

UNSHACKLED



SIMON ODLING

**A Lifetime In Racing
Meets Club Leadership**

COMMODORE'S COLUMN

Dear Members,

It's been a busy start to 2026 for the Club and greatly pleasing to see so many members defying the cold to continue to participate in the sport they enjoy throughout the winter. We are well used to members over the years that are part of Draycote Academy continuing to train under the stewardship of Steve Irish despite freezing conditions. However, this year we have seen very strong participation across the board from Club racing to wing foilers and boarders enjoying good conditions irrespective of the cold. This increased participation was again demonstrated in a strong AGM attendance by members. At the AGM the Committee reported back on their stewardship of the Club with a continued strong financial position in line with the Development Plan. There are, however, uncertainties around the planned increase in the high-water mark which we must navigate in partnership with Severn Trent. This is ongoing, and I hope an update will be available in the Spring. The implication of this uncertainty, ultimately means we are limiting improvements to the boat park and concentrating on maintenance of the clubhouse.

The increased participation demonstrates that the Club is starting to build a community which was not as prominent when I first started on the Committee back in 2012. Building a community, a sense of belonging or ownership, when we, as a Club, don't have prescribed



volunteering, above that of Club racing duties, has proven to be difficult. As a Club we are a "Community Amateur Sports Club" (CASC) and therefore building a community within the Club is important so we support everyone within the Club, from the young to old, inexperienced sailors to champions. As a CASC we must look to support the local community and provide access to the facilities for everyone. To enable the Club to support this broad range of individuals we need to build a sense of pride, belonging and ownership within all our members. After all, as members, we are all shareholders of the Club, as set out in our Articles, hence why members are asked to vote at the AGM. It is vital for the longevity and future of the Club that this community is developed further and continues to make the Club welcoming to all and supporting those

who wish to enjoy the sport without the means to do so. It is for this reason we have set up the Academy Trust, which will start taking applications this year, and we will look to involve everyone in the renewal of the clubhouse bar. Moving forward the Club will be encouraging everyone to contribute in some form, whether it's time or simply a donation. Please look out for further details on both these initiatives, along with an updated Club Development Plan, as we approach the Spring and look at ways you can contribute to the Club as members.

In the meantime, I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the Club enjoying the sport and the facilities on offer at Draycote.

William Whittaker

CLUB UPDATE

Those members who attended the AGM will have heard an update from the Committee on significant matters affecting the Club. This article seeks to summarise and update that report.

Work To Increase Water Levels

As most members will know by now, Severn Trent are working to increase the maximum water level by 0.6m. Although there have been some delays, partly due to the weather, the aim is that this will be completed by 2027.

This will have significant implications on the Club. We will lose considerable boat parking space (which will particularly

affect the Flying Fifteens) and the current patio and clubhouse will be at risk of flooding. The solutions to these issues are under discussion with Severn Trent but have not been fully resolved.

Severn Trent needed to press on with the work in order to benefit from government funding, but the Committee are working hard to make sure that solutions are found.

Clubhouse

The former steward's flat on the top floor has been converted into training rooms, primarily for the Draycote Academy but also other training. This has successfully reduced the amount of (young / wet) sailors in the lounge / bar.

As part of this modernisation, we have fitted (new) fire doors. The old radiators have been replaced with more efficient modern ones and we are decorating the clubhouse. The foyer was done in January and other areas will follow. There is a project to improve the bar area.



Other Site Work

While a few members have been caught out with the introduction of ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) it is generally working well and has successfully reduced the amount of anti-social behaviour in the evenings. We remind members that it is their responsibility to follow the processes to ensure they are not charged for car parking / fined.

Severn Trent have also tarmacked our lower car park and we have concreted the areas in front of the fuel store and car parking in the east of the dinghy park.



ANPR Reminder

Parking this side of the red line?

No action needed, so long as you have come through the red / white barrier immediately

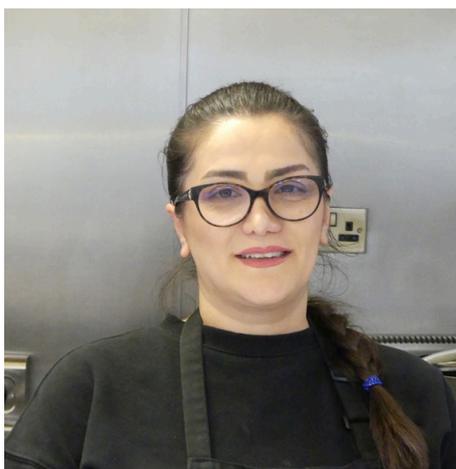


Parking this side of the red line?

Then you need to enter your registration in a tablet each day

Catering

Along with many other catering establishments, the wet bar has proved difficult to staff since COVID. However, Nazanin joined us in the Autumn as our wet bar chef and she is doing really well, so we hope we are now in a more stable situation which is less of a drain on the other Club staff.



Draycote Academy

This continues to grow with increased demand, attracting many new members to the Club – including active sailing families as well as youth memberships. It is well known nationally and a number of other clubs and the RYA have sought to replicate some of its success. Sadly for them, they don't usually have our facilities or Steve Irish!

Draycote Academy Trust

We are setting up a trust to provide support for some of our younger members. This has been initiated by donations from Christine Silver (a Topper dinghy), Rodger Hadlow (in his will) and Ronnie Carvell (a Y&J parent).

The idea is that young sailors can apply to have the Topper for a season. More details to follow.

Membership Fees

The Committee have completed the annual review of membership fees. As with any business, we face substantial cost increases with our rent increasing by RPI, the rising minimum wage (particularly for young people of whom we employ quite a few) and tax increases.

Most memberships will increase by £18 per annum (£1.50 a month) and adult boat / board fees £9 per annum (half that for junior boats / boards).

COMMITTEE



Commodore: William Whittaker

Leading the Club & chairing the AGM & Committee.

Line manager for the Club Manager. Sails an ILCA and has 2 children in Youth & Juniors. Runs a Management Compliance Consultancy.



President: Jeremy Atkins

Providing advice to the Commodore & Committee.

Oversees data protection. Has a Solo and (very) occasionally sails it! Runs a nautical book publishing company.



Rear Commodore Sail: Simon Odling

Overseeing all activities & equipment used on the water and water-linked activities. Sails an ILCA & has children in the Youth & Junior fleet.

Works in the automotive industry.



Treasurer: Paul Huett

Management of the Club's finances, including accounts, budgeting & forecasting.

Sails a variety of boats including a Flying Fifteen. Qualified accountant with an engineering company.



Committee Member: Julian Messing

Committee representative on environmental matters.

Long-standing windsurfer at the Club. A mechanical engineer who works part time helping EDF keep the lights on.



Committee Member: Chris Avery

Obtaining grants. Past Commodore. Owns a flotilla of boats but can be seen most often in a Flying Fifteen or Solo. In the process of retiring as Managing Director of a building products company.

To find out more about Draycote Water SC's staff and Committee, visit: www.draycotewater.co.uk/committee or get in touch by emailing: office@draycotewater.co.uk

Vice Commodore: Richard Botting

Deputising for Commodore. Resolving complaints / disputes.

Sails a Fireball & Blaze.

Works as an engineer in the construction business.



Vice President: Harry Sayers

Providing advice to the Commodore & Committee.

Founder member of the Club & past Commodore.

Retired from management consultancy.



Rear Commodore House: Chris Mulhall

Overseeing the clubhouse & land site.

Sails an ILCA and has children in Youth & Juniors.

Works in IT security and runs a children's nursery.



Committee Member: Rachael Astley

Leads on safeguarding & equality and oversees affiliates.

Supports son Peter in his ILCA.

Works for the National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs.



Committee Member: Paula Irish

Supports the Club with marketing.

Learnt to sail at the club in her 30s and still enjoys getting on the water two decades later! Former newspaper journalist, now a freelance writer and communications professional.



MEET THE REAR COMMODORE SAIL: SIMON ODLING

By Jeremy Atkins, Club President

Some long-term members might describe Simon Odling's progression at Draycote Water Sailing Club as 'indecent haste'. He joined the Committee after just seven months of membership and became a Flag Officer a year later. But, with a lifetime of competitive sailing on the circuit and a successful business career, Simon's 'indecent haste' has certainly been to the Club's enormous benefit.

He comes from a family with sailing at its core. His father sailed and windsurfed, sailing home-built Fireballs, 505s and Lasers (now ILCAs) up to World Championship level in the 1970s and 1980s.

With this background, it was inevitable that Simon followed his footsteps and, sure enough, he first learnt to sail on holiday in France in an Optimist and on small catamarans. This was proceeded with Mirrors, Lasers and Simon says, "anything else going" on the Blackwater Estuary in Essex from Maylandsea Bay Yacht Club.

From the Club's 'Family Fun Weeks', Simon progressed onto crewing for his uncles and father. In his teenage years, he crewed for an uncle as part of the Army Sailing Association in Bosuns, sailing in the Army Championships for a few years. He also crewed for another uncle and his father in the C-Fly class (how many remember them?) at both open meetings and the National Championships.

The next class was the one he sailed for the longest period, the single-trapeze Osprey, which is a great sea-going boat. He initially crewed for his uncle and then for his father for many years on the open meeting circuit. He had one season at the back of the boat.

During this time, Simon migrated from a wooden Mk2a boat (originally his grandfather's!), to a competitive wooden Mk3 and then onto the very first Mk4 foam-sandwich boat. Over this period, they were heavily involved in boat and sail development.



They won open meetings and had good placings at the National Championships. During this period the fleet became even more family oriented as Simon's wife, Melissa, joined in, crewing for his uncle.

But as the result of a growing family (three boys), as so many of us have, sailing took a backseat for a while as the children were growing up. Simon resorted to mountain biking and running to get his athletic 'fix'.

Roll on a few years and, living in Warwick, he joined Draycote with his family in April 2022. Here he sails an ILCA and crews for his son, Bear, in their RS200 in the Menagerie fleet.

Simon is also back on the circuit again. He sailed on the ILCA inland circuit for a few years, doing the Inland Nationals and Masters Inlands. Last year he went one step further and joined the main ILCA circuit, sailing at Weymouth a few times and competing in the Masters Nationals and Europeans at Hayling Island.

With such a long experience of so many sailing clubs and events, Simon was ideally placed to contribute to the Club. As he put it, "I appreciated the work the Committee was doing and the welcome

I had to the Club, but equally I could see the challenges the Committee were facing with reduced numbers at the time, and I felt I could offer some support."

So, with all his experience, how does he view our Club? "The Club is welcoming and professionally run. The staff we have make the Club a huge success and we really do offer something no other clubs offer. The quality of the sailing area, the racing and the people really do make the Club what it is. As a professional club only supporting Race Office duty's a couple of times a year is also a massive benefit for members compared to other clubs with thousands of volunteer duties to fill every year."

And what about the challenges? "Maintaining and growing our membership is key to the long-term health of the Club. Equally the general climate of volunteering reducing across the country poses a challenge – we are a members' run club, but if the members don't want to run it then the needs of the Club operating in a financially sustainable way may mean the Club structure has to change."

As a member of the Committee for the last 14 years, I would just comment that Simon has brought his professional skills to the Committee and he is a real asset. We are lucky to have him, however much 'indecent haste'!



FLYING FIFTEENS

Nigel Davenport
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The Flying Fifteen (FF) is a six-metre two-person sport boat - it's a dinghy with a keel; you don't capsize so it's very popular with those who have had enough of swimming! The '15' refers to the original waterline length - 15 feet (4.57m).

Club racing is a vital aspect of FF sailing and particularly so at Draycote where this year saw very close and exciting competition. Draycote also hosted the 2025 Flying Fifteen Inland Championship and five Draycote boats also took part in the FF Nationals / World Championships at Weymouth.

The Pete Badham / Pete White combination dominated Club racing throughout both the Summer and Winter, securing both the Sunday AM and PM summer prizes as well as the Wednesday evening series with Jan Elfring as crew.

Draycote hasn't hosted a Flying Fifteen event of its own for some time, largely because of varying water levels and difficult launching facilities. This problem has been solved with the construction of the new launching facility and car park for visiting boats at the west end of the site, and despite an onshore wind competitors at the 2025 Inland Championship were able to launch and recover their boats rapidly and efficiently.

Flying Fifteen championships are always fiercely competitive affairs and the 25 entrants included amongst them the principals of three UK sailmakers, as well as various other previous and current champions. The stiff wind allowed for windward-leeward-triangle courses, with the reaches wide enough to allow the Flying Fifteens to indulge in the exhilarating three-sail power surfing at which they excel - followed occasionally by ignominious broaches at the gybe mark. We look forward to hosting more such events soon.

Five Draycote boats (including one loaned to the Australian contingent) were among 84 teams from four continents who competed at the Nationals / World Championships at Weymouth. Congratulations are definitely due to Jeremy Davy/ Martin Huett who were placed 4th overall.



Photos left & centre © Malcolm Lewin Photography

SOLOS

Robin Warren
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2025 was a cracking year for the Draycote Solo fleet. We welcomed several new members, with fresh faces joining us from the Draycote learners' programme and, from sailors acquiring a second boat for those days when a crew fails to appear!

A big part of this success has been our FRP demo boat, which can be borrowed to race competitively in Club races. It's proved a great way for people to try a Solo before committing to buying one - and it's clearly doing its job.

Although the Solo design dates back several decades, the National Solo Class Association has worked hard to keep the class up to date with modern sailing developments. The result is a boat that feels contemporary, rewarding to sail, and famously, comfortable to sail in, rather than on.

There's been a noticeable amount of upgrading going on too, with new boats and shiny sails appearing in the dinghy park - a sure sign of a healthy (and perhaps slightly competitive!) fleet atmosphere.

While most of our racing naturally takes place at Draycote, we also have four boats regularly competing at Open Meetings and National Championships.

To keep things interesting at home, we run a variable handicap system on summer Sunday mornings, spreading the race results around and giving everyone a fair shot at winning a prize. We're also one of the few fleets that races on Sunday afternoons, for those who like to squeeze every last drop out of the weekend.

Of course, it's not all about serious racing. A dedicated mid-week group meets throughout the year for informal racing or cruising in company, followed by a lunchtime natter where the world is thoroughly put to rights. And when Winter really bites and ice appears on the water, the Solo Draycote walk – complete with coffee and lunch – ensures the fleet stays social even when sailing isn't an option.

Looking ahead, 2026 promises more of the same. With the fleet boat continuing to attract new sailors, the Draycote Solo fleet remains a thriving and welcoming armada.

Keen to get involved? Text Robin on 07730 091011 to get in touch with the fleet.

All photos © Malcolm Lewin Photography



**ILCAs
(LASERS)**

Marcellus Pryor
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Given the ILCA's widespread usage over such a long period, probably everyone who has sailed has at some stage sailed an ILCA, which means for new entrants to the class there's plenty of advice / support / guidance from more experienced sailors. There is also a very strong second-hand market with boats available at all price points.

The majority of ILCA sailors at Draycote, whilst still claiming to be 'youthful', are let's face it, well past their youthful days. We have many Masters, Grand Masters, Great Grand Masters and even a few Legends (not self-proclaimed but according to ILCA classifications).

It's not just about the kids!

It would be remiss of me to be writing about ILCA (formerly known as Laser) sailing at Draycote without mentioning how many of our Youth and Junior sailors are doing quite well at National, European and World level, but I'm sure their prowess will be covered elsewhere and besides, ILCA sailing at Draycote isn't all about the kids!

Alongside the usual Club racing (Wednesday evenings during the Summer and Sunday mornings all year round) we support these sailors with two very popular activities:

ILCA is the most widely sailed dinghy in the world, with some 235,000 boats made in its 50-year history, and it is the Olympic singlehander dinghy class for women with the ILCA 6 rig and for men with the ILCA 7.

- Mid-Week Sailing – where the focus is getting out on the water and having a sail with like-minded people, then tea and cake – all very civilised.
- ILCA Masters Academy – as the name suggests this is aimed at Masters (aged 30+) and broadly based on the training our Youth and Juniors receive but taking cognisance of the limitations of age. Held once a month, it's a great way to improve and develop the skills and techniques that have been either forgotten or never learnt.

There are three sail sizes: ILCA 4 for sailors with a weight of under 60kg; ILCA 6 for sailors under 78kg; and ILCA 7 for everyone else. This means that, no matter what weight you are, there is an ILCA for you. At Draycote all three sizes are sailed every weekend, so whichever size you decide to use there will be others on the water to compare yourself against.

Several Masters are now also competing at Regional, National and European level, albeit not as successfully as the kids, so perhaps it is all about the kids after all!

All photos © Malcolm Lewin Photography



FIREBALLS

Mike Deane
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There have been Fireballs at Draycote since 1970, and somewhat to my surprise, we're still here 56 years later. But whilst the 1970's-boat was made of plywood, varnish and long evenings with a paintbrush, everything built in the last 30 odd years is glass / Kevlar foam-sandwich, so super stiff and zero maintenance. This means the boats stay competitive pretty much forever, and you can buy a 20-year-old item for not much money and still win races with it.

That aside, what's the appeal? Well, it's a two-person boat, so you do your sailing in good company. It's rewarding to sail in all wind-strengths, from roll-tacking in 5mph of breeze to charging around the lake in 20mph. It's easy to sail, but difficult to sail really well, and it is fast enough to be exciting

without hurting you too much when it all goes wrong.

This year in particular promises to be a good one for Fireball sailors, as the World Championship is coming to the UK for the first time in ages. This has prompted a decent percentage of Fireball owners to dust off their boats and get some practice in prior to the big event.

On top of this, we have the 2025 rule changes, which allow carbon fibre, plus single-string rig adjustment and twin spinnaker poles. The Fireball has always been a boat that you can set up to suit your own crew-weight and preferences, and now it's even better than before.

Here at Draycote, we are still running Gold and Silver fleet categories in our races, so the rookies don't have to compete directly with the superheroes of the class. And we're still running two races every Sunday, so you really get your money's worth out of your day's sailing.

And finally, if you are reading this and wondering how you can join in the fun, we have the fleet boat available for any members who want to have a try. Get in touch, we're happy to help!



Photos - C: © Malcolm Lewin Photography/R:© Foto Elena Giola

Top female helm Katie Byne and crew Rich Bailey are regular Club racers in the Fireball fleet and aim to be on the water every week this season ahead of the 2026 World Championships in July at the Royal Torbay Yacht Club in Devon.

Katie says: "I enjoy doublehanded racing because you're able to have a natter, whether about the sailing or life in general, and I like the Fireball because it's fairly flexible on how you set it up, so you can bumble and play around with it to make it go faster.

"Our 2025 highlights were winning the Summer afternoon series at Draycote and competing at the Fireball Worlds on Lake Garda in Italy, where out of 136 entries we finished 30th overall, 4th mixed team and 4th female helm.

I love the fact you can Club race the Fireball and also take it on the road to compete nationally or internationally.

"It's a great boat for all ages so you've got sailors from under-20 all the way through to

80, and it's a competitive and friendly fleet wherever you go! If you have a question or problem everyone is open to offering advice or lending you a hand to fix something if you need help.

"There's always been a Fireball fleet at Draycote Water so the Club racing is great and it gets you out of the house on a Sunday, plus on a Wednesday evening in the main season. It's the chance to get on the water and get some fresh air, and the Club is really sociable on shore as well. It structures your week and gives you something to look forward to!"



Both photos © Malcolm Lewin Photography



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MENAGERIE

Chris & Karen Larr
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2025 has been a busy year, we've had good turnouts on both Sundays and Wednesdays, providing some fantastic close racing!

Congratulations to Jan Elfring in his Dart 15 for topping the Pursuit Club Championship with a comfortable lead.

The Summer Sunday series saw an entry of 80 boats through the series with a variety of different boats competing, top 3 consisting of: 1st Solo Robin Warren, 2nd RS600 Andy White, 3rd RS400 Chris & Karen Larr. This is handicap racing at its best.

Wednesday evenings saw an entry of 55 boats through the

series: 1st Solo Chris Brown, 2nd RS600 Andy White and 3rd RS Vareo Chris Cousins.

We've also had some travellers in the fleet, with the Dart 15s who were in the Isle of Wight, the RS500 in Mounts Bay and the RS800 in Weymouth.

We welcomed Otto Kelsall-Gooch to the fleet in September, congratulations to mum Beccy, who was soon back out on the water with her dad in their RS400. Now that's commitment!

We have such a varied fleet and therefore a wealth of experience and knowledge across many boats. So, if you would like to try a boat, start racing or have any questions please reach out via the 'Contact Us' feature on the Menagerie Fleet page of the Club website and we can put you in touch with the appropriate person to provide support and advice so that soon we might see you on the water too!

If you haven't already, then please join our fleet WhatsApp group, it's always great to hear from everyone and share news.

We hope to see you all out on the water during 2026.



WASZPS Imogen Green

A fresh wave of foiling enthusiasm has hit Draycote Water Sailing Club over the last two years with the rapidly growing WASZP swarm, aimed at bringing high-adrenaline foiling to sailors of all ages. The swarm originally started with Bob Byne two years ago, and has now grown to seven boats in the Club. The group have seen some amazing results already: in last year's Worlds Theo Smith was 3rd in the 7.5 fleet, and Imogen Green ended the season as 3rd ranked female in the world in the 6.9 rig.

The swarm's aim is to create an inclusive and energetic WASZP community right here at Draycote. Whether you're taking your first steps into foiling or looking to sharpen your skills ahead of national events, the group is here to support your journey on the water. We intend to run regular training sessions at the Club to try

and draw in more members, because a lot of the class is very much south coast focused at the moment.

Interest in WASZP sailing has been growing locally, especially since Draycote hosted the WASZP UK Nationals in 2025, which attracted a strong fleet and showcased the class's appeal for fast-paced racing.

With the new group now active, Club members and guests are encouraged to get involved, with taster sessions organised through the class and coaching available as part of the season's programme. The WASZP group promises to be one of the most exciting additions to the Club's diverse fleets this year!



DART 15s

Jan Elfring
jelfring9@gmail.com



During 2025 the class has been relatively well behaved, and our attendance record has been consistent at both Draycote Water and on the open circuit.

We have maintained fleet numbers with Malcolm Lewin and Steve Prince, who have joined the fleet and are quickly getting to grips with racing, although Malcolm visited the rocks near mark B and became a land yacht at the end of one race, sailing the boat up the slipway. Jeremy Franklin and Iain Taylor are also consistently competitive.

Steve Prince demonstrated the hazards of sailing an older boat by nearly falling through the trampoline but is still managing to get a lot of knots per £!

Some of the fleet enjoy the versatility of the Dart, in that you can sail it with the addition of the pocket handkerchief we call a jib and a trapeze (Sport mode). Ed Tuite-Dalton and Derek James travelled to the IOW (Isle of Wight) for the Sport Nationals, which is hotly contested.

The UK Dart 15 Association consistently runs two national events: the Sport Nationals and one for the Una rig: singlehanded with mainsail or two-up with both sails and NO trapeze, which is usually Dad / Mum with a son or daughter.

There is also a Winter and Summer series, which are fun to attend as we travel around the UK enjoying some great venues.

The Nationals in 2025 were at the Royal Yorkshire Yacht Club at Bridlington. Derek James, Andrew Berisford, Jeremy Frankin, Ed Tuite-Dalton and Jan Elfring represented Draycote. Congratulations to Ed Tuite-Dalton who achieved his best National result of 4th overall and 1st over 60.

At the same event, for managing to park my boat either side of Mark 2 in Race 2 (the mark having jumped 10 yards in my opinion) I got a Fernhurst book token for entertaining the fleet. This is a particular skill for a cat sailor...

The 2026 Nationals will be hosted by Stone Sailing Club in Essex, which hopefully will be well attended again - including by a few sailors from Draycote - given that is it just down the river from Marconi Sailing Club, who have the biggest fleet and travel a lot.

We're also looking forward to the Sport Nationals, which swap each year with North Devon Yacht Club, who have a big Sport fleet. It is lovely down there and very tidal which is always a challenge for us pond sailors!



All photos © Malcolm Lewin Photography

RS AEROs

Pete Blakey
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The Draycote RS Aero fleet has enjoyed an excellent Summer Series at the club, with strong participation and some of the closest racing we've seen to date. The fleet continues to grow, and Wednesday evenings have been a particular highlight – regularly attracting double-figure turnouts and creating a competitive but welcoming environment.

Several positions went right down to the wire, with some places only decided on the very last evening. Congratulations to our series champions: Mike Deane, winner of the Wednesday Night Series, and Brian Cooper, winner of the Sunday Summer Series.

The standard of racing continues to rise, helped by an increasingly engaged and enthusiastic group of sailors. A huge thank you goes to Richard Pye and Chris Larr, who generously gave their time throughout the summer to run coaching sessions. Those who took part spoke highly of the instruction and the clear improvements they saw in their technique and racecraft.

It has also been brilliant to see a growing presence of women in the fleet, with seven regular racers taking part throughout

the season. Special congratulations go to Sian Clark, who finished as first lady in the Wednesday Evening Series, and to Helen Salisbury, who claimed first lady in the Sunday racing.

There were also some fantastic battles across the handicap. Chris Larr and Ant Clay fought it out for second and third place on Wednesdays, sailing 9-rig and

5-rig Aeros respectively - a great showcase of the advantages and excitement of mixed-rig handicap racing.

Looking ahead, we're excited for Draycote to host another RS Aero Open Meeting on Saturday 28th March, followed by the RS Aero Inlands on 10th-11th October 2026. Let's get a strong home turnout and keep the momentum going!



Photos - L & C: © Malcolm Lewin Photography/R: © Champy McLean



© Champy McLean / CD V26 - RS Aero World Championships 2025

RS Aero Race Coaching Richard Pye

Over the Spring and Summer period I offered to deliver race coaching to members of the Draycote RS Aero fleet should there be demand. To my relief the offer was well supported and during 2025 coaching was provided on a 1-2-1 basis for nine members of the fleet over 13 days.

The principle of 1-2-1 coaching was to get dedicated, sailor-specific and targeted tuition to cover areas both the sailor felt they wanted to improve upon, as well as opportunities to improve that were spotted during the course of the day.

Each session would start the week before, with a digital exchange of views on areas the sailor and I felt they could gain most from a day's coaching. The day itself would typically start with a quick on shore briefing where it's easier to explain what exercises we were going to practise, as well as discuss some of the more technical aspects that may be covered.

The on-the-water sessions were typically 60-90 minutes in the morning, with a lunch break followed by a second on-water session. Finally, in the days following the session a relatively in-depth analysis of the day's coaching was delivered digitally of areas that were covered, ways to improve and aspects that were already going well.

Each sailor was considered individually, and the needs of each

training day were wildly different, sometimes to match the experience of the individual, but also to match the conditions on the day.

We covered topics as wide ranging as being able to launch and stay confident in wind strengths stronger than the sailor felt they could possibly manage prior - which has definitely brought instant reward. This involved stabilising the boat using control lines, boat trim and sail setting.

Another day it could be start line tactics and boat handling - or wind shift recognition, how to maximise gains, and sail the fleet and not the boat closest to you.

Feedback from many has been consistent. Having started racing either following on from a training course, or moving from crewing to helming sometimes years before, they have never had coaching since. Some, what may seem simple pointers, such as boat

/ sail setting adjustments or tactical suggestions, have at times been described as game changers to the understanding of those receiving the training.

Should the Club RS Aero fleet be receptive, I have every intention to again offer the 1-2-1 race coaching in 2026.

"My 1-2-1 coaching sessions with Richard were very helpful and challenging! I had developed some poor sailing habits and lacked basic techniques, which Richard identified, and I have been working on addressing those over the last year. Simple things like moving smoothly around the boat, sail trim in big winds and maintaining boat speed on tacks and gybes. He also made me reflect on my race techniques, especially start-line position and rounding marks more effectively. The coaching was put to use when I took part in the Aero Worlds in Brittany during the summer. I look forward to further coaching sessions in 2026."

Sian Clark



Photos © Malcolm Lewin Photography



Club Racing

Racing isn't for everyone, but it does provide a great communal experience, particularly when it is combined with social activity.

Our Wednesday night racing in the Summer (1st April – 9th September) is legendary as a great value meal is offered afterwards and many people stay on after the race. You must pre-book a meal before you go out.

This same atmosphere is coming to our Bank Holiday Pursuit Races this year. A good value sit-down roast dinner will be on offer after the race – not only for the sailors – members are welcome to bring family and friends to what will be a fun gathering. Again, pre-booking will be required, but it should make the bank holidays even more fun!



2026 - 27 Club Championship Pursuit Race Series

RNLI Lifeboat Pursuit Monday 6th April - 11.00am	Air Ambulance Pursuit Monday 31st August - 11.00am
John Siggers Pursuit Monday 4th May - 11.00am	Brass Monkey Pursuit Saturday 26th December - 11.30am
Sir C Barratt Pursuit Monday 25th May - 11.00am	RNLI Salver Pursuit Friday 1st January 2027 - 1.30pm

New for 2026... Hot meals available after racing!

WINDSURFERS & WINGFOILERS

Robin Verso
robinverso@aim.com



We have seen a significant increase in the number of wingfoilers over the past 12 months. Some are new members but many are windsurfers who are a bit envious of how easy it seems to get a wingfoil board up on the foil in light winds. So they are investing in the sport and having a go with real success after enduring a relatively short, although sometimes painful, learning curve.

However, it is not a cheap option because, like windsurfing, as you progress you need more advanced gear. I asked recently if anyone was interested in wingfoil coaching that the Club might be able to provide. The response was very low and it seems that being self-taught with a bit of advice from

other members is achieving good outcomes for most.

Although a few hardy and brave members have been going out in temperatures below five degrees, I am sure we are all looking forward to spring weather and warmer winds. Ken Miles deserves a medal for his exploits in the coldest weather and amazingly he windsurfed 56 times in 2025.

Congratulations to Jonathan Ingram achieving 1st place in the Sailboard Gold Fleet at Weymouth Speed Week in October and 3rd overall for sailboards without a foil.

Congratulations to Julian Messing, a longtime windsurfer, on being appointed to the Club Committee and thanks for volunteering for this.

Draycote is a great venue for windsurfing and wingfoiling as the lake is more elevated than the surrounding land on the west and east sides and most winds are clean and consistent, ideal for our sport. The Club provides beginner courses for windsurfing and you will also find fleet members about on any windy day who are happy to help with advice and support to get you and your board flying across the water.

All photos © Malcolm Lewin Photography



CLUB FUN DAY

Saturday 16th May

Many of you will have been to or helped at our various Open / Discover Sailing / Push the Boat Out Days over the last decade or more.

This year we are mixing things up with a rather different approach. We will still be offering try sailing and try windsurfing, but we plan to have more activities on shore and make it much more like a village fete. There will be entertainment and the chance to play games, do things like throw sponges at the Commodore, buy food and drink and so on, as well as the chance to learn about the Club and what's on offer.

Try sailing and try windsurfing can be pre-booked online and require a small donation. If there are spaces on the day they can also be paid for then.

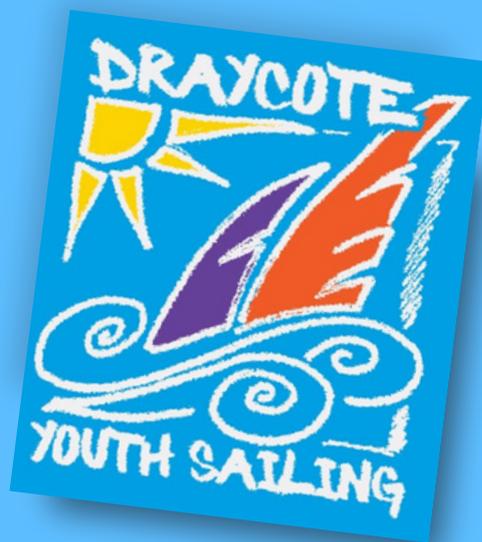
We will need more helpers than usual – mainly onshore, so no sailing experience or getting wet (unless you are the Commodore!) required. Please contact the office if you are interested in helping:
office@draycotewater.co.uk
01788 811153



Y&J 2026 PREVIEW

YOUTH & JUNIORS

Jon Hughes
jdfhughes@gmail.com



We have a great season of Youth & Junior activities coming up this year!
Here are some of the highlights to look forward to...

Friday Night Racing

Every Friday, first race 6.30pm. We run a series of short one lap races on a tight course, then a longer race which is scored on handicap and counts towards our Friday Night Series. After sailing, enjoy a BBQ (bring your own food) and a drink in the bar. We kick off on 3rd April, then every Friday through to September.

Saturday Club

Arrive by 10.00am to rig, change and be ready for the briefing at 10.30am. We aim to improve skills and confidence in a dinghy and have some fun along the way! Towards the end of the session, we anchor up somewhere on the lake for a bit of fun and mayhem on, and often in, the water - and for the now traditional jelly babies. This starts on 4th April and runs every Saturday through to October.

Youth & Junior Championships

Saturday 5th September is the date for our annual Championship Regatta for our young sailors, racing in three age groups, with extra on-the-water coach support for novice racers. This is always a great day of racing, complete with an after-race tea when bakers can compete for the prestigious Cake of The Year trophy!

Volunteer Opportunities

Youth & Junior activities are largely brought to you by volunteers. If you would like to get involved, we would love to have you on the team! You do not have to be a coach, or even a sailor - there are plenty of shore-based roles such as helping with registration at the beginning of sessions and assisting with launch and recovery, especially at our Saturday Club. Many roles just require a small amount of time when you are at the Club anyway, so please consider helping to spread the load of running these activities. Our handy on-line rota system lets you sign up for dates and roles that suit you.

Southport 24 hour Race

An awesome event, unlike any other dinghy race! As mentioned elsewhere in this edition, we will be returning to Southport to race again this year on 12th & 13th September. Keep your eyes and ears open for further information!

Northamptonshire Youth Series

A great local travellers' series with an emphasis on fun and inclusivity. The 2026 series kicks off on Saturday 18th April at Northampton Sailing Club.



facebook.com/groups/dwscyouthandjunior

Hari is Young Sailor of the Year finalist

Hari Clark is among the nominees for the 2025 YJA (Yachting Journalists' Association) Young Sailor of the Year award, having also been short-listed in 2024! The winner for this and the YJA's Yachtsman of the Year will be announced on Saturday, 21st February 2026, at the RYA Dinghy and Watersports Show in

Farnborough. Hari, who only started racing 3 years ago and trains with Draycote Academy, won the Tera Sport World Championships the same year he transferred to the class, and is a previous Topper 4.2 National and World Champion. Well done Hari!



Jess sails for GBR at Youth Worlds

For Draycote Water SC's Jess Powell it was an amazing year in the ILCA! Highlights included finishing 3rd U16 at the ILCA4 Europeans, 4th U16 at the ILCA 4 Worlds, 1st U-17 & youth female at the ILCA 6 Nationals, and wrapping up 2025 in style after being selected to represent GBR at the Youth Sailing World Championships in Vilamoura, Portugal, in December.

Aged just 15, Jess was part of the 16-strong British team chosen to compete at World Sailing's pinnacle event for youth sailors, which mirrors the Olympic format and brought together over 400 top youth

athletes from across the globe to race across six classes.

Competing in the ILCA 6 female class, Jess said: "It was such an amazing event and an incredible experience! I absolutely loved the super close racing and got so much out of it. Going out there and being part of a brilliant team was a fantastic opportunity."

Jess first developed her racing skills with Draycote Academy and is an RS Feva national champion, 2-times Topper National Champion and was named YJA Young Sailor of the Year 2023.

As she continues to train hard in the ILCA ahead of another packed season of racing in the UK and abroad, we asked Jess for her top tips for other aspiring young sailors at the club:

- **Boat Preparation - always check over your boat and make sure everything is working properly.**
- **Food & Hydration - this is critical in the run up to an event as the days can be long and tough on the water**
- **But most importantly - enjoy your sailing!**

WOMEN ON THE WATER

Sandra Young
Via office@draycotewater.co.uk



Women on the Water (WoW) is the Club's group for women and girls of all abilities interested in sailing together in a pressure-free way. As well as being a sailing group we have a social aspect to our activities.

We meet on Monday evenings between April and early September and usually arrive from 5.30pm; it's all right if you're earlier or later to get on the water and we are away by 9.00pm.

You can sail your own boat. If you don't have a boat, that's okay, you can hire a Club boat at a special rate for the session. The group help each other to launch and recover the boats, and there is full safety cover provided by the Club.

On the water you are free to do what you want, it's a race-free zone so if you just want to get to grips with your sailing that's fine, it's up to you.

This group is for you if you'd like to get on the water and

you're returning to sailing or are new and have just completed a course. Also, it's for those that want to enjoy the water in a relaxed environment. When conditions are right, sometimes the paddle boards come out rather than dinghies.

We're also a social group and will meet after sailing for cake and a chat. During the year we organise the occasional group dinner in the local area.

Our main communication method is our WhatsApp group. You can join this by asking the Shop for the QR code. We'd love to see you in 2026 to enjoy being on the water together.

Kaz started sailing in 2025 and joined WoW for a paddle board session. Kaz really enjoyed it, felt very welcome to the group, and is looking forward to joining us in 2026.

A highlight for Sian was taking part in the 2025 RS Aero Worlds at Quiberon in France: "It was the first time I had sailed abroad and an amazing experience to compete in such a big event. It was great to see so many women from so many countries competing, especially Australia, and from youth to 'grand masters' - women over 50!"

Debbie says: "Really enjoyed WoW as it gave me a bit more confidence to get out there and have a go. New to the Club it's great to meet such a friendly great bunch of 'girls' who happily share their time and knowledge, not to mention cake afterwards. Pleasant Monday evenings. Can't wait for it to start again."



CELEBRATING OUR CLUB HEROES

Our previous issue of Draycote Unshackled was published in 2024 - that means we have two years of heroes to celebrate in our 2026 edition!

We have two ways we recognise our Club heroes. The first is the annual Commodore's Cup which is presented at the AGM each year to the person the Commodore (in consultation with the Committee) decides most deserves recognition for their contribution to the Club. Typically, Committee members are not put forward.

In 2024, the Committee had no hesitation in presenting the Commodore's Cup to Roger Darbyshire.

Roger picked up the running of the Improvers Group which runs every Sunday in the summer and is an ideal way for adults to move from learning how to sail on courses to going sailing in their own or Club boats.

Roger is a former top-flight keelboat racer, but he dedicates his time to beginners and encourages them in their sailing journey, which is so important for the Club. Roger was also short-listed for the Rugby Sports Awards Unsung Hero.



In 2025, the Commodore's Cup was presented to Christine Silver for her significant contribution to the Club. She stepped down from the Committee at the AGM after eight and a half years, most of them as Rear Commodore House.

Christine took responsibility for grants from a previous Commodore's Cup winner, Gill Pearson. Like Gill she obtained so many grants for the Club. Without her we would not have sound panels in the lounge, solar panels, changing room refurbishments, many of our Club boats and much more. In addition, with her professional

background, she took a lead on safeguarding and equality and was always available to help out when we had challenges in these areas. She will be sorely missed on the Committee.



The second, and more occasional, way we recognise our Club heroes is through Honorary Membership. With only 13 people ever having been given this honour in the Club's first 54 years, this is only given for outstanding service.

In 2024 we honoured two members in this way. Rodger Webb, with Phillip Hunt, was responsible for getting the Club out of the hole it found itself in the mid-2010s (losing c. £80k in four years). He was Treasurer of the Club for 11 years and helped put the Club on the firm foundation it has now.



The second was Malcolm Lewin who, as a photographer extraordinaire, has really helped put the Club on the map (and Facebook!) with his amazing photos. He often drives the significant distance from his home just to take photos for us. More of Malcolm's work will be put up in the clubhouse over the next few months.



We also made Jon Hughes an Honorary Member in 2025. Jon has worked tirelessly for the Club for decades – on the Committee, as Rear Commodore Sail – but it is in his latest incarnation, running our Youth & Junior section, that he was awarded this honour. Jon has been doing this role for 12 years and, in that time, we have seen an explosion in both the size and success of the Youth & Junior Fleet.



While credit for this must also go to the Draycote Academy & Steve Irish, it is Jon that has provided the building blocks. With him and Youth & Junior, so many youngsters have grown to love our sport, so much so that they want to continue at the highest level. Thank you, Jon.

These are five people who have contributed above and beyond to our Club in a way that most of us could only dream of being able to do. But there are still lots of opportunities for individuals to make a difference to our Club including:

- Joining the Committee
- Helping at the Club Fun Day (Saturday 16th May)
- Helping with open meetings and the Draycote Dash (21st / 22nd November)

TRAINING & LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Few members can have failed to notice the dedication so many of our younger sailors have with their training with the Draycote Academy. But there are also lots of opportunities for adults to receive training at the Club.

Women On Water

Our women-only sailing group has been running for several years and offers a dedicated time for women to sail together. A great opportunity to improve skills, ask questions and build confidence, as well as social fun usually with drinks and cake afterwards in the bar.

Monday evenings from April to September, starting at 5.30pm until water closing time.



Novice Racing

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

They run on the first Sunday of each month from April to September and are led by an experienced sailor.

Improvers Group

The perfect group for new sailors who have just completed a course or for sailors returning to the water and needing some support.

This group is led by an experienced Club member and is all about getting confident with your sailing skills, asking questions, and trying various boats.

Sunday mornings 10.00am – 12.00pm, arrive a little earlier for your first session and to get a boat rigged and ready.

Mainly runs from April to September, but there are sessions all year when the weather is suitable, details added to their WhatsApp group.



Fleet Training

Our fleets organise a variety of types of training depending on what their members want:

- The ILCAs have arranged a structured training programme for their fleet, with a qualified instructor (similar to the Draycote Academy approach).
- The Flying Fifteen fleet are planning some Friday sessions to introduce potential crews to sailing a Flying Fifteen.
- The Aeros have a great scheme where top sailor Richard Pye does one-to-one training on some Fridays with fleet members.
- The Solos have their mid-week gathering and Solo expert, Chris Brown, is often on hand to offer advice. He will also be organising a day's training with a top coach from the class later in the year.

So many potential opportunities – speak to your fleet captain if you would like something like this in your fleet.

THE 24 HOUR RACE – A WIN FOR TEAMWORK!

A team of intrepid junior and youth sailors took on the challenge of the 24 Hour Race in the Autumn with a weekend trip up the M6 to Southport.

Hosted by the West Lancashire Yacht Club, the reboot of this classic dinghy racing event saw more than 60 teams racing in Enterprises, GP14s or Fireflies on a saltwater marine lake – the name of the game being to race 24 hours non-stop.

With the results based on average lap times, sailors from each team have to swap in and out of their boats in relay, with some interesting handovers in the quest to keep moving as fast as possible at all times. The shore was lined with gazebos, spectators, sailors and supporters, creating stadium-style viewing and a festival vibe as the entertainment unfolded.

Our team of 15 sailors was matched by an enthusiastic shore crew of almost the same number! Our weapon of choice was Benson - a Firefly built in 1959 and acquired for the princely sum of £300 from an earlier event, named somewhat ominously, the Colander Cup.

The boat was fettle to survive the rigours of the 24 Hour Race, however, and appeared to not have any holes. With camping next to the lake, and party nights at the local sailing clubs on the Friday and Saturday, all was set for a grand adventure!

The race started at 12 noon and Hari and Bob got proceedings underway, quickly discovering that it would be an interesting course, complete with two islands in the middle, a retail park creating wind shadows, and shallows for the unwary - lap one done: 69 more to go!

The conditions ranged from a gusty 12-15 knots to light airs around dawn, with a massive squall and thunder from 9.00 - 10.00pm, so in the dark except when the sky was lit up by lightning! Oscar and Pete battled on and survived despite two capsizes and the loss of Oscar's glasses, which at least meant he couldn't see the carnage going on around him!

In total our team did 14 changeovers and seven pairs took the boat through the night, with navigation lights and marks to guide the way. Within the 24 hours there are various trophy races, and when Pete and Ted saw the first light of a new day in Benson, they achieved our best result with a 13th in the event's Dawn Race for the fastest lap after 6.00am.

The next milestone race was the Heineken Cup - fastest lap by an all-female team - at 10.00am and just two hours before the end. Millie and Katie took a shot at it but by this time, Draycote Academy coach Steve thought Benson was looking a bit low at the back. The girls took the boat though the line for the final and 70th time at 12:01pm. Mission accomplished!

In the overall standings, our youth and junior team achieved 36th out of a fleet of 61 entries, sailing a 66-year-old £300 boat, in our first attempt at this iconic event as a Club for 35 years, with only half the team ever having previously set foot in a Firefly.

For Benson though, it had all been a bit too much – the team gathered around at pack-up time as at least 20 litres of water sloshed out of the rear buoyancy tank!

A massive well done to the 2025 team:

- **Sailors: Hari, Jai, Peter, Bear, Katie, Millie, Bob, Tristan, Will, Oscar, Henry, Ted, Will D, Ben, Laurie.**
- **Support Team: Jon, Dave, Dunc, Steve, Rachael, Claire, Liz, Richard, Ann, Arthur, Emily, Ronnie, Steve A, Wobble.**
- **The Bakers: Ronnie, Katy**
- **Supported by: XG-Group for the funky graphics & team gazebo; Mike P for all the rope & Harken ratchet block!**

Just think what we can do with some TLC for Benson and time to prepare for the next edition! The 24 Hour Race returns on 12-13th September 2026 and we plan to take part again in this awesome event. We will open the entry for team members in due course, and might even plan a bit of pre-event practice! Put it in your diary now!



DRAYCOTE ACADEMY SAILORS LEAD THE WAY



All photos © Malcolm Lewin Photography

It was another successful year for the Draycote Academy with around 65 youth and junior sailors joining us for our top level coaching.

Our biggest take up was for the Toppers and ILCAs with more than 20 sailors signing up for each of these groups, alongside around a dozen RS Teras and four 29ers.

The growth of the Academy has in turn provided an opportunity to bring on our next generation of coaches, with Joe and Millie further developing their skills alongside head coach Steve and lead coach Steph, and Clemmie also now stepping up as an assistant coach.

As ever it's been hugely rewarding to see the success of our Draycote Academy sailors as they compete regionally, nationally and internationally. And wherever they are from – local to us or among the many who travel considerable distances to be a part of the Academy – it's always brilliant to see them acknowledging Draycote in their entries and by wearing our branded hoodies and race bibs!

All Draycote Academy sailors are members of the Club and we have some tremendously loyal families for

whom we are their second home.

There have been many more individual achievements along the way across all the Draycote Academy fleets, including for our ILCA sailors, who are fighting hard for results on the hugely competitive national and international scene for this Olympic singlehander.

We're proud of all our Academy sailors who put in the hours more than most on our training weekends. They work hard from when they arrive and rig up to when they leave at the end of each day. And this is what gives them the edge over the competition.

They're all super keen – you have to be if it's a freezing cold day with more drizzle than wind! They just get on with it, building resilience, life and sailing skills. Even on a recent day when they were struggling to get boats down icy slipways, they still went out and were smiling.

They're a dedicated group who go on to do brilliantly, whether achieving their goals in competition, or having learnt a lot about sailing for whatever follows, be it more racing, instructing or coaching. All leave the Academy with an enthusiasm for the sport and lots of friends within it!

Outstanding results in 2025 included:

- **Hari Clark took his second world title at the RS Tera World Championships at Lake Lipno, Czech Republic, in the RS Tera Sport (to add to his Topper 4.2 world title from 2024), with Molly Wilson taking first girl in the RS Tera Pro fleet.**
- **At the RS Tera Nationals at Paignton, Hari took another podium finish with 2nd in the Sport fleet, and Joseph Hulse was 3rd in the Pro fleet**
- **The Topper Worlds at Medemblik, Holland, saw Toby Turner 3rd overall with Alex Stainton 6th, and Faith Turner 2nd Girl; Henry Cruse took 2nd in the 4.2s.**
- **Topper Nationals at Largs: 5.3s Fleet - Toby Turner 4th & Faith Turner 1st Girl; 4.2 fleet – 4th, 5th, 6th for Audrey Yang, Elizabeth Stainton & Harry Fenton respectively.**



DRAYCOTE
~ WATER ~
SAILING CLUB

OPEN 364 DAYS A YEAR

sail & windsurf whenever it suits you

PROFESSIONAL RESCUE STAFF

no buddy system or time limitations

LOW CLUB DUTIES

only 2 per year and absolutely none if you're not a racer

40+ BOATS TO HIRE

wide variety to hire and try and regularly replaced on a rolling scheme

