

Starboard Newsletter

June 2008



Charity No. 1105212

Eric Blyth

Earlier this year we put Eric's name forward for the New Forest Sports Council Awards, category "Service to Sport". He won the award and it was presented to him by the Council Chairman, Steve Neville, at the Annual Awards Ceremony at Hobourne, Bashley.

My sailing started when I was about eight when I used to spend all my spare time at Eling Sailing Club at the lower end of Southampton Water. When I was about sixteen I found I had less and less time for sailing with work and socialising. By twenty-five I was married. My wife was not a sailor so we pursued other interests. At thirty nine, with two sons of two and four, I was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. At that time I could still run two miles or so, but would sometimes unexplainably trip. Slowly over the last twenty years I have deteriorated through using one walking stick then two and now I am dependent on a wheelchair, just able to stand to transfer.

In May 2001, thirty nine years since I sailed regularly, I had the opportunity to do a weeks cruising on the Solent in a 36ft yacht with the Gwennili Trust. On this trip Dave, a fellow disabled sailor who was partially sighted, would push my wheelchair when we were ashore and I would steer. This way Dave felt safer as he was less likely to walk off the side of the pontoons and quays plus as a team we could keep up with the rest of the crew. On board I could get around without the wheelchair. In conversation Dave told me that for the last few weeks he had been sailing at New Forest & District Sailability in Ringwood but no longer had any way of getting there, so as I drive I arranged to take him the following week. This continued for the rest of the season and still does when Dave wishes to go. By October 2001 all the original committee had retired for some reason or other and NFDS looked as if it was going to fold up so between the five sailors and three volunteers that was NFDS we formed a committee, myself as Chairman (only because I had my own chair). With none of us having any committee experience and very few funds in the kitty, we got through the 2002 season, gaining a number of new members one being Rory. Early in 2003 we advertised in the local press which brought in about 20 new members. Rory took on the job of sailing captain and organised the volunteers. We extended our morning Tuesday sailing 4.00pm. In 2004 we opened on Fridays too. The group also received a number of donations and went from strength to strength.



Now, in 2008, we have 13 boats, a volunteer force of 70 and take over 150 sailors on the water.

Comment from Rory: Much of our success is due to Eric's dedication, hard work and personality.

Lyn Jones

We deeply regret having to bring you the sadness that one of our most enthusiastic sailors died suddenly on Friday 24th April. Lyn Jones was sailing on Spinnaker lake in her beloved 2.4m when, as we understand, she suffered a severe heart attack.

Despite every attempt to revive her, Lyn did not regain consciousness. She was taken directly by ambulance to Bournemouth hospital but to no avail. Our sadness is offset perhaps by the knowledge that Lyn died doing what she loved best. Her sheer enjoyment at being out on the water was infectious; she loved everything to do with the sport, sailing with Poole Sailability and on the catamaran "Knoticat" as well as with us. Her kindness to others less fortunate was noticed as well.

We valued her services when she served as a Trustee of NFDS. Our hearts go out now to her family and friends who will surely be mourning the loss of a person who set such a fine example – she did not allow any disability to master her but kept on, keeping on.



Rory's garage!

Shortly before Christmas Rory, Mags and Tony Ryle cleared out Rory's garage. This was a mammoth task of odds and ends that had accumulated over the years. As I moved into Broadshard Lane a mere 8 years previously I cannot imagine what other people's garages can be like when they have spent a life time in the same house!

Through the winter a series of boats came and went – "Ariel" of the wooden deck, then "Rosie", followed swiftly by two of our double boats. With the weather was so cold that there was no hope of fibre glass repairs or paint jobs being done outside and the resin was slow setting even with heat. Most of this work was done by the Ryles and I don't know what we would have done without them. Many, many thanks! If you haven't seen them recently it's because they are now in Portugal, no doubt working hard on their own boat!

The end of March saw the GP14 come in for a repaint job. This was done by Verwood Day Centre. They are now making a name plate and want to call the boat "Vocall" – V = Verwood, O = Occupational, C = Centre, ALL = All the people who worked so hard. We are truly grateful to them. (See picture on back of page)

No sooner did the GP14 come back to Spinnaker than Rory's garage started to fill with generous donations for the Car Boot Sale. Books and children's toys were sold at Bransgore Fun Day and helped to swell the takings from Xav's plants and the various games. The working party was Eric and family, Xav, Pam, Rob, and Rory. On 11 May Pam, Rob, Brian, new sailor Dave and Rory went to the car boot sale at Canford Magna. A total of £275.10 was made at these events.

Guess what? Rory's garage is now full of her grandson's Grotty Oppy, kindly repaired by John Noble and now just needing some paint!

2007 Rescue Boat Practice!

Cuffy Laverton

Inclement weather reduced numbers sailing one Tuesday so Cuffy Laverton tried out her elderly dry suit and leapt out of a solo dinghy to see what would happen.

The rescue boat realised there was a missing boat and came hunting for it, and, finding it crewless, saw Cuffy in the water. Driven by Andrew Allen as fast as possible to near the 'body' the boat slowed to a perfect halt. During this time Don Baker had lowered the forward ramp and was ready to haul out. This he did by pulling up and back using the buoyancy aid, easily retrieving Cuffy to right up alongside the driver.

Meanwhile the shore crew had not seen anything much amiss. On a second 'leap' where Cuffy could see some of the shore crew, their only comment later was that the boat was sailing well on its ear and she must be having a good time! In fact, the boat was sailing itself and going in circles of various sizes around the 'casualty'. The rescue boat had been briefed not to react until alerted by someone else. Another passing boat finally raised the alarm.

A third leap overboard in view of the shore resulted in shore to boat communication, a whistle being blown for attention and another haul out. The dinghy on this occasion made tight circles and could easily have hit the person in the water.

TIPS for those who Sail

1. Make sure the buoyancy aid is TIGHT around the middle, or have a crotch strap firmly secured. This means you do not slip out in the middle of rescue.
 2. Have a whistle around your neck in a place you can easily get it.
 3. YELL
 4. Try and hold onto the boat in some manner. It may tend to sail round you, and if there is a rope over the side grab it.
 5. Do **NOT** try and swim, it makes you cold
 6. Wave an arm until you are aware someone has seen you.
 7. When being pulled onto the boat go **in backwards** and do not try to help except to cross your arms over your body. Relax and let yourself be pulled and laid on the floor out of the wind. Wet clothing slips fairly easily on the surface.
- (Going over the ramp forwards and trying to help is a lot harder for all– even for someone fit)

Tips for shore and other crew.

1. Keep an eye out for both boats and occupants at all times. If you have not seen a sail for a while get it checked out.
2. Have a whistle handy, and call the desk to radio the rescue boat.
3. If at the front of the rescue boat make sure your weight is kept forward so the ramp is below water level. If you take your weight back as you pull, and the casualty hip bones are not over the end of the ramp, it is **jolly** uncomfortable and could cause a graze unless the back is well covered. (This only happened on the third try)
4. If the casualty is face down, or facing you, turn them so the back faces the ramp before pulling.
5. Place the rescue boat between the casualty and the loose dinghy if possible.
6. Catch the boat later.

The Rib

You may have noted a large, bright orange rib moored against the pontoon in front of the club house. This was kindly presented to us by Geoff and Jean Brown for use or to sell for NFDS funds. As we had recently purchased "Jaffa", we felt that we could not justify its costs. Spinnaker decided that they could not use it and it was rather big and powerful for the lake. So it has been sold for a handsome sum and the proceeds will go to improving our facilities.

New Boats

Alan Bailey has just purchased a 303 Access and Barbara Houston is expecting hers any day now. I understand that NFDS will be able to borrow them when necessary.

2008 Season

Two months of the season have flown past. The weather has been variable to extreme and windier than usual. For the first time ever we have cancelled sailing on a beautiful sunny day when gusts were reaching force 6 and even with reefs the boats were hard to manage.

However, we have made up for it, taking 44 people sailing on Friday 23 May. Several Tuesdays have been almost as busy. We appear to have reached a stage when we can no longer accept new members and we have two new groups knocking at the door. Spike wrote to Rory:

I can't speak for Tuesday, but Fridays are at or approaching limiting capacity as far as new groups are concerned. For those Volunteers who do the whole day, the time available to have a sensible lunch break has been eroded over the last 2 years. While occasional 'add-ons' could be managed for individuals or even small groups to receive a familiarisation sail, I believe that committing NFDS to permanent arrangements for more than we currently serve is stretching our resources.

If NFDS were a commercial operation with direct income and paid employees, this would be an enviable situation. However, the danger we run is losing the good will of our now well-trained and still enthusiastic Volunteers; loss of only a few of those would immediately put the whole operation at some risk. (Witness the forthcoming days when Tuesday is short of Volunteers).

NFDS is already regarded as a paragon of performance and good management – hence our status as a Centre of Excellence. Highly commendable improvements (Volunteer numbers and training, customer numbers, equipment, etc.) have been made in recent years. We should not jeopardise all that by over stretching the group and going onto debit with the goodwill which exists.

Perhaps a question at the next AGM could be "Can NFDS further expand its operation within current (manpower) resources?" But I would be surprised if a consensus were to be achieved. The real question there is "Are Volunteers genuinely prepared to put in more hours?"

