

For those of you who don't know me, my name is Peter Russell. Boats and the RCC have been a huge part of my childhood - one of my earliest sailing memories is being in an oppie at the lake district Swallows and Amazons meet.

Three years ago I sailed for the first time with the sailing charity Adventures Offshore. They invited me back to become part of their young sea staff training programme and this motivated me to get some yacht sailing qualifications. Through the charity I have discovered a genuine enjoyment for imparting what I have learned from sailing on to other young water users.

Earlier this summer I did my first aid course, this allowed me to obtain my dinghy instructor qualification and also allowed me to get commercial endorsement on the qualifications I had to sail with Adventures Offshore.

The dinghy instructor qualification enables me to teach sailing, something I had been really looking forward to. Since then I have used the qualification to teach adult sailing at my local sailing club every Monday evening and to teach junior sailing for a week over the summer, as well as teaching at On Board every Saturday morning. I can certainly say that as a job it tops washing pots in the local pub.

Having successfully completed a yachtmaster/coastal skipper theory course earlier in the year, I was keen to get some on the water qualifications and I applied to the Noel Marshall Fund to help towards my coastal skipper practical course. Unfortunately, the yachtmaster instructor decided that, despite the fact that I had a lot of the skills required, I did not yet have the sea miles in a position of authority (first or second mate) to be a fully qualified coastal skipper. So, I was sent to gain more miles with Adventures Offshore, proudly holding my Day Skipper certificate. The Day Skipper allowed me to progress within Adventures Offshore from a trainee mate to a second mate. This has not only allowed me to further my sailing knowledge by putting me in a position of responsibility, it has also enabled me to pass on some of that knowledge to other young people who are less experienced than me. This caused me to think more about the functioning of the boat as I was no longer only thinking about myself. Standing a watch as a second mate involves taking responsibility for at least four watch members, and I had to not only think about the welfare of the boat, but also the welfare of the people in my watch. This showed me a new side to sailing that I had not yet experienced, and I have to say that it is some of the most enjoyable sailing I have ever had, as well as ticking another box in the Coastal Skipper checklist.

A favourite memory is of the small ships race from Ramsgate to Gosport at the end of the summer. I lost my glasses to the marina and had to wear prescription sunglasses for the rest of the trip. This meant that I was, at midnight, as we crossed the finish line, leaning over the leeward rail with a torch reading tell-tales in a pair of aviators. But by then I had complete confidence in my watch, as over the course of the week we had grown together, not only as a team but as sailors, everyone learning something new and different every day, and I knew that with a little help from an essentially blind me they could sail the boat anywhere. The feeling that I had got this small group of people to this point made the finish of the race even more special and I will remember that week for a very long time.

I think it is fair to say that I have had an amazing and memorable summer this year and I have certainly increased my sailing knowledge and experience exponentially. However, none of this would have been possible without the assistance received from the Noel Marshall Award. I am so immensely thankful that it provided me with the opportunity to further my sailing, and help others

further their sailing too, and I would strongly recommend that anyone who is considering something similar apply for it.