

Juniors launch the sailing season

With perfect weather and winds around 10 to 15 knots, some of Sydney's keenest Manly Junior skippers and crews recently took to the waters at Greenwich Sailing Club to wash away the cobwebs and prepare for the new season.

For many of the young sailors it was an opportunity to skipper a boat for the first time and for the more experienced skippers and crews it was a chance to refine their skills.

"The fantastic thing about sailing is that it teaches young people to be independent," Peter Horton of Greenwich Sailing Club said.

"Just to be able to head out and enjoy the wonderful Sydney Harbour at that age is great. If you live within 10 kilometres of Sydney Harbour, you're mad not to get out there and enjoy it."

The club's 40-year tradition began with local sail maker, Laurie Mitchell, who wanted to create a boat for young sailors with the potential to plane and have enough buoyancy to allow for a crew of two.

Today, the snub-nosed timber boats are still carrying season after season of budding skippers, while providing a much-needed outlet for young people.

"The main reason I love to sail is because the whole family can do it," Mr Horton said. "You can get down there and spend the day together, rather than going your own separate ways."

Greenwich Sailing Club will be hosting the first round of the Manly Juniors State

Championship heats in October and more information on the class is available on the web.

Greenwich Sailing Club's sailing season officially starts on Sunday, September 14 and sailing continues each Sunday through to April.

"This is one day where we can get the kids together in groups based on skill levels and let them have a bit of fun while being coached by really experienced sailors," Manly Junior Association President Allan Carney said.

"The skills needed to handle these three-sail, eight-foot skiffs are no different to the skills you need to sail an 80-foot Americas Cup Yacht and it's just great to see kids of seven or eight getting out there on the harbour and polishing up those 20 skills."

"Many of Australia's top sailors started in Manly Juniors - perhaps a future world champion will be amongst those training at Greenwich this weekend."

An Open Day is scheduled at the club for the morning of September 21 for anyone who is interested in sailing and would like to give it a try.

Sailing introductory courses for all ages are also run by the club early in the season.

As well as the Manly Juniors, other classes sailed include Flying Elevens, Flying Ants, Lasers, Tasars and Manly Graduates.

For further information see the web site www.gsc.org.au or call Peter Horton from Greenwich Sailing Club on mobile 0425 286 632.