Awe & Wonder as Young Epilepsy launch their V20 Wheelyboat

THE LAUNCH of Young Epilepsy’s Coulam Wheelyboat V20 named ‘Awe & Wonder’ took place in June at Weir Wood Reservoir in East Sussex where it is used as part of Young Epilepsy’s St Piers School and College’s physical education programme.

The Wheelyboat Trust and Young Epilepsy started work on the project together in July 2015 when seven students from St Piers School and College were able to try out a V20 for the first time. The trial run showed the PE department’s staff how straightforward the purpose-built boat is at accommodating less-independent students.

Young Epilepsy’s water-based activities provide their 180 students with a valuable sensory experience away from the classroom in a unique and stimulating environment. Many students find focussing on a given task, or even just sitting and relaxing, very challenging. As soon as they are in a boat, however, they become calm and instantly relaxed and take a definite interest in their surroundings and outdoor environment. The PE department finds it very difficult to replicate these experiences in any other physical activity.

Until recently the fleet has met the students’ needs but more young people are attending St Piers who are non-ambulant and require specialised wheelchairs for mobility and positioning. Getting on and off boats for these students requires manual handling which is undignified and carries an element of risk. As a consequence wheelchair-using students were missing out. The V20 has overcome this problem enabling even the most severely disabled to take part and benefit alongside everybody else.

Able to reach a top speed of 32mph with its 90hp Suzuki outboard, the V20 provides a new and more exciting sensory experience to all of the students, benefitting their overall health and well-being. The V20 also enables students to learn how to drive a powerboat and it supports the delivery of The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme as well as benefitting other local special needs groups and schools.

Paul Keenleyside, Director of Education at Young Epilepsy, said: “Young Epilepsy is very pleased to accept the Coulam Wheelyboat V20 donated to us. This boat offers each young person at Young Epilepsy amazing opportunities to embrace the outdoors and take part in adventurous activities on the water. The Wheelyboat will not only broaden our young people’s horizons, but also encourage them to experience new physical activities and enrich their lives through adventure and challenge. We have had the most fantastic support from The Wheelyboat Trust and our charitable donors who have made this possible. I am confident that our young people will be benefitting from their generosity for years to come.”

As part of the extensive fundraising activities, Scott Baptie, Young Epilepsy’s Head of Physical Education, and his predecessor, Marcus Frisby, completed a ‘Three Lakes Challenge’, paddling two open canoes down Loch Awe,
Lake Windermere and Llyn Tegid in 24 hours, raising £3,500 towards the cost of the V20. The Wheelyboat Trust also supported the project by raising 40% of the fully-fitted craft’s cost, which was £41,000. The Trust also provided its V20 demonstrator as a safety boat for the Young Epilepsy Swimathon in October 2015 where the students raised £9,000.

Andy Beadsley, Director of The Wheelyboat Trust, said: “We are very pleased to see the launch of the first wheelchair accessible boat in Young Epilepsy’s fleet. Our aim is to allow as many people as possible to enjoy taking part in waterborne activities and this project will directly benefit those that have the most complex and limiting mobility needs.”

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George Cheeseman, Head of Marine at Suzuki GB, said: “We are proud to partner with The Wheelyboat Trust and provide the outboard power for the V20. The Trust does a fantastic job enabling disabled people to experience the enjoyment of water-based activities.”

Awe & Wonder was generously funded by: events and sponsorship undertaken by staff, students, parents and friends of Young Epilepsy; Chalk Cliff Trust; Nineveh Charitable Trust; Tunbridge Wells Operatic and Dramatic Society; Webb Family Charitable Trust; Raymond & Blanche Lawson Charitable Trust; Borrows Charitable Trust; Alchemy Foundation; Weir Wood Swimmers & Paddlers; Three Lakes Challenge; Loch Awe Boats; Fullers Farm Shop; Samphire Trust; Corker Outdoor Living & Landscape; and, the family and friends of Victoria Nice.

Cheeki Rafiki crewman
James Male remembered in launch of V20 Wheelyboat

IN AUGUST, the Coulam Wheelyboat V20 for QE2 Activity Centre was launched on the River Hamble in Hampshire providing a brand new facility for disabled people to access waterborne activities such as nature watching, pleasure boating and powerboating.

The event was attended by the many donors who supported the fundraising activities including Graham and Lorraine Male. James, their son, was one of the crew on the yacht, Cheeki Rafiki, that foundered in the Atlantic in 2014. They raised almost £13,000 towards the cost of the Wheelyboat, named in his memory. Charles Reed, Chairman of the English Federation of Disability Sport, was guest of honour.

QE2 Activity Centre is a charity that provides day services, holidays and activity sessions for people of all ages with additional needs including learning disabilities, autism, physical disabilities and sensory impairment. It is proud to be fully inclusive, regardless of ability, and the special features of the Wheelyboat will provide mobility impaired users with complete independence as they explore downstream and learn how to drive and crew the powerboat.

Every year at the QE2 Activity Centre thousands of people with additional and special needs are able to access the River Hamble on kayaks, canoes, rafts and a pontoon boat. The centre also offers multiple activities in the Hampshire County Council 400 acre park including archery, climbing, zip-wiring, bushcraft and orienteering. The V20 will enable the centre to train disabled people how to helm and crew a motor boat and it will substantially increase the number of people enjoying powerboating trips as the craft can accommodate up to 10 adults, including 6 wheelchair users.

Graham Male said: “At 22 years old, James achieved more than most would in a lifetime. Those who met him know that he was extremely popular, a real people person with an infectious smile and the
most likeable, selfless guy. When the opportunity came up to do something positive to recognise James, the QE2 Activity Centre was the perfect charity to support to give something back to others. James loved all types of outdoor sports, but he would have particularly loved seeing everyone on the water enjoying activities the way he did. James would have been proud to be a part of the QE2 Activity Centre and overwhelmed by all the good work it achieves for disabled adults and children. It is an honour to be able to leave such a fantastic legacy for James.”

Phil Oates, Manager of QE2 Activity Centre, said: “This is a great addition to the Centre’s fleet and will bring a lot of pleasure to a lot of people. I’m very proud that Graham and Lorraine have chosen to support QE2 Activity Centre in memory of James and very grateful to all who supported the Males and the Wheelyboat Trust to make it happen.”

Charles Reed, Chair of the English Federation of Disability Sport, said: “EFDS is delighted to support this new opportunity in Hampshire, which will enable more disabled people to be and stay active. The organisers have worked tirelessly to raise funds and ensure more people can have memorable experiences on the water. We hope lots more people enjoy the opportunity over the coming years.”

The launch generated some excellent media coverage with BBC TV South Today, BBC Radio Solent and That’s Solent TV reporting on the event.

The Wheelyboat Trust and QE2 Activity Centre are very grateful to the charitable trusts who contributed so generously to the project. They are: Henry Smith Charity, Bruce Wake Charitable Trust, Hedley Foundation, Bernard Sunley Charitable Trust, Sterry Family Foundation and Dixie Rose Findlay Charitable Trust.

For more information contact the QE2 Activity Centre on 023 8040 4844 or email qe2centre@aol.com or visit www.qe2activitycentre.co.uk.

Wheelyboats on order

AS WE go to press, four Wheelyboats are on order for delivery in the next few weeks:

- Assynt Crofters Trust, Sutherland—Coulam 16 Wheelyboat for trout fishing on the famous Loch Drumbeg.
- Mountain Ash Flyfishers, Rhondda Cynon Taff—Coulam 16 Wheelyboat for trout fishing on Penderyn Reservoir.
- Papercourt Sailability, Surrey—Mk III Wheelyboat for pleasure boating on their 42 acre lake.
- Local Solutions, Liverpool—Coulam Wheelyboat V20 for powerboating and pleasure boating at Liverpool Watersports Centre.

Four Wheelyboats have recently been delivered and their formal launches will be taking place shortly:

- Bonnybridge Angling Club, Falkirk—trout fishing on Drumbowie Reservoir
- Llyn Brenig, Conwy—trout fishing on North Wales’ premier angling reservoir.
- Tower Wood Outdoor Education Centre, Cumbria—Coulam Wheelyboat V20 for powerboating and pleasure boating on Lake Windermere.
- Caldecotte Xperience, Buckinghamshire—Coulam Wheelyboat V20 for powerboating and pleasure boating at Action 4 Youth’s watersports centre near Milton Keynes.

Reports and photos of all the launches for these projects will be in the next issue of Waterwheels.
THE FIRST wheelchair accessible Coulam 16 Wheelyboat at Draycote Reservoir in Warwickshire was launched in April following a successful fundraising campaign supported by Draycote Fly-Fishers Association and led by one of its members. An established trout fishery for many years, Draycote Reservoir is a 600-acre lowland reservoir near Rugby famous for its buzzer hatches and large grown-on brown and rainbow trout.

The Wheelyboat is based on Jim Coulam’s popular 16’ reservoir fishing boat design and has been adapted to provide wheelchair users with step free access on board. With an open cockpit and level floor throughout, the disabled angler can choose to sit at the bow or the stern and is able to drive and operate the boat quite independently. The unique design features of the boat are not immediately obvious. Wheelchair users board the Coulam 16 Wheelyboat via a ramp from a pontoon onto a hydraulic platform that lowers to floor level. Removable handrails around the platform help keep the angler secure and simplify the boarding and disembarking procedure, which means that only one able-bodied helper is required for assistance. The boat has a 6’ beam, low centre of gravity and is very stable. In normal conditions wheelchair brakes are sufficient to hold the angler in place, but D-rings on the floor provide secure strapping points when required.

The project cost £9,200 and was funded by Draycote Fly-Fishers Association and their members, the Janet Nash Charitable Settlement and Fishery Management (UK) Ltd which has been running the fishery on Draycote since 2011.

To book the Wheelyboat and a day’s fishing at Draycote telephone 01788 812018 or visit their website www.flyfishdraycote.co.uk.

FORTH AREA Federation of Anglers (FAFA) launched a Coulam 16 Wheelyboat on Linlithgow Loch in April following their successful fundraising campaign supported by The Wheelyboat Trust. There has been a Mk I Wheelyboat operating on Linlithgow Loch since 1995 but it was showing signs of its age and needed to be replaced. The Mk I was the original Wheelyboat model, a flat bottomed aluminium craft with a bow door. The Coulam 16 Wheelyboat is a substantial improvement on its design and is a genuinely dual-purpose craft – anyone can use it, mobility impaired or not.

FAFA is a group of volunteers that since 1962 has been running the fishing on Linlithgow Loch. The loch is a trout fishery dominated by Linlithgow Palace on its shore and is very close to the M9 between Falkirk and Edinburgh. The loch’s fishing lodge is fully accessible including loo facilities with level parking adjacent. Mobility impaired anglers are looked after very well there and the new Coulam 16 Wheelyboat will enable the group to promote its accessible facilities more widely.

The new Wheelyboat is powered by a Suzuki DF8AEL electric start tiller outboard. It is the ideal outboard for the Wheelyboat being ultra-reliable with push-button start.

The project cost £11,166 and was funded by Avondale Environmental Ltd, LandTrust, Scottish Landfill Communities Fund, West Lothian Council and the Souter Charitable Trust.

Andy McAlpine, secretary of FAFA, said: “I would like to thank all the funders for donating to such a worthwhile cause that will enable disabled anglers to enjoy a pleasure the rest of us take for granted. The old Wheelyboat was donated by the Bank of Scotland 21 years ago and if we get the same use from the new Wheelyboat we will be very satisfied.”

For further information and to book the Wheelyboat go to www.fafa-linlithgowloch.org.uk.
New scheme sets out to encourage disabled people into powerboating

AT LAST September’s Southampton Boat Show, the Trust was delighted to work with the Royal Yachting Association to help launch a new disabled powerboating certification scheme ‘Powerability’.

For over 30 years the Trust has been making boating accessible to disabled people through its specially adapted Wheelyboats. RYA Powerability is an important milestone in further broadening accessibility, as for the first time disabled people will be able to acquire specially developed certification in powerboat skippering.

Joff McGill, RYA Sailability Manager, said: “This fantastic scheme will provide many disabled people with the opportunity to develop their powerboating skills and track their progress. The scheme dovetails into the internationally recognised RYA training schemes and is a great stepping stone that increases accessibility.”

Andy Beadsley, Director of The Wheelyboat Trust, said: “We are excited to witness the launch of the RYA’s new Powerability Scheme. Through our UK wide network of Wheelyboats that we have established over the last three decades, we will be able to support the RYA in its roll-out of this important scheme to the large number of organisations operating Wheelyboats across the UK.

“This scheme, as well as highlighting our purpose-built accessible powerboat, the Coulam Wheelyboat V20, to activity centres and Sailability groups across the UK, will have a very positive impact on the involvement of disabled individuals in water-based activities. Having a berth at the Southampton Boat Show, thanks to our friends and partners, Suzuki GB, is a fantastic opportunity that allows us to raise awareness about our cause and encourage everyone and anyone to get out on the water.”

For more information about Powerability and where to take part email Joff McGill at joff.mcgill@rya.org.uk.

First Rivertime Accessible Regatta a great success

A BUSY and exciting day was had by all at Bisham Abbey National Sports Centre last June as the first ever Rivertime Accessible Regatta welcomed more than 300 young people with a wide range of disabilities and special needs to try out sports, many of which they had never experienced before. In the presence of HRH The Princess Royal and a number of Paralympians and Olympians, the event brought smiles to everyone’s faces.

The Rivertime Accessible Regatta was organised by two charities, Rivertime Boat Trust and Give Them a Sporting Chance, with the aim of giving disabled children and young people the same sporting opportunities other young people freely enjoy. The river was brought to life with bell boating, accessible sailing and powerboating, kayaking, canoeing and paddle boarding. On the land, participants could try a host of indoor and outdoor activities ranging from boccia and wheelchair basketball to cycling, football, rugby and air guns.

Two V20 Wheelyboats operated non-stop throughout the day (photo above). One belongs to the Accessible Boat Club and operates on site at Bisham Abbey Sailing School. The other was on loan for the day from Young Epilepsy who kindly helped out as the Trust’s demonstrator was tied up at the Seawork show in Southampton. Huge thanks to them and to Marcus Frisby for skippering.

The regatta will be held again in 2018, taking place on 13 June. See you there!

HRH The Princess Royal spent most of the day at the regatta including a visit to our stand.
Two more canals provide Wheelyboat access

Wilts & Berks Canal Trust’s Mk III Wheelyboat offers historic view of a newly restored canal

THE WILTS & Berks Canal Trust has made great progress in breathing new life into the previously derelict section of canal between Chippenham and Lacock. In 2017 the restoration of a 1.2km stretch at Pewsham Locks was completed and a legacy enabled WBCT to purchase a Mk III Wheelyboat that now operates there for the benefit of disabled people. The Wheelyboat was officially named after Mary Archard, its benefactor, and launched in October before setting off on a scenic inaugural trip for invited guests. It was the first time in more than a century that passengers could view the canal from the same perspective as the original narrowboats. The canal’s tranquil setting amid fields and woods can be enjoyed by people with mobility impairments, their friends and families on trips organised by the canal trust. For more information go to www.wbct.org.uk or contact Dave Maloney on 07809 374754 or dave.maloney@wbct.org.uk.

Mk III Wheelyboat joins the fleet at Cotswold Boatmobility

COTSWOLD BOATMOBILITY is an independent community group whose aim is to make boating on the Cotswold canals accessible to all. They operate on the Stroudwater Canal and organise their trips from Stonehouse Wharf, Ryeford Wharf and Ebley Wharf. The launch of their Mk III Wheelyboat took place at Ebley Mill last October in glorious sunshine. Zephyrus joins a small fleet of katakanus that enable disabled people, young and old, to get out on the water paddling the ‘kanus or driving the electric-powered Wheelyboat. For more information go to www.cotswoldboatmobility.org.uk or contact Jan Thomas on 07702 134957. They regularly post photos and reports of their activities on their Facebook page as well as details of forthcoming trips. Look out for reports this February on a visit from HRH Prince Charles. They operate all year round and only the most adverse weather conditions stop them from going out.

The Wheelyboat project is one of four organised in partnership with Countryside Mobility, a charity run by Living Options Devon that has been set up to provide disabled people with easy access to the south west’s beauty spots in off-road Tramper mobility scooters and Wheelyboats. Full details of the scheme and a list of venues are available at www.countrysidemobility.org, by phoning 01392 459222 or by emailing info@countrysidemobility.org. You can also find out more by following them on Twitter @CMSouthWest or on Facebook.

Reminder about special insurance policy for Wheelyboat operators

WE HAVE teamed up with insurance company IRCM to offer Wheelyboat operators a bespoke insurance policy for their Wheelyboats. It is very important that the work of the Trust has the support of a broker who fully understands the role Wheelyboats play, that they are purpose-built for the job and that being mobility impaired should not be a barrier to participating in waterborne activities. Some insurers perceive disabled people taking part in activities on the water as high risk and price their policies accordingly. Not only are IRCM’s policies tailored to fit the needs of Wheelyboat operators but they are also very competitive. We are very pleased to be able to recommend to operators of Wheelyboats a policy we have absolute confidence in regarding its price and the cover provided. For more information contact Mark Elcocks at markelcocks@ircmsc.co.uk or on 01902 796793.
First Coulam Wheelyboat V20 to operate in the Solent handed over to Lymington Sailability

FOLLOWING a highly successful fundraising campaign, Lymington Sailability officially received their Coulam Wheelyboat V20 from The Wheelyboat Trust at the prestigious Southampton Boat Show. It is the first V20 to operate in the Solent.

For the last 21 years, Lymington Sailability has been transforming the lives of disabled people in Hampshire, Dorset and Wiltshire by enabling them to participate in water based activities. Working with Special Educational Needs schools, charities and community groups, the group offers accessible sailing and powerboating for people who might feel confined by their disability. The group was attracted to the Coulam Wheelyboat V20 as it needed a boat that could accommodate larger groups of people and satisfy the growing interest in accessible boat trips.

Tom Morton, Lymington Sailability’s Vice-Chairman, said: “Having first discovered The Wheelyboat Trust at the Southampton Boat Show a couple of years ago, we booked the Coulam Wheelyboat V20 for a demonstration in our local waters at Lymington. “The Trustees were absolutely delighted with what it could offer, which then led us to work with The Wheelyboat Trust to raise the funds to make this important acquisition for our charity. We can now accommodate so many more people and give them access to the water and the great enjoyment that can bring.”

Andy Beadsley, Director of The Wheelyboat Trust, said: “We are delighted to be handing over their new Wheelyboat to Lymington Sailability—the large capacity of the V20, offering space for up to ten adults including six wheelchair users, made it the obvious choice for them.”

The V20 is fully fitted with A-frame and navigation lights, a Suzuki DF90ATL outboard, hydraulic steering, folding bench seating, storage cover and a water skiing post that will be used for towing the group’s dinghies.


To contact the group or learn more about their activities go to www.lymingtonsailability.com.

Mk III Wheelyboat connects two Yorkshire villages for the first time since 1952

NUN MONKTON is a little no-through-road village situated at the beautiful confluence of the Rivers Nidd and Ouse. The Ouse is navigable here for a further 20 miles and river traffic would once have played an important part in village life. In fact, until 1952, a small passenger ferry was operated from the ‘Ferryfield’, close to the new Wheelyboat’s pontoon, and a ferryman was permanently accommodated in a cottage close by. Villagers wanting to cross would ring a loud hand bell from the water’s edge to call the ferryman (a great grandfather of one of today’s villagers!). Since its delivery in August, a Mk III Wheelyboat (wittily christened Bryan Ferry) has reconnected the communities of Nun Monkton and Beningborough, opening access to the many walks and cycle paths available on both sides of the Ouse. Operating from April to October, the ferry can carry up to 7 passengers with a skipper. Dogs are welcome and travel for free. The journey across the river takes about 2 minutes. The organisers are looking to recruit more volunteers and for more information on this and the days when the ferry operates please visit the Nun Monkton Ferryboat Facebook page. Mk III Wheelyboats are built for us by Joshua Preston Marine & Heavy Engineers.
THANKS TO our PR agency, Jane Bevan and her team at Firebird PR, 2017 was another high profile year for the Trust in broadcast, print and online media. A staggering audience reach of nearly 42 million people was achieved! With a busy programme of Wheelyboat launches, shows and events, there are plenty of opportunities to showcase the work of the trust. Firebird’s extensive list of media contacts ensures excellent coverage of our work and dissemination of our key messages. The current focus of our PR strategy is developing new projects in the UK and exploring opportunities to reach new markets further afield. As far as we know we are the only charity that designs, builds, funds and supplies this type of craft anywhere in Europe.

Refurbished Mk I Wheelyboat launched on Burton Mill Pond

A PICTURESQUE Sussex fishing lake near Petworth has had a new pontoon constructed providing step-free access from the road, berthing for a Wheelyboat and two punts and a platform for birdwatching and fishing. The project is part of Arun & Rother Connections (ARC) Project, a £2.2m initiative funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund that aims to improve the environment in the Arun and Rother river catchments and encourage greater access by the public. The project has been delivered by West Sussex County Council with support from The Wheelyboat Trust. Burton Mill Pond is owned by WSCC and the angling rights are leased to Sussex Piscatorial Society. The Wheelyboat is available for disabled anglers and their companions to use on a day-ticket basis. It is self-operated so users will need some prior boating experience. For security, its electric outboard and other equipment is kept at The Wheelyboat Trust’s HQ, half-a-mile down the road, to be collected and returned on the day. The Trust is very grateful to the Gerald Micklem Charitable Trust whose grant funded the Wheelyboat’s refurbishment. To book or make an enquiry go to www.sussexpiscatorialsociety.co.uk.

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PLEASE DONATE—IT'S VERY EASY.... Our work is entirely reliant on income from donations, we receive no statutory funding. Donations can be made online via the Donate/Support Us page on our website, www.wheelyboats.org. We welcome legacies, so please remember us when writing your will (more info and a codicil form can be downloaded from our website’s Donate/Support Us page). Members of clubs/societies/fisheries—please nominate us as your charity to support.

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