



**ELIZABETH JACKSON**  
HOBBY ROWER

■ Elizabeth Jackson has lived in Bristol for almost nine years, but although All Aboard is just a five-minute walk from her home, she was unaware of it until earlier this year when, by chance, an acquaintance mentioned it.

In the past she had taken part “as an extra pair of hands” on a couple of sailing trips, but is now rowing once a week and volunteering in the office.

An active lady in any case – she gets around by bike – Elizabeth, who will be 70 on her next birthday, loves a challenge and is thriving on her new-found activity.

She says: “I went down and had a taster sailing session, which didn’t excite me because there wasn’t a good wind and we were sitting in the harbour not going anywhere.

“And then I went canoeing. The first time was really nice and the second I was the only person, so I had one-to-one tuition which was fantastic because I learned to do emergency stops, move sideways and turn on the spot. I would love to do more canoeing, but on a river. It sounds awful, but I think the harbour is a little bit too tame – there’s no challenge because it’s such a safe environment. On a river, the techniques I’ve learned would be really tested.

“I thought I wasn’t really interested in rowing, but I had a go at it and I don’t know what it is, but it’s got under my skin. I thought it was a straightforward thing of pushing the oars backwards and forwards, but it’s not. Rowing has almost taken me back to the days when I started to learn to drive – there are so many things to do at once.

“There are six of us in the boat and we have to work as a team, which is the hardest thing because older people tend to have different levels of strength and ideally you need a team with the same strength level.

“I don’t ache as much now. The first two or three times I really did, but once I got a little bit annoyed about that I started working on it and then I knew where to put the effort in. It was aching a little bit more and a little bit more and I was thinking ‘how much further am I going to go?’ and then it started to stop and my effort is not drifting off, so I think I am getting stronger.

“I thrive on people who are enthusiastic about their jobs or interests, or whatever it is. I seem to generate energy from such people.

“Everyone at All Board loves their job and they are really interested in the people they take out on to the water. Aren’t I lucky to have this on my doorstep?”



**MICHAEL DENNIS**  
COMPETITOR AND  
INSTRUCTOR

■ Michael Dennis, 16, pictured above left, has been sailing with All Aboard since he was 12 and took to it like a duck to water. He competes on sailing’s world stage and has qualified as an instructor.

“About four or five years ago a friend brought me to have a go at sailing and quite simply I took off on it from there. I learnt to sail there and some of the instructors got me doing more, which led to me doing many, many competitions, including two world championships last year and the year before in France and Italy. I was also trained up as an assistant instructor.

“In the first world championship, out of 100 I was 80th and the following year I struggled again because I’m not very good in light winds, but I peaked at 25th and finished 50th. I used one of the All Aboard boats for last year’s competition.

“I just have just moved out of the RS Quba class of boat last year, which was for juniors, and I’m now in a 29er, which is a youth class. I definitely want to take it further and I want to go to uni too, to do sciences. The universities have a very competitive sailing circuit.

“What I like about All Aboard is firstly that it’s round the corner from where I live, and secondly it’s a brilliant atmosphere; all the instructors are brilliant to work with and working in such an enclosed environment like Bristol’s harbour is safe and it’s right in the centre of the city, so you’re not going to get that kind of experience anywhere else. It’s unique.

“Generally I work with kids, but I also do voluntary work with the Sailability group, which is for disabled people, and also with the university groups.”