

Helford River Children's Sailing Trust

PRINCIPAL AND CHIEF INSTRUCTOR'S REPORT – 2014

2014 has been dominated by huge beginner groups, and we had to pull every trick out of the bag. Luckily we even learned a few new ones. We started this season with 157 complete newbies!

The on-the-water team has gone from strength to strength with Senior Instructor duties spread out on different days easing responsibility and encouraging a healthy competition for "bright ideas" and "clever plans". Helen Farmer has become a full time Dinghy Instructor moving from her voluntary role of one day a week and rounding off our team superbly.

The other great addition this year has been the kayaks. With such large beginner groups, we have had the ability to split the outings with more than one Instructor and go separate ways, with some kayaking in a sheltered cove while the more adventurous took on the wind and waves in our limited oppie fleet.

We need more oppies and kayaks please!

Our "Big Sail" was a huge success, showing anyone who watched how able even our youngest beginner becomes here at the trust. Huge thanks to the Constantine dream team on the beach with BBQ and shore line assistance. The wind was strangely cooperative with a force 6 due south that stretched the sailors and safety team to their best.

Our core volunteer team has always been important and is always on the move. Last season saw the passing of a big year 6 level 3/4 group whose parents have moved on with them. We have a lot of new volunteers who we are training as fast as we can. I must thank Peter and Derek for "multi-school" volunteering where we had gaps.

A huge thank you to the Ford family for their donation of a new Rib the *Mike Ford* a fast and versatile rescue and training craft adding to the feeling of security that kids need to push themselves in often rough and scary sea states. Knowing that a big orange thing will be at your side in seconds takes a lot of fear out of the first few capsizes.

The National Trust's donation of the Carwinion Boathouse has been hugely successful. Our kit is safe and secure, dry and well maintained. We also have a bolt hole in a thunder storm!

We are all benefitting from a renewed relationship with the Helford sailing club. We lend our dinghies and equipment on a Friday evening, borrow extra safety cover for big events in both directions, and have been able to use the sailing club's classroom facilities in foul weather. Thanks Dom and Rachel, Suzie and Carol.

Our SEN education has rewarded all involved.

It's been a fantastic season with Nine Maidens going from strength to strength. We have seen real change in the attitudes and personalities of the children that have come to us for self-improvement, whether that be through the medium of sailing or kayaking or even just being outside in nature and going in the water for the very first time (a big step for some!). What works for one child will not work for another, and whilst it has sometimes been difficult and always challenging, the rewards have matched the effort we have put in.

We put the emphasis on appropriate and mutually beneficial social interaction in these sessions as those are skills sorely lacking in other aspects of the children's lives. Once we achieve getting the children to work together and help each other, we can then move on to learning water skills and have had some great success in this area too with some of the best sailing I have ever seen from beginners! However, the first time a student goes out of their depth and trusts their buoyancy aid to hold them, or when a child runs to help another, are just as important milestones as dry capsizing in steep swell.

Next year we hope we can build on the Nine Maiden's sessions, hopefully opening another slot for them. We feel we make a real difference in these children's lives and in some ways it is the most important work we do at the Trust.

MIKE COMYN
31st October 2014



Chairman's Review 2014

HRCST continues to go from strength to strength. Once again, we achieved a record number of sea outings and children and young people on the water.

Number of Sea Outings	4392	(2013: 4253)
Number of sailors	569	(2013: 510)
Number of Schools	17 primary schools and 4 Special Needs Groups	
Number of volunteers	114	(2013: 83)
Number of volunteers in training	82	(2013: 41)

Perhaps the single event this year, which demonstrated the HRCST at its best was the "Big Sail" which was held on Port Saxon Beach in June. Despite difficult weather conditions and a strong onshore wind, we had over 300 children, parents and volunteers on the beach and the entire fleet of boats, whilst over 100 friends and supporters enjoyed the day at the fund-raising lunch held in marquees on the lawns of Porth Sawzen. The day raised an astonishing £6,992 of greatly appreciated funds for the HRCST, with the credit for this success largely due to the PTAs of the participating schools.

A brief video clip of this tremendous occasion is viewable at youtu.be/Hcv3nKtUzVE

Not all sailors acquire the same skills at the same pace – some becoming more able more quickly – but all participate and gain competence and confidence, and this was very evident at this enjoyable celebration.

This year's introduction of kayaks shows that we continue to learn, improve, and grow our programme. After the success of this pilot year, we plan a full kayak squad next year – especially valuable to disabled and SEN children – but also enabling us to accept more schools.

In these difficult financial times HRCST continues to provide a most needed opportunity for the many children who would not otherwise take part in an activity of this kind. Demand continues to grow from both existing and new schools in our catchment area, and inspires us to raise funds all the harder to meet this need.

Without the support of the many volunteers who help at every level, we could not possibly function as costs would be at least three or four times greater. We now need to raise well over £100,000 each year to meet the costs of our few paid key instructors as well as providing boats and the safety equipment. We are proud that we have negligible administrative and fundraising costs, and we stand out amongst charities in this way, as well as in the appreciation the Trust inspires in its young sailors, volunteers, instructors and donors.

THE FUTURE

HRCST is determined to continue as a local charity providing water based activities to enhance the lives of young people who would not otherwise have access to this type of character-building activity.

One encouraging development is that we are confident that there will be proper changing facilities for all participants on both sides of the River by, at the latest, 2016.

The Trustees are working to identify longer term options to secure the continued future.

THANK YOU

2014 has been a particularly successful year, and we are enormously grateful for all the financial support we received from our many Friends and a number of generous charitable Trusts and Foundations.

Richard Nathan

"Thanks for a lovely sail yesterday and a super season. We ended on a high note with them all happily sailing and having fun.

Thanks to all the lads & lasses for all their efforts this summer - they've brought lots of fun & experiences to the children ... and some of the adults too! Sailing with Dolphins, capsizing Mr Conrad, seeing Megan sail on her own ...and enjoying herself! Not to mention my Mike & Martin sandwich when my dory ran out of petrol - very reassuring that you were there so prompt.

The children have gained so much and our new teacher, Mrs Ellie Watkins has been completely blown away by the opportunities our children have on the doorstep. She can't wait for next season."

Anna Lyford - Parent

"Our students can be quite challenging due to their physical needs, social needs and behaviour but working closely with the instructors and with their flexibility we have been able to make our visits to the Helford River one of the most looked forward to activities in our school calendar. We still have students who pass on their stories and talk about their experiences which without your support they would never encounter.

I feel that the sessions help to develop the students social skills, confidence and self esteem in a way that cannot be demonstrated and achieved by activities within school. it has been this enhanced provision that has helped our students develop and generalise these skills and makes them believe that they can succeed in other areas.

I hope this shows the importance of the work that you do and how grateful we are for the chance we get to bring our students to such a wonderful location and to take part in activities that really do have an impact."

Rob Armstrong - Curnow Community Special School

"Nine Maidens AP Academy, Cornwall's largest provider of education for vulnerable children, has been working with the Helford River Children's Sailing Trust for 2 years. We now have 2 group sessions per week, during the season, with both primary and secondary students enjoying their water based experiences.

Some of the Nine Maidens AP Academy students are part of the Nurture Class provision. As well as ensuring their academic learning improves, their curriculum encourages team work, confidence and self-esteem building, so growing their own sense of achievement. The aim of our provision is to reintegrate the young people back into their local mainstream Schools.

This season has seen a new emphasis on sailing and particularly water skills.

The Trust have recognised that many of our children are not familiar with the water, the sea or even beaches so have adapted the learning opportunities to cater for their needs. With the addition of kayaks it means that children can explore the water safely, independently and have fun whilst developing new confidence in trying out unfamiliar activities.

From this grounding they can then progress, broadening their experiences towards Oppies and potentially Picos.

This year we had students who'd never swum outside, been on the water let alone on a beach. This reminded us to never assume that students have prior knowledge or confidence in being around water and the equipment involved. By individualising the weekly activities we have been able to see our group of students move forward in many ways both personally, socially, developing trust in adults and each other.

We realise that working with the HRCST brings unique opportunities, aspirational ideas and positive life experiences for our students who appreciate and enjoy their time greatly with the instructors greatly."

Emma Vyvyan - Ninemaidens AP Academy