

Chew Valley Lake Sailing Club

Weather Wise

When sea sailing (and even on the lake at Chew) the weather conditions are all important as you may not be able to return ashore easily if the conditions deteriorate while you are afloat. Some knowledge of weather patterns is therefore a great help and will make your sailing much more enjoyable.

We in the U.K. are weather wise, dominated by depressions and lows interspaced with high-pressure areas. Depressions bring with them strong winds and rain with the likelihood of major wind changes, especially on the 'cold front' of a low or depression whereas the high-pressure areas are associated with periods of settled weather with usually light steady winds.

Depressions usually travel fairly quickly from West to East and increasing amounts of cloud, which get gradually lower in the sky, heralds their approach. If you suspect a depression is approaching get a reliable forecast from your local Met Office since the situation could change rapidly.

A depression is usually accompanied by rain which may put you off sailing, but high pressure areas with their lighter winds usually provide easier sailing conditions. When after a period of good weather the day becomes very clear and sparkling this may indicate that a low is moving in and as winds move clockwise in a high and anti clockwise in a low the two accentuate each other and though it is a beautiful day the winds may be twice as strong as that forecast.

On a hot day at the seaside you may encounter a sea breeze springing up about 1–2 p.m. this is the land warming up quicker than the sea and so drawing air in towards the land. If you already have an onshore wind the sea breeze will accentuate it making it stronger. If there is an offshore wind the sea breeze will cancel it out.

Beware the leading edge of big clouds as they pass over you the wind will increase as they move towards your area. Watch for tell tell signs on the water, darker patches will indicate gusts. Watch the T.V. forecasts, isobars (lines of equal pressure) when close together will indicate strong winds.

For a reliable forecast ring Marine Call for a sea area forecast and Weather call for inland forecasts, there is a different number to ring for every area in Great Britain.

Wet Suits must be worn

Those who are associated with the organization of outdoor activities of various kinds are always urged to read the article 'Cold can Kill' by Surgeon Commander Waters R.N. of the Institute of Naval Medicine (obtainable from the R.Y.A.)

It may come as a shock to those who haven't read it yet to learn that even in mid summer a person could die of exposure as a result of being immersed in cold water, and even good, fit swimmers in experiments have collapsed after attempting to swim only 20 yards in these conditions.

To summarise the leaflet, we are told that hypothermia occurs when the inner 'CORE' temperature of the body falls from a normal 36.8°C to 35° C. Heat is lost to the surrounding air and water from the body surfaces and thus the most obvious way to minimise the loss is by insulating the body **effectively.** A layer of air trapped in clothing fibres close to the body will be at body temperature and a good insulator, but moving air (wind) will quickly remove it, unless a windproof outer layer is also worn. That same clothing soaked with water, on the other hand, may have only as little as 1/10th of its dry insulating value (because water is more efficient heat conductor than air) and in the water, although the wind effect is negligible, heat is lost at **27 times** the rate at which it is lost in still air at the same temperature, so that the original clothing has ceased to be an adequate insulation against the cold. The principle of the **wet suit** is that it traps a layer of water (warmed to body temperature) next to the skin so that it is not constantly being replaced by the surrounding colder water when the body is immersed. Out of the water it has a similar effect – but is **not** windproof, and therefore should be worn **with** windproof outer garments to protect from wind chill.

Certainly, (apart from the **Dry Suit** which is worn with an inner woollen thermal layer) it is one of the most effective means we know of preventing the onset of hypothermia. We can read that other factors influencing the rate of heat loss are age, sex, body build and fitness – but if you can't arrange to be 20, female, plump and fit **Getta Wet Suit or a Dry Suit and Wear it.**

And don't forget to wear a hat to trap the heat leaving your head, and wet suit boots (or socks) to keep your feet warm.