

On the river - Harlow (Blackwater) Sailing Club

Until you're prevented from doing something, you do not realise how important to your wellbeing and lives it fully is. When our boats were laid up for winter, none of us predicted the lockdown. No sailing or on the water activities being allowed throughout the spring.

At the Harlow (Blackwater) Sailing Club, the wooden black painted sailing club on Lawling creek in Maylandsea the larger boats would normally have been launched and on their moorings from late March onwards. Indeed, one boat was moved onto the hard standing by the sea wall ready for launching and there it stayed as lockdown commenced. Those of you getting your quota of daily exercise along the sea wall will have noticed the empty moorings in the bay. They remained empty right through into June, when thankfully rule relaxations allowed launching to begin. These boats are now free to go for short cruises on the Blackwater, maybe to favourite destinations such as West Mersea or Bradwell. Hopefully, the more adventurous may soon be able to sail further afield, up the East coast or even across to France or the Netherlands.

Likewise, dinghy racing should have started in late March. Most races are run jointly with Maylandsea bay sailing club. Unfortunately, the restrictions in place as I write this in mid-June still prevent racing. Some members though have been racing each other in virtual dinghy races, thanks to the marvels of the internet. The races have been hotly contested with plenty of virtual collisions and protests, but for me it's not the same as the real thing. You don't even get wet or have the joys of pulling your boat back up the jetty tired and exhausted after a hard race. Frustratingly we have missed some glorious sailing weather during the spring with blue skies and crystal-clear sea, most unlike the normal muddy grey of the Blackwater.

Current rules now allow us to at least launch and sail individually from our jetty. I have personally had two great sails exploring up Lawling creek and into Mayland creek, which we rarely seem to do when racing each other. Both are fantastic and typical of the Essex tidal creeks fringed by salt marsh with magnificent wide-open skies.

Our keen canoeists as soon as permitted were back paddling on the creek which is a great safe place for canoeing, with the bank never too far away. You will often see the seals, either in the water or basking on the banks. These fantastic creatures, with lovely inquisitive faces seem completely at ease with the canoes, allowing them to pass within a few feet. As the tide comes up, new channels develop allowing the adventurous to explore into the salting's.

Our very active wind surfing contingent, wasted no time in getting their boards back on the water. The strong cold northerly and easterly winds we have been getting recently being no deterrent, providing the perfect conditions for flying across

the creek. In fact, the stronger the wind the more they seem to enjoy this fast exhilarating sport. Some of them are also into the latest innovation called foiling. On a sufficiently windy day you could be lucky and see their boards accelerate out of the water, literally flying along on its foils, with the board about 2 feet above the water. It does take some skill, but they assure me it's worth it when you get it right.

Unfortunately racing and opening the clubhouse buildings and socials are waiting on further rule relaxations. We are missing Jenny's lovely homemade cakes and a pint in our cosy clubhouse, but at last the sailing season has restarted at HBSC on Lawling creek.

If you're interested in sailing or finding out more about our club at any level please see our website at: **Harlow-blackwater-sailingclub.com** or contact us by email at **hbsccommittee@gmail.com**, for membership secretary Telephone: **07929 734684**. We currently have club moorings, dinghy, canoe and board storage available on site

- Edward Skinner -

