



Report for 2017 funding



2017 has been an action packed year for the Discovery Sailing Project both ashore at the beginning of the season during the refit period and during the main sailing season. The Project has increased the number of berth days from 1027 in 2016 to 1275 this year, a 24% increase.

Our Clipper 60 yacht was lifted out of the water for a month towards the end of January. The electrical system had been causing some problems and the old generator on board had failed and was beyond repair. The yacht depends on batteries kept in good condition to run the navigation systems, and other domestic requirements such as lights and pumps. The need for a generator to keep on top of that was paramount and the funding that we received made it possible. The generator room was refurbished by our volunteer staff and the generator itself was fitted by the supplier. Craning it on board was an interesting exercise



Below decks Thermopylae had generously been described as utilitarian but lacked the homely feel that the Project had wanted for years. The deck head was rough finished and painted white and the sole boards were basic plywood and fitted with non slip pads. A number of members set to and put in many hours rejuvenating the saloon and galley area with headlining complete with LED strip lights and teak and holly sole boards. It is so important not only to maintain the yachts but also to improve them and the difference on Thermopylae is immense. It is anticipated to complete the task by upgrading the rest of the yacht below decks early in 2018.

In March the volunteer Sea Staff attended a number of familiarisation and training weekends. These weekends are vitally important and help everyone remind themselves how everything on board works, and have a check list to refresh the mind with the position of safety equipment and fire extinguishers for instance. The yachts do go to sea but not for a voyage but to refresh man overboard procedures and sailing evolutions. Everyone from trainee Watch Leaders to Senior Skippers attend. The weather at that time of year cannot be guaranteed and sometimes it is difficult to get out of bed on a cold morning!



We are pleased to report that the number of Sea Staff volunteers has increased slightly and we have been able to promote two new skippers for Thermopylae and Discovery. We have also progressed some of our senior Watch Leaders who have achieved their RYA Day Skipper certification to Junior Mates and they are now skippering our training yacht, Alexander Fairey. This has enabled more of our junior Watch Leaders to gain more experience during a number of weekend voyages. It is a major ethos of the Project to train our young members to advance in their qualifications and experience. Funding has enabled us to keep the voyage fees for our Watch Leaders to a minimum to make this affordable. The strain on family finances in these times would otherwise not stretch to all these trips.

The 2017 sailing season has been very successful with a number of differing voyages. Some of our core business is our weekend sailing predominantly with Scouts. With prudent managing of funds and the fact that we do nearly all of our own maintenance has enabled us to keep our voyages at the same cost for the fourth year running with an added discount for Scouts. The funding we have received has also enabled us to run a number of special voyages at an affordable rate.

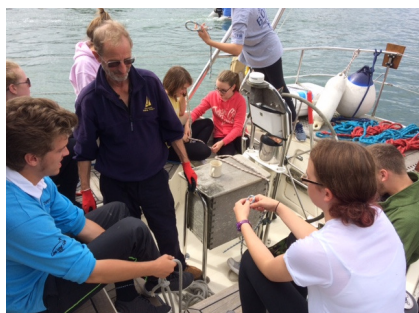
In March and June, in conjunction with a local school we have run two week voyages for non achieving young people to pass a BTECH course in sailing. Some of those young people will sail with us again.

In June we also ran a trip for another local school, taking a number of students who are deaf. This was quite challenging for both the young people themselves and also the Sea Staff who took part. We anticipate that this will be an annual event. It shows these young people that they can join in the activities they sometimes may think they are excluded from. The Project has amongst its members a deaf Watch Leader who has now obtained her RYA Day Skipper certificate and from the voyage reports on her performance will soon be promoted to Junior Mate.

Departing from the Hamble in mid June and returning at the end of August, Thermopylae Clipper voyaged to the Baltic where she took part in the Sail Training International Tall Ships Race. During the series we had nine different nationalities on board and Thermopylae visited eight different countries making this a truly International event for us.

One of the legs was crewed by a number of youngsters from a deprived part of Glasgow. The reports from them truly showed that they had a life changing experience. One commented how he had not missed his iPad or mobile phone and how amazing it was to see the sunrise and sunset daily. Funding to the Project enabled us to assist with crew fees for deserving cases.

A number used the various voyages for the residential section of the DofE Gold Award. On one leg all of the crew took the opportunity on board the square rigged Clipper Ship 'Shabab Oman' to climb the rigging after extensive briefing.



The Project has an association with a scheme known as 'Gosport Maritime Futures'. This initiative gives the chance for young people who are not highly academic to experience the marine environment and hopefully to inspire them for greater things. All of them achieved their RYA Competent Crew and by mid week were preparing the yacht for sea without the assistance of the Sea Staff. The scheme does not receive any public funding and as we hope to advance these youngsters we were in a position to use some of our funding to help with crew fees. Nearly all of them are coming back to crew Thermopylae in the Association of Sail Training Organisations Cowes Small Ships Race in the Solent in October racing against up to 30 other Sail Training yachts.

All three of the Project Yachts will take part in the Cowes Small Ships Race where all the vessels are crewed by young people. The element of competition is healthy and not only focuses the mind of our Sea Staff but hopefully inspires the young people and proves that team work is a vital constituent of success!

As previously mentioned the Discovery Sailing Project is a progressive organisation and the Watch Leader scheme is testimony to that. Following the voyages this year fourteen young people will be joining the scheme. Initial training will take part during a five day sail at the end of October. This activity is part funded by the grant aid we received. They have undertaken the commitment to assist during refits, join in our training days in March and perform their allocated duties as Watch Leaders.

The Project takes an interest in our junior members outside of normal Project life.

We would like to comment on some of the achievements of young people who have progressed through our scheme and on to further maritime occupations.

Two have finished their courses and have graduated as officers in the Merchant Navy with another Joining the Royal Fleet Auxillary. All of them mention that their Sail Training experiences helped them in their career.

We also have Watch Leaders who were not that academically inclined when they joined the Project but have persevered with the support of adult members and have achieved good degrees at university including first class honours. One had now completed a Masters degree in Palaeontology!

The Discovery Sailing Project and the young people we support are indebted to the grant aid that we have received. It has been faithfully applied to upgrade the much needed electrical system on Thermopylae, provide grants to young people and support the flourishing Watch Leader Scheme.

The photographs include just a few of those young people that the funding has helped in their life changing experience.



Clive Fisher

Project Organiser

September 2017