



# BLACKWELL SAILING

## Newsletter 2021

### **We started in April with the independent sailors again**

Sailing sessions started off on Wednesdays only. Andy Wild decided, however, to become even more independent. He and his wife, Nicola, bought their own Access 303 to keep at Fell Foot Park, so that they could sail more often. We were able to help them with the practical side of things and they came back to sail with us again later in the season to tell us how they had got on and asking for a bit more tuition.

A new sailor, Lindsey Cooper, joined us in May and has been as often as she can ever since. Here is her story:

#### ***My first season sailing with Blackwell Sailing***

*It all started when I was out in Trixie my mountain trike on a ride to raise funds for Children in Need with Girlguiding when I bumped into a stranger and we started chatting. She suggested why don't you start sailing with Blackwell Sailing? After being an outdoor instructor in my former life and volunteering as an able bodied person at the Calvert Trust, I had a little experience of sailing and I've always had a love of the outdoors but this was my first time sailing as a full time wheelchair user.*



*When I rolled up on my first day I was a little nervous but I shouldn't have been! Everyone was so friendly and welcoming. I was given a tour round and shown where the kit was and then it was time to set sail. The first challenge was working out how to get in the boat. After a bit of think I decided that*

*gravity assisted (or falling with style as I like to call it!) would be best for me.*

*I was sailing the Access dinghy and was a little concerned what if I'd remember the sailing from my Calvert days and childhood. They let me loose on my own, but reassured me that I couldn't tip it over and wouldn't fall in! Words that I've stuck to ever since! As I'm zipping across the lake at 45\* angle with the wind whipping through into the sail thinking that water's getting closer to me! I had a ball and from that first session I was hooked! As the season has progressed I have grown in confidence and knowledge of how to control the boat although my favourite is still sailing around the lake at full speed! I now feel confident that I can avoid other boats most of the time although it still makes me nervous crossing the ferry line. I'm scared that the wind will die with me sat there and a ferry full of cars heading straight for me! Thankfully this hasn't happened yet!*

*All this being said one of my favourite sessions was an evening session where I was in Joanna (one of the Whammel boats) and the wind was VERY still. We sailed up*

*the lake to Wray castle mainly using the motor and the lighting and scenery was just stunning. I think I was given a fresh appreciation of it knowing all my fellow shipmates had visual impairments so I did my best to describe our surroundings but it did make me very grateful for something I so often take for granted! Coming back down the lake I took the helm and let's say the wake out the back didn't show us taking the most direct route with my little wobbles! It was great to chat the evening away sharing stories of everyday life and adventures we'd had, whilst watching the sunset and looking at the rainbows reflecting on the lake.*

*I've had great fun sailing this season and have met some fantastic people. I am very grateful to all the instructors and volunteers for giving up their time to support me in this adventure. I'm going to miss the sailing over the winter months and I'm already looking forward to the spring when we can start all over again. During this gap, the experience of sailing has given me the confidence to try sit skiing over the winter just to fill the time. They promise me I can't break myself doing it which I think might be a little like the promise that I can't tip the Access dingy over which I didn't quite manage this season - but there's always next season!*

### **The Groups**

Some of our established groups have not yet returned to us because only now, at the end of the season, are some sections of the day service starting up again after a very long period being closed or severely reduced during the pandemic. Some group members did however come to sail with a carer if they were in a 'bubble'. We also realised that some would feel more confident with a canoe session rather than sailing, because it is easier to keep a distance from each other and you don't have to keep moving about the boat.

Ben Lusted had sailed with us for many years with the Horticare Group and was one of the first to return. He came to try some solo sailing in an Access boat at first, but then also joined us for canoeing and then Whammel sailing too when things progressed in May. Because of Ben's horticultural experience we gave him the job of trimming back the holly bush that was overgrown near the gate!



### **Volunteer Training**

As soon as we started using the Whammel boats again it was important to run some practice sessions for Volunteers. Many said they had not sailed since 2019 and were feeling a bit rusty! We then re-started the Tuesday evening sessions.

The Thursday evening sailing started up again too, but in a very low-key way at first. It was heartening to see a steady increase in members, however and with some help and guidance from Sight Advice we able to welcome some new members to the Vital group sailing team. In order to keep numbers low and avoid the boats getting too full we ran some extra sessions towards the end of the season.

**A New Group** approached us and then, after a taster session, came sailing regularly on alternate Wednesdays. They were the Underley Gardens group from Lindale, near Grange and brought a lot of enthusiasm! They were actually the first group to try sailing from the yacht club – see below....



### **Support from Royal Windermere Yacht Club**

A couple of our regular groups were able to sail this year from the yacht club jetties, over the other side of Bowness Bay. After a couple of meetings and much support from Ian Smith, who has now signed up as a volunteer with us, we have a written agreement in place so that in future we can use the club premises when we need to. The club have helped us in many ways in the past (and we have occasionally been able to help them). When we launch and recover boats at each end of the sailing season we use their slipway and we have also borrowed their safety boat occasionally. Many thanks to the club for supporting us now with group sessions and a special thank you to Nigel Tullett, 2021 Commodore, for his extra help with this.

### **New equipment**

Thanks to generous donations from Windermere Rotary and Windermere Masonic Lodge we started the season with two new 4 stroke outboard engines for our Whammel boats and a new, taller, hoist (+ slings) for use on the jetty. This local support has been very much appreciated. The new hoist is more suitable for those using electric wheelchairs and the new engines are more reliable and greener.

### **New Manager, Jonny Cormack**

Following on from David's announcement that he wishes to retire at the end of February 2022 the trustees shortlisted and then interviewed candidates for the position in September. They have now appointed Jonny Cormack as the new manager and principal instructor (pictured) who will start in the New Year and work alongside David for his first two months. We are very excited about this and feel that Jonny will fit in well and will confidently take us into the future. He has written a few words here to introduce himself:



*'I am delighted to be joining Blackwell Sailing in the New Year. I have known about the charity and the great work it does since I have been working on the lake over the past 20 years. The time and effort that David has put in over the years is immense and I know I have some big shoes to fill! I plan to use my time with David over the coming months very wisely extracting as much information as possible during our hand over period.'*

*I am really looking forward to working with the variety of groups and individuals that visit Blackwell each year. I have met some of the volunteers and instructors that give up their time helping out at the centre and I look forward to meeting everyone else that helps makes the Blackwell vision become a reality. This is a new chapter in my life as well as Blackwell's and I am looking forward to taking the charity forward for years to come. See you on the water in 2022!*

David says he is looking forward to working with Jonny and passing on the responsibility to him. *"I am sure we will all want to wish him the best of luck and do everything we can to help him settle in when the sailing season starts off again. I think we are very fortunate to have someone with Jonny's experience and qualifications to take over. He has been running another sailing centre on Windermere for a number of years and has also worked voluntarily with Blind Sailing UK, a charity that enables people to compete at national and international level"*.

### **Amanda Wilson**

In June we heard the very sad news that Amanda had died. She has been so greatly missed at Blackwell Sailing since she left us last year. Many of our sailing members and volunteers responded to the news by passing on their condolences and fond memories of happy times sailing with Amanda. She was so conscientious, warm hearted and fun to be with. In memory of Amanda we received some very generous donations for the charity from her family and friends.

### **Gordon Spragg and Glyn Jones**

In mid-season Glyn announced that he was moving to the Isle of Man. We are very sorry to lose him as a volunteer. He sent a card saying how much he had enjoyed sailing with us and stating his intention to get involved with his local Sailability group over there. Glyn sailed with us regularly for many years.

Gordon is now retiring after more than 20 years of very consistent and dedicated service to the charity as a parent/volunteer. Gordon first joined us when we were still operating from the Blackwell boathouse. He then helped out as a regular Whammel skipper, safety boat operator and with maintenance.

Many thanks to you both for all those years of support!

**The Inquest into the death of Stephen Hague** was held on 27<sup>th</sup> May and the Coroner recorded his conclusion of death by misadventure. David and the trustees wish to thank everyone for their continued support during this difficult time. Our memories of Steve will always remain with us. He was such a good friend and supporter of the charity over many years.

## **Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year!**

**Acknowledgements:** Since our last newsletter we have received support from: Harold and Janet Lefton, Sir John Fisher Foundation, Baily Thomas Charitable Fund, Frieda Scott Trust, RYA Foundation, Cumbria Community Foundation, Outdoors For All, Cumbria Soaring Club, Masonic Fund Windermere, Rotary Club of Windermere, Michael Brown, Bendrigg Trust, Roger Wilkinson, Graham and Marion Newman, Maiden Marine, Royal Windermere Yacht Club, RYA Sailability and the government Job Retention Scheme.

*Life through Sailing - Sailing through Life*

