for mobile updates, all you have to do is tell Twitter to send you a text when GrafhamSailing is updated.

Go to your Twitter Home page and click on the "following" link. You will see GrafhamSailing in the list



Click on the phone icon.

It will turn green to show that you are now getting text updates.

That's it !

Kim Harris. 27 July 2010.