NEW FOREST SAILABILITY NEWSLETTER

Spring 2024

The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service
The MBE for volunteer groups

Charity no:1105212

Chairman: Malcolm Bentley

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Dates for your diary:
Start of season:
Tue 2 Apr 2024

See later in this newsletter for more dates.

EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

It has been a distinctly wet and miserable winter but I am keeping my fingers crossed for a dry (and hopefully warm) new sailing season which starts on Tuesday 2 April. Before then, we will have done our refresher training and so be up and raring to go.

I cannot continue without recording my sadness of hearing of the deaths of both Eric Blyth and Charles Shraven over the winter. There are articles on both of them later in this newsletter— they were both well liked, dedicated volunteers and, in Eric's case a founder member, Chairman and President of NFS. It is fair to say that they will both be missed.

Also later in this newsletter, there is more information on the potential change of status of our charity to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation. There is much administration work to be done to achieve this status and thanks must go to both Malcolm Bentley and Andy Holmes for driving this change and working to see it come to fruition.

Spike Spencer has written an article about the 2.4 yachts. It would be great to see them being used more this season. They are fast, responsive and great fun. If you think you would like to give them a try (preferably in not too windy weather for the first try) please do talk to the OOD to see if we can get one or both on the water.

In this edition, we have a closer look at Bryan and Mel Yates and Steve Kitson's "story" of his diving accident and battle to recover some mobility.



Both 2.4s and a 303 on the water during lockdown



Jane Knight in a 2.4

As ever, a huge thanks to **Chris Wales** for permission to use photos taken by him (and others, in some cases) and on our website.

Rowena Marsh

NOTES FROM THE AGM HELD 13 FEBRUARY 2024 AT SPINNAKER CLUB



Malcolm Bentley
Chairman



Andy Holmes
Treasurer



Andrew Allen
Members Rep



Stefan Hart
Membership Sec
& Volunteer Co-ordinator



Steve Kitson
Race Rep



Rowena Marsh
Secretary

The full AGM Minutes will be sent to members. The main points were as follows.

- A proposal to convert our existing charitable status to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and the relevant practical matters involved were unanimously agreed.
- Clarification of the numbers of people and, therefore, boats we can put on the water.
- Our financial situation remains satisfactory, with an increase in sailor numbers leading to an increase in sailing fees and refreshment income.
- A permanent Bosun has been identified (keep your fingers crossed!).
- Following the resignation of Angela Bentley from the committee, an events “team” had been formed, effectively as a sub-committee.

It was noted that Richard Savill and Angela Bentley had retired from the committee and everyone present gave a heartfelt round of applause to both Richard and Angela to thank them both for their many years of dedication and hard work.

There were 29 people in attendance and, as usual, a great bring and share lunch was enjoyed, with some left over cakes and biscuits much appreciated (and scoffed) by the committee in their meeting following the AGM!









FROM OUR CHAIRMAN - MALCOLM BENTLEY



We will be back at the lake very shortly, initially to prepare as volunteers and then to get out on the water with our Sailor members in April. The winter maintenance team have of course been busy on the boats and other essential work and a big thanks goes to them.

Please make every effort to attend Refresher Training as applicable to your role(s) on Friday 22 or Tuesday 26 March. I look forward to seeing you all at the start of our sailing season on Tuesday 2 April.

CHARITABLE INCORPORATION ORGANISATION (CIO)

As you will have seen earlier in this newsletter and as discussed at the AGM, it is intended to change the status of New Forest & District Sailability from a charity to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) and to change our name to New Forest Sailability. We have, as a matter of brevity and practice, been using this name for a few years now and it seems an opportune time to formally recognise this name change.

Why are we changing our status? We know that one of the reasons that people are not coming forward to be trustees is that they do not wish to be personally liable for NFS debts. Although we have Trustee Insurance this will never give complete protection to our Trustees.

In response to requests from charities for a new legal form that provides the limited liability benefits of being a company but without the associated administrative burdens, Charitable Incorporated Organisations were introduced in 2013. The main advantage of a CIO is that the Trustees have no or limited liability for the debts of their charity although it is still regulated by the Charity Commission.

Many clubs have recently converted to CIO's including sports clubs, Rotary Clubs and other smaller local charities and the main reason is to avoid the trustees' having personal liability. Had it been possible to do so in 2000 it seems very likely that NFS would have been formed as a CIO.

To enable our charity, NFDS, to convert to a CIO, it was necessary to gain the approval of our members and four proposals were put to the AGM. These were:

1. To convert New Forest and District Sailability (NFDS) to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with voting members.
2. To approve the Constitution for the CIO including the new name of New Forest Sailability (NFS) and the existing trustees of NFDS to be the first trustees of NFS.
3. To register NFS with the Charity Commission of England and Wales as a CIO.
4. When NFS has been registered as a CIO to dissolve NFDS and after payment of all outstanding debts to transfer all the assets contracts and undertakings of NFDS to NFS.

These proposals were agreed unanimously.

ERIC BLYTH

As you will know by now, Eric died on 21 February 2024. He had been suffering from MS for many years and I had only ever known him in his wheelchair, when I joined NF Sailability in about 2008/09. Despite his medical problems, he was always cheerful, cheeky and quite a "manipulator" when it suited him! When, as chairman, he phoned me to ask me to become Secretary to NFS, I asked when the meetings were—"whenever they suit you" he replied. OK—so how was I to know that the meetings were ALWAYS on Friday afternoons in those days. The timing did not suit me, but by then Eric had me hooked and I re-arranged my activities to fit in with him! He later became President of NFS, even when his time was taken up by starting the new Sailability Club in Testwood, much nearer to where he lived.

We did, as an organisation, apply for an Honour for Eric but unfortunately were unsuccessful. It is a great pity that he did not receive a Honour as he was tireless in setting up, running, and publicising both New Forest and Testwood Sailability centres and publicising Sailability generally.

FROM SPIKE SPENCER—taken from an article by Geoff Holt



"For context, I had been exhibiting my challenger trimaran at Southampton boat show in 2006 to raise awareness for my round Britain challenge in 2007. Henry Lloyd gave me an articulating mannequin to sit in the boat, I printed out a picture of my face and put it inside my helmet.

Every morning when I arrived at the boat show I was told off by the boat show manager because someone was messing about with the mannequin making rude gestures which was not appropriate for children. I spoke about this almost every day with Eric and we had no idea who it was. Then, on the final day, when I got home, I received this photograph which still makes me laugh."



Geoff

ALSO FROM SPIKE SPENCER

One day we were having a "photo shoot" - I think either at the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service or at a boat launch. There were about 20 people on the pontoon posing for the camera where the two decking sections join. Eric came down to add his presence but the weight of his wheelchair caused the pontoon to start sinking, triggering a rush to spread the load !!

TIM WORNER

It was in 2005 that I read an article in the local paper about NFDS written by Eric. They were looking for sailors and volunteers. I went along and met Eric and Rory who made me feel most welcome.

Since then Eric and I always had a chat when we saw each other and we also met up at several MS/Sportability events. Even though I have not seen him for a while I have some great memories thanks to Eric.

VAL STEVENS

Yes very sad news of Eric passing. One thing that has always stuck in my mind, and it was a very long time ago, involved Eric and Geoff Holt. I think it was either at an AGM or a TT meeting where they decided to have a competition to see who could go the highest and quickest in their electric wheel chairs. I can't tell you who won but it was very amusing to watch. **IAN STOCKDALE** added that the "elevation" contest took place at the Sandy Balls dinner after the 2012 TT Race day. Apparently, Eric also got rid of an annoying mobile phone by tying it to helium balloons and floating it to the ceiling.







CHARLES SHRAVEN— 1930 to 2023



As many of you will know, Charles died at the end of November 2023. Charles had been a volunteer with us for many years and although we had not seen much of him in the 2023 sailing season, he did turn up for the volunteers appreciation day last year. I have had many lovely comments about him which I will include below, together with some parts of the eulogy by his grand-daughters read at Charles' funeral. I have also had many photos but when I have looked back at NF Sailability photos, what is interesting—and indicative of the man—is that there are so many of him in the background, perhaps chatting to his friends and listening to the conversations going on around him. He was always so unassuming but willing to do whatever he could with us, and I suspect generally during his life.

Grand-daughters eulogy

We are privileged as a family to have had our Grandpa, Charles, write his life's story, which he named Charles's Story. "On a dark and stormy November day in 1930 a scraggy infant came into the world of a small Jewish, working class home in the East-end of London." Grandpa would often remark on his childhood adventures, especially those relating to his time as an evacuee. His aptitude for 'grabbing life by the horns' is to be admired. On 1 September 1939, Grandpa was told to get himself ready for evacuation. He remembered being very agitated because he thought he would not be able to go ….. it seemed like an adventure not to be missed.

Grandpa's life-long love of flying began during his time at school. He joined the school's unit of the Air Training Corps and had his first flight in a Tiger Moth. Age 19, Grandpa was called up for National Service and joined the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry - the only battalion of the KOYLIS which was operating in North Malaya. Malaya became a favourite, and remained so. After his travels around Malaysia, Grandpa described being *"bitten by the travel bug".* This contributed to his decision to enrol in wireless college and eventually led to him qualifying as a Radio Officer in the Merchant Navy.

In 1964 Grandpa met Grandma (Avril) after she returned from Australia. Grandpa often expressed that he thought Grandma was far out of his league. He wrote in his memoir *"I considered she would have to lower her sights, in more ways than one. "*

Although in his memoir, Grandpa wrote that he was *"no intrepid sailor",* water sports were a clear passion – from learning to water ski in Borneo and Nigeria; teaching Ruth and Simon to sail as tiny children at Hurstcastle Sailing Club; volunteering with Bishops Wordsworth Sailing Club; and in later life volunteering at national charity, Sailability. He found much joy in visiting the lake and spoke of the kindness of the Sailability community who helped him continue to enjoy the water as he later became less mobile himself. The Sailability team shared that Grandpa was "a longstanding, active and popular volunteer" who was "renowned for his apparent disregard for his personal safety perching precariously on his boat". Yep, that sounds like Grandpa!





Kris Fenner wrote a poem about Charles, following a sailing holiday with him and fellow NFS volunteers

<u>Charlie Darwin</u>



Charlie is my Darwin
He never makes a fuss
He's kind and sweet and funny,
He's just like one of us.

When I'm as old as Charlie,
He's 64 I think,
I want to be just like him
And have a boat that's pink.

When Charlie's on the pontoon
It's a pretty certain bet
That if you take your eye off him
You turn around …… he's wet.

If you get to sail with Charlie
And I really think you should
He tacks and gybes and falls around
He's really very good.

So that is Charlie Darwin
There's nothing more to say
Except "Good on yer Charlie"
Hip Hip, Hip Hip Hooray

What is touching is that Charles' daughter, Ruth, found a copy of the poem in a drawer



Other comments

Spike Spencer

I was saddened to receive Malcolm's notice about dear Charles. I can't think of any stories about him other than to remember him as a dedicated and most supportive NFDS volunteer and "Tout Circular Bon Oeuf".

Steve Kitson

So sorry to hear the sad news of the passing our dearest Charles. Such a sweet gentle man who always had time for a chat. Deepest sympathy to his family.

Mags Ryle

Charles was so unassuming. He was always interested in the foreign exploits of his friends at Sailability, asking questions, drawing out their stories. The first time I realised what an exciting and varied life he had led was when, after telling him a particular anecdote, he said that that reminded him of one time when he was flying over the Sahara desert. What?!! Where did THAT come from?







FROM OUR FIRST BOATSWAIN—MIKE (SPIKE) SPENCER

This time, Spike talks about the history of the 2.4mR fleet



The early days of NFDS (2004 - 2007) saw encouragingly rapid growth in sailing with our growing ACCESS 303 fleet and several sailors becoming quite able and then even competitive. As well as the evolving 303 racing team, the Committee determined that a more sophisticated boat could be introduced as an incentive to develop more advanced sailing skills. In 2006 we were offered a pair of used 2.4mR boats (in rather variable condition) from a yard on the IOW. We booked the ferry to get a closer view and with subsequent Treasurer's agreement made the purchase and had the boats delivered. This period was when NFDS routinely operated from our "H" pontoon or the plastic Spinnaker jetty before the current WALCON facilities arrived so we agreed with Spinnaker to moor the boats at the South jetty, then to be towed to the busy in-use pontoon whenever required. As these boats were potentially easily damaged, a simple sailing ability test was introduced to gain reassurance that new users were unlikely to cause mayhem. In recent years, NFDS use of these boats has sadly diminished and the fleet has consequently been reduced from four to our present two. The message is therefore "Use it or lose it !" These eager and responsive boats are most enjoyable to sail where newcomers usually come off the water from their first sessions with the classic "2-point-4- Metre-Grin". The boats are there to be used so if you are tempted just ask to be briefed. Perhaps renewed interest might lead to re-establishment of the Challenge Ladder (functioning similar to a Squash Ladder) that ran soon after introduction to the NFDS fleet; individuals would challenge each other whenever an opportunity presented. These short informal races where course, number of laps, start and finish were mutually agreed, usually took place after core 303 sessions or during quiet periods - we did sometimes have those! Some lively competition developed. When a brand new GRP hull JUBILEE was added to the fleet we also gained a small half model which, suitably mounted, became the annual award for the ladder leader of that season. As far as I am aware, Malcolm was the last recipient and I expect he still eagerly awaits someone to throw down the gauntlet. **(Ed—Malcolm confirms that he looks forward to it!)** The sleek 2.4mR hulls originated as a miniature version of the America's Cup yachts with several competing designers. The 2.4mR became the winning design and it has since lived on to become popular in its current form at Paralympic level. The full history can be found on the UK Class Association website and much UK activity is based nearby at Frensham Pond where there is a large active fleet with regular races. Visitors are always welcome there and with suitable notice, a loaned boat can sometimes be arranged thus avoiding the hassle of road transport from Blashford.

https://www.ukassociation2-4.co.uk Close Racing Annual Trophy
ttps://www.inter24metre.org/about-the-24mr-keelboat-sailing



The trophy for the season's 2.4MR winner





Xav demonstrating the 2.4m grin!

CLOSER LOOK – AGAIN AT A SAILOR *AND* VOLUNTEER

NAME: **BRYAN YATES – AND MEL (SISTER)**
AGE: Bryan is 59 and Mel is 57
HEIGHT/ WEIGHT: Too short/ too heavy and they left it to me to sort out which was which!
ROLE AT SAILABILITY: Bryan is a sailor. Mel is a receptionist having started helping out with buoyancy aids.



BACKGROUND: In a break with "tradition" I met Bryan and Mel at The White Buck in Burley (tea/ coffee/ water) – no cakes! It was very quiet until the fire alarms were tested and a waitress sorted out cutlery on the table next to us. Otherwise, very pleasant.

Bryan was born with cerebral palsy and Mel is now his main carer, both living in their family home. Whilst Bryan has some difficulty in communicating, he certainly can make himself understood and they are both fairly "straightforward"! They told me that Bryan started coming to Sailability in 2021 with his day centre, having heard about us from Sylvia and Sally Morris who they knew from a swimming club. At first, Bryan went for trips in the safety boat but when Mel heard that he did not sail, she set about getting him into the 303s. As she recounted:

Week 1 - Down the pontoon but he decided he did not want to sail.
Week 2 – Started to get into a hoist, then did not want to go.
Week 3 – In the hoist, in the boat "and as soon as his bum hit the seat, he turned to the skipper and said what's your name". So all good! And now he wants to sail all the time.

As for Mel, apart from helping on reception, she talks to some of our sailors or gets them to help hang up the buoyancy aids etc to keep them happy (distracted) while they are waiting to sail or after they have sailed but waiting for the rest of their group.

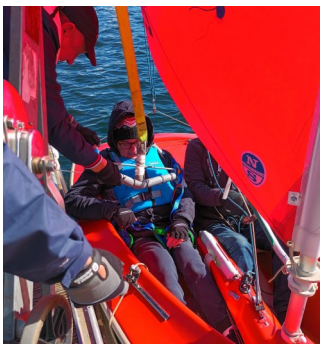
Outside of sailing, Bryan likes to do gardening – both planting and weeding. He is also into cars and cricket. His biggest dislike is being bored. Sounds like a typical male!

NEW SKILLS OR ABILITIES: Bryan is learning to sail and working towards the RYA Sailability Certificates of Achievement. With a massive "credit" to Chris Wales, Bryan is learning to use the joystick in the 303s and learning some knots. Mel said that Chris has taught Bryan the figure of 8 and a reef knot – and Bryan is doing these as home. He is hoping to continue to learn next season and thanks all the skippers who are helping him – name checked are Chris, Ron Harrington, John Ridd and Jane Knight. Mel says that although Jane took her sailing and tried to explain the wind directions, sailing was not likely to be Mel's major holiday activity. She does say that the main thing she has learned is diplomacy! A great skill dealing with so many people with different skills and experiences—and that includes sailors, carers and volunteers

MOST ENJOYS AT NFS/ WOULD MISS IF STOPPED COMING: Like most of us they would miss the company of people at Sailability. In particular, Bryan enjoys the male company of which there is little in his other daily environments. Having said that, Bryan (and Mel) think Sue on the pontoon is great for jollying Bryan along and getting him into the hoist and the boats. He would consider being the guinea pig for the hoist on refresher days – fantastic, I certainly would not want to do that! Mel likes interacting with both volunteers and the sailors/ carers – and definitely can relate to the carers.

ANYTHING YOU WOULD CHANGE?: For Bryan – it is getting to sailability earlier but he has to wait for Mel to get ready. Mel thinks that the booking in system could be rationalised. **(Ed—Malcolm is introducing some improvements for this year along with Chris Westwood that may help Mel.)** Another suggestion from Mel was to ask the carers to take photos of their sailors in the buoyancy aids, so that the correct ones could be identified at future visits.

Thank you Bryan and Mel. It was a meeting with quite a lot of laughs and this article could be littered with exclamation marks. While Bryan can continue to enjoy learning to sail, Mel could help with our IT. So over to you, Chris and Malcolm.



ACCIDENTS DO HAPPEN—STEVE'S STORY



In this edition, we are visiting the background to Steve Kitson's medical issues and what led him to join NF Sailability.

Steve was a keen, highly qualified and experienced scuba diver. In 2002 he went on a diving trip which went badly wrong. He joined his club-led boat dive for a planned dive of around 30m but as the boat left, the other divers decided to do a 55m wreck dive instead. Steve's buddy was someone he had trained and with whom he had dived several times but not certified for decompression diving over 30 meters. In scuba diving, relatively shallow diving is done with air in the tanks but for deeper dives it is necessary to use a gas mixture with a higher proportion of oxygen ie air is roughly 21% oxygen, whereas deeper dives may be with 40% oxygen. The upside of a higher proportion of oxygen is there is less risk of nitrogen narcosis (narked)—similar or probably worse than being extremely drunk—the downside is that it is possible to be poisoned by the excess oxygen in the gas mix at the wrong depth. There is a delicate balance between the mix of oxygen and the time spent at depth—a bit too technical to go into here.

Steve and his buddy decided to do the dive and dived down to around 53m. However, Steve's buddy became narked and Steve decided to abort the dive. They ascended to around 25m but then Steve lost control of his buoyancy, ascended too quickly and without the necessary stops at certain depths meant that the bubbles of nitrogen in his body did not have time to clear—basically, he got what is called "the bends".

Back on the dive boat, Steve used the safety breathing tank which contains 100% oxygen and can help to reduce the bends but after 15minutes he started vomiting, and then lost feeling in both legs. A helicopter was called but was very late transporting Steve to land where an ambulance took him to a decompression chamber in Poole. After 5 hours in the chamber, Steve overheard the doctors saying they were struggling to keep him stable and after 8 hours of severe pain, constant vomiting, retching and disorientation, he lost consciousness. "I remember waking up in a hospital bed, paralysed from the chest down" Steve says. He had suffered severe spinal decompression illness, something most often associated with deep dives, high gas loads (ie higher oxygen), rapid ascents and omitted decompression stops.

Steve's doctors thought that he would never regain any feeling below his chest and would be paralysed. However, by using his specialist dive insurance policy, his wife moved into the hospital and Steve started a 40 day course of 90 minute decompression treatments to help stimulate the nerves. The spinal injury caused his legs to spasm every 15-20 seconds and the staff had to put bungee straps around a pillow wrapped around his legs to stop them hitting the side of the chamber. They also tried a Slendertone machine twice a day to try to stimulate the muscles in his legs. After 4 weeks, Steve noticed a tiny movement in one of his little toes. The nurses who witnessed the movement cried with joy. Spurred on by that, they carried on with the machine, massage and pulling himself about the bed to get any movement. After 3 1/2 months Steve was moved to Stoke Mandeville where the treatment continued. By this time, he could move his knee almost 35 degrees but could not feel anything. After a few days he was taken to the gym and fairly soon was going every day and to the pool twice a week, working at everything he could to improve his movement. Towards the end of his time in hospital Steve took part in a "Bobath" treatment which involved two physiotherapists standing over him and moving his body weight around **(yup, typical Steve surrendering to the ladies!)** but after a week, he was standing and walking albeit crudely. He was able to walk about 3m with 2 walking sticks and used a Zimmer frame to walk further.

Following his hospital discharge, he contacted his dive insurer and as his policy covered private treatment after the NHS treatment ran out, he was able to continue with the Bobath and private rehab sessions for just over 2 years.

Steve has recently had further surgery on his spine and once again, is having to carry out physio and exercise to get back to some mobility. But it has to be said, that if anyone has the determination to improve his mobility, it is Steve.



Steve suffered an extremely serious injury but through determination and making the most of any opportunity to improve, he is still able to enjoy life. Without wanting to sound glib, diving's loss is sailability's gain. Steve has become a competent and extremely competitive sailor and NF Sailability are fortunate to have him as a sailor, racer and a committee member.

AOB OR GOSSIP

I don't know what is going on—but there is no gossip! Help me out here folks, I always like a good laugh. Perhaps for the next edition?

REPRESENTING NFS

New Forest Park Volunteer Fair

Andy Holmes organised a stand at this Fair on Sunday 28 January 2024. Andy wrote this following the event:

"I would like to say a big thank you to Brent, Bob, Charlie, Trevor, Tim, Jacquie and Liz who helped man our stand at the New Forest National Park Volunteer Fair on Sunday. The event was very well attended and we were able to speak to many potential volunteers. Hopefully our efforts will be rewarded with some new volunteers."



Future Stands

Bob Webb is organising stands at David Lloyd Club and Christchurch Sailing Club later in the year. If you are interested, or at least willing, to help. Please contact Bob.

Poster displays for stands

Malcolm advises that he and Bob are planning poster displays for use at stands. If anyone with basic IT/ Powerpoint skills is willing to help please do speak to Malcolm, who has the templates etc., for example those used for the large sign at the club entrance.

FUTURE NFS EVENTS

In addition to the diary on the front page, the following events will take place during the year.

TT Race— Wed 1 May 2024

Volunteer Appreciation Day— Wed 4 Sept 2024

Christmas Lunch— Mon 2 Dec 2024