

Starboard Newsletter

September 2007



Charity No. 1105212

Well it's been a busy summer at New Forest Sailability! With a steady increase in new members days are becoming well subscribed. This has been greatly improved by the instalment of our new pontoon with its capability of handling four hoists. It hadn't been in the water a week when the pontoon was put to the ultimate test for the Inaugural Access Travellers Trophy race meeting at Spinnaker.

Keith has been travelling all around England to Access Travellers Trophy events including the multi-class regatta at Rutland Water, Leicestershire.

Our silent but now famous member Geoff Holt finished his epic journey around Great Britain after taking 108 days.

'Jessie' Revived

Members of New Forest & District Sailability owe a dept of gratitude to two very able and hardworking volunteers, namely Marg and Tony Ryle for their outstanding skills and efforts in restoring 'Jessie' to it's former glory. They have both worked hard throughout many hours this summer and at no cost to the Club have brought Jessie 'back to life' for the benefit of all members.

She was re-launched on Friday 10th August, bringing our on water fleet of 2.4's to three. Number 4 is on Rory's drive waiting for the same sort of loving care. Volunteers, please!" Our sincere thanks to Marg & Tony.



The Gannett Foundation cheque is presented to New Forest and District Sailability at the Spinnaker Club.

New Forest and District Sailability was handed a boost in June after they received their £5,000 cheque from the Gannett Foundation.

The funding has come from the charitable arm of the American owner of Newquest, whose titles include the Forest Journal, the Salisbury Journal and the Avon Advertiser.

Journal chief reporter Tris Dixon handed over the cheque to Sailability chairman Eric Blyth and sailing captain Rory Morrison in front of sailors and carers. The money is going towards a new £25,000 pontoon that will allow disabled sailors easier access to the water and it was installed in August.

We will be having an official commissioning ceremony on Tuesday 30th October - our last sailing



Pontoon Miracle

That might seem an odd title to an article but to the many members who have toiled over many, many months sorting out design options, negotiating permission from three separate organisations, obtaining quotations, writing the dozens of letters and form filling to obtain the necessary funding and then finally sourcing the contracts, it did seem for a while that it might never happen. So perhaps it is understandable that by dogged determination and a lot of effort 'the miracle' of a much needed improved facility is now up and running, in spite of an eleventh hour panic to get it manufactured and installed in time for the Access Travellers Series Event.

What an achievement! we should be rightly proud of this addition which has so greatly improved our sailing facility, we can now operate safely and more efficiently throughout our sailing season without the worry and inconvenience experienced in the past by changing water levels. An added bonus is the much improved stability, the removable safety handrails and the ability to operate two winches simultaneously.

It has also been encouraging to hear the comments of praise from the various groups and individuals.



At a later date we will be having an official commissioning ceremony and will have the opportunity to formally thank our generous sponsors who include:-

The Hanson Concrete Charitable Trust.

The Hampshire & Isle of Wight Community Foundation, Sport Relief.

The Forest Journal

Wessex Water.

Ringwood Carnival Success

A team of willing sailors and volunteers entered into the spirit of the day, firstly by manning our stall on the Bickerley Green, running the games some of which were on loan through friends of Xavier, whilst others showed prospective sailors the finer details of 'Orville' which was kindly loaned for the day by Keith. There were a number of potential customers showing interest, in fact one young lady, Caroline, has already attended on a Friday for her first sail. The combined financial gain for the day from the games and collection boxes was a record £160 which will be added to our general fund.

The fun day continued well into the evening when a total of ten members joined the procession with a towed boat and helped the Carnival funds by rattling the collection buckets whilst 'flying the flag' for Sailability. In all an enjoyable and worthwhile event and well done to all who took part.



Geoff's Personal Everest

By Mike Spencer "Spike"

On May 14th 2007 Geoff Holts set out on his epic 1500 mile journey around Great Britain and got into the record books for being the first disabled sailor to circum-navigate around the British Isles. Below are excerpts from an article Spike wrote outlining the technology Geoff used.

Nobody is quite sure how and why the Round-Britain project started but it was about then that Geoff announced to his family that planning had started for what is a significant undertaking even for an able-bodied sailor, let alone a Tetraplegic (someone with little or no muscular function below the chest). However, as Geoff himself points out, he wished to be understood as an experienced yachtsman who uses a wheelchair - rather than a disabled person who sails. This is a significant distinction. I became involved at the end of the 2006 NFDS sailing season when Geoff visited us at Spinnaker to chat to the members. I was aware that he needed experienced mariners who could 'rough it' for prolonged periods so, as a semi-retired Support Helicopter pilot and Seaman Officer, I offered him my CV. My ulterior motive was that while serving in the Grey-Funnel Line, I had circumnavigated the UK on a couple of occasions but rarely actually in sight of the coast. I firmly believe that the Western coasts of Britain offer some of the most beautiful coastal scenery in the world and I wanted a share in the adventure.

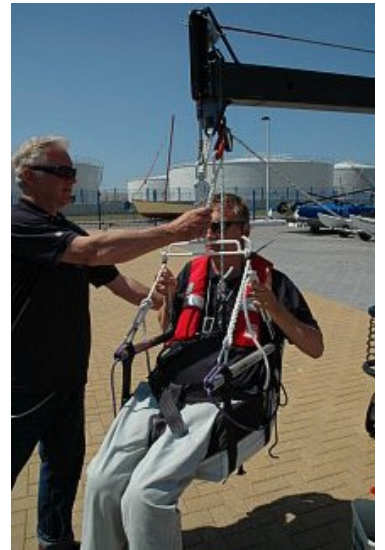
To come rapidly to the present, the support crew and hardware started to come together in the weeks leading up to 14 May 07 which was the original start date. Those last few weeks were a turmoil of planning, shopping, welding, turning, cutting, painting and fettling. I found myself slipping in extra days off work to travel either to Geoff's home at Shedfield to work on the trimaran, or to catch the ferry to Cowes and to Ian Clover's workshop where the support RIB was being prepared/modified. The Landrover came home for some serious welding jobs. The depth of swarf in my workshop seemed to be unaffected by any application of dustpan or vacuum. Whatever we did, the list of 'to-do' items seemed to get longer and more detailed the closer the off date became.

Eventually the Media days arrived (TV and Radio, both local and National) and before we knew, the official departure from the Royal Southern YC on the Hamble was upon us. The send-off was superbly well supported and the nice finishing touch was the presence of the entire cast of the Southern Union Chorus Barbers' Shop ensemble of which Mike Golden is part. They serenaded us in the RSYC Lounge to help the champs go down (one sip only for RIB crew and Geoff) and sang us away from the slip. Mike G is another NFDS Volunteer and also joined the Personal Everest team as driver of one of the crew support vehicles. The excitement and disappointment of that first day's sail was shown live on TV and the continuing full story is well documented on Geoff's website. Some people expressed surprise that we fished Geoff out so quickly but man overboard was the most fundamental part of safety planning and anyone who sails offshore in a dinghy has to expect a swim from time to time. The permanent presence of the supporting RIB and its crew of three is for just such eventualities. However, that evolution did happen a little earlier than expected! Our risk-analysis had been thorough but we took advantage of the extra days to add extra support bars either side of the Challenger cockpit for added comfort and to prevent Geoff getting anywhere near falling out again. Although Geoff is not attached to the boat by any means, in an emergency such as the boat being pitch-poled (going end over end), cutting a single lashing would release the entire assembly. The secondary use of the poles when removed from the boat is to carry Geoff, still in his special seat, in the manner of a sedan chair. By this means, two people can easily transfer him to his wheelchair, or in an emergency across beach or even rocky areas to safety.



On Geoff's boat he had the following equipment in front of him :

- Raymarine GPS (Global Positioning System)/Chart Plotter
- Articulated arm supporting Plotter
- Seat backplate with quick-release lashing for side bars
- GPS Antenna
- VHF transceiver
- Gecko Helmet (With integrated Video camera and Intercom)
- Depth Sounder
- LED Nav Lights
- GPS Tracker (regularly updates position shown live on website when underway)
- 'Spare Air' short-term underwater beathing system (on backboard beside VHF)



Support RIB

This is an ex-MoD Pacific 22 powered by a rugged inboard Diesel engine. After a growing selection of fenders, some fished out of the sea on passage, there is only just sufficient room left for dry bags, thermos flasks and lunch boxes for crew and Geoff's culinary support during sailing days of up to ten hours on the water. We did have some fun with the 24V electrics and a few other excitements - but that is perhaps another chapter for Geoff's book (?)

Land Vehicles

Geoff and his family have a specially adapted motor home with a wheelchair access hoist platform on the side. A slightly smaller bus houses four crew members. The third vehicle is heavily-modified Landrover Defender 110. This carries much of the boat 'spare gear' in the back and on the roof. However, its main function (as well as Project Manager Ian Clover's personal sleeping space) is to recover Geoff and his boat from 'difficult' situations. To this end the front bumper houses a 10,000lb winch. This is mainly to extract the Landrover or RIB from difficult situations because steel cables and such devices are not for mixing with human bodies (!). Overhead is a telescopic cantilever crane arm which yes, made the suspension groan. This structure mounts a man-rated winch and can reach 2.5 metres from any dockside wall to plumb the centre hull of the trimaran on those occasions when no slipway is available to haul him out. A normal recovery is with Geoff still sitting in the boat, using the normal launching trailer. Once on a firm level surface, he is transferred from boat to wheelchair and then to his camper.



Two boats, three trailers, three vehicles. Personaleverest circus comes to West Bay, Bridport.

Race Report Access Nationals - Rutland 2007

By Keith

Well that was a very interesting weekend. From force 6 on Friday, to no wind on Saturday and perfect conditions on Sunday made for a real mixed bag! Steve Sawford went out in a 2.3 on Friday and was swamped by 3 foot waves and had to get rescued.

The racing was taking place about a quarter of a mile offshore so I really didn't know what to expect. Not feeling confident in my untested seating arrangement to hold me solid I took the cautious approach for the first race and put a reef in the sail. I took about 10 minutes to get to the start line but by that time realised with the reef in I was going nowhere fast. Unfortunately I couldn't get to the support boat until 2 minutes from the 2.3 start to get my sails maximized which nullified my result for that race. I was obviously late crossing the line but gradually caught the back markers up. Like Nottingham the area around the windward mark was very flukey and had to put 2 slow tacks in. On the downwind and reaching legs I overtook 2 people coming 6th.

I had to pull out of the second race due to having considerable discomfort problems with my back.

I don't remember much about the third race on Saturday but the 4th race was a real buzz. I decided to follow Anne Lewis (2006 TT Champion) as she was winning every race. I managed to stick with her right up the windward leg but realised she was having her worst race of the day. At the windward mark she was about 6 boat lengths ahead which was down to 3 by the leeward mark. Unfortunately the race was shortened so I ended up 2 lengths behind at the end. What was most encouraging was the fact that throughout the whole race she was shifting her body weight and on the run pushing the boom out to its maximum (which is currently allowed) and I still managed to stay with her.

Sunday's conditions were about 7-10 knots with a reasonable chop. Feeling more confident today I went out with full sail but realized I couldn't go close hauled without feeling incredibly unstable. I managed 6th-7th in that race which was a pretty good result considering I was sailing very loose upwind.

The final race was a 90 minute pursuit race with all classes of boat taking part in the whole regatta including all Access classes, Challenger Multihull, Skud 18 and Artemis 20. I dived into shore for a quick reposition and a reef put in the sail. This seemed to do the trick limiting the heel and allowing me to sail closer hauled. I was a little concerned about my boat speed at the start but realized my safety comes first. For a 2.3 the course seemed to take an age between marks. After 4 legs and 45 minutes I was running 5th in the 2.3's when my rudder battery gave up. Unfortunately I had to complete 5 out of 6 races to be eligible for a placing. Now I look back on it I didn't do too badly considering I'd never face chop like that.

What made a good weekend great came at the prize giving. I was given the Rotary sponsored cup for endeavour!



Roughest Day at Spinnaker

On August 15th Spinnaker Sailing Club hosted its first Access Travellers Trophy event. Unlike previous weeks the wind was blowing 16-20 knots with gusts in excess of 27 knots. The event was made much easier by the completion of the new pontoon the week before enabling up to 8 boats to be moored along side.

With large contingents coming from Rutland Water, Frensham Pond and Tideway, the races were very well subscribed with several entries in both 2.3 and 303 Buddy assist classes from NFDS.

Below are some personal accounts from Xavier and Keith.

Race Day!

by Xavier

On arrival it was clear that it was going to be an interesting day! I was wondering how the crew was going to cope with very windy conditions and a large number of sailors, but everything was made clear as I arrived. I was told where to park and where to go after that to sign in. When I got to the club house I was directed to fill in a few forms, they had thought of everything, which made it easy for me. At the start of sailing I was confident of getting a place at the rear of the group but as it turned out I got stuck in irons at the start line. After having spent a season trying to get used to the racing rules and learning the basics of racing I found it very frustrating being stuck on the start line in the first two races. I thought that my luck would change in the third race but I found out minutes before the race started that my main sheet was not as it should be! After having fixed that I found that my rudder was falling apart as the race started! I did two laps and retired as exhaustion was setting in.

I have to say that every thing had been carefully thought about, so a huge well done to all the volunteers who were involved in the planning and the running of that day and thank you for making it a day I shall never forget.



My Best Result

by Keith

My day started at 7 a.m. when Helen started to get me up. Everything was going to plan until we got out to my car! We discovered the side door hadn't been shut properly leaving the internal lights on and draining the battery. As neither Helen nor I had any jump leads we had to call out Green Flag who arrived within 30 minutes.

On arriving at Spinnaker I was relieved to find that the entries from Frensham Pond had been delayed and racing had been temporarily postponed.

Under normal circumstances I would shy away from conditions like that but the day before Spike had put side supports on my seat giving me more confidence from falling out.

After the race briefing I went down to Orville and with a lull in the weather ventured out with a single reef in my sail. I quickly realized I needed another turn! Fortunately Spike was given the task of shadowing me so got him to reef the sail more. I just about made the start line for the first race and got a flyer! I started at the outer mark away from the fleet! Thinking I was over the line I tacked within 45 seconds of the start. It was that first manoeuvre that set the tone for the day! With every tack after that I was verging on being out of control. Nevertheless on the second lap I was running a clear third which is where I finished.

In the second race I got another great start and was running second until the leeward mark. I cut the mark too close, got stuck in irons and was blown onto the buoy! After taking a penalty turn I never recovered.

After lunch I was already tired but still went out! It was getting harder to keep Orville under control as the day went on and was happy with a seventh in the third race but then called it a day.

It was fitting that I had my best result at my home meeting! I'd like to thank everyone involved for a great event and can't wait for next year's event!

To all Sailing and Volunteer members.

Dates for your Diaries:-

- 1) Tuesday 30th October 2007,
Pontoon & Safety boat 'launch' ceremony.
Optional light buffet lunch available @£3 per person, (booking essential)
- 2) Friday 2nd November 2007,
Volunteers please note, this morning we will pack away
boats and equipment commencing 9.00am, 'many hands' etc.!
- 3) Monday 17th December 2007.
Christmas Lunch at the Ferndown Golf Club, cost £13.50p.
Details and booking form to be circulated at a later date.

Well that's it for this issue of Starboard! If you have enjoyed reading it and if you feel the inspiration to write something for the next issue please E-mail your article to Keith at Keith@Harris75.eclipse.co.uk

Thanks to Rob, Spike and Xavier for their articles. Another thank you goes to Pam for the great Photography.

This document was created with Win2PDF available at <http://www.win2pdf.com>.
The unregistered version of Win2PDF is for evaluation or non-commercial use only.
This page will not be added after purchasing Win2PDF.