

During the summer, I was given the chance to sail on Merrilyn, a 62 foot yacht with a crew of 16 people to travel on it. We were taken from Richmond station to Southampton by coach, and stopped off to meet our boat.

Merrilyn is a modern and hi-tech boat, and has a kitchen and dining area downstairs as well as a lot of rope and sails on deck! After spending a few hours getting to know the boat, we set off and sailed out the harbour.

We spent the night anchored near the Isle of Wight, some of us were seasick but we all got used to it eventually. The next day we hoisted the sails and went along the coast travelling west and made it to Weymouth for the night. We docked in the harbour and all went to play football in the town. It was quite interesting sailing in a place where a few weeks before, Olympians were racing on, and a place where Paralympians would soon be sailing as well. Unfortunately the next day had brought fog with it, so we couldn't travel very far, however once it had cleared we sailed around Portland and anchored there so we could try jumping off the boat into the sea, very good fun!

The rest of the week was spent sailing with decent weather and wind slowly back east. We stopped off in Cowes and Yarmouth on the Isle of Wight, both very interesting places. The other crew members on board were very friendly and despite being the youngest there I was not left out. The instructors and skippers were also kind and devoted the whole week to making sure we had fun and learnt new skills.

At the end of the week, the skipper talked to each one of us about how our experience had been with the Rona Sailing Project. Out of the 16 crew members, I was one of the 4 awarded a special 'Scott Award' by the skipper. This will benefit me if I would like to take part with the Rona Project again (which I certainly will.) Overall I have had a fantastic week onboard Merrilyn and am really thankful for the bursary I was awarded by the Boating Base and the Royal Thames Yacht Club to take part on the trip.

