

Starboard Newsletter

Summer 2010



Charity No. 1105212

2010 So Far...

“Tis the set of the sail and not the gale that determines the way we go”
Traditional

I'm loving the sailing, thank you!! I go as often as I can get someone to come with me, need help with my wheelchair. Everyone there is so helpful and kind and what a beautiful place!! So thank you! Charley Thomas (new Sailor)

First, we would like to thank all those who worked so hard on our boats between Christmas and March to have them ready for the new season

The training days were not as well supported as we had hoped. Maurice runs a really good day on land and on the water. Spike would like to take out EVERY safety boat driver before the season starts, especially those who don't do the job very often. But even those who run “Jaffa” all the time can find a refresher very useful. It's all too easy to drop into bad habits!

Joe Meilak gave us the usual excellent First Aid course. Being a volunteer as well as a paramedic and trainer means that he not only knows his subject but knows our situation. He makes his course very relevant to us.

The first Tuesday was horrendous! It felt as if every sailor was desperate to get back on the water as soon as possible and the receptionists were overrun by people paying membership fees and sailing fees. It is for that reason that we like to get as many subscriptions in from those who attend courses before the season proper gets under way. With that experience behind us, we set things up differently on Friday and all went smoothly.

With 35 – 45 people coming most Tuesdays and Fridays and more than 50 occasionally, the volunteers are really busy! Do you have any friends with sailing experience who would like to join us? Or without sailing experience, but willing to work on the pontoon?

We have also started to sail on Wednesday afternoons. It is open to both sailors and volunteers. We run two groups – the first is for those who would like to improve their skills or learn to sail. The second group is for those who have more experience and want to race. We have been very lucky to have David Bedford to train the racing group. He is a professional racing skipper on big boats and RYA qualified to train Sailability Groups as well Martin Hadley and Tom Harper have joined the Access Travellers this year and are doing all the southern competitions. Keith, with his new boat, “Blue Streak” is taking part in every event he can.

We have already held three major events this year.

On Monday 19th April Sussex Sailability came to compete in their second Challenge. To his delight (and ours), Martin Hadley came first (pictured above).

On Friday 7th May, Morna Hughes (RYA Sailability Trust Manager) brought about 25 Trustees, potential Trustees and Donors to see how a Sailability Group functions. Their visit ended with a sponsored BBQ to which our members were invited.



“The Event” was held at The Spinnaker Club on 14 May 2010

By Pamela Druce

This was the day when Geoff Holt came to name an exciting new Access boat to add to our fleet. It was donated by HSBC Staff and Bank, represented by Adrian Keane-Munday (Manager) Melanie Ficher and Zoe Pearman. Geoff then named Keith Harris’s new Access boat.

The weather was kind and it was fairly warm with a gentle breeze. At twelve o’clock volunteers, sailors and guests gathered for the naming ceremony near the pontoon.

Geoff Holt, first disabled person to sail solo around Britain and then complete an assisted Atlantic crossing, is an honorary member of NFDS. He thanked HSBC for the new blue and white, two-seater electric controlled dinghy. He explained how it would allow seriously disabled sailors to sail this highly modified dinghy with a qualified instructor. He then, with the addition of champagne, named the boat ‘Inspiration’. Following this, Geoff named Keith’s new blue and white Access Liberty XS ‘Blue Streak’.



Our Chairman Eric Blyth then introduced Peter May, Commodore of Spinnaker Club, who invited guests, to view the plans for refurbishing and extending the Club House.

The bar was then opened and thanks to Paul and his helpers, all enjoyed an excellent Barbecue to round off the day.

Peter Bircham Climbing for NFDS



Peter Bircham, our longest serving volunteer, is also a keen supporter of the Jubilee Sailing Trust Tall Ships.

May should be a warm, sunny month but this year the prevailing wind was a cold blast from the northeast. Never one to let little things like that deter him, Peter climbed the mast of the “Lord Nelson” in Weymouth Harbour. It’s over 110 ft. high, deck to foremast top! He didn’t quite make it to the top as the cold got the better of him... but would you do this? Or will you do it when you are approaching your 80th birthday? He raised £402.00 which will be divided between JST and NFDS.

Val Stevens – working on the pontoon

I first joined NFDS in 2008 at the start of the season, so this is my third year. My friend Mary was already a volunteer and suggested that I came along to help out on reception on Friday afternoons. That was until I met Rory who, as soon as she knew that I had boat experience, “albeit yachts” claimed me to help out on pontoon, with the occasional move to reception when cover was needed.

What can I say? From that first day I was completely hooked, not only do I work with a great bunch of people, the sailors themselves are just fantastic. It took me a little while to understand the slightly different language, i.e. painters and not warps, but on the whole a boat is a boat, isn't it?

Pontoon duty is very varied. It's our job to assist sailors on and off the pontoon, ensure they have a suitable life jacket and if a sailor is in a wheelchair that a sling is placed correctly in the wheelchair. It is essential that we know how to work the hoist, which enables us to transfer these sailors safely into the boats. Once the skipper and sailor are comfortable and happy to be released, we slip the bow and stern painters and off they go.

Whilst on the pontoon we should also keep a watchful eye on the lake, checking on what is happening and also being aware of any boats returning to the pontoon. Once safely tied on we then assist the sailor out of the boat, either offering a helping hand or using the hoist again.

Since my first year things have changed slightly. The new system involves a pontoon co-ordinator who uses the radio to advise the reception team which skipper, sailor and boat are leaving and returning to the pontoon. This is another job that I have been involved in and it gets pretty hectic at times with several boats on the move at any one time.

Last year I started working all day and this year my status has changed to being a skipper myself. Thanks to the various skippers who have kindly taken me out in our boats and who have encouraged me to go on my own I have now been approved to take sailors out and I've done it!



Tom Harper

In 2003 I had an accident that left me paralysed from the shoulders down, and changed my life for ever. I was at a friend's house where they had a swimming pool and I simply misjudged a dive. I hit my head on the bottom of the pool and broke my neck at the C4/5 vertebrae. Nothing spectacular, but it's amazing how little force it takes to cause so much damage.

From a fit and active 23 year old working as an industrial designer for a large aviation company and spending most weekends surfing, cycling or snowboarding, suddenly things were very different. After spending over a year in hospital I found myself struggling to come to terms with my total loss of independence, needing assistance with everything I do. Over time I learnt to live with the daily challenges of my situation, but found it difficult to keep motivated and active.

It wasn't until I met Geoff Holt, after he became the first tetraplegic to sail around the British Isles, that I realised the possibilities that sailing could offer someone of my ability. He pointed me in the direction of New Forest and District Sailability, and last summer I decided to give it a try. Since then I haven't looked back and I now sail with NFDS two or three times a week. A specially adapted boat with electric controls allows me to sail on my own, at an equal level to other sailors. The ability to leave my wheelchair behind and be truly independent has been a revelation. I have even managed to satisfy my competitive streak and started racing on a regular basis.

I am trying to attend as many Access Travellers Trophy events as possible and last week myself, Darlene and Martin attended the Oxford event. There were five 2.3s at this event and I managed to gain my first third-place at one of these regattas.

Sailing has made a massive difference to my quality of life and given me something meaningful and positive to concentrate on. I can't thank all the volunteers at New Forest Sailability enough for their help and support

I now work for myself as a designer and do mostly small jobs for local firms.



Tom trying out inspiration for size!!!

Mattie Awarded the 2009 Most Attended Sailor

Last year your committee decided to give an award to the person who had sailed with us most regularly. For the second year running, this was Matthew Tonks who comes with the Windward Workshop Group. He sailed 45 times in 2008 and 43 times in 2009. As Mattie was not present at the AGM, the presentation finally took place in June this year



Keith's Bruce Wake Access World Championships

This year was going to be an exceptional year for UK disabled sailing because we were holding the Access World Championships at Rutland water. This was going to be an eight day regatta with five days of racing.

I was incredibly excited before hand as I was now sailing my new boat "Blue Streak" named after the first British made ballistic rocket. Having had an excellent year in Orville in 2009 I was quietly confident about my ability to bring the fully servo assisted championship home. Unfortunately due to weather conditions and primarily boat winch breakages this wasn't to happen.

There were 90 competitors from 10 countries in attendance at these championships. We were sailing an array of access boats including the 2.3, 303 doubles and singles, the Liberty as well as the Paralympic class Skud 18.

On the first two and a half days we had exceptionally light winds which made it a bit of a lottery as to who had wind and who didn't! Unfortunately I was in the group who usually didn't. I was also being plagued by winch problems from day one which severely hampered my efforts to try and come in the top three. These problems completely ruined any chances I had of doing this with three breakages in five days. That's not to say that I didn't have fun!

On the Wednesday afternoon having spent three hours bobbing about in light airs, we were sent out again in the afternoon because the organisers thought there would be a front coming in giving us more wind to play with. Man, were they right!!! To give you an example of how much things can change at Rutland, in the morning they had to cut a race short because of a lack of wind, but then in the afternoon we had 20 knots gusting up to 25 with two foot waves.

Unfortunately after the first race in this session my main sheet winch almost disintegrated meaning I lost all power in it. I had to sit out the second race in this session, typical!

Thursday was more of the same conditions and once again my winches were playing up! The Sawfords had repaired the mainsheet winch that evening but now it was the turn of the jib winch not to work. Nothing we did would make it work, as you can see from the picture I went out without my jib. Steve Sawford said to me on the pontoon "right this will be just like sailing a giant 2.3" and he was so right. This was the best day's sailing I had that week. Now the pressure was entirely off me because I was a long way behind the others in the standings, so it was just a matter of having fun.

On the final day I decided to play second fiddle to the other British guy in the other fully servo assisted Liberty. He needed to get a win in the final race but there were two Dutch girls who were incredibly fast and with only one point between the three of them, I was going to help Melvin win the gold for Britain. I wouldn't say I got in the Dutch girls way too much but I tried to do enough so that Melvin could get a big enough lead so that once the girls got away from me he would be able to win the final race, which he did!



Sailability Down-Under

By Mary White

In the last week of February, Norman and I visited Dobroyd Sailability in Sydney, the first group in NSW, started in May 1995. Sailability (Australia) had begun in Victoria, about 10 years after it started in the UK.

We were made wonderfully welcome, both on the Wednesday when they have pupils from a "Special School" and again on the Sunday which they run as a family day. On Wednesday pupils both sail and ride on the Ducky (Safety boat) as well as helping to stow all the gear, including the dinghies. On Sundays (every other week) they have individuals and groups.

The Sunday we visited there weren't many sailors as it is getting near to the end of their season (end of March) and it was the day of the forecast tsunami from the earthquake in Chile. Most sailors seem to go out with carers or family though volunteers took others as required. I went out on the safety boat (see photo to prove it) and Norman had a sail. They have a lunch time B-B-Q which helps with funds, as their sailors only pay a 50\$ (£30) annual fee, casual sailors pay 10\$ per sail. The group doesn't have to pay for use of the club house or water – lucky them – so the B-B-Q is important socially and financially.

They seem very keen to visit us when they are in the UK and one member might come in September

It was a lovely experience and they are keen for us to join in when we are next in Sydney, so if anyone else is heading that way I can well recommend a visit. There are many other groups in Sydney and the rest of Australia. We are in touch with them, by email, so can pass more information to anyone interested.



Forthcoming Events:

- 10 August** Volunteers' BBQ to be held at Spinnaker Club from 6pm. Details to follow
- 26 August** Our Access Traveller Event. Who wants to sail in it? Lots of volunteers needed to sail with people, or help with the organization. More details to follow.
- 18 September** Ringwood Carnival. People needed for the stall on the Bickerley and to walk in the evening procession.