

The Vernon Lilford Spirit of Variety Skippers report September 2014

The season started in April with the usual haul out power-wash and anti-foul. We only had the boat out of the water for a short period of time due to the high demand on space within the boat park area, this meant that we finished the commissioning process when the SOV was on her berth.

In order to prepare the SOV for the forthcoming season we needed to make some updates. The cost of this always varies from year to year, due to the fact that safety equipment periodically reaches its expiry date. We renewed several lifejacket lights, plus other out of date lifejacket parts. In one case we purchased a new lifejacket to replace one at the end of its service life.

Other than the general safety equipment we also had to make some stitching repairs to the bimini cover and purchase a new sail cover. This was made locally at a cost of around £650. The new cover was fitted early during this season.

With the advent of Wetwheels Jersey coming on line, our season has inevitably been affected in some part. Naturally with such a high profile new facility at peoples disposal, lots of user groups have been taking full advantage. This means we have had fewer groups using the SOV this season. I personally do not see this as a problem however as a great way to raise awareness and show exactly how accessible both the services have become to people and this has actually increased our client base.

Looking to the future I believe working closely with Wetwheels Jersey will not only raise our profile it will also enhance the services we can provide and perhaps bring our booking system more up to date.

We have experienced good demand this season and have facilitated a good number of trips on the SOV. As in previous years we haven't been getting the high volume of school groups taking advantage of the SOV in the school terms, however the holiday groups are always very keen to use the SOV. They provide holiday clubs to children that would normally be involved in special needs education.

We always have regular groups who chose to use the SOV, one of these is Le Geyt Center/day service. They provide activities to adults with learning difficulties, special need and disabilities. We have provided them with lots of trips this season and hope to continue well into October.

As you may have been aware I was doing an overnight trip on the SOV with a girl with who has learning difficulties at St Aubins fort, when I took part in assisting a rescue of an elderly lady. The SOV was safely moored up against the wall at St Aubins fort, with the girl and her support workers eating their dinner onshore at the time of the rescue. There was no direct effect to the SOV of her passengers during or after the rescue, however due to impending weather we ended up spending the night back in La Collette harbour.

There is still a while left in the season and I certainly look forward to this continuing lovely weather in the hope we can finish the 2014 season with a busy two months.

Steve Manning

Skipper of The Vernon Lilford Spirit of Variety.