

# Lancing SC

With its new clubhouse, Lancing SC on the West Sussex coast provides the perfect base for some serious dinghy sailing. We took a closer look...



PHOTOS COURTESY OF LANCING SC

Lancing SC was founded in 1959 by a group of local enthusiasts who recognised the favourable sailing conditions to be found in Lancing Bay, West Sussex. They rented a site from the local council for £5 a year, levelled it, put up a fence, installed a portable building (a large shed) and took to the sea. The club thrived, and in 1980, a new clubhouse was opened by Sir Alec Rose. This was still only a semi-permanent building but it came to embody the unique spirit of the club, and served its purpose for 23 successful years, surviving hurricanes and floods with a little help from skilled and resourceful club members.

## Sailing waters

The club is located on the Sussex coast, approximately three miles east of Worthing and two miles west of Shoreham-by-Sea. The clubhouse is at the beach end of Shopsdam Road, a turning off the A259 Sussex coast road. The road is not local authority controlled and provides access to the beach for boat trailers, not cars, but local parking is fairly easy.

All club racing takes place on the open sea between April and November. The beach is mainly shingle with good stretches of sand at low tide. The prevailing winds are largely cross-

shore, allowing sailing at every state of tide and in all but gale conditions. Lancing Bay, being shallow, develops short steep waves in a breeze, and provides some exhilarating sailing

“I knew that Lancing SC was the club I was looking for immediately. I found 35 boats on the water, a knowledgeable group of spectators on the patio and a warm welcome in the bar”

Bob Aldridge, Commodore

conditions. Riding these steep waves in a cloud of spray on a windy reach is a superb experience which more than makes up for the hard work invested on the upwind leg.

Conditions do vary enormously with the wind ▶



Above In July 2003 UK Laser champion and Olympic hopeful Paul Goodison, opened the new clubhouse.

direction. The prevailing south-westerly winds are usually ultra-smooth with little to disturb them on their way up the channel. Good wave technique pays dividends in these waters as does a wary eye on the tide, which can have a dramatic influence on racing tactics, particularly in light winds. Offshore winds can be very shifty as they become wickedly confused on their way across the nearby South Downs. However, when their direction is right, they can create a perfect summer sailing day by driving the sea breeze mechanism up to a solid Force 4.

“The conditions in Lancing Bay provide as good a test of racing technique as any I have experienced around the world”

Mark Littlejohn

### New clubhouse

In July 2003 the latest chapter in the Lancing SC story was started when UK Laser champion and Olympic hopeful Paul Goodison, opened the new clubhouse. This new building on two floors was made possible by a grant from Sport England and doubled the accommodation. There are now spacious changing rooms, good disabled facilities, much improved race control and a comfortable clubroom with a great view of the sea and the racing.

Lancing SC has always attracted families and this translated into strong youth fleets throughout the 1990s. The RYA recognised this achievement in 1999 when Lancing was one of the first clubs to achieve Volvo/RYA Champion Club status and run the RYA Red Badge youth racing course. For a small club of only 160 members, the level of participation is exceptional, 35 boats on the water is not at all

uncommon and the overall standard of the sailing is very high.

### Racing and events

Lancing hold morning and afternoon races for varied fleets on Sundays and occasionally run a Saturday pursuit or team race. There is also a summer Wednesday evening series which is contested on a personal handicap basis and provides an enjoyable contrast to the usual PY based racing, often giving young or novice sailors the opportunity to trounce the experts.

Another form of competition developed at Lancing over many years is the Topper league with its unique scoring system, encourages participation and improvement, particularly from novice sailors. This runs throughout the season, and the trophy can only be won by a novice. One point is awarded for starting a race, and for each boat a helmsman beats iwith extra points for the top three positions.

The main fleets at Lancing are Laser, Laser Radial, Laser 2, Laser 4000, Topper and Streaker, but there are also enthusiasts for the 420, Laser 2000, Laser 4.7, Contender, Lightning, Buzz and Miracle. Open meetings for the Laser, Topper, Laser 2 and Streaker classes are held every year.

The enthusiastic social committee organises events throughout the year. A variety of meals, quiz nights, karaokes, barbecues and even go-cart racing boost the club's income and encourage the involvement of non-sailing members.

### Sailing achievement

There have been many outstanding performances by sailors from Lancing SC, but the pinnacle of achievement was reached by Mark Littlejohn with his victories in the 1992 Laser nationals and as an apprentice in the world Laser masters in 1999 and again in 2003. Mark also won the Miracle nationals in 1998 with his son Sam and was Shirley Robertson's coach at the Sydney Olympics in 2000.

Several youths have been members of national and regional squads and this standard has recently been upheld by Tessa Cooper who was first female youth at the 2003 Topper nationals. Just for good measure, her mother, Mary, was first female adult. Another outstanding Topper helmsman, Ollie Page, has just moved up to the 29er and recently achieved fourth place at the worlds. Members of the Contender, Streaker, Laser 2 and Laser 4000 fleets have contested national, European and world championships and this group of vastly experienced sailors provide the foundation for Lancing's continuing success.

The club has several accredited race coaches and plans are in place to extend training activities with a series of Saturday 'improver' courses. There are strong links with the nearby, council-owned, Adur Watersports Centre and this provides a natural route of progression for many of their young sailors who want to move up to club racing on the open sea. Recent new links with a local school and the introduction of club boats for novices, has further strengthened the youth focus. An incredibly successful 'Have a go day' in July led to several new members joining, encouragement enough for the event to be repeated in 2004. ■

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