

SUMMER SAILS



Throughout history we British have been known as a nation of seafarers, and to this day we all enjoy the seaside with the water attracting us like a magnet, *writes Richard Forrester, of Barnet Green Sailing Club.*

Here in Barnet Green we are about as far from the sea as it is possible to get, but fear not, water lovers – the beautiful Bittell Reservoirs are right on our doorstep.

The Lower Bittell is frequented by fishing enthusiasts but the Upper Bittell, also being the larger, is home to Barnet Green Sailing Club (BGSC).

The club was formed in 1918 and over the years it has grown in sailor numbers and developed the facilities we enjoy today. We are a members club, which means we do most jobs ourselves – the exception is the Keeper of Bittell, Fred Rollins, who lives next to the clubhouse, maintains the grounds and looks after security.

Our club is proud of its heritage and continues to provide enjoyment for all the family. We hold regular year-round Sunday races for adults and juniors, sailing dinghies and sailboards. The longer days bring Wednesday evening racing and dinner in the clubhouse, which has a fully licensed bar and professional standard catering kitchen.

The clubhouse enjoys a panoramic view of the lake so that spectators can watch the exciting racing if the weather is inclement. On warmer days, grassed seating areas at the waterside provide opportunities for picnics.

For those wishing to learn and improve their skills, we hold training sessions all year round for adults and juniors. The junior events are so popular that we hold three courses during the Easter and summer holidays, and these are always over-subscribed.

We are a Volvo Royal Yachting Association Champion Club for training, and have a good number of RYA qualified sailing instructors headed up by Merlyn Wilcox – ably supported by Paul Cross for the adults and Mandy Suggitt for the juniors. Mandy won Coach of the Year in the Bromsgrove District Sports Awards 2011 and is now progressing to the Herefordshire & Worcestershire County Sports Partnerships Awards.

During the summer we have recreational sailing on Saturday afternoons where sailors can practice their skills in a more relaxed atmosphere, and various evening sailing activities run by volunteers to help newer and less experienced sailors gain confidence.

We also have a Friday evening ses-

sion where younger members can have a social evening with sailing and other sports such as table tennis, often rounded off with a barbecue.

We have recently been awarded a grant by Sport England, enabling us to purchase four brand new Pico class training dinghies. These will be used by adults and juniors alike to work towards the various qualifications taught at the club, backed up by the official RYA awards scheme.

The "Boathouse" venue is available to hire for small conferences and training days, providing a real log fire in the winter and a scenic view in the summer months. Flexible seating and facilities such as overhead projector and screen are available.

The club is hosting two Open Days on Saturdays May 7 and July 9 from 2–5pm, where you can experience first-hand what the club has to offer, and (subject to weather conditions) sample sailing for free.

There is always a warm welcome – so on Sundays throughout the year, Saturday afternoons and Wednesday evenings during summer, come and visit. All the details you need are at www.sailingbarntgreen.com