

Southport Back in Time



with Andrew Brown



Boats from West Lancashire Yacht Club enjoy the Marine Lake in Southport, and left

Photos: Bertie Cunningham Southport BID

Club welcomes all to have a go at sailing

THE beautiful Marine Lake in Southport is one of the most historic and remarkable attractions in the UK – and it's there to be enjoyed by more people!

That's the view of Richard Westlake, the Commodore of West Lancashire Yacht Club.

Richard would love to welcome anyone keen to give sailing a try from inquisitive landlubbers to decorated admirals. They don't need to have sailed before; age is not a barrier; and the health and wellbeing benefits are immense.

The West Lancashire Yacht Club, on Marine Drive, is famous throughout the country for hosting its iconic 24 Hour Yacht Race every autumn, but sailing is a pastime that is there to be enjoyed by people throughout the year. Why not give it a go?

Incredibly, the Marine Lake is a man-made lake that has been enjoyed by generations of Sandgrounders and visitors going back to the Victorian Era.

The attraction is just over a mile long and half a mile wide and was created along with the beautiful Kings Gardens in 1887.

Richard Westlake said: "Sailing is an activity that gives a huge boost to your mental health and wellbeing. Being out on the open water, sailing in

the fresh air – we are so lucky to have the Marine Lake here in Southport.

"West Lancashire Yacht Club has a very close alignment with the objectives and ambitions of Southport BID, which is keen to highlight the many health benefits of Southport as a seaside town. We are members of Southport BID and are delighted to contribute to it.

"Southport is very fortunate in having the amenities we have available for water sports. We are really keen to raise awareness to let more people know what we have available, and how easy it is to come down and have a go.

"The Marine Lake is a huge asset to have in our town. To have such a sizeable facility right next to the coast and so close to the town centre is really unique.

"When our club started out in 1894, life was very different. There used to be boats tied up alongside Southport Pier, people used to sail from the pier and out to sea and along the coast. The lake was extended in the 1960s."

Richard is keen to encourage more people along to enjoy the various sports on offer.

West Lancashire Yacht Club offers dinghy sailing, dinghy racing, RYA sail training, RYA powerboat training, offshore sailing, remote control yacht

racing, juniors and adult training courses, taster sailing and more.

It is a great pastime to be part of even if you're not sailing – many members enjoy volunteering and attending social events in the recently refurbished Lakeside Lounge. Club hire with a dance floor is available.

Richard said: "We have got a fabulous community here. We have got children sailing with us whose parents started out with us when they were young.

"There are lots of local success stories. People have learned how to sail with us and have then gone on to become competition winners and even national or world champions.

"There are people like me who didn't start sailing until late in life. I never sailed as a child, I was a complete beginner.

"We have got young people who have come down for youth taster sessions, and have then developed a passion for it.

"We have done sessions with local primary schools where as well as sailing, children have also been able to enjoy a curriculum activity related to sailing in our club.

"We're planning to expand the junior programme in partnership with local schools and with an offer to meet every budget.



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"At the other end, we have had groups of older people such as the U3A having a go.

"We want to reach out to as many people in the local community as we can.

"Our club is on the Marine Lake with safe waters for sailors of all ages and abilities. We don't have any members of staff, it is all voluntary and volunteering is part of the fun of membership.

"We are passionate about sailing and enjoy the social activities that come with it. There's nothing quite like the feeling of being out on the water, with the wind and the waves around you.

"We want to share that feeling with others and help them discover the joys of sailing.

"We believe sailing is good for our wellbeing – it's the fun of competitive sport, the technical challenge against the elements and the social engagement in a friendly club environment.

"Sailing can be a great way to reduce stress, and connect with

nature. We aim to help our junior and senior sailors achieve these benefits through our sailing and training programmes.

"Sailing enables the holistic development of a person. It requires the development of both physical and technical skills – how to rig a boat, how the wind works, how the boat moves through the water, and very importantly, how well you work with other people on board.

"Many young people who have previously lacked confidence have been able to build their confidence both on the water and through the friendly and welcoming social aspect that the club offers.

"They can develop skills that will be useful throughout their lives. Come down and experience the fun and thrill! Try sailing with us for free – no prior experience is required."

West Lancashire Yacht Club is on Marine Drive, Southport, Lancashire, PR8 1RY. Email: the.commodore.wlyc@gmail.com or call: 01704 530 840 or visit: wlyc.org.uk.



Richard Beswick-Calvert Bertie Cunningham Southport BID



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Andrew Brown runs the Stand Up For Southport Facebook group. For details email mediaandrewbrown@gmail.com. You can also #StandUpForSouthport