

## Draycote Water – our History



**40 years on and as the 20<sup>th</sup> Commodore shepherds the Club into the new lease period and a redesigned website. So how did it all begin?**

Draycote reservoir was constructed in the mid 1960s under the direction of Rugby Corporation Water Department.

A small group of people led by Sir Charles Barratt had the vision of a sailing club on the reservoir and in 1968 called for a meeting of interested people by public notice in the local Press to be held in the Rugby Benn Memorial Hall. Bearing that there was little water in the reservoir at that time the response was overwhelming which encouraged those founder members to approach Rugby

Water Board and negotiate a lease which resulted in Draycote Water Sailing Club coming into being in 1969. The lease was conditional and the Club had to commit to a variety of works and site development to confirm the long term intent to base a sailing club on the site.

The Entrance fees and Subscriptions for these first members was as follows:-

Entrance fee	£10. 10. 0.
Founder member and Ordinary member	£ 8. 0. 0.
Family member	£12. 0. 0.
Crewing member	£ 7. 0. 0.
Junior member	£ 2. 0. 0.
Boat registration	£ 5. 5. 0 plus £1. 1. 0 per ft for any boat exceeding 15ft in length.

With some 850 memberships and 600 dinghies, with a pledge not to go into debt and only the first subscriptions in the bank the membership organized weekend working parties to meet the need of site development, prepared the dinghy berths and laid concrete slipways. Sailing was for the enthusiastic only with little water in the reservoir, thick black mud and a start line from a small wooden hut on the foreshore. With no clubhouse changing was performed behind the car in the car park and a cup of tea was available, courtesy of the lady members, from an ex site contractors hut in the top car park.

The reservoir was eventually filled and with confidence for the future of the sailing club, and to protect the members financially, seven Founder members applied for the Club to be formed into a Company limited by guarantee in February 1970 and a formal lease was granted.

## **A Clubhouse for Draycote Sailing Club**

With the help of a grant from the Department of the Environment the clubhouse was commissioned, built and opened in 1971.

Sailing was initially based around a menagerie fleet which saw some strange craft at the club but over a short time popular classes emerged, the Club specified which classes of dinghy were preferred and the fleet concept and structure was born. This was the time of big fleets of popular dinghies, Mirror 10, GP14, Enterprise and Fireball all of which could be built from a kit by someone with average wood working ability. Such was the popularity of the Mirror 10 that numbers at the club were capped at 120. The backbone of the Clubs activities being racing these large fleets required an effective form of communication which was successfully achieved through the fleet Captains structure and a regular printed club magazine.

The first five AGMs were held at the Benn Memorial hall due to the uncertainty of the number of members that would attend, the first to be held in the clubhouse being in 1975.

## **A new utilities company is created**

In 1974 the Severn Trent Water Authority was created and took over a considerable number of Utilities among them the Rugby Water Authority and so became the new landlord of the Sailing Club. The terms of the lease remained unchanged with DWSC being the sole tenant and members of the public being allowed to walk the perimeter only if they bought a walking permit.

Essentially a dinghy racing club development over the next nine years was based around the popular fleets and weekend and Wednesday evening racing. From 1984 the character of sailing changed with the introduction of windsurfing. Initially membership was opened to 30 windsurfing members for a trial period of a year in order to examine the new form of sailing. The first year was deemed to be a success and the limit was removed. The growth in windsurfing, their desire to use the club any day it was windy and some dinghy members wishing to cruise on a weekday brought about the 7 day a week opening of the club.

The Open meeting period was set during the months of September, October and November and was the era of the big Open Meetings with entrants regularly hitting the 80 mark in most classes. The Club also ran an invitation Open in March where all of the dinghy class associations were invited to send their top two crews and the DWSC fleets also entered their top two crews. This was the Silver Salvors event sponsored by Nathan the Jewellers of Birmingham. The winning boat receiving Rolex Oyster watches. Needless to say entries regularly neared the 200 mark. Sadly Nathans discontinued their

sponsorship in the early 1990s after which there was a series of sponsors the last being Jaguar. The event was eventually discontinued during the late 1990s due to lack of sponsors and the logistical problems of organization.

Training became an important feature of the club during this period. Training was organized and run wholly by part time enthusiasts who not only were qualified instructors but also very capable handymen doing any and all necessary repairs. The Club eventually became an RYA Recognised Teaching Establishment which grew from dinghy sailing to encompass windsurfing and power boat instruction. Such was the success of the training reputation of the Club that each year there was an Optimist summer camp held for a concentrated course of training.

From the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s there was a marked shift in the classes of dinghy being demanded and sailed at DWSC. Dinghies like the GP14 and Enterprise disappeared from the club scene as members demanded higher performance boats. The Club recognized that dinghy design was going through a development phase and opened membership to wider selection of classes.

1994 saw the beginning of another change in DWSCs development with the announcement from Severn Trent Water (STW) of a Draycote Water Management Strategy. This strategy proposed increased public access and the development of major visitor facilities.

In 1996 Severn Trent Water approached the Club with a proposal for a combined visitor centre and sailing club to be partly funded by a joint application for Lottery funding. During the discussions STW proposed that the Club join with the Authority, form a Draycote Water Trust, of which the Club would play a major part and manage the site activities, and the Club would be granted a new 28 year lease. Two years later in 1998 building plans were finalized and in 1999 the grant application was submitted. The Lottery Grant application failed due to STWs commercial interest and the scheme was abandoned. However this was the beginning of a long period of increasing numbers of the visiting public, STWs desire to build a visitor centre and the Clubs desire to protect its interests and achieve a new lease.

Into the 2000s and the growth in popularity of the asymmetric dinghy classes and the introduction of “windward/leeward” courses to compliment the “round the can” racing for the ever popular traditional dinghy classes. The “windward/leeward” class racing had the bonus of the introduction of the Draycote Dash Open meeting which is a worthy successor to the Nathan Silver Salvors.

And so one era ends with the expiration in 2010 of the original lease, the negotiation of a new one and the opportunity to bring the Club to further success.