

## **The Birth of A Sailing Club**

**John Cooper**

LASC 25<sup>th</sup> Jubilee Booklet (1968–1993)

The Trossachs made such an impact, from the very first time I found this 'bristly country'. The influence was so strong that I married in the tiny Trossachs Church, had a wedding reception on the 'Maid of the Loch', and spent many happy weekends exploring the area further.

So it just had to be the Trossachs to start a sailing club. What prompted me to start a sailing club? Quite simply, I was not entirely happy with the one of which I was a member! It lacked that most important ingredient – friendliness. Why is it that some people, when invested with authority, even in a social situation, become little gods?

My enthusiasm for a new sailing club was quickly absorbed by my absorbing friends at the Stirling Arms. It wasn't long before we decided upon the Forest Hills Hotel as a club house. Although expensive, at 3s 6d per pint, the beer was good, and there was a superb site to start it all.

And so it came to pass that eighteen stalwarts met on the 3rd March 1968 and formed the Forest Hills Sailing Club. (It is worth recording that our founder members consisted of some connoisseurs of wine, women and song, which they soon discovered existed further along the loch-side. Understandably, the Manager of the Forest Hills, having lost his clientele, decided we could do without his site, and hence the change of name to the Loch Ard Sailing Club.)

The Dinner and Prize-Giving held the following year highlighted what had been achieved in a short time by a group of active and committed friends. The first site was cleared, drained and fenced, a racecourse laid, and the first race held on the 16th May 1968 with a Twinkle 12, a GP14, a Gull and two Mirrors.

Who would have thought that within a year over 30 Mirrors from all parts of Scotland would be racing for the Mirror Open Championship from yet another well struggled-for location on Loch Ard?

The first Club Trophies were won by Brian Morris (Round the Island Trophy), Richard Heathwood (Gartmore Cup and Founders' Shield), and John Cooper (Trossachs Cup). But success was also gained playing away – a win and two seconds at Loch Tummel Sailing Club in July 1968.

What other achievements? Election to the CYCA and RYA; fundraising with 200 club; 21-mile sponsored walk; stimulating monthly committee meetings; new rescue boat; new Club logo and tie; and an access road gate together with a car parking area and site fencing on the new, formally leased, Forestry Commission site.

The great success of the Club can probably be measured by the fact that by May 1970 there were over 100 members.

I recall commending my Committee Members for certain achievements during these early years. Among them, Tom Webb for achieving a record that would never be

beaten – the first club member to capsize! Brian Morris for his regularity in making protests, and his ability to read the racing rules to his advantage at all times. Alex Berry for providing an unpredictable air of excitement to his racing, particularly at the marks. Martin Kain for everything a good crew shouldn't do – advising the helm how to sail, smoke and partake of alcoholic refreshment during a race, refusing to move when called upon, and providing competing boats with an unfair advantage due to an excess of ballast!

By far the greatest achievement however, was a wonderful spirit of mutual support and friendship.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all my friends for their support in founding the Loch Ard Sailing Club, and to express my pleasure in seeing that support continued by others over the past twenty-five years.

May the Club continue to prosper in the spirit of friendship which I found so rewarding.