

What can sailing do that other sports can't?

– by Gemma Telford, Trustee, The Cirdan Sailing Trust



This piece was really hard to write a title for! Because all my previous attempts focused on changing lives, helping underprivileged kids and charity work. All very worthwhile, and boring as hell. Ok, people might read it and give it a like but so what? So, with this title, what I'm hoping to do is get people who like sailing to read it. Why? Because they're really the people this piece is addressed to.

So, if you've got this far, hopefully it's because you like sailing. Also, I bet you can think of a whole bunch of things that sailing can do that other sports can't. Other sports might get you outside and in the fresh air, but they probably won't see you having to adjust to conditions that can suddenly change, that are unpredictable, potentially dangerous and that rely on the whole team working together. Other sports can bring together a team, but is it a team you're with all day, or even all week, long? Is it a team you can literally trust with your life? You might go for Saturday night drinks with your football mates, but you probably don't know a tenth of what they're like as a person, under pressure or as a cook!

Now if you're still here, I reckon you definitely like sailing. You probably understand the benefits and enjoy it as a pastime. Well, when I was 14, I got to go sailing and it changed my life. I sailed on a 90 foot, Baltic trader built in 1937, called the Queen Galadriel. She is the flagship of a charity called the Cirdan Trust (for Tolkien fans among you, Cirdan was the Shipwright in The Lord of the Rings). Cirdan was founded in 1983 by the Rev Bill Broad, who inherited money from his father, a Lloyds of London tycoon. Bill believed that sailing in groups was a great way to encourage the development and motivation of young people. He set up the trust to help underprivileged kids have access to sailing, and through this potentially give them a new vision in life and an understanding that even if you're disadvantaged in other ways, you can still achieve great things.



This year, I was lucky enough to be in a position to help to sponsor a group of girls from a school down the road from me, in Luton. Their teacher, Trudie, like me, had been on a voyage with the Queen Galadriel when she was younger and realised the power of this experience. Now a secondary school teacher, she wanted to share that experience with her pupils.

Their voyage was booked for July 2023, but they were struggling to raise funds. Many of the girls came from very strict backgrounds, attended Mosque after school and had never even been on a sleepover at a friend's house.

So, a week's sailing on board a historic sailing ship was a long way out of their experience! I went to meet Trudie and the girls just before summer term ended, and a week before their voyage. The girls were a mix of Year 7, 8 and 10 and one by one filtered into the classroom that we were meeting in during their lunch break, bringing their lunch along with them. They'd been selected for a number of reasons – some because the school saw leadership potential in them, some as a respite from their home and school relationships and some to help them create more positive relationships and associations within school.





Talking to the girls was really interesting. Many of them hadn't had a chance to do any kind of 'enrichment' activity due to Covid. They were excited and a bit nervous. Only one had been on any kind of boat before. They wanted to know if there would be sharks? (Not likely around the UK coast.) Would they be able to have a shower? (There is one small shower, but daily showering isn't a 'thing'.) Does the boat have WiFi? (It doesn't.) Will there be proper meals? (Depends on the group's cooking!) Where would they get changed? (Modesty was a super important issue with this group. Luckily, all the bunks are fitted with curtains to give privacy for changing.) Mostly, they were excited to see their teachers in their pyjamas which they thought was pretty unbelievable.

And afterwards? Afterwards I got the most incredible letter from Trudie and the girls. I've shared some excerpts of it here. And right here – this is the reason for me writing this article – to share some of the incredible work the Cirdan Trust does, and which, as a new Trustee, I'm so proud to be a part of going forwards.

Thank you so much for giving us
about to live on for 5 days.
To Gemma and all the other
charities who have donated
to this trust love a big thank
you for giving me an opportunity
I did not think was possible
before it all came to life and
I got a once in a lifetime
opportunity. Thank you



It's not often that you can say that what you do makes a real impact on the lives of real people. Not just in improving their situation, but in giving them an opportunity to do things they would never have been able to do, and the chance to learn, develop and grow as people because of that. It gave me a warm fuzzy feeling in the best way possible. Might it be able to do the same for you?

Cirdan have to fund a large proportion of the costs of every voyage, because by choosing to work with underprivileged groups, by default these groups are often not capable of raising the funding needed to support the voyage, crew and small fleet (as well as Queen Galadriel, there is Faramir, a Bermudan Ketch, and Duet, a classic Yawl from 1912 that was gifted to the Trust..)

So, the main reason for writing this piece and for appealing to people who already love sailing is to see if personally, or through your own business, you might be able to help facilitate some voyages through the trust yourself. Many businesses these days raise money for charity and all that work is important. Sometimes, a fund is set aside for CSR type projects. It costs around £12,000 for a week's sailing on Queen Galadriel. In 2024 we're going to be looking at a number of initiatives to raise funds, but also give sponsors a chance to visit, and even sail on one of the magnificent boats. I was lucky enough to be able to see all the boats in dock in London just a few weeks ago, and meet the crew and volunteers and it was magical to be back on the Queen Galadriel, just for a little while.

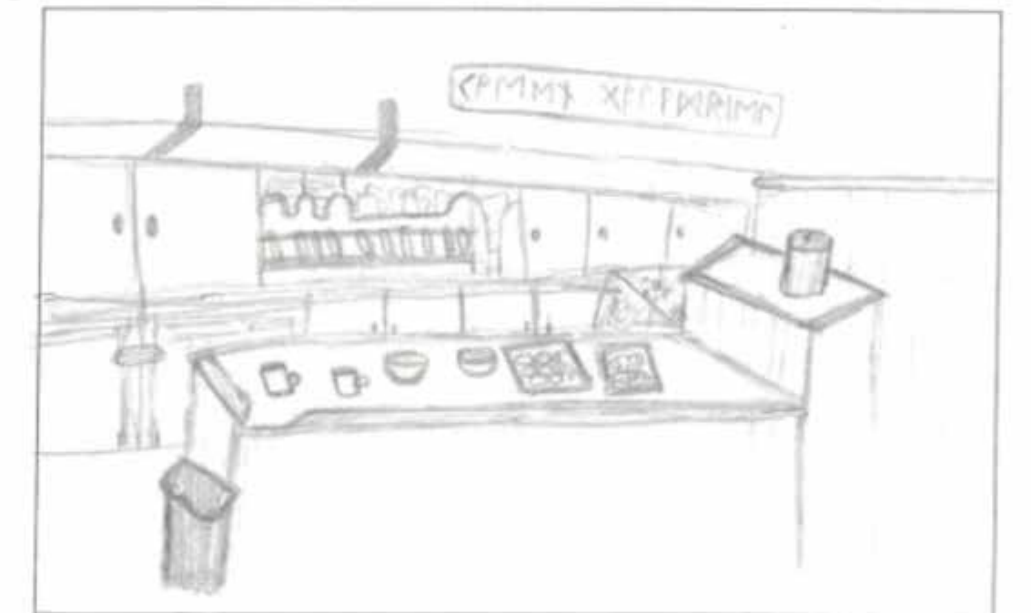
And if you need any more persuading – I couldn't put it more eloquently than Trudie, the course leader for the girls school in Luton did...

"Throughout the week-long voyage, our girls had the chance to develop their teamwork, communication, and leadership abilities while immersing themselves in the art of sailing. They learned the importance of collaboration, the thrill of adventure, and the beauty of the natural world. The confidence and self-esteem they gained from overcoming the challenges of sailing will undoubtedly stay with them for a lifetime.

Your support has not only enhanced their personal growth but has also inspired them to strive for excellence in various aspects of their lives. By believing in their potential and investing in their future, you have become an integral part of their journey towards success.

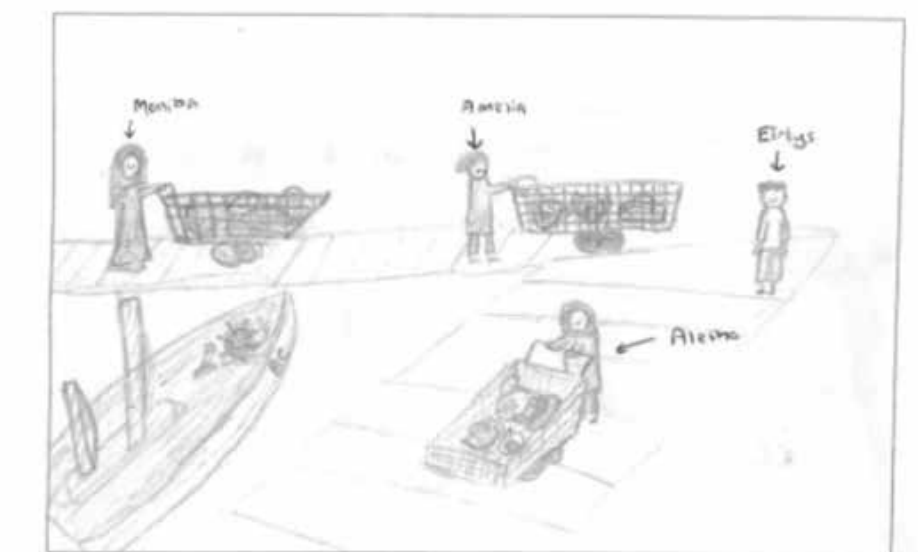
The impact of your generosity extends far beyond the voyage itself. Our students return to their community with a newfound sense of empowerment and determination to achieve their goals. Your contribution has sparked a flame of curiosity and ambition that will continue to burn brightly in their hearts and minds."

I will never forget this and feel as if this is a once in life-time opportunity. One to never forget!



THANK YOU!

Thank you so much for supporting the Cirdan Trust. Every second I had here I really really enjoyed. I have learnt so much like the different names of things on a ship, tying ropes in different ways, learning to never stop and always keep trying, and everything is done as a team. This experience truly allowed me to do things that can only be done once. Once again Thank you so much for making this experience possible!





THANK YOU CIRDAN TRUST!
I'm so glad that I got to go on this trip, honestly I feel so lucky to be chosen & for this special event to be happening. Thank you so so super much for those people who were & are supporting the Cirdan trust. I will forever be grateful for this trip. I will remember this forever, continue supporting the Cirdan trust so that these wonderful events still happen & so others get to experience the same fantastic days on this ship.

THANK YOU
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To find out more:

Visit www.cirdantrust.org
Or drop me or the team a line at:
nfo@cirdantrust.org

We'd love to hear from you 😊

