

The Concise History of The Dart Sailability Group

In 1996, Dennis Kinnair, a retired Mine Safety Officer, was living, beside the river Dart at Kingswear, with his wife and disabled daughter, who was a resident at the Robert Owen Foundation.

Dennis used to take his daughter and her friends sailing in his 26-foot cruiser and the Royal Yachting Association (RYA) asked if he would like to start a Sailability Group. He agreed and they provided him with an old Challenger Trimaran that was made seaworthy by the next year.

In the same year, Bob Scull retired from the Police Force in Bristol and in February 1997 he and Liz moved to Kingswear. In April, Bob saw a letter from Dennis, in the local Herald Express, asking if anyone was willing to help with sailing sessions for disabled people. Bob, also a keen sailor, visited Dennis and after a few Gin and Tonics, whilst sitting on Dennis's veranda overlooking the river, he agreed to help.

After three difficult sailing sessions in the river Dart, with residents from the Robert Owen Foundation using the Trimaran, Dennis and Bob decided that they must be more professional if they are to continue.

They set up a charity called the Dart Sailability Group and started fundraising, recruiting volunteer helpers and acquiring second hand equipment. By October they had received two Sunbird Sailing dinghies and the offer of a third. Darthaven Marina offered space in their car park for boat maintenance and storage.

On 27 November 1997, the inaugural meeting of the Group took place at the Adult and Community learning Centre in Brixham, which is the home of the A.C.E charity for the disabled. Bob was elected chairman, Dennis secretary and his daughter Lucy, treasurer.

In 1998, Bob and Dennis met the operators of Noss Marina to ask for some funding. They were unable to provide funds, but they offered a sailing base with free mooring space alongside the pontoons provided it did not impact on the running of the marina. The marina occupies the 37-acre site of the former boat yard of Philip and son Ltd on the Kingswear side of the river Dart.

At 11.30am on 4th June 1998 the Dart Sailability Group was officially launched.

A standard hospital disabled persons' hoist was donated and fixed to the pontoon by the marina staff. The fleet was four Sunbird dinghies, an old wooded Falmouth Bass Boat and Bob's 4-meter dory, with an old 8 horse power motor as a safety boat.

The Sunbirds were sturdy boats, but no longer in production and spares were unavailable. They were designed for only one sailor and there was no safe space for an instructor.

The first season was a great success, when 26 disabled sailors took to the water on 145 occasions in 27 sailing sessions. We were building a very popular Group with a strong volunteer base. Paul Burns was our first sailor and he was soon followed by Kirsty Stewart and her parents Nikki and Don.

Darthaven Marina offered free hoisting facilities. At the end of the season, the boats were towed to the Marina and hoisted onto their trailers and towed back to Noss for maintenance and storage.

Training sessions were arranged during the winter and the first Annual Dinner was held at the Weary Ploughman and later at the Churston Golf Club.

With further fundraising success, the Group bought two safety dories, a Pioner Rescue boat, a Lune Whammel day boat, based on a Morecambe Bay fishing boat, and 2 Access 303 dinghies. The Access dinghies are designed and built in Australia for disabled sailors. They are 10 feet long, with a fibre glass hull, a deep, heavy, retractable keel, an aluminium mast and two sails. Two people can sit beside each other, facing forward, controlling the sails and steering with a joy stick. Wheelchair users are hoisted, by a sling, from their wheelchair into the seat.

Darthaven donated a free pontoon mooring space for the Rescue boat and two free car parking spaces. This generosity meant that volunteers could be ferried between Dartmouth and Noss for sailing sessions.

In early 1999, Dennis announced he was moving to Portugal for his wife's health and Bob took on the additional role of co-ordinator and Liz Scull was elected secretary and fundraiser.

Bob helped Dennis to sail his boat, Nutmeg, to Portugal experiencing a severe storm in the Bay of Biscay.

Noss marina donated a redundant porta cabin that was soon equipped with a kitchen for hot drinks and storage shelves for lifejackets, water proofs and general equipment. A double-glazing company donated and fitted two windows.

As the Noss marina buildings deteriorated, our winter boat maintenance and storage area was moved from the machine shop, to the pattern making shop, near the offices at the top of the site and finally to the present Green Shed, beside the slipway. As a charity, we annually negotiated a business rate rebate on this building.

In 2001, we purchased a 3rd Access 303 dinghy to replace the Sunbirds and a 17 foot Nab Dory to accommodate wheelchair users.

Pat Luxton started compiling the Group's Policy and Procedures manual.

Bruce Symes, the bosun, and David Edey, a sailing instructor, started collecting items for the bi-annual Boat Jumble sales, at Newtown Abbot race course. It started with Bruce wanting to clear unwanted clothing from his store.

By 2002, the Group was a well-established part of the river Dart scene and was growing. Many volunteers had settled into fixed roles and others were happy to do whatever was required.

Bob Scull, Pat Luxton and Tim Somner qualified as Power Boat Instructors to train the volunteers.

In April, after a successful RYA inspection, the Group was granted Foundation Status, which meant we had reached the required standards of accessibility and safe handling for disabled people.

In July, we made a video to illustrate our promotional talks.

In 2003, we purchased 3, 4-metre RIBs (Rigid Inflatable Boats) as safety boats. Jenny Luxton, a disabled sailor, qualified to helm the Rescue boat and she strictly enforced safe practises. Ten volunteers passed the Power Boat 2 (PB2) course.

After a further successful RYA inspection, we agreed to become a Power Boat Training Centre with Bob as the Principal.

Mike Durston agreed to organise a series of races for the 'Durston Trophy', which he and Doreen donated.

The RYA declared us the Sailability Centre of Excellence for the South West.

2004 began with 23 sailors and two local Rotary clubs wishing to donate a fourth Access 303 dinghy. More mooring space was provided, but at an annual charge.

In September, during a blustery race, Kirsty Stewart capsized and she floated out of her boat. Robert Boyd's steering broke, but he still managed to catch one of Kirsty's shoes. Tony Jones's life jacket accidentally inflated and Mic Christmas sailed on to win the race. The rescue procedures worked perfectly and we were all soon back onshore with Kirsty dripping, but still smiling.

When we learnt that a disabled group in Ukraine was unable to sail due to a lack of lifejackets we sent 6 lifejackets, from Bruce's store, and a Sunbird via the Rotary clubs, who made the delivery to Mariupol on the Azov sea.

At the end of the season, longstanding volunteer and engineer, Dave Cleveland, retired and Frank Vond took over.

In 2005, with increased demand, we purchased two more Access 303 dinghies and a new Hawk 20 keelboat.

Bruce bought the Whammel and he continued to sail it, from his home in Galmpton, to ease the pressure at each sailing session. The boat was a picture with its prominent red sails and black hull. Bruce would sit at the stern near the tiller and let the students and staff sail his boat as he provided the tea and doughnuts. One day Bruce mistimed the tide and he ran aground. His crew quickly jumped ship and he, like a true captain, waited for the next tide. He promises to improve his singing.

In the spring, we learnt that the marina had been sold, which caused us some concern for our future.

We started competing in the Royal Dart Yacht Club (RDYC) Wednesday night series in Equalizer, the Hawk 20, with crews of two less-able sailors and two volunteers. We joined in the Port of Dartmouth Royal Regatta finishing 11th out of 30. Not bad for a first attempt.

Mark Farries qualified as a Senior Sailing Instructor and the Group became a RYA Training Centre for power and sail. Bob handed the role of Principal to Mark.

93 disabled sailors took to the water 604 times in 42 sailing sessions.

In 2006, it was business as usual with sufficient boats and a great team of volunteers. Jennie Lloyd Edwards, the long standing Social Secretary, announced she was leaving Devon to be with her family and Janet Helmore and Janet Cottey accepted the role. Jennie donated the Jennie's Cup for the most improved sailor as an encouragement to budding racers.

In 2007, Bob and Liz decided to move from Kingswear. They felt that they had taken the Group as far as they could; it was financially sound and in safe hands. They sold their house and resigned on 8 July.

We marked Bob's last sailing day with a sail past. With loud cheers of thanks and best wishes, we surprised him and Jenny Luxton as they sat chatting in the rescue boat. We had an excellent tea, arranged by the two Janets, when we presented Liz and Bob with a brass plaque engraved, 'Thanks for the first ten years' and a beautiful Cockington glass vase. Bob agreed to become our honorary President.

At the next trustees' meeting, on 14 July, Mark Farries agreed to continue as the Principal and Chief Instructor, in charge of all 'Water Based Activities', Robert Boyd was elected chairman, Nikki Stewart was elected secretary and co-ordinator and Mic Christmas continued as treasurer.

Mark published a comprehensive programme of training and sailing for all. We passed our annual RYA inspection with a recommendation to modernise our kill cords.

In August, Mark organised the Dart Sailability Regatta with visiting sailors from Wimbleball Sailability in Somerset and Bristol Sailability responding to our invitations. Alan Hall of 'Flair Lingerie' in Dartmouth, donated the Flair Cup, which he presented to Robert Boyd, the winner of the single-handed races. The Sue Holman Challenge Trophy was donated by Sue Holman of Darthaven Marina. It was presented to the winners of the pairs races, Juliet Prentice and Jo Smith by Roger Belsey, the President of Dartmouth Rotary Club, who also donation £500 to Dart Sailability, his chosen charity.

Later that month, we attended the Kingswear regatta and promoted the Group with a fully rigged Access dinghy on its trailer with photographs and leaflets. In September, Lucy Payne, the chair of the Regatta Committee, surprised us with a donation of £3000.

Equaliser finished 6th in the RDYC Wednesday night races and 9th of 21 in the Dartmouth regatta.

We finished the season, with a race for the Founder's Shield, donated by Bob Scull and Dennis Kinnair. It is a pairs race, when a less able sailor takes the helm with an instructor.

In September, the new owners, a consortium of business men, published their proposed Noss Marina regeneration plans in the local newspapers. They then used a large display model to illustrate these plans, at three public consultation events, before submitting the plans to South Hams District Council.

They planned a new marina with 250 jobs, South Devon College to become an academy, a 5-star hotel and spa, houses, both on site and in Dartmouth and a new walk way between Noss and the higher ferry. They intended to use the railway and the river to bring materials in and out of the site.

On 30 October 2007, 73 members gathered at Churston Golf Club to celebrate the Group's 10th anniversary arranged by Nikki Stewart and Janet Helmore.

Mark Farries illustrated Bob Scull's description of those early days.

Vic Rolfe, the RYA Sailability South West Regional Organiser, presented Bob with a RYA fleece for his exemplary service to disabled sailing. Pat Luxton presented Liz and Bob with a sophisticated weather system from the members and Mary Searle, a disabled sailor, presented them with her painting of Equalizer proudly flying her spinnaker.

Bob presented the Founders' Shield to Richard Cottey, by video link, as Richard was in Australia at the time. Richard made an excellent acceptance speech.

Christina McGrath donated £500 from her late husband's Ray McGrath Memorial Trust.

Stephen Corner, the Financial Director of Noss Marina Ltd assured us that we had a good future in the proposed new development and he said that we no longer had to pay our mooring fee.

We ended the evening by thanking Bob and Liz for all their hard work in creating the Group.

The AGM was held, as usual, at Dragon's Tail, Brixham. We saw that our finances were very healthy, thanks to the generosity of our 5 long term sponsors, numerous other donors and the assistance of Darthaven Marina and Noss Marina.

On 17 December 2007, Mary Rimmel, the musical director of the Stoke Flemming Operatic and Drama Society donated £1000 to Dart Sailability that was gratefully received by Kirsty Stewart and Robert Boyd. We were treated to an evening of carols and two monologues. Gwen Teage spoke, as an irate police officer, trying to deal with a very merry Father Christmas, whose reindeers and sledge were parked on double yellow lines.

Janet Helmore had arranged our social events at the Noah's Ark, Paignton and, with Janet Cottey's assistance, the annual dinner at the Churston Golf Club. Bob Scull received his ten-year service award.

Bob Scull, Pat and Jenny Luxton and Mark and Angela Farries attended the RYA Annual Conference at Keswick, where Bob was presented with an RYA award for his contribution to RYA Sailability.

On 14 March 2008, Roy Grainger lost his battle with cancer. We know from his close friend, Trevor Jeakins, that sailing helped him fight this awful illness.

On 19 April Mark Farries, Alan Davenport and Terry Hopwood staged a seamanship training day at the Galmpton Institute with very delicious, homemade refreshments for lunch and tea.

On 12 May Pat Luxton lost his fight against spinal cancer. He joined the Group with his wife Jenny in 2000 and he became Bob's right hand man. He took on the roles of writing the Procedures Manual, health and safety training, radio maintenance, weather recording, driving the Nab and BBQ chef. He was meticulous in all he did, including the commentary that he provided, at the helm of the Nab. Both Roy and Pat are greatly missed.

We raced on two occasions between Noss and the Galmpton Basin, where the sailing is always challenging and competitive. The shore crew continued the normal services at Noss.

On 27 June, Mark Farries, Robert Boyd, Mic Christmas and Alan Davenport visited New Forest Sailability to try their Access 303 sport dinghies, one with electric controls and the manual hoist. The trustees later decided to buy two Access sport dinghies and a hoist.

The RYA inspector recommended that the helm of the Hawk wore a kill cord on their leg.

Mayfield School joined Bidwell Brook School on the RYA On-Board scheme supported by Pete Muskett of the RYA.

Mark Farries qualified as a power boat instructor.

In August, Mic Christmas, Kirsty Stewart and Robert Boyd visited Wimbleball Lake, in Somerset, for race training with RYA coach George Baker. Mic and Robert struggled to tack the single sail Challengers and Robert was knocked into the water. The next day, George came to Noss and we raced in a strong tide. He videoed our starts for us to learn from.

Equalizer finished 7th in the Dartmouth Regatta. On the Sunday, we made history for the Group, by winning the only race of the day in very calm winds and by avoiding the multiple collisions. We won the Telford Trophy Challenge Prize that consisted of an engraved decanter, donated by Old Pulteney Whisky and a bottle of their malt, which Colin Smith really enjoyed.

The RYA noticed our keenness for racing and donated a Sonar keel boat that we named Sonar of the Dart.

Trevor Jeakins and his fellow volunteers presented Steve Sedgewick with a plaque engraved, 'Thanks for all your hard work'.

We started 2009 with a 23-foot Paralympic class Sonar keel boat that boosted our training and racing fleet and two Access Sports dinghies that are drier, faster, but heavier boats for single handed sailors.

Paul Burns, Jenny Luxton and Terry Hopwood received their ten-year service awards.

Mark, Gerry Willox and Alan Davenport staged another seamanship session.

Bruce, Robert and Ian Cottey displayed a fully rigged Access dinghy, at an exhibition in Torquay, to promote activities for disabled people.

Nikki and Kirsty Stewart received a donation of £500 from Stover School.

We held two races to Galmpton that tested our skills on this beautiful river.

We received £750 from the RYA On-Board scheme to support our work in providing sailing experiences for disabled students. Mat Grier, a RYA racing coach, visited us to advise Mark on how to get the best from the Sonar.

Mark and Robert attended the RYA multi-class regatta at Rutland water, for the first time, and Mark towed an Access dinghy. Mark helped with the organisation and Robert learnt how inexperienced he was.

Friday was registration day for the sailors, classroom training and race practise. I had to learn the start sequence using flags and racing in a large fleet.

On the Saturday, I struggled as I raced into a strong head wind and the water lapped over the bow and the sides. By lunch time, I was sat in a bath tub and I now had to return to the pontoon and land for the first time. How I missed the Dart Sailability safety boats! But I did manage, without too much of a crash, and I was hoisted out to drip dry.

I fared better in the afternoon, with a dry boat, calmer conditions and two more races.

On Sunday, we had a pursuit race, in glorious sunshine, and my spirits rose, despite being threatened with a protest, from a super-fast Challenger, who accused me of obstructing him, when rounding a buoy. I was now having too much fun to worry and he never did protest me. However, it did prompt me to learn the rules. I came 8th from 13 on the Saturday and 39 from 72 on the Sunday. I really enjoyed the experience, the friendships and the lovely facilities.

Back at home, the chair of the Port of Dartmouth Regatta invited Mark and I to the opening ceremony. We entered both keelboats in the hectic four days of racing with mixed ability crews. The Sonar finished 5th and the Hawk 10th. The skippers deserve special praise for managing the complexity of the races and the inexperience of the sailors.

The RYA inspector asked if our policy decisions were recorded and circulated and did we have a policy for dealing with children and vulnerable adults, which we do.

We finished the season with a BBQ, arranged by Janet Helmore and cooked by Janet Cottey, followed by a naming ceremony. Jenny Luxton named the Nab, 'Patzome' after her husband Pat, Roy Grainger's daughter named the red Access, 'Roving Roy' after her father and the blue Access was named 'Klever Kirsty' by Nikki, as a tribute to Kirsty, in her on-going battle against numerous illnesses and her enthusiastic contribution to disabled sailing.

Our finances were healthy due to the generosity of John and Melanie Holman at Darthaven Marina, Steven Corner at Noss Marina, Christina McGrath for the Ray McGrath Memorial Trust, John and Rosemary Minshall for their regular donation and our other sponsors and donors. Core funding is always difficult to obtain and we are fortunate to receive so much community support.

The boat maintenance volunteers started 2010 in the coldest winter for 29 years, but thanks to their tenacity, hard work and comradeship within the shelter of the 'Green Shed', so generously provided by Noss marina, all 15 of our boats were ready to start the season on 18 May.

The social organisers kept us in touch with skittles, lunches and the annual dinner at the Churston Golf Club. Roma Severn, Val Atkinson, Tim Somner and Mike Durston received their ten-year service award.

Mark and Angela Farries and Bruce and June Symes attended the RYA Sailability Annual Conference at Wyboston Lakes, where Bruce received an award for his 'Outstanding Contribution to disability sailing'. Bruce thanked his wife June and friend David Edey for all their hard work and assistance that had helped to raise funds for DSG.

Andy Fell completed our RYA Disability Awareness Training and Sue Price and Gwen Teage were appointed as our trainers.

The Noss Marina staff fitted the manual hoist to the pontoon as a second hoisting point and we purchased a keel lift to avoid the strain when raising the Access dinghy keels.

The RYA inspector recommended that we add a knife to our emergency equipment and that we provide a safe storage area for spare petrol.

All members were reminded to read the Procedures Manual updates to ensure best practice. Val Phillips managed our Child Protection and Vulnerable Adult Protection policy with the RYA.

We introduced a complaints procedure, in which written complaints would be initially dealt with by the Principal, for volunteers, and the Co-ordinator, for the sailors. If unresolved, the Chairman of Trustees' would pass it to a panel of three trustees.

Noss Marina purchased a replacement cabin that was fitted out by the marina handyman, John Whitmore and Kevin Helmore, a DSG trustee.

Penn Wooding, a disabled person from Brixham, redesigned our website www.dartsailability.org.

Mark, Robert, Terry Hopwood, Roma Severn, Liz Thompson, Kirsty Stewart, with her parents and Val Phillips competed at the RYA multiclass regatta at Rutland. Robert finished third on the Saturday and first on the Sunday. Liz and Roma finished third on Saturday and Kirsty, Val and Mark finished first in the Laser Stratus race on Sunday.

Roma and her husband lost their home, under the water, when Rutland reservoir was built. Before that, they had been keen carriage riders and they had donated a Challenge Cup to the club. Now that the club had folded, Roma re-donated her cup to the multiclass regatta for a competition between Rutland and Dart Sailability.

It was pleasing to see Liz Thompson and Grahame Young racing, Mark Taylor sailing solo and Colin Whymark keel boat racing.

In September, Brendon Helmore and Jordon Ruse won the Founders' Shield in light, variable winds with excellent skills. We then enjoyed a BBQ and raffle with dancing to Ian James and his ceilidh band, 'Warts an' All'.

We had had a very successful year of fundraising. Bruce arranged an Antique Evaluation Day at the Berry Head hotel that raised £770. We competed in the Devon Medical Rally with, Dr Stephen Hopwood, son of Terry, that raised £150. Barry Cooper and his DS crew raced in the Eddystone charity race that raised £1652 and Cora Quinn raised £3650 by climbing Mount Kilimanjaro.

11 Keelboat instructors, 2 Power boat instructors and 4 assistant instructors were trained during the year.

At the AGM, Val Phillips and Alan Davenport resigned and Sue Price and Liz Thompson were elected.

114 disabled sailors took to the water 564 times.

On 16 November 2010, we joined the survivors, families, friends and community members to remember the twenty workers, who were killed, when Philips Boat Yard was bombed in WW2. Noss Marina had commissioned a memorial stone, bearing their names, that was placed in a memorial garden, built by John Whitmore, near the scenes of these tragedies and overlooking the river. Reverend David Treby of Stoke Gabriel conducted the service and the blessing. Theresa Whitmore's mother, Irene Kennar was working in the copper plating section at the time of the bombings. She survived the first attack, by sheltering under the desk, and the second by darting into the gent's toilet.

In 2011, Trevor Jeakin, Gwynneth Hampshire and David Edey received their ten year service award.

On 9 June, we enjoyed a lovely sail to Brixham, in yachts belonging to Mark Farries and Tim Somner. Liz Thompson had arranged a liaison meeting, at Brixham's Yacht

Club, between Dart Sailability and Torquay's Disabled Sailing Association (DSA). 36 members enjoyed a very sociable lunch together, before we raced DSA back to Dartmouth.

The RYA inspector complimented us on our Procedure file, our activities, enthusiasm, training and the skills of our volunteers and sailors with no recommendations.

On 18 June, we hosted the annual South West Regional Sailability meeting with Debbi Blachford, the RYA Sailability Manager, Vic Rolfe, the Regional Organiser and Regional representatives. The meeting was very successful and our social organisers provided a very tasty lunch. Bob Scull was now assisting Vic in developing the South West Sailability clubs.

On 26 June, we competed in a 2-day regatta at Plymouth for Hawk 20 keelboats. We finished third, despite having to rescue a crew member, who fell over board as we tacked.

Bob Miller arranged a day's sail, for 15 of us, on the Lord Nelson of the Jubilee Sailing Trust. She is a square-rigged sailing barque adapted for disabled people and we were encouraged to take a full part in all the sailing activities.

Robert Boyd represented DSG at Rutland, where the weather was kinder. He came 4th in the Access races and 7th in a modified pursuit race. He won back the Roma Severn Challenge Trophy.

During the Port of Dartmouth Royal Regatta, at the end of the last race on the Sunday, Equalizer capsized and turned turtle, trapping the helmsman, Robert Boyd, under the water. He was quickly recovered, rushed to Dartmouth and airlifted to Derriford Hospital, at Plymouth, where he made a full recovery. He personally met and thanked all his rescuers. The RYA investigated the accident and they recommended: no one was to be strapped in, mast head buoyancy to be fitted, the centre plate to be kept down, avoid cleating the sheets and the helmsman to always hold the tiller extension. The Sonar came second in the race.

In 2012, Janet and Kevin Helmore and Janet and Ian Cottey held a ceilidh dance evening and buffet with Ian James and his band, Warts an' All. I never thought I would dance in a wheelchair, but I did and we all had an excellent evening.

Nikki and Kirsty Stewart, Elaine Cowper-Smith and Ian Hooper, whose stage name is Ian James, received their ten-year service awards.

We passed our RYA inspection, but we were required to reinstate the First Aid Badge over the cabin door, to fit a safety stop on Safety one and to write a training plan for volunteers.

We celebrated the Queen's Diamond Jubilee, on 4 June, in the Nab, festooned in bunting. 60 boats sailed in line, from the mouth of the river Dart to Dittisham and back, with a final salute to the Lord Lieutenant, the Queen's representative.

Later that month we donated to Graham Solway, in his round Britain collection, for the Cure Parkinson's Trust.

Oaklands Park in Dawlish, Bidwell Brook in Dartington and Mayfield in Torquay continued to enjoy our On-Board scheme for disabled students between 14 and 16. John Ballantyne, the organiser and administer of the scheme, arranged for the presentation of bronze, silver and gold certificates and badges to mark their achievements.

Tim Somner and Gareth Davies became our Power Boat instructors and Tim arranged the purchase of the Ribcraft safety boat.

The Sonar of the Dart won the Keelboat class, for the first time, at the Port of Dartmouth Royal Regatta.

On 27 October 2012 Val Atkinson died. She was an enthusiastic trustee and Shore party leader, who often cuddled her little dog in her fleece. We experienced a very moving celebration of her life at her church, Saint Peter's of Stoke Fleming.

At the AGM, Kevin Helmore, Liz Thompson and Frank Vond stood down and Nick Teage, Val Philips and Barry Cooper were elected.

Mark Farries indicated he wished to stand down as Principal, but his replacement had not been arranged.

In 2013, the Annual Dinner was held in the Mulberry Room of the Berry Head Hotel, Brixham, where the larger room suited the wheelchair users. Richard Fellender, Kevin Helmore, Ian Cottey, Frank Vond and Bruce Symes received their ten-year long service awards.

At the Trustees' February meeting, concern was raised over their financial liability. Two local solicitors attended the next meeting in May and they recommended that we change to the new Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The trustees and members supported this recommendation at a general meeting on 16 June. A CIO constitution, based on the Association model, was tailored to the needs of the DSG and submitted to the Charity Commission.

On 18 September, the Dart Harbour Board awarded the DSG, the Dart Harbour Senior Award for exceptional and inspiring work on the river. They had visited our sailing sessions and they felt that our organisation met the needs of so many disadvantaged people in such a fun way. They kindly donated £500 at a meeting held at Bidwell Brook school, in Dartington.

Our 100 disabled sailors took to the water 606 times.

On 12 February 2014, the Charity Commission approved our application to become a CIO, registration number 1155753, which was implemented on 1st April. Robert Boyd was thanked for making the application.

Nick Teage, Sue Price and Val Philips received their ten-year long service award at the Annual Dinner, arranged by Janet Helmore and Janet Cottey at the Berry Head Hotel.

In April, we congratulated Nick Teage, River Lovejoy and Bob Miller for passing the very demanding 4-day Chief sailing instructors' course and Richard Fellender for passing the Chief power boat instructors' course. They would now assist the Principal, as Officers of the Day(OOD), taking charge of sailing days and developing the 'on water activities' of Dart Sailability.

We accepted Noss Marina's kind offer to hold our annual BBQ in the berth holders' marquee. Ian James and his band, 'Warts an' All' entertained us as Janet Helmore and her team prepared over 100 meals and desserts on a very successful day.

We presented certificates and badges to 12 Entry level students and 10 Bronze level students in the new RYA Certificate of Achievement Scheme that suites our disabled learners. John Ballantyne, our administrator, also developed a Powerability scheme based on the sailing programme.

We supported Natasha Lambert in her 'Sea and Summit' challenge, when she berthed in Dartmouth. Aged 17 and severally disabled, Natasha had sailed from her home in Cowes, on the Isle of Wight, controlling the sails and the direction of her boat by sucking or blowing through a tube in her mouth. It's an ingenious device made by her father, an engineer. She then sailed on to Swansea and climbed Pen-y-Fan, the highest peak in the Brecon Beacons, using a specially designed walking frame.

We trialled a new RS Venture dinghy for disabled sailors. We were not able to include it in our fleet, but we provided some feedback.

Robert was placed 2nd in the multiclass regatta at Rutland and he retained Roma's cup.

We also won the Keelboat class at the Port of Dartmouth Royal Regatta.

Barry Cooper and a Dart Sailability crew raced his boat in the Eddystone charity race and raised £828. Barry presented Ian Cottey with a winner's trophy for raising the most money for the race. Totnes Rotary donated £3000 for providing safety boat cover at the annual Totnes Longbow canoe race.

We introduced a rope and pulley system to safely bring wheelchair users up and down the ramp to the pontoon. Judith Smith took charge of the system as part of her shore party duties.

Bruce Syme's neighbour, Richard Partridge, ran the 'Iron Man Challenge' in Wales on 14 September. He completed an open water swim, a cycle ride and a marathon totalling 120 miles, in 15 hours 24 minutes. He raised £1130 for DSG.

Another of Bruce's neighbours, Peter Royal, raised £2000 over several years.

Bruce thanked both Richard and his wife Charlotte and Peter and his family with a presentation morning, of cake and flowers, at Noss.

Sadly, we lost Cliff Zapple, Mark Parker, Jack Cutter and Kirsty Stewart. They all made a huge contribution to the Group and are sadly missed. Cliff was a former salesman and a real charmer. Mark was a building surveyor, who drove and worked long hours and he relaxed at DSG when he could. Jack was an elderly disabled sailor, who loved being on the water and Kirsty joined DSG from school. She was a charming young lady, who, despite poor eyesight and repeated strokes, was always cheerful. She loved sailing and was a great competitor. Even, when she lost her speech, she 'spoke' with her eyes and she never lost her sense of humour.

Mark Farries retired as the chief sailing instructor after 12 years in charge of 'all water activities' and 7 years as Principal. Dart Sailability greatly benefitted and prospered under his leadership and we are grateful for his and Angela's endless enthusiasm, commitment, skill and hard work, plus their many hours of travelling from Exeter.

He was succeeded by Andrew Cushen as Principal, Bob Miller as Chief Sailing Instructor and Richard Fellender as Chief Powerboat Instructor.

In 2015, the trustees delegated the management and development of the 'on water activities' to the management committee of Andrew Cushen, Bob Miller and Richard Fellender. Andrew kept the Trustees updated.

They compiled an interesting programme, for all abilities, that included volunteer induction, skills training for RYA qualifications and a photographic competition.

The RYA were impressed with John Ballantyne's Powerability syllabus.

At our Annual Dinner, Janet Helmore, Janet Cottey and Geoff Carne received their ten-year long service award.

The committee held an enjoyable feedback and aspirations day that was attended by 46 members. We worked in groups to answer six tasks and we expressed our thoughts and ideas to start the year. Jo Heaton presented a new logo design that was later adopted, from other designs, after a members' vote.

Jo and Anne Bailey included the new logo in their redesigned information leaflet and Jo started fundraising with 'Easy Funding' and other sources

Andrew spent many hours compiling the Group's Development Plan and HOPs, the Handbook and Operating Procedures manual. He also encouraged the trustees and other officer holders to write Role Descriptions for future recruitment information.

They sourced, commissioned and supervised 'Robust Boats', in South Wales, to build the power boat that the trustees had been searching. This sturdy, aluminium boat was built to carry two crew and ten passengers, which can include four

wheelchair users. Safe access for all, including heavy motorised wheelchairs, was provided with minimal physical strain for the crew. The 'drop front' design has provided new opportunities for wheelchair users to go ashore.

The boat was blessed by Father Nick at a RYA 'Try a Boat' promotion in Dartmouth and named the 'Farries Flyer' by Dr Sarah Wollaston MP. The boat name is a tribute to our former Principal and his wife, Mark and Angela Farries.

Bob Miller arranged the maiden voyage of the Farries Flyer along the stunningly beautiful Bow Creek to Tuckenhay. The new boat opened such treasures to more of our members.

He also arranged trips to explore the river's rich history, environment and wildlife.

Local historian, John Risdon, took us up river, on a fine summer's day, to Greenway, where we anchored and learnt about this famous home of Sir Humphrey Gilbert, the half-brother of Sir Walter Raleigh, and later home to Dame Agatha Christie. John expressed an interesting theory that the British Empire began, when Sir Gilbert discovered Newfoundland and claimed it for the British crown.

We cruised the isolated creeks and inlets, with wildlife expert Nigel Smallbones, to enjoy the scenery, the wildlife and the beautiful weather.

Bob arranged a 'sizzler evening' on a remote beach. The drop-down bow of the Farries Flyer meant that wheelchair users could land and collect fire wood for a very pleasant BBQ evening beside the river.

We passed a joint inspection by the RYA and the Adventure Activities Licensing Services (AALS).

We developed closer links with the RDYC with team racing at Noss and a BBQ and musical evening at the Yacht Club.

On 16 May, we held a retirement tea party and celebration for Bruce and June Symes and David and Lisa Edey for their tireless work in collecting jumble to raise funds at two annual Boat Jumble Sales at Newton Abbot Race course. They also sold donated boats and other large items from Noss and the internet. We named a dinghy 'Jumble Joy' after them and Nick Teage built and presented them with a model. In 2008, Bruce found a rusty old bike left on his lawn that he advertised on ebay. To his surprise and delight, a Japanese business man recognised it as an early Moulton folding bike and paid £537. He combined a business trip to the UK to meet Bruce and to collect his bike.

Dart Sailability was the chosen charity of the Stoke Gabriel Community Concert Series 2015. Five concerts were held in their splendid 11th century church and each musical evening was very different and most enjoyable. We are very grateful to all those who attended and donated such a large sum of £1750.

Janet Helmore retired and Janet Cottey continued as the lead shore party member and the disabled sailors' Membership Secretary. At the start of the season, she collected the membership forms for the information of the Principal, the Chairman and her records. The forms were then locked away in the cabin, but available if

required. She also collected the annual payments and the session fees for banking by the treasurer. At the end of the season she circulated and collected the Group's feedback forms for the information of the Principal and Chairman. These duties were in addition to her normal shore party duties of meeting and greeting disabled sailors and other new arrivals and getting them ready to sail.

Gaye Astley, the Volunteer Membership Secretary, dealt with volunteer membership forms and their attendance records. As the Welfare Secretary, she dealt with the Disclosure and Barring Service with the RYA and she liaised with the students, staff, disabled sailors and carers, on behalf of the Principal and Chairman, to ensure their wellbeing and safety.

We continue to welcome disabled students, aged 14-16 years, to participate in RYA courses in sailing and powerboating that are tailored to their abilities. Ofsted have recognised the important learning these activities provide.

The shore party arranged a tea party this year rather than our usual BBQ. They served the delicious sandwiches and cakes provided by the members, whilst the men were kept busy providing the tea or coffee. Ian James entertained us on guitar and Richard Scanlon closed with an excellent speech.

David Edge and Anne Bailey publicised the Group extremely well via the website, the press, regatta information and magazines.

Robert Boyd represented Dart Sailability at the Hansa Nationals, organised by Chesil Sailability, at the Olympic Academy Portland. He finished 4th in nine races.

At the 2015 RYA Volunteer Award ceremony, her Royal Highness Princess Anne presented Mark Farries with the Francis Elkin award for his significant contribution in time, effort and personal endeavour to enable people with disabilities to become involved in sailing. Excellent letters of support from Bob Miller and Nick Teage enabled Robert to submit the application

At the AGM on 14 November, chairman Robert Boyd after 7 years and treasurer Mic Christmas after 11 years decided it was time to resign. Mic received his long service award and Bruce made a model of Mic escaping in a rowing boat with hordes of money spilling over the stern.

Anne Bailey gave her publicity report and likewise stepped down. She had regularly publicised the group, in local newspapers, booklets, magazines and personally at the regatta stand. Anne and Jo Heaton revised our promotional leaflet that helped to recruit 9 sailors and 10 volunteers.

Andrew Cushen reported that there was increased membership involvement and the Farries Flyer had brought new powerboat opportunities for training and pleasure. He highlighted Induction training and increased Shore Party support as key goals for the next season.

Robert Boyd, Mic Christmas, Barry Cooper, Ian Cottey and Colin Whymark resigned and David Blood (Treasurer) Tom King, Mike Breed and Mike Pleass were elected and Robert Boyd re-elected.

On 12 January 2016, we elected Richard Fellender as chairman and Steve Oakey, as Safety Officer. Steve arranged for the lifejackets to be professionally tested. Andrew Cushen prepared a laminated Emergency Action Plan for each support boat and he confirmed that the Farries Flyer, call sign ARC, was restricted to 3 miles from the river mouth. It was agreed not to have a minimum membership age. Elaine Cowper Smith took charge of social matters with the shore party staff. Mike Pleass became the fundraiser, Tom King data protection and Jo Heaton replaced Anne Bailey as publicity officer. Val Phillips would liaise with John Ballantyne and Gwen Teage to manage the schools' programme.

David Blood resigned as treasurer on 16 March and Mike Breed was elected chairman and treasurer.

Later that month, the Annual Dinner was held at the Dainton Golf Club, the management committee ran a seamanship day at Noss and Gwen held a Disability Awareness course.

Juliet Prentice won the photographic competition with a charming picture of light, playing on the ripples, as they bumped against the Hansa dinghies.

On 12 April, Premier Marinas Ltd published, in the Herald Express, they had purchased Noss Marina and their £100 million investment plan.

The trustees immediately submitted a Dart Sailability introduction document to our new owners.

In May, Bruce organised a coffee morning at the Berry Head Hotel to thank Janet and Kevin Helmore and their sons Calvin and Brendon for their many contributions to Dart Sailability over thirteen years. Janet had served on the shore party and she organised the social functions and the Annual Dinners with Janet Cottey. Kevin had served as a trustee, rescue boat driver, handyman and BBQ cook. Brendon was a successful sailor and both sons helped their mother with the shore party equipment. Robert Boyd thanked the family for their many years of support and he presented them with a model sailing boat prepared by Bruce.

Robert attended Terry Hopwood's funeral on 25 May. Terry had been a very committed DSG member, the main dinghy instructor and later a disabled sailor.

On 5 June, we decorated the Nab with bunting and large purple numbers and joined RDYC members to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the club.

On 12 July, Rachel Andrews, the RYA Chief Power Boat Coach, visited us to discuss the 'Powerability' scheme as devised by John Ballantyne.

Jo Heaton successfully applied for Dart Sailability to become the chosen charity of Sainsbury's at Dartmouth and, on 17 July, we joined in our first fundraising quiz. Very well done Jo.

We treated our sponsors to a flotilla cruise to Stoke Gabriel for a very pleasant, summer's evening, meal.

We held a mid-season volunteer training day.

Again, we benefitted from Bob Miller's many expert friends. Nigel Smallbones led a successful wildlife cruise in July with sunny, calm conditions. We observed various gulls, cormorants and ducks, but, special for everyone, we discovered a family of otters playing by the river bank, opposite Noss Marina.

John Risdon took us on a history cruise to Dartmouth, Kingswear and the river entrance. We learnt how the Crusaders had gathered at Warfleet creek, how French raiders, during the Hundred Years war, led to the building of two castles at the river entrance and a nightly chain drawn across the river, attacks on the Armada and a boat captured, the plight of the Pilgrim Fathers, Civil War battles, the benefits of Napoleonic prisoners, WW2 exploits, the hazardous fishing trips, by sail, to Newfoundland and the transatlantic crossings, in competition with Southampton.

The RYA inspector asked to see our training syllabus for both power and sailing boats and the Hansa risk assessment.

The trustees decided that Hansa sailors must unclip their slings, once in the boat, to ensure they are not restricted in the event of a capsize.

On 28 June, Mrs Sheila Peacock and her family launched the Hansa dinghy that they had funded in memory of John Peacock. He had been a career soldier in the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) and later in Adventure Training. On his retirement, he became a RYA Director in the Seamanship Foundation that assists disabled sailors. They enjoyed a tea party, whilst watching us dinghy sailors competing between the buoys.

During the sail passed, at the Port of Dartmouth Royal regatta in late August, we received a rousing reception dressed as marauding pirates in the highly decorated Farries Flyer. Later, at the regatta prize giving ceremony, we received the winner's trophy for the Keelboat class.

On 30 August, Bob Miller organised a sail towards Brixham using the Sonars, a support RIB and the Farries Flyer. We took our time enjoying the sights of Dartmouth and Kingswear, the seals, birds and crags of the Mew Stone, the observation point of the National Coast Watch at Froward Point, the private pool of the D'Oryly Carte Operatic Company at Collaton Fishacre before anchoring at Scabbacombe beach. As we ate lunch, we enjoyed this beautiful summer's day, with multiple views of sea and sky. On a nearby rocky headland, woolly Soay sheep contrasted on one side with a group of nude bathers who stood chatting on the other side and we marvelled at Bob's planning skills. By 3.30pm it was time for a gentle cruise home following the sonars.

Bob's annual 'Sausage Sizzler' was going so well, until he found he'd left his rucksack at Noss with the frying pan and sausages. Andrew saved the day by borrowing matches from a friendly yachtsman and speedily returning to Noss. We settled down to a relaxing social evening, of good food, drink and friendships on another summer's evening beside our beloved river.

On 28 September, Premier Marinas held a public consultation of their regeneration plans at Noss Marina, followed by similar events at Kingswear and Dartmouth.

We provided safety boat cover for the Long boat and raft races.

Tom King wrote a data protection policy that was approved by the trustees and implemented.

In 1999, David, the son of Mike and Doreen Durston, broke his neck in a diving accident and was paralysed from his chest down. After two operations, he gained some movement in his wrists, but not in his hands. In 2004, Dart Sailability volunteers managed to get him into an Access dinghy and Roma Severn took him for his first sail and he was hooked. He joined Whitefriars Sailability, near his home, and he started racing at Rutland, where he won the Ken Ellis Trophy for the overall multiclass champion in 2010. Despite his determination, he failed to qualify for the 2012 Paralympic Skud 18 class so he crossed to the Hansa Liberty, where he became the National Champion in 2015. The next year, he was placed 7th of 31 in the World Cup in Holland. He is the Hansa Association Treasurer working with the chairman, Bob Scull. Yes, the same Bob Scull. He's also a very keen wheelchair rugby player in Gloucester.

On 15 October 2016, David married Nicola Matthews, at the Cotswold Water Park, and many of us watched the ceremony on Ch4's Extraordinary Weddings.

Mike Breed chaired the AGM on 12 November 2016 and he informed the meeting that the Charity Commission (CC) had changed the format for the annual accounts. Andrew Cushen, Richard Fellender, Steve Oakey, Val Phillips and Nick Teage stood down and Juliet Prentice and Keith Cockburn were elected.

In the discussions after the AGM, Keith Cockburn suggested having a dinghy Sailing Captain and Brian Hignett was duly elected.

Steve Oakey was appointed Principal and an ex officio trustee, Steve Watkins - deputy Principal, Andrew Cushen - Chief Powerboat Instructor, Richard Fellender – Engineer and Tim Trent the Safety Officer.

In 2017, Gaye Astley retired as volunteer membership and Welfare Secretary. Bob Miller temporarily took on the post and he soon realised the enormity of the task. He suggested using the online 'membermojo' to charge all members an annual fee of £1, that would readily identify our active members, plus an additional single payment for disabled sailors without session fees. The trustees, however, decided on an annual membership fee of £5 with an additional payment of £30 by disabled sailors, to be paid direct to the DSG account. Facilities were made available for all members to donate extra funds towards the value of the Group if they wished.

Anne Bailey retired from the Group and she was thanked for her excellent work as our Publicity Officer (PO) and for the work she and husband Peter had done to maintain our boats and their general assistance during the sailing seasons. Mark

Saunders Barwick became our PO. David Edge also retired and was thanked for his work on the website. Jo Heaton developed and managed another excellent website.

Mike Breed resigned as chairman and treasurer for personal reasons. Tom King was elected chairman, Nick Woodward treasurer, Dolly Marsden Welfare secretary, Denise Winks Sailor Recruitment, Keith Cockburn Sonar Organiser and Janet Cottey continued as membership secretary. Anna Chrystie succeed Bob Miller as the Chief Sailing Instructor and Bob became the Training Officer.

Steve Oakey held monthly meetings with Andy Osman, the Premier Marinas representative, and his requirements, mainly Health and Safety issues like the correct use of ladders and antifouling procedures, were implemented.

Steve Watkin and Andrew Cushen updated the Group's Development Plan and the Handbook and Operating Procedures (HOPs), which all members must read.

Steve Watkins also prepared the briefings for the trustee meetings, an excel property maintenance schedule and the H&S procedures for the website.

The Annual Dinner was organised by Elaine Cowper Smith, Janet Cottey and Judith Smith. It was held at the South Devon College Restaurant, where the students prepare and service the food.

Jane Robson donated money on behalf of her late husband Peter, who was a keen racer. In his memory, we bought a new motor for the Sonar of the Dart.

Nikki Stewart qualified as a Disability Awareness trainer to add to her many other shore party skills.

We enjoyed a summer's evening social trip to the Maltster's Arms at Tuckenhay. The journey up the river Dart and along Bow Creek is, in my opinion, English Countryside at its very best. But we had a cold return journey heading into a strong easterly wind.

On 5 June, Neil Hockaday was elected as a trustee. He was formally the chairman of the Dart Harbour and Navigation Authority. His knowledge and skills will be a great asset to DSG.

Mark and Angela Farries and Bob and Liz Scull were made Honorary Life Members of DSG.

Directors and Officers insurance was purchased.

We came 3rd in the keelboat class in the Dartmouth Royal regatta and we were second in the best dressed boat in the regatta sail passed dressed as Strictly Come Dancing.

The AGM was held at CGC for the first time. Joanne Heaton and Robert Boyd stood down as trustees in accordance with the CIO.

The Green Shed was cleared of our equipment and Premier purchased us a 40-foot shipping container to compensate and we purchased a second container.

In November, Premier built a pedestrian bridge beside the road bridge, over the railway, that was then strengthened.

The 2018 winter was very cold, with unusual deposits of snow, that refused to melt.

Claude Cazzola built a roof between the storage units to shelter the boat maintenance volunteers. The Hansa dinghies were stored and maintained in a stack of scaffold poles and the larger boats were allowed ashore, two at a time only, for maintenance and then returned to the water. Bob Miller and Paul Stannard, a surgeon, joined the thin rope used to furl the sails of each dinghy to dispense with the stop knots. Bob also modified the outhaul system, so it could be more easily adjusted by the skipper.

HOPS was updated, and the volunteers had two training sessions. A new disabled persons' hoist was funded by the Dartmouth Utilities Charities and fitted to the pontoon by the Noss staff to replace the other two hoists that had failed the annual tests. This hoist also lifts the dagger boards.

Bob Miller taught three sessions of 'RYA Start Sailing' with practical tests on the water that made us sweat. All sailors should have this excellent teaching to enrich and improve our sailing. Grahame Abbot, Don Fallon, Brian Hignett, Anne Blood, Juliet Prentice, Stephanie Read, Mike Matthews and Robert Boyd enjoyed the course.

At the March Annual Dinner, at South Devon College, Keith White, a disabled sailor presented the sailing awards and, some weeks later, gave us a talk about his sailing exploits. He is an inspirational man, sailing alone long distances and entering strange harbours as a stroke survivor and having the use of only one arm.

Steve Oakey (Principal) and Steve Watkins (deputy Principal) decided to resign their posts due to other work pressures. We are very grateful to them both for all their development work for DSG and we wish them well.

In August, Premier Marinas received their planning permission to regenerate Noss Marina. They plan to 'create the best marina in the UK' with an investment of £75 million. It will feature 232 berths, 91 new homes, a 50-bed spa hotel and restaurants, a passenger ferry to Dartmouth, a new home for South Devon College Academy for engineer training, car parking and a heritage site.

Janet Cottey asked if she could share some of her tasks. Gill Pendlebury became the membership secretary, Carrie Sawyer the social secretary and Janet continued as the senior shore party member.

On 22 August, representatives of the Elmgrant Trust, Sophie Young and her disabled brother Chris visited our site to see how their donated funds were being spent. The trust had donated £2000 for training equipment. They saw the Group in action, had a ride on the river and we celebrated with tea and cakes arranged by Carrie.

On the following Tuesday we celebrated again with Roy and Sarah Fuller from the Essex Trust. They had purchased a support RIB and engine and they named the boat Jano after her mother. They enjoyed their new boat as the dinghy sailors were receiving instruction on sail setting. Carrie arranged a highly decorated cake with wine and non-alcoholic drinks to celebrate the occasion.

Keith Cockburn organised the sailors for both Sonars over four days of racing in the Keel Boat class of the Royal Dartmouth Regatta. 'Krack On' came 3rd using a spinnaker with a trained crew.

In the regatta sail passed, we won our first, 'best decorated boat', in the Farries Flyer with a 'Mamma Mia' theme. It was an excellent team effort.

Tim Trent had received the role of Safety Officer from Steve Oakey, 2 years ago, and now he passed it onto David Pendlebury. Tim left a full report of his work including the hoist renewals and lift jacket and buoyancy aid testing. He emphasized that Premier requires high safety standards.

Ian Wakeling was appointed as Principal. Ian lives locally at Dittisham with his wife Cherry. He is an experienced sailor and he is a qualified RYA Senior Dinghy Instructor and racing coach.

We enjoyed an unusually long, dry summer with fine sailing. Bob and Keith kept us busy with passing our practical tests, racing and games. We raced for our various cups and shields and, in pairs, raced along and round the line of yellow buoys, played follow my leader for speed and direction, chased the fox and retrieved tennis balls thrown into the tide.

On 23 October Andrew Cushen and Bob Miller organised a 'Way a Head' morning for members to discuss and record their suggestions for next season. It was also a great way to meet new members. Tom King used it as an extraordinary meeting to agree that the 2018 AGM could be held in April 2019.

On 11 December, Carrie organised a marvellous Christmas lunch at the Horizon Restaurant at South Devon College.

We now wait for Premier Marinas to continue implementing their regeneration plans for the former Noss Marina on the Dart.

