

CLUB PROFILE



ISLAND BARN RESERVOIR Sailing Club

How to get there

Island Barn Reservoir Sailing Club is situated in Surrey, just south of Kingston off the A309. Junction 10 of the M25 is only 20 minutes away.

Known as a little club with a big atmosphere, Island Barn Reservoir Sailing Club has a reputation for being one of the friendliest clubs in the UK. Rachel Cooper investigates just what makes it so special.

Island Barn Reservoir Sailing Club was established 47 years ago in 1959 when it was originally known as Walton-on-Thames Sailing Club. It was always a popular place to sail, with a number of members already joined up whilst it was still a gravel pit! The current membership reflects the same interest today, with over 240 members covering a wide age range and a truly thriving youth fleet.

The club is located in the centre of West Molesey, a residential area with a peaceful atmosphere; the sailing area covers 122 acres of raised reservoir and luckily the sailing club has total exclusivity to it. The real secret weapon though is that the reservoir is last on Thames Water's rota for freshwater so members do not have the same concerns as other reservoir sailors around Greater London, that the water they love to sail on could diminish considerably in the summer months.

So what is so special about the club? Island Barn runs by a clever ethos that is the lifeblood of many sailing clubs across the UK; to manage the sailing club and its facilities solely 'by its members for its members'. The club has absolutely no hired staff at all; members run the races, man the rescue boats, make the lunches and serve at the bar. It's all very much a team effort that enables them to keep club fees as low as possible.

Membership

It's thanks to the dedication of its members and the three to four duties per year that are requested, that the membership rates are kept as low as possible at Island Barn. The entry fee no longer exists which is a real bonus and the price of £158 for annual membership includes one partner and any children under 18 at the same address which is very reasonable, especially when you take a look at what comes with it: in

Membership fees

Entry fee: Abolished!

Annual membership: £158

Cadet membership: £50

Associate member: £24

Senior member: £106

**Berthing fee: £51 for adults,
£24 for cadets**

addition to the quarterly newsletter and handbook, there are discounts at local suppliers, a busy social calendar and the use of the club for personal events.

IBRSC caters brilliantly for small ones by providing a well-equipped toy-box on a comfy carpet in the dry area of the clubhouse, and a small climbing frame outside. The clubhouse itself is a comfortable open plan building perched on the side of the reservoir. Key information for new members can be found on the website, along with news, results, and information on members who have since moved away. Club committee members work hard to host a good number of open and training events through the year. The focus veers towards their strong number of youth members who enjoy exciting racing in the Topper and Laser fleets. The club has produced one of the best Topper sailors in the country; Oscar McVeigh, who only last year came second at the Topper Nationals.

Sailing

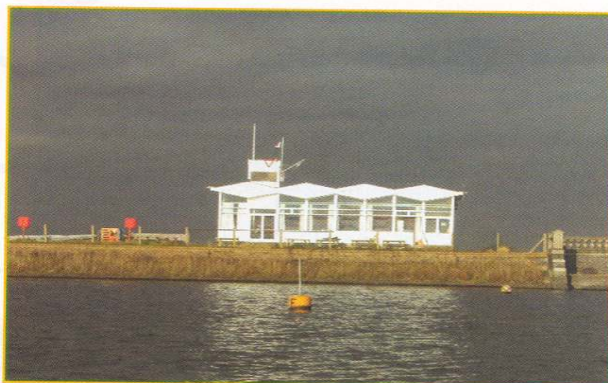
Apart from the Topper and Laser fleets Island Barn has many other busy classes such as the Solo fleet, RS fleets and a good number of 29ers. Alongside members boats and club boats are a number of 420s lining the shore; these

belong to the local Kingston University Sailing Team who regularly make it over to the club at weekends and on weeknights in the summer months to join in club racing.

Racing runs all year round. During the winter months a regular fifty boats or more turn out for Sunday's racing as IBRSC welcomes visitors from many of the local sailing clubs in the surrounding area which shut down for the winter.

However it's in the summer months that Island Barn Reservoir Sailing Club really comes alive and packs in as much sailing as possible, managing to hold a whopping four days sailing every week. Sunday racing starts with a 75 minute pursuit race on the first Sunday of every month, followed by two back to back races, which finish around 1300 so everyone can come in for a bite to eat (cheese toastie, packet of crisps and a chocolate bar all for £1.50!) in the comfort of the clubhouse.

It's impressive to see just how much sailing they get in on this reasonable stretch of water during the week, and not only in the summer but all year round. And it's not just members getting out on the water for their own personal racing; many members are happy to stay out after two or three races to run training sessions for their large youth membership. This commitment has nurtured sailors such as Topper sailor Ben



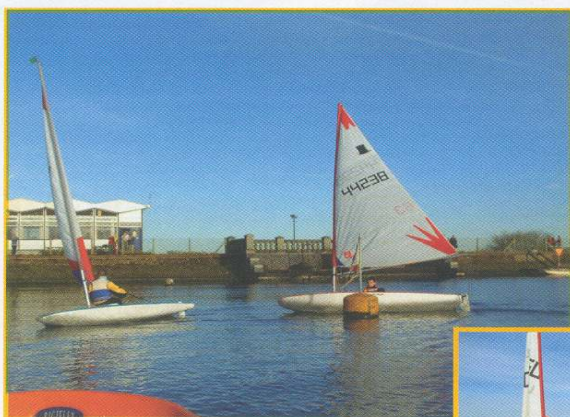
Palmer who just this year came 1st in the under 16's at the London Boat Show Pursuit Race.

Training

Junior Training Camps at Island Barn Reservoir Sailing Club run twice yearly, with courses in the spring and autumn. Between these dates the initiative 'Trysail' takes place, which is a Tuesday evening adult training session that runs through the summer months, only costing £4 per head.

Commodore Alasdair MacLean and many others put a huge amount of effort into running a regular junior training scheme, which is held on summer Sundays. Using a fleet of Topper dinghies and lots of enthusiasm the aim of these sessions is to offer children and youths up to the age of 18 a structured course starting with basic theory and sailing in a straight line, through beating, tacking, reaching, running, gybing, race theory and a number of short practice races. ▶





Open days

There are a number of sporting and cultural festivals due to take place in the local area surrounding the club this year. Island Barn Reservoir Sailing Club works in conjunction with these festivals to promote sport by hosting open days from the sailing club, which have the added bonus of attracting new members. The next open days are planned for 14 and 21 May in the afternoons. So if you are local to Island Barn Reservoir grab some waterproofs and get on over to the sailing club for an afternoon of fun on the water!

Publicity Officer Simon Bean has been a member at Island Barn Reservoir Sailing Club since 1988. He plays a big part in the organisation of the Open Days and enjoys putting a lot into the club. Along with the other committee members, Simon is keen for as many people as possible to get involved and take advantage of all the club has to offer – something which reflects in the friendly welcoming ethos of the club. In particular, Simon gets a huge amount of pleasure from sailing his Laser at Island Barn where, he says, "The breezes are constant due to its elevated position and where the water never runs out"! However it is really the extremely competitive fleet of Lasers that gets him out on the water, as



he comments, "There's always someone out there who is better than you". That's a fair comment when you have Laser sailors such as Rob Cage who just last year won the Laser Radial European Masters Division and came 2nd overall, and John Reay who came 2nd in the Masters Division and 4th overall in the Europeans, sailing around with you on Sundays!

This year the club is holding open meetings for Lasers, Toppers, Solos, Scorpions and RS classes. IBRSC's accessible location draws high numbers of visiting sailors to open meetings, and with plenty of home grown talent, the racing is guaranteed to be top notch.

New members

But you don't have to be an expert racer to find welcome at this club. Island Barn Reservoir Sailing Club has its own fleet of club boats, which include a number of Enterprises, Solos, Toppers and Lasers. All of these are available to new members to

Contact details

Island Barn Reservoir Sailing Club, Ray Road, West Molesey, Surrey KT8 2LF

Tel: 0208 9799057

Membership line: 0870 7652628 (between 18.30 and 21.30)

Web: www.islandbarn.org.uk

Email: islandbarn@hotmail.com

hire whenever the club is open. Young people and adults can enjoy learning to sail in a different boat each weekend!

Alasdair Maclean, Commodore, had this to say: "Five years ago my son decided that he wanted to take his Topper sailing seriously and our search led us to Island Barn, by far the friendliest reservoir club we viewed. The club is very much centered on racing and learning to race for both adults and juniors. Although a lifelong sailor I hadn't really sailed dinghies for twenty years when I joined, but with a huge amount of encouragement from the Laser fleet and some excellent coaching days I now find myself at least up with the best guys, although not actually beating them yet!

"We had five of our young sailors at the Youth Championships this Spring; Nicola Groves and Sarah Martin were first girls in the 29ers, and Dicken Maclean and Henry Maxfield were 3rd 29er overall. This says a huge amount about not only the club coaching but also the support, encouragement, and advice that is freely given."

Summary

Island Barn Reservoir Sailing Club is certainly every bit as friendly as those who have visited claim it to be; its members-run club has an informal and relaxed atmosphere, even though the series racing is anything but! The junior training and adult starter courses are second to none for encouraging people into racing and pushing them up the ladder, and the results boasted by club members competing on the national circuits prove that.

If ornithology is your other passion you'll be pleased to know that the reservoir is also nationally noted for its feathered visitors as I discovered whilst racing at the club, as a flock of Parakeets flew just overhead - a definite distraction from the spinnaker I was meant to be watching! **DSM**

Summer sailing schedule

- **Tuesday evenings:** Adult training sessions
- **Wednesday evenings:** Wednesday night series
- **Saturday:** Saturday series for young families and informal racing
- **Sunday mornings:** Pursuit Race on the first Sunday of each month; main racing series on other days.
- **Sunday afternoons:** Under 18 training