



Oceans of Hope is the first yacht to circumnavigate the world crewed by people with MS. **Martin Hadley** joined a local sailing group five years ago and hasn't looked back since. He talks to Alice Lewis.

The 67ft yacht Oceans of Hope is part of a Sailing Sclerosis Foundation project that hopes to change perceptions of MS, and help people with the condition focus on the positives; what they're able to achieve, rather than the disabilities.

The Danish foundation was set up by Dr Mikkel Anthonisen, a doctor and physiotherapist from Copenhagen University Hospital. Mikkel set up the project to show that having MS shouldn't stop people living their lives, and has brought together an international network of MS and sailing communities.

The yacht will sail over 61,000km and cross the equator twice. It sailed

from Copenhagen, Denmark on 15 June 2014 (World MS Day) and docked for four days at Gunwharf Quays, Portsmouth on 3 July before heading off to La Rochelle, France. The yacht will call at 20 ports around the world, stopping to host events en route, where people with MS can participate in sailing opportunities.

After stopping in southern Europe, the yacht will continue to the USA, the Caribbean, Panama Canal, across the Pacific Ocean to Australia, South Africa, Brazil and then back to Europe. The voyage will conclude on November 2015, when the crew are due to land back in Copenhagen. In our next issue we'll be talking to Chris Davis and Camilla Veale who

have MS, and will be on board from Panama to the Galapagos Islands.

Sailing locally

It's an incredible opportunity, but you don't have to circumnavigate the world to experience the excitement and freedom of sailing. Martin Hadley, aged 56, has primary progressive MS and sails with a local group where he lives in Poole. 'I was diagnosed in 1994,' he says. 'I was walking wounded for about two or three years, before I eventually fell into an electric wheelchair so I could get about and do things.'

'I got into sailing since being disabled, and now I don't know why anyone wouldn't do this.' Martin sails with Sailability, the charitable arm of the Royal Yachting Association (RYA). The national organisation represents people who go boating for pleasure, and encourages and supports over 40,000 people with disabilities to

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ABOUT MARTIN

Diagnosed with MS in 1994, Martin is a keen sailor.



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take up sailing, and facilitates sites to develop sailing opportunities.

'My first time on a boat was five years ago,' says Martin. 'I quite quickly progressed onto sailing on my own, and then I started racing – and I was quite good! I used to cycle a lot, so sailing brought back my racing instinct. I wanted to sail on my own because it gives you a great sense of freedom. It's like when you're riding a bike along the road and you see another bike further up; I was always the person who would see that bike and want to overtake it. I can't do that anymore, but out in my boat when I'm at the start line of a race, ready to go round a course, it gives me the same feeling.'

Racing up The Clyde

Martin sailed up The Clyde for Race 2 The Games (a sailing race for all abilities and experiences) after seeing it advertised on Facebook. 'It was a warm up to the Commonwealth Games,' he says, 'and as Sailability has only just started up in Scotland, they decided to put on this event.'

'The type of boat I use is the 303. You can be lifted onto it and do all the operations you need to from one seat. There were 14 boats, and we set off from Greenock Dock and sailed

up The Clyde estuary. It was quite rough, and there were big gusty winds, but we had plenty of safety crews.

'The whole race was over 17 miles, and it took seven hours. As I suffer from fatigue, I was advised to have another person in my boat, so I volunteered my PA, Dave Owens, who takes me to events throughout the UK. He'd never been in one of these boats; I don't think he knew what to make of it!' Martin won two trophies at Race 2 The Games. He crossed the finish line third overall. 'I've never done anything quite like it before,' he says, 'but it was brilliant, and I have lots more events coming up.'

If you want to get involved or try sailing, contact Sailability to find your local sailing group. 'You can go out with an instructor to see what it's like,' says Martin. 'They hoist you up into the boat. I think most people would benefit. I have no regrets since I started sailing. I enjoy my life; I enjoy my sports. MS is not the end of life, it's the beginning of a new one.'

Oceans of Hope are recruiting. Do you have MS? Do you enjoy sailing? Then why take part in the adventure of a lifetime? www.sailing-sclerosis.org



Martin Hadley sailing in the boat 'Gannet', thanks to the Bournemouth & District Multiple Sclerosis Society, Dorset

Contacts

- ▀ Sailing Sclerosis:
www.sailing-sclerosis.com
 Check out their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/OceansofHope or email the team for more info at: info@sailingsclerosis.com
- ▀ Royal Yachting Association – Sailability
 Find a course or group near you at: www.rya.org.uk; 023 8060 4100
- ▀ AHoy Centre – specialise in sailing and rowing:
www.ahoy.org.uk; 020 8691 7502
- ▀ Disabled Sailors Association:
www.disabledsailing.org; 01329 317279