

UNSHACKLED



**CLUB OF THE YEAR
SUPER SUCCESS**



CLUB OF THE YEAR 2024



In a culmination of 10-12 years hard work we are absolutely delighted to be winners of the RYA Club of the Year 2024. The best sailing club amongst around 1,400 clubs affiliated to the RYA! Doesn't that sound good! We hope you are proud to be a member of such a club.

We did go for this award in 2020. We were short-listed and disappointed not to win but felt that the voting – it was a public vote – was more in favour of coastal-based clubs which were in the heart of their community.

When the voting system changed, to a vote by an RYA Committee, we decided it was time to have a go again. You had to put yourself forward under specific categories (we chose Young Person's and Active) and then the overall winner would come from the winners of the categories.

We won Young Person's Club of the Year which is a tribute to the work that the Youth & Junior fleet captain, Jon Hughes, has put in as well as Steve Irish with the Draycote Academy and

our amazing young sailors. And then we won the main prize!

RYA Awards Panel member Janet Viney said: "Choosing a winner for the overall award was challenging as the standard of the category winners was so high. We were impressed with how Draycote Water Sailing Club hasn't stood still and by introducing new opportunities, its young membership has kept coming back to enjoy all the club has to offer."

Commodore, William Whittaker said just after being presented with the award: "We're really so pleased. It means a lot to the Club. It's been a lot of hard work, a lot of volunteers and a lot for the staff to achieve this, which is the pinnacle of club awards, so thank you."



Photo above: © RYA



Photos above & below: © Jeremy Atkins.



SELDON SAILJUICE WINTER SERIES – CLUB WINNERS

We've been on the podium before, but this is the first time we have won the Seldon Sailjuice Winter series as a Club!

Many members will be familiar with the series – a set of winter handicap events which starts with our very own Fernhurst Books Draycote Dash. This winter there were eight other events, culminating in the Oxford Blue at Farmoor Reservoir.

The results of the top three club boats in each race go to make up a club's overall score, with a weighting factor to give more prominence to races with more entrants. Our final score was 20% higher than the next club, Bowmoor Sailing Club.

We usually start leading this series, beginning with our home event and lots of DWSC competitors, plus it's the event with the largest number of races, which also benefits us! But usually, as the series goes on, we lose that top spot, but this time we retained it throughout, even though no one entered the Yorkshire Dales Brass Monkey under DWSC!

We were helped massively by two Club members who sailed many of the events: Imogen Wade, who with Hugo Valentine in their 420 were fifth overall and won the lady and youth series, and Finlay Cochrane (a member of the Draycote Academy but also from Yorkshire Dales SC) who won the junior series in his ILCA 6.



All photos © Tim Olin.



Along the way they were helped by 15 other Club members who scored in our top three in a race:

Richard Botting, Blaze
Emily Davis & Jo Tribe, RS 200
Mike Deane & Paul Disney, Fireball
Sam Grayton, ILCA 6

Alaister Hodgson & Ella Spain, RS 200
Harrison Pye, Aero 7
Joe Rowe, ILCA 6
Iris Singleton, ILCA 6

Derin Can Soyer, ILCA 6
Freddie Sunderland, ILCA 6
Bronwen Thomas, ILCA 4
Dave Wade, Scorpion

CLUB CHAMPIONSHIP

New Year's Day sees the culmination of the year-long pursuit race series for the Club Championship for a trophy presented by the Fillmore family.

With these races held on bank holidays, the series starts with the Easter race, followed fairly quickly by the two May bank holidays. There's a gap till the August bank holiday and then an even longer gap till Boxing Day and New Year's Day. That's a total of six races, and two discards are allowed, meaning that you have to perform across the year to be in with a chance of overall success.

These races are the one time that all Club members (and visitors) can compete against each other. Of course there are the vagaries of the handicapping system and quite a bit does depend on the wind strength on the day for results in individual races, but it is noticeable that some of the most regular participants are 'dyed-in-the-wool' fleet racers who still clearly enjoy the excitement of pursuit racing. In these, the slowest boats start first and it is always exciting to see which of the faster boats can catch up the tortoises in the allocated 100 minutes.

The weather (and possibly course bias) can be seen in the podium results, with the Easter race dominated by Dart 15s, May Day by ILCAs and Boxing Day by Flying Fifteens. The other races saw a spread of classes in the top three, including a Solo, RS 300, and Fireball – so most of the Club fleets reached the podium. Perhaps surprising there wasn't an Aero up there, but Mike Deane did sail one to a fourth place in one race – so not far off.

Overall, Jeremy Davy & Martin Huett dominated this year in their Flying Fifteen when they were present, with two bullets and never being out of the top three. But they didn't sail in the two May races (using up their discards early), so their overall victory was not certain till the final race.

But despite this dominating performance, Jeremy pointed out at the prizegiving that they had not won the series since 2016/17. The last five series have been won by five different classes: Flying Fifteen, ILCA 7, Dart 15, 420 and RS Feva.

Photos: Left & Middle: ©Malcolm Lewin. Right: © Matt Rowley



So, if you fancy some fun racing, where the outcome isn't known till the finish is signalled, join in the Club pursuit races this year. Datum (when the Toppers start) is 11am except Boxing Day: 11.30am and New Year's Day: 1.30pm.

Mon 1st April
RNLI Lifeboat Pursuit Race

Mon 6th May
John Siggers Pursuit Race

Mon 27th May
Sir Charles Barratt Pursuit Race

Mon 26th August
Air Ambulance Pursuit Race

Thurs 26th December
Brass Monkey Pursuit Race

Wed 1st January
RNLI Silver Salver Pursuit Race

VOLUNTEERING: **RECOGNITION & OPPORTUNITIES**

At Draycote Water Sailing Club we are blessed by a superb multi-tasking staff team. Most weekends you will see them welcoming visitors, supervising car parking, running rescue services and sometimes races, making and serving food, dealing with first aid incidents and behind the bar. They each accomplish so much every day!

However, they can't do it alone. We are a members' club which is run by members for members. I don't think any of us want to be in a commercial facility where the sailors' needs are sacrificed for a money-making operation.

2023 saw perhaps the biggest Club volunteer mobilisation for many years when we ran the NSSA Summer Regatta. At least 30 Club members volunteered and helped run the event, many of them giving up the whole week to do so. They all seemed to enjoy it too!

COMMODORE'S CUP

Each year, the Commodore's Cup is presented to an outstanding volunteer at the AGM. This year it went to Sandra Young, who had been a member for less than two years.

Upon retiring three years ago, Sandra decided to take up sailing. She was initially interested in yachting, but soon realised she needed to have experience in sailing dinghies to give her greater understanding of the dynamics of sailing. She joined the Club two years ago with an ILCA and immediately volunteered to help at the Club.

Every weekend in the summer (April-October) she volunteered

and helped to run our active Saturday Youth Club. She also helped in the Committee Boat for at least 10 open meetings, including the week-long National Schools Sailing Association Regatta in July and the national-profile Draycote Dash in November. She is now relied on by our Open Meeting Race Officers and, indeed, the intention is that she will run an open meeting herself next year.

She has also participated in and helped out with our Women on Water and Improver groups.

Sandra was a well-deserved winner of the Commodore's Cup.

Photos: Left: © DWSC. Right: © Jon Hughes.



HONORARY MEMBERS

Two other long-standing volunteers were also recognised at the AGM by being elected to Honorary Membership.

First up was Rodger Webb who retired from the Committee in 2023 after 12 years.

During the period 2009-2013 Draycote Water Sailing Club was in dire straits. Due to the financial crisis we haemorrhaged members and, over this 5-year period, the Club made an operating loss of over £80,000.

Something was needed to address the rot and two volunteers took on the challenge of turning the Club around. One was Commodore, Phil Hunt, who led the Club successfully for four years, and he was ably assisted by Rodger who stood up to be Treasurer.

Rodger held the financial controls for 11 years from 2011 to 2022, during which time the Club's turnover increased from a low-point of £240,000 to £434,000. The facilities provided by the Club were transformed from the staff team and regular replacement of Club boats to the Club's commercial arm.

As Treasurer, Rodger was central to this development, spending many hours at the Club and on his computer ensuring that this massive recovery and growth has been achieved for the benefit of all our members.

Then came photographer Malcolm Lewin. Malcolm was a long-term Club member and, as a professional photographer, he generously used his skills to promote the Club to a wider audience through social media, reports and Club marketing.

I think it is widely agreed that Malcolm is a superb sailing photographer and expert at capturing the enjoyment of sailors. His Club photos led to him being commissioned by the RYA and Fernhurst Books amongst others.

When HRH The Princess Royal visited the Club in 2019 we had no hesitation in asking Malcolm to be the official photographer – a task he performed expertly, capturing some fantastic photos of the memorable day. Although he did observe that, as the photographer, he was the only Club member HRH didn't seem pleased to see!

When Malcolm hung up his trapeze harness (he sailed a Contender), he moved semi-permanently to Cornwall, but he still visits the Club regularly when he is back in the Midlands (where he has family) and he (and his photos) are always welcome.

We are very grateful to Sandra, Rodger and Malcolm for all they have given the Club.

Volunteering Opportunities

We have highlighted three people who have given exceptional service volunteering for the Club and they have rightly been recognised. But there are lots of opportunities for Club members to volunteer, both in small and bigger ways.

There are lots of projects which we would like to take on, but we are struggling to do so because there is such a small Committee. The amount of time they will take up will depend on the individual and the task, but tasks which could benefit from member input are:

- Environmental working group
- Disability / access working group
- Development of the flat working group
- Marketing working group
- Future energy / fuel working group
- Membership structure working group (particularly for the 'young adult' age group)

You don't have to be on the Committee (i.e. become a Director)

to help on these working groups and enthusiasm is more important than specific skills or experience, but obviously these are very welcome as well.

And, as mentioned already, the Committee is down to only six directors now. Last year we lost over 20 years of experience on the Committee and welcomed no new members. We really do need some members to stand up and volunteer for the Committee to help take the Club to 2030 and beyond.

Again, while specific skills and experience are very welcome, they are not necessary – the main thing is enthusiasm and having the best interests of the Club at heart. With that you will help safeguard what is now a family-focused club and a leading training venue where members benefit from the commercial activities.

If you are interested in any type of volunteering, or to stand on the Committee, talk to Dave Rowe or any Committee member.

INTRODUCING PEOPLE TO SAILING & THE CLUB

Sailing is such a fantastic activity – exercise, in the fresh air – and it is life-long – from children to those well into retirement. And at Draycote all ages, genders and abilities can do this activity together. The newest beginner can sail alongside a world or national champion, or can get to grips with wingfoiling, skimming over the water.



Photo © Malcolm Lewin

We want to introduce more people to sailing and to the Club.

Our long-running RYA training courses introduce hundreds each year, but we are always looking for more and, as members, you can help us.

Bring A Guest

You can invite anyone as a guest to sail your boat / board (or a boat / board you hire from the Club). The only restrictions are that you sign them in as a guest and stay at the Club while they are here; you can only invite a particular individual as a guest four times a year.

Race With A Guest

For 2024 we are increasing the opportunity for you to sail in a race with a guest. You will be able to hire a suitable two-person boat for racing (like a 2000) free of charge. If you are interested, talk to Dave Rowe.

We also have some specific days where you can invite your friends / colleagues / relations:

FAMILY DISCOVER SAILING DAY:
SATURDAY 11TH MAY



BOOK HERE

A chance for adults and families to discover sailing and windsurfing, tell your friends and get them to book a trial session online

We will need volunteers on the day, so please put this in your diary now.



JUNIOR DISCOVER SAILING DAY:
SATURDAY 18TH MAY



BOOK HERE

Open to anyone aged 16 or under. Tell your friends about this and invite them to book a trial sail online.

Our Junior Club will, as they did so well last year, be hosting this day for us – so, Junior members – get this date in your diary now! And invite your friends to sign up!



For both Discover Sailing Days, the booking is only open for Club members' friends & family in March, and we are hoping to book up all the sessions to them, before we open it up and advertise more publicly. So please get inviting now!



Rediscover Sailing Day: Saturday 8th June

This is a new RYA initiative to attract people back into sailing / windsurfing which we are very happy to support.

We plan to have a land-based day where people can come up to the Club and meet the staff and fleet captains. On this day we will be looking to sign people up for fleet trial days, refresher days and trial sessions in the Club boats. We will also be offering 3-month membership to encourage these people to get back into sailing.

Again we need you to invite your friends and family who have sailed / windsurfed before.

SAILING GROUPS

Women on Water

Restarts on Monday 15th April at 5.30pm

Improvers Group

Restarts on Sunday 31st March, 10am - 12pm

Youth & Juniors

Friday 22nd March, 7.00pm - Pre-season social

Friday 5th April, 6.30pm - Friday Race Training restarts

Saturday 6th April, 10am - Saturday Club restarts

Join their Facebook group for regular updates:



CLUB RACING

Fleets Prizegiving

Sunday 24th March, after racing

Summer Series

Sunday 31st March

Wednesday Racing

Wednesday 3rd April, 6.30pm

Novice Start Returns to Club Racing

After a 4 year Covid-induced hiatus, we are thrilled to bring back the Novice Start. This is for all members who are new to racing, even if you've been leisure sailing for some time.

Racing can be a daunting prospect for novices - it's not as simple as a ready, set, go race! There's specific jargon and rules to learn but these sessions aim to simplify and demystify the sport.

We'll meet on the first Sunday of each month (April - October) at 10am on the patio and the session will be led by experienced Club racers. Marcellus from the ILCA/Laser fleet has volunteered for the first session on Sunday 7th April.

Each session will start with a briefing to discuss the weather

and course for the day, and a recap of race essentials including the staggered start sequence. The volunteer will sail out to the start area with you, and then there will be an opportunity to catch up after the race to chat about how it went, ask for advice and ask questions.

The Novice Start will be the last start of Race 1 so all the experienced sailors will go before you and you won't have to worry about being in their way.

On the Club website is a good explanation of Club racing and the main Racing Rules. Do have a read through these beforehand (scan the QR code), and come along on Sunday mornings to see it all happening too.





All Photos © Jane Sunderland

THE SUPPORT TEAM

As the top Young Person sailing club in the UK, we often highlight the achievements of our fantastic junior sailors, but here we focus on another key part of their success, as Freddie Sunderland's mum Jane describes their trip to the ILCA 6 Youth Worlds in Mar Del Plata, Argentina.

Argentina was Freddie's tenth World or European Championship and with several additional international competitions under his belt, you would think we would have the logistics nailed by now. But Argentina? That felt a big and scary prospect, forgetting and losing items felt more perilous than usual. A large number of spares were factored in and snacks / sailors' fuel needed to be brought, whilst Argentina is famed for its steak and Malbec, SIS gels and Frusili bars are harder to come by.

So lists were drawn up and lots of them appeared. Items were ticked off as fast as new ones came. Early arrivals established that the charter boats, made by RioTecna would not work with all tillers, the only ones that would

fit these boats were the old LP and the new Devoti ones. A mad scramble for tillers ensued. Boats in the UK were stripped and the most important parts split up amongst the luggage. (When you charter an ILCA, they give you a hull, foils and the spars, everything else has to come, from deck blocks to bungs.) Tillers are surprisingly enormous and burst out of the ends of even the biggest suitcases, so the use of oversized luggage in the form of golf bags are required.

The Notice of Race was read, re-read and read again. What about insurance? A standard £5 million cover was required, but many UK insurers would not cover Argentina. Clearly stories of the wild winds and waves had made it back here. WhatsApp groups were formed, messages were shared and 2 hours before the opening ceremony, the insurance was finally agreed.

Argentina is currently deep in the throes of hyperinflation, with their largest bank note being the two thousand million note which is worth £2. We were advised to bring dollars which we exchanged on a near daily basis for huge handfuls of pesos. Initially we felt shy with such large

quantities of notes but, like all things, we adapted, splitting and sharing them in our rucksacks.

The ILCA is a one-design boat so measurement is a much easier prospect. It's just the sail that requires measurement, but that's easier to fail than you might imagine, Freddie failed 3 times at the last Worlds. The margins of tolerance for the numbers are only 5mm and it's easy to make a mistake. So spare numbers and GBRs were packed. When the day of measurement came, many a breath was held. Freddie's sail passed, a first mini-win.

There's a saying "Will it make the boat go faster?" when referring to the niceties. However, team kit is an important part of the process. It won't make the boat go faster, no, but you'll see the sailors stand slightly taller and feel a bit prouder when wearing the kit and this in turn may just help them sail a litter faster. Therefore team kit was duly ordered and distributed.

Departure day minus 1 and my bedroom floor was awash with sunscreen, snacks, control lines, mainsheets and wetsuits. Could even the best lists in the world guard against missing items?

We arrived 6 days before the racing started, after a whopping 25 hours of travelling. We felt dishevelled, disorientated and a long way from delivering Freddie in perfect form to race at a World Championships. We were greeted by a tropical thunderstorm with biblical rain on our first evening, which then gave way to blistering heat. The ozone layer is more depleted there and the sun is so much fiercer. Zinc cream and factor 65 were dispensed in alarming quantities. Hats and sunglasses were issued and reissued as they were lost in the great swell of Mar Del Plata.

The charter boats were collected. Slowly. The Argentines appear to love queuing as much as the Brits and tag teams of parents took turns to stand in the unrelenting sunshine. Stories of warped dagger boards ran through the boat park and on the sixth try Freddie selected his. Boats were built and the sailors went out for their first taste of the infamous waves. Stories came in thick and fast. One of the British boats was badly damaged. The waves were large, the largest the coach had ever seen. Time to refuel and recover.

The night before the championship started Freddie was sick. The conditions were absolutely brutal, a mixture of the intense heat, waves and, without doubt, nerves. With the help of rehydration tablets and a lot of care, we rebuilt him for the following day. The atmosphere was electric in the boat park the next morning. So many sailors had travelled so far and prepared so hard for this event, and you could see it mattered. Three days of qualifying followed and the sailors settled into their routines. Sailing and steak seemed to do the trick with a glass of Malbec for the parents. The fleets were split into Gold and Silver Fleets for the final series and the wind continued to blow and the waves reformed and reformed.

Messages constantly came flooding in from home; the depth and breadth of support we received was quite overwhelming and Draycote was no exception. It really did help. Whilst on the face of it, you are sitting in the sunshine in January, the reality of what happens in the background is exhausting. Creating the perfect environment for a sailor keeping them fed, watered, well and focused in a foreign country is no mean feat. Freddie did his part, he qualified into Gold Fleet which was a fantastic achievement, and we are unbelievably proud of him.





WINTER TRAINING 2024/25

Specialist winter race training with
GBR & RYA coach, Steve Irish

OPTIMIST ILCA TOPPERS
& all junior fleets

Applications open 1st April 2024



Photos Left & Middle: © Malcolm Lewin



Photo Right: © Rob Hunt



YOUNG SAILOR OF THE YEAR!

Draycote Academy sailor, Jess Powell, capped a great year in 2023 by being awarded the Yachting Journalists' Association Young Sailor of the Year Trophy jointly with Ben Greenhalgh from Wales.

Previous winners of this award have gone on to do great things in sailing -

for example, the most successful male and female Olympic sailors ever (Ben Ainslie and Hannah Mills) are former recipients, as is Ellen MacArthur.

Jess, at thirteen years old, is the youngest ever recipient of this award. She will be eligible for another five years and this is the second time she has been shortlisted!



Photo © Jeremy Atkins