

## **Thoughts From 'Flo Jo' by Val Stevens**

*When I, SORT OF, volunteered to speak following our delicious lunch, I thought long and hard about what to say, trying to remember what had been said in previous years. I decided to just keep it simple and share with you a lovely note from someone new and special to the team.*

I joined New Forest Sailability this year and just wanted to share my thoughts on how it has gone.

It was in April that I arrived at Spinnaker Lake to a very warm and friendly greeting from everyone. I was blown away, quite literally with the beautiful setting and the abundance of wildlife there was there.

I was introduced to so many and was relieved to see that most had a name badge, which helped me to remember everyone. The colours of the boats were amazing, there were Orange, Lime Green, Blue and White sails, some even had matching hulls, and the volunteers, ESPECIALLY the ladies, wore lovely bright pink, blue and lime green tops. It was a wonderful sight, especially as the sun was shining too.

Almost immediately the season began and I found my Tuesdays and Fridays very busy. There is even a race training night and sometimes I was involved with that as well.

At 9.0.clock on Sailing days the boats are uncovered, sails shaken out and all the necessary done to prepare to launch them, ready to meet the eager Sailors arriving from 10.0.clock onwards, From then on it is pretty constant with groups and individuals arriving all the time all eager to have their time on the water. At the end of each day all the boats are put to bed until the next sailing day. The sails are rolled up, the centre board and rudder lifted up, then on to a trailer to be dragged up the slipway. Once on shore the masts are covered and a big blue coat is strapped onto the whole boat to protect it from dust and rain.

The volunteers are a mixed bunch, there are those adorable ladies, and Stephen, who work on reception and serve teas. There is Xav who sells plants and sometimes bakes yummy cakes. Then you have the pontoon crew who help people in and out of the boats and carefully secure the boats to the pontoon when they come along side

You also have the SKIPPERS. Well, I can tell you a tale about some of them! For instance, there is Ian, he is great fun and all the sailors want to go out with him because he tells jokes, some I couldn't repeat, as they make me blush. He is also very naughty too, he stays out a bit longer than he should and the Safety boat is sent out to chase him back in.

One of the lady skippers is Angela, SHE always brings a cushion to sit on and it makes it soooooo comfy for us both. A fairly new Skipper is Stephen, now, he has a LOVELY VOICE, they tell me he is a DJ for Forest FM, I can see why I just love listening to him. I could go on and on about each and every one of them as they are a fantastic bunch and I just love being around them. The only other person I must mention is Malcolm, our Chairman, he is a very good sailor and instructor but can be quite bossy sometimes. But then he is in charge.

The Safety Boat crew are a VERY select group from the Skippers. They are a BIT special as they can operate Jaffa as well as we boats, but they don't let it go to their

heads and muck in with everyone else. It makes us all feel very safe while we are out on the water.

The SAILORS that come really seem to enjoy themselves, some are so relaxed they go to sleep, some even snore. Others like to have a go on the controls, that can be fun, they don't always go in a straight line, but as long as they are happy that's all that matters.

Oh how I have loved it, with the wind filling my sails, ...did I say sails, ..... well, of course I would, I am boat No 4 the new Red one with the adorable name of FLO JO.

Another new boat to arrive this season was Boat No 5

Ferndown Golf and all the other boats have been most helpful helping us to settle in. The most helpful has been Gannett, who arrived in 2013. Gannett is boat No 7 and can be a bit of a show off as he has been competing in races with Martin, one of the sailors. This year, however, Martin has a partner in crime, STEVE and they have been all over the place and have done pretty well. They have been taking lots of photos to share with everyone and we are very proud of them. Heaven knows what they will get up to next year, but we wish them luck. Maybe I might even get to go somewhere with them.

It has been a great first year and I am thrilled to be part of the New Forest Sailability Fleet. I am now enjoying a well-earned rest, just for a few months until March, when Richard Savill and his band of helpers will wake us all up and prepare us, ready for the 2016 season. I am led to believe that we will all be having a pamper day, bubble bath and blow dry followed by a lovely wax and polish, sooo much nicer than in the middle of the season when we have to have our bottoms scraped to get rid of all that nasty weed – none of us ladies like that! So undignified!

I wish you all a very Merry Christmas and look forward to meeting up with you all again next year. Love and kisses FLO JO,

Remember, I am the pretty Red Head, Boat No 4.