

Friends of Loch Tummel Sailing Club Newsletter

Issue 5 November 2011

Friends party 2011 and interview with Mike Barron....



Friends of Loch Tummel Sailing Club Newsletter December 2011



Interview with Mike Barron...



Photo above – all set for Cape Horn apart from the shorts underneath...

Mike learned the rudiments of sailing at school at Fort Augustus on Loch Ness. There were no wetsuits and he also had a hazy recollection of there being no safety boats either. Someone had donated two Heron's to the Monks running the school who were also responsible for the local fire tender.

Learning to swim was accomplished by using the fire tender's pump to take water directly from the Loch to fill a 'pool' and for some reason Mike never learned to become that strong a swimmer....

(Editors note: Average depth of Loch Ness 600ft, 786 ft at deepest point and average water temperature: 5.5° C)

Mike's memory was that it was 'not warm' and that they tended to only go out

in light winds for safety, only ending up swimming once when a centreboard broke.

Back in Blairgowrie Mike then joined Perth Sailing Club crewing for his brother in a National 12 where there were Enterprises, Firefly and Albacores. The 12 in those days was narrow, clinker built and very unstable.

A venture into bigger boats ended with a swim at Fort William when the tender sank – all that early training then coming in handy in swimming ashore – a narrow escape.

Racing at Perth tended to be a beat and a run and with the demise of the local favoured handicap for the cotton sails a move to Tummel in 1961 was on the cards with a victory in the Colquhoun cup in the first year at the club. The first win was thought to be fortunate and due to a good handicap and there were no more wins for the next few years (although a considerable number since).

There were a surprising number racing then for such an early stage in the club of around 8 – 10 boats. There was only one race starting at 3.30 which often lasted for two hours, 'round the cans' which were wider spaced out on the Loch than the current layout – 'A' where it is now and 'E' at Port an Eilean. Positions tended to become established early in the race and stay until the end.

Once his brother got bored with sailing small boats Mike became 'owner' and had a succession of National 12's – 7 in total before moving on to an International 14 which was fitted with twin trapezes. With

this boat the result tended to be either 'win' or 'last'. Moving on afterwards to an Iso and then into the Flying Fifteen class round about fifteen years ago .



Mike and Fiona in action in the 14'

Asked to choose a favourite from all of these boats Mike chose 'Spider' his last wooden 12, a fast boat from David East which he sailed with Fiona before family got in the way.

Fiona, a teacher at the Croftinloan boys prep in Pitlochry and arrived in the 'year the Loch was drained' on a preparatory reconnaissance trip. The club were then offering local coaching to schools one evening per week. John Northcott and Mike were the principal instructors. Mike and Fiona met after that while taking the boys out and one thing led to another ending up with the two of them out together in the 12...

The coaching was not really a success as the local boys were usually busy with other things at the weekend and did not tend to become members.

In the early days of the club there were still no wetsuits and, following a swim, you just tended to come back in. There was no coaching then and they did a lot of swimming on windy days. Practice was the key and took place on a Saturday, often sleeping the night in the back of the LandRover.

When sailing the 12 at the Autumn regatta one year they had an unfortunate capsize and swim. Mike wanted to leave the boat and collect it later but the safety boat driver was also a 12 sailor and did not want to leave the boat behind. A protracted recovery of the boat led to a frozen crew and the race officer realising that 'first aid' was needed when they got ashore administered large glasses of whisky...

Tummel week was conceived one evening at supper with the Dalziels and McLarens. The Calders were travelling to a similar event and it was thought 'why not' have the same at Tummel. Mike has been, he thinks, to all the Tummel weeks perhaps apart from one.

Of the Tummel weeks' Mike particularly enjoyed this year's event as it was not too busy and lots of people were sailing with their kids and got quite nostalgic sitting in the rescue boat watching Mark Simpson sailing with his son in a 12 as Mike had sailed regularly against his parents. His current 15 almost feels like a 12 sometimes.. until the wrenched spinnaker has to go up...



The magnificent 15 - Designed by Uffa Fox



Homeward Bound



Caption competition.....

Friends of Loch Tummel – Jim and I are thinking of having a 'Committee' for next year's Friends Party – volunteers welcomed to join in....

(Editors' note – I also met my wife to be at a sailing club meeting – perhaps the next edition should be a 'Valentine's day' one?)



Editorial: friends@lochtumelsc.org