

Ulley Sailing Club toasted a most successful 2011 at its annual Plum Pudding Race and Boxing Day Wassail. Following its re-launch on completion of the repairs to Ulley dam in 2010, the club has gained two national accolades and nearly doubled its membership.

Father Christmas, (none other than Dave White, who won a lifetime achievement award at the Rotherham Sports Awards 2010 and went on to win the South Yorkshire lifetime achievement award earlier this year) arrived at the control tower with his young elves in a festively decorated Santa Express (a.k.a the club's mini tractor and trailer) and rang the bell to start the traditional Plum Pudding Race



. Eighteen dinghies took to the water in very strong and gusty winds, but only a dozen made it to the finish and both safety boats were kept busy throughout the race, while those watching from the bank were entertained by some spectacular pirouettes and nose-dives (*photos*). The closely contested race, featuring many of the club's past and present class and youth champions, and various Santa's penguins and snowmen, ended in victory for Mark and Simon Pinder in their Merlin Rocket. Among the competitors was Mark Burkitt, the Club Commodore from 2007 to 2011, who recently received an RYA Volunteer Award for Outstanding Contribution to Sailing, presented by HRH Princess Anne, the Princess Royal, at a ceremony in Westminster. Mark has been the lynchpin who held the club and its loyal membership together over 4 very difficult years when it had no water and, for a time, no clubhouse, and his voluntary offer of half day sailing experiences with a trained instructor was instrumental in attracting the club's record number of new members.



Among the spectators were active USC members Roy and Cynthia Goodison, parents of Honorary Life Member Paul Goodison, reigning Olympic Champion in the Laser class, who has again been selected to represent Great Britain in the London games.

The club is now looking forward to a year of celebration in 2012 in which the Olympic Games and Royal Jubilee coincide with the club's own 40th Anniversary. Already planned is an Open Weekend in May, where members of the public can come along and enjoy a free sailing taster, and participation in the RYA's "Push the Boat Out" Day on 21st July, which is aiming to get a record number of boats on the water.

Although the boat park is now full to overflowing the Club is able to continue to welcome new members, thanks to the addition of 3 new boats to its club fleet, purchased through grants from the John Merricks Trust, RYA Small Grants and Sport England. The club also has plans to double the size of its boat park. Ulley Sailing Club aims to make sailing an accessible and affordable sport for all. With a club fleet of 10 or more boats, and club kit available for those starting out, together with the offer of half day Sailing Experiences at very modest cost, all you need to start sailing, from aged 5 to 95, is your enthusiasm and a year's family membership will cost less than the price of a day ticket for a theme park and offer just as many thrills. For further information visit www.ulleysailingclub.org.uk or leave a message on the club phone at 01709 372180 and the club will get back to you.