

Starboard Newsletter

December 2008



Charity No. 1105212

Rory Morrison, Sailing Captain of New Forest & District Sailability **wins RYA top award!**

At RYA Sailability's National Conference, held at Rutland Water on 1st November 2008, Rory Morrison received the highest award available for her 'Exceptional Contribution' as a volunteer in delivering sailing for local, disabled people. These awards are considered, by RYA Sailability, as the 'MBEs' of Sailing for the Disabled. Her nomination was submitted by New Forest & District Sailability's (NFDS) committee.

Rory joined NFDS in 2002, when it had just 3 boats and was in danger of closing due to lack of support.

In 2003, Rory and the Chairman, Eric Blyth, placed an appeal in the local press that resulted in 27 new volunteers being recruited. Rory took on the mantle of Sailing Captain and set about training and organising rotas for the new team. She energetically 'spread the word' to organisations for the disabled and soon NFDS became so popular it was necessary to increase our operating hours from half-a-day per week to the current two full days per week. We now have 70 volunteers, 150 disabled members and 13 boats.

Increased demand meant that our very basic pontoon became a severe limitation. So in 2006 Rory spent hours, weeks, possibly months, writing and telephoning various organisations: applying for grants, pleading for funds and generally making a nuisance of herself. Consequently, in 2007 NFDS commissioned a new, bespoke pontoon, costing £22,000. The queues to get into boats disappeared, the disabled sailors had easier and safer access to dinghies and two hoists meant we could get more people onto the water for longer. It also proved invaluable when we hosted the Access Travellers' Trophy for the first time in 2007; this is a UK sailing championship for both disabled and non-disabled sailors. Rory's fundraising was so successful that we were also able to purchase a Pioneer safety boat which enables wheelchair users to drive a powerboat.

Most people would have been satisfied with these achievements, but not Rory; she is now raising funds to re-surface our club's gravel parking area with tarmac, making it easier for wheelchair use. Once this is completed, her next goal is to improve toilet and changing room facilities for the disabled. We're sure she has a target after that, but she hasn't dared to mention it to the committee!

Most of us only see Rory on the days we sail but Rory has made NFDS her vocation! As well as being our sailing captain she also takes on the following commitments:

- Fund raising
- Organising volunteers
- Race coaching
- Manager (with Rob) for NFDS hosting Access Travellers' Trophy
- NFDS representative on Spinnaker Club's Sailing Committee



Rory receiving her award from Pat Dod, Chair of RYA Sailability

My experience in the Travellers Race August 2008 by Jenny Monger

We all turned up early on a bright sunny day with a good wind that at times did dip down, but generally was great. The volunteers were working hard on getting our boats ready for our racing. Competitors were arriving from all around the country - Lands End, London, Rutland, Frensham are the ones I can remember.

Mervyn, my co-sailor, and I signed in. At the briefing we drew the course on our map, showing on which side to pass the buoys. Then the flags for the start sequence were explained and, finally, we were given a red flag to wave in case we needed help during the race. Although I should remember what each start flag means, I always seem to be wondering if it's the 3 minute flag or the 1 minute flag as they are the same - I must get a big face stop watch! So I just watch and see what everyone else is doing, and try to follow someone who seems to know the ropes.

Race 1 - after buoy 1, we decided to go to the right of the island, but this did not gain us any places. (If only we had had Paul's comments about wind shadows when the wind is from the East.) We were battling to stay ahead of the boats behind. I think there were 24 boats in all sailing together at some point. We were cat and mouse at some buoys and beating into the wind well to the first marker. Race 1 we finished with us in 5th place.

Race 2 - we went the opposite side of the island which I think had better wind. But the dirty wind of other boats pushed us into the side of the island and we slipped behind a few places. At one point I think we overtook 3 boats in one go, so I was well pleased to have finished 7th. So disappointed with that result, but one score does not count so perhaps we can make it up in the afternoon.

Race 3 - After a break for lunch where we all recharged our batteries, I tried to be up with the leaders and made a good start. About 3rd over the line, perhaps this time I would be able to catch up with the red boat that kept on winning. Although the wind had dropped a bit, we didn't seem to find the good bits or my sailing was not as good as the guy in front, but we did well. I think we finished 3rd /4th with some very close sailing to the line.

Race 4 - I was really getting the hang of getting over the line at the right time in first place, but disaster struck and we went through some heavy weed and our rudder fell off. Fortunately we were near the safety boat and they managed to get us up and running again quite quickly. But by that time we were last and so our mission was to overtake some boats. With what I like to think was skilful sailing, we managed to overtake 5 or 6 boats as we sailed toward the small island buoy. As we were on starboard they had to give way to us. Anyway, we finished about 6th so we were well pleased with that race after such a bad start.

We finished the day just outside of the lovely trophies that Beryl made, in joint 4th place out of 15 competitors, but next year maybe!! Overall it was a great day, very exhausting, but good fun and you certainly learn a lot from actually racing and watching different tactics. Mervyn kept on reminding me not to bother about the ones behind, but sometimes they were trying to get by and I wanted to either block them or keep out of their way. Thank you Mervyn for being my co-sailor. Thanks, too, to all the organisers and volunteers who made it happen.

PS Well done to Keith who came 2nd in his 2.3 in a fleet of 9.



Konigsberg. A German East African Raider

On Friday the 14th November, NFDS was treated to a fascinating talk from Kevin Patience, illustrated with many rare photographs. Kevin is the author of a number of books and articles on East African military and transport history. Although we were expecting to hear the story of the “Africa Queen” film rooted in this area and era, the subject of this talk was the German raider *Konigsberg*. The Africa Queen story will have to wait for another occasion. However, look out for Kevin’s working model cruising our lake one day this summer.

In the upper reaches of the Rufiji River delta in what is now Tanzania lie the rusting remains of the Imperial German Navy cruiser *Konigsberg* and its attendant fuelling collier *Somali*; both destroyed by gunfire from Royal Navy vessels during the early stages of the First World War. These relics mark the site of a curious drama that took place against the inhospitable backdrop of an obscure East African river.

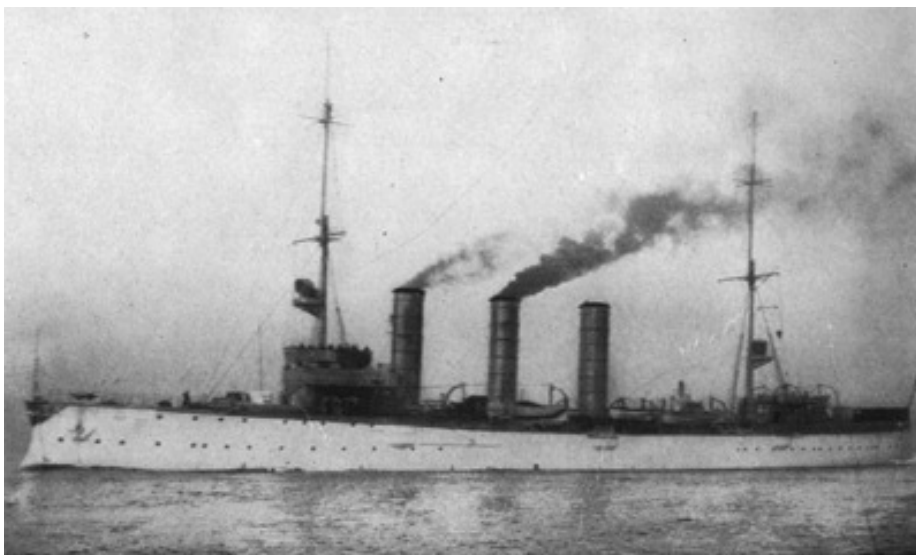
Towards the end of July 1914, the *Konigsberg* prepared for a new role as a sea raider and left Dar-es-Salaam for the high seas, followed by the collier *Somali*. War was declared on 4 August. In the Gulf of Aden the *Konigsberg* captured and later sank the City of Winchester, the first British merchant ship to be lost in WWI. Refuelling with coal from her prize, she headed south once more but, short of coal again, was forced to take refuge in the muddy backwaters of the Rufiji delta south of Dar-es-Salaam,. She planned to sail back to Germany when refuelled, hopefully capturing more British ships en route. However, hearing of a British ship in Zanzibar she headed north. With her hugely more powerful guns she quickly sank HMS *Pegasus* in the harbour. But her luck ran out and major engine failure forced her back into the Rufiji delta.

The loss of the *Pegasus* brought down the Royal Navy and various methods were tried to sink the *Konigsberg*. After two farcical attempts with underpowered ancient seaplanes and tiny bombs had failed, the decision was made to deploy shallow draft gunboats. Two ex-Brazilian Navy river monitors were commandeered, towed through the Mediterranean and south to Zanzibar where they were prepared for an inland river battle. *Konigsberg*’s destruction was eventually achieved by the then revolutionary use of spotter aircraft in cooperation with surface gunfire.

Konigsberg had occupied the Royal Navy for nearly a year, tying up twenty ships and ten aircraft and consuming nearly forty thousand tons of coal.

The wreck remained in the river until 1962 when a salvage contractor cut up the remains for scrap. Today there is little to be seen other than a few pieces of metal in the bushes while the *Somali* slowly corrodes away under an umbrella of mangrove trees. *Pegasus* is now a popular dive site. The largest relics of *Konigsberg* to survive are a pair of 4 inch guns, one in Mombassa, Kenya and the other in Pretoria, South Africa. By a strange coincidence the Mombassa gun stands next to one from the *Pegasus*. Both had been salvaged from the respective wrecks and both had seen further action against each other on land.

For further details and relevant books, Google “kevin patience konigsberg”



Bransgore Fun Day

A contingent of willing NFD Sailability volunteers attended the event on the 5th May, this has become a regular annual pilgrimage that both gives the opportunity to update people of the area about our increasing facilities and at the same time add a few pounds to our funds. The day was well attended with a number of potential sailors showing interest, resulting in young Harry Bassett visiting the lake for a trial session and later becoming a very welcome new member.

Ferndown Carnival

The Ferndown Carnival is always a fun event and brings us good publicity even if very little money. 13 of us walked the 1¾ mile trek around the town on a blustery day. As we approached the bottom of Church Road I (Rory) heard a big crack and as the boat swung round the corner I saw that the mast was at a weird angle and was swaying dangerously! It had hit one of the big trees that lean across the road. As we progressed slowly along Ringwood Road, I jumped into the boat and struggled to lower it with all its flags. It was very badly bent just above the gooseneck. A total write-off! Well no, not quite! When Steve Sawford came down for the Access Travellers' meet he brought half a mast with him, cut ours to the appropriate length and joined the two halves.



Ringwood Carnival

This is a two-part event held annually on the second Saturday in September.

The day arrived with feelings of some concern being the end of an extremely wet week and there had been flooding in the area. With the Bickerley Green at one point underwater, the organiser had taken steps to arrange for various under cover venues to be utilised if needed. However, with the weather improving and the waters subsiding sufficiently, the first part of the day got underway on the Green.

This was a relief as we were still able to display a boat and run a number of games, thanks to the support of our willing troops!

The second part of the event is the evening Carnival Procession and we went 'to town' this year adorning the boat with new 'road sails' thanks to Cuffy, and yards of festive lighting powered by a portable generator. Our thanks to Eric for the loan of the lights and to Spike for the loan of the generator. I believe the photo says it all!

In the procession the boat was escorted by a band of stalwart sailors and volunteers armed with banners or increasingly heavy collecting buckets.

This is a truly amazing procession, the atmosphere is electric with the numerous decorated floats and bands playing, all enjoyed by appreciative crowds lining the streets. If you haven't experienced it, I can thoroughly recommend it!



RACE TRAINING By Di Pettet

During the summer, a rumour started to circulate about the possibility of sailing training, to include racing. Then one Friday, Irene, in determined mood, was enlisting pupils, twisting their arms, to persuade everyone to sign up for the training course. With a notepad full of names, the decision was made to run the course.

The idea came about after Eric asked Clare Butterfield, from Spinnaker, for advice on racing before the Access meeting. She offered to run the training for Sailability in the time she had before she went abroad. Irene duly organised everything, including rounding us all up.

It started on Week 1 with classroom training, taken by Clare with the help of Ed and Tom, as the pupils decided that they were not waterproof enough to sail in the heavy rain. However, it was a good evening, very sociable, and there were lots of questions and answers. Ed and Tom were very entertaining, trying to outdo each other in answering the questions. I was unable to attend, but the course notes circulated the following week were very good. With a recap to remind pupils of what they should have learnt, the notes nearly made sense!

The second lesson started with a little more classroom training, but then, hooray! We were able to sail! We piled into the boats to practise the starts. “Where on earth is the start line?” “What does that flag mean?” “Was that the start signal?” “No, no-one else has started, we’d better tack”. Needless to say, confusion reigned! I’m amazed that Clare didn’t give up and go home after seeing how hopeless we all were. Eventually, after several attempts at practising the start, we seemed to learn what was going on, and actually completed a course to the finish line. Ed and Tom set the course and helped Clare with the teaching, and Graham was Race Officer, setting the flags etc. Rory was also out on the water, filming everyone’s mistakes for posterity!

The following week, the whole session was spent on the water, and we all paired up with different partners to last time. I was fortunate to be sailing with Charles – at least he knows how to sail properly! The utter confusion of last week was replaced with disagreements within the boats between partners, as to what we should or should not be doing! Clare was kept very busy in the safety boat shouting instructions to the nearest person who dared make a mistake. Fortunately, I don’t think she realised how many false calls were being made – i.e. calling ‘starboard!’ when on a port tack, calling ‘windward’ or ‘water on the mark’ when it didn’t apply. I think the idea was to make the other boat give way, regardless of who actually had the right of way!

Week 4 had me sailing with Rory, who had abandoned her filming to help crew the boats. The second race started with a huge collision! 5 boats in a semi-circle all heading to the same point was bound to end in disaster! The boat on the right on a starboard tack just HAD to give way(!) but the culprit on the left on a port tack just carried on regardless as everyone else collided!!! Much laughter ensued, while Rory did her best to untangle the boats. Who caused this mayhem? Why, Keith of course! No-one else would have got away with it, without a lot of verbal abuse!

As Rory and I won the first 2 races, it was decided that we had an unfair advantage (who, us?) and were given a time handicap for the start of the next race. However, Rory abandoned me before the last race, having better things to do. Oh well, I didn’t really need her anyway – I still won the last race!



Day 1: fleet all spread out. It took us three minutes to get over the start line! We have a lot to learn!

For the last day's racing, we again had different partners. We were joined by 4 Topper Group sailors from Spinnaker - Adam, Jack, Misha and Ryan. I was teamed with one of them, but I'm sorry I've forgotten his name. I do remember that he was very good and gave me lots of helpful tips on racing – thank you. I heard on the grapevine that Rodney had decided not to race as he doesn't like losing!

This time it was Eric who provided the evenings' entertainment. Sailing an Access 303 Sports single-seater, he was well ahead approaching a marker buoy when he decided life was boring, let's give everyone a laugh. Anyway, the boat heeled badly, Eric seemed to be trying to fill it up with water!!! This gave everyone the chance to catch up and some of us overtook him. How kind of Eric to give us all a chance! In the confusion Eric lost his tiller overboard. Paul retrieved it, and while trying to get closer to Eric to return it, he was shouted at to keep clear! Paul was only trying to help! Eric blamed his mishap on the new ropes on his boat, which jammed when he tried to tack now what is that saying about workmen blaming their tools??

The boats were speedily put away, thanks to the help of the Topper sailors' parents – this was much appreciated. The evening ended with a social get-together, as it was the last days racing for the season. Unbeknown to us, Graham had been scoring that days' racing, as would normally happen. However, even he found it was a challenge to find the overall winner! Charles and I tied for first place and also tied on the usual tie-breaker points. Graham had to check the Rule Book to work out the winner. I was very surprised and very pleased to learn that I had won, as I have not actually done very much sailing, until late this summer.

Only a few hours later, Clare was due to fly out to start race coaching. How she managed to finish her shopping and packing in time, I've no idea. That is what you call dedication to sailing, for which we are very grateful.

I have really enjoyed these sessions, despite my early doubts as to whether my concentration would enable me to take in the technical side of the rules of racing. The competitor in me has come out, so watch out for next year! I would also like to thank Richard for teaching me to sail properly at last! It's so much more interesting when you know how to sail the boat at its best.

Many thanks to Clare, Graham, Tom, Ed and all the helpers, (including Irene for organising it), for all their hard work and enthusiasm. Do they know what they have started? Roll on next year!



Day 3: Thanks to Claires' expert tuition now look at us!