

Solent Dragon Fleet Newsletter – Spring 2008

Dear class members

First of all I would like to say how honoured I was to be elected as class captain at the AGM last November. I first started sailing Dragons in the early '80s shortly after my father became the proud owner of Asa, firstly in Abersoch and then from 1985 in Cowes. I am grateful for this opportunity to follow a distinguished line of class captains (Peter Morton, Brian Orr, Keith Skelsey, Chris Caws, Bill Daniels, Neil Payne and Gavia Wilkinson-Cox, to name a few) and with an impressive team of officers and management committee already in place.

Turning to the season ahead, with the first race less than 2 months away, the calendar is now finalised. There are some important changes from last year, some of our own making and some from the CCCA, to note. The Calendar as it currently stands is attached but may be subject to change so be sure you read the sailing instructions on the day.

CCCA RACING

**Key Change: Shore-line starts – 2 races on Saturday, 1 on Sunday
New starting times**

This is the biggest change for this year. There will now be two races on Saturday when starting from the organising club's line but the race officer has the discretion to just hold one race. Sundays will continue to have one race with the exception of the two May bank holiday weekends where Sundays will have two races (with the first start at the normal Sunday starting time), and Mondays will have one race, start time as for Sunday.

The aim of this change is to give racers a varied schedule and to give the race officers at the clubs greater flexibility to respond to conditions on the day. For example on a gloriously sunny July day the committee may send us off to circumnavigate the Solent while they enjoy a long lunch!

Start times have been revised, to reduce the gap between the fleets, which race committees were finding difficult to manage. To allow for travellers and Dragon sailors with families to have some time at weekends our fleet is starting last on Saturday and first on Sunday. Times of warning signals follow.

Saturdays (Race 1)

12:55 Daring
13:05 International Etchells
13:20 International Dragon

Sundays and Mondays

11:40 International Dragon
11:55 Daring
12:05 International Etchells

The sailing instructions have yet to be finalised so there may be changes but as things stand if the race office intends to hold two races on Saturday flag "R" will be flown before the first race (but note this is only an intention, there may not actually be two races). If flag "R" is not flown, there will only be one race.

The sailing instructions are also likely to contain a provision to shorten the first race between a mark and a committee boat. Some clubs have indicated that they may start the second race from the committee boat (a final decision has not been made so, again, please read the sailing instructions). The aim is that on two race days the races should each be around 1¼ to 1½ hours long, completing at around 4:30 p.m.

Obviously this is a new format so please give the clubs a few weekends to get into the swing of it but do also let the officers know how it is working out.

New Series: Dragon Fleet 'Champagne' weekends

This is a new series for this year that was proposed and agreed at the AGM in November. It will be a series run over selected shore line start weekends, the idea being to provide a series for those members of the fleet who are unable to race every weekend and so are unlikely to feature in the overall championship points. We hope they will provide a focus for a good turnout.

Julia and Graham Bailey have kindly donated the **Bailey Bowl** for this series and the class is very grateful for their generosity. In addition, there may just be some champagne involved...

The series will consist of a shoreline start weekend from each month on a points system similar to the series already held. The weekends we have selected to count this year are:

Spring Series:	May 3 rd /4 th
Mid Series:	June 21 st /22 nd
Summer Series:	July 19 th /20 th
Summer Series:	August 30 th /31 st
Late Series:	September 20 th /21 st

Red Funnel Weekends

The format for these weekends will remain pretty much the same. One change will be to revert back to having the start line on the port side of the committee boat and the finish line on the starboard side. This will allow the race committee to start classes whilst others are finishing, resulting in less hanging around on the water but please do look out for other classes that may still be racing.

Times for the first warning signal remain the same as last years. A quick reminder follows.

Saturdays

12:50 International Etchells
12:55 Daring
13:05 International Dragon

Sundays

11:50 International Etchells
11:55 Daring
12:05 International Dragon

Jubilee Cup

The Dragon Fleet Jubilee Cup will be on the second May bank holiday weekend (24 -26 May) and will consist of the CCCA racing for that weekend, the Island Sailing Club being the organising club. The Jubilee Cup will be awarded for the 5 races series over that weekend and

those races will also count for the Mid Season Series and the Class Championships. This does conflict with the BDA East Coast Championship for travellers, so it may open up the competition!

This weekend's socials will be held at the Cowes Corinthian Yacht Club, thus continuing the association of the club with the Jubilee Cup that has been in place since the inaugural running of this event.

Four-up Saturdays – New Crew Training

Last year's "Boatcamp" was very successful in PR terms and generated a lot of interest in the fleet but didn't really help us build up a pool of trained crew, to ensure as many boats as possible are out sailing.

This year we will be trying a new format where for two Saturdays in the existing series, fleet members will be asked to take a non-Dragon sailor on their boat either in addition to their normal crew (i.e. to sail four up) or in place of their third crew to train in Dragon crewing during the two races.

The aim is that participants are individuals who have some experience of sailing, and if given the opportunity would commit to being available regularly as crew for fleet members. We have selected dates early in the season to help address crew shortages early: Saturday 10th May and Saturday 21st June, and we will start the days with brunch at one of the clubs before racing.

As an additional incentive, boats that don't include a Dragon novice on board will have 2 points added to their Saturday race results! The Class Captain (in consultation with the other officers) will have the final say as to whether a crew member is a Dragon novice. Further, the officers shall also have discretion not to award any points for races on these days if the conditions are not suited to racing with novices.

Owners are also encouraged to take novices for the Sunday race too but on those days there will be no penalty for not having a novice on board.

Action for fleet members:

We all have colleagues and friends who have expressed an interest in sailing Dragons regularly – or indeed are considering buying one, so please forward their contact details to Matt Hill as soon as possible.

Crews Union - Matt Hill and Rudi Jurg will be working together to keep a list of available crew on an ongoing basis and helping owners find sailors when their own efforts fail. Please ask anyone you know who would be interested in being on the crew list to contact Matt or Rudi.

Post Racing Cup-a-Tea

In recent years, dry sailing has resulted in the fleet sailing from a number of locations in Cowes and we haven't always successfully met as a fleet afterwards, especially as some don't want to start drinking straight after racing.

This year the class is asking (and paying for out of existing class funds) each club running the weekend's racing to provide us with tea and biscuits in their club house after racing on the Saturday. Hopefully this will provide a focal point for everyone to meet after the race. The bars in the clubs will of course remain open to those whose race results require something a little stronger.

We encourage you all to support the clubs whose volunteers provide our race management, and of course extend the excitement of the day's racing by re-living the highlights with fellow competitors. Or ... talk about something completely different. The Daring class on hearing of our idea and are considering doing something similar, which should only serve to improve inter-class mixing.

'Buddy' Scheme

To aid communication, each member of the management committee will have a number of boats in the fleet to contact regularly about where we are meeting up, socials and specifically to help new members get the hang of sailing in Cowes.

We may in time ask others to become buddies as the scheme gets under way. Rachel Grimshaw has agreed to coordinate so contact her with any questions, suggestions or requests!

RLYC – Racing Rules Clinic

We are invited to a pre-season Racing Rules Clinic to be held at The Royal London Yacht Club on the 19th April from 9.30 to 13.00. The cost will be £10 to include coffee and a buffet lunch.

The clinic will be suitable for anyone keen to refresh his or her knowledge ahead of the new season. The clinic will comprise a review of the rules framework, key principles and examples of frequent occurrences on the racecourse. The focus is in practical understanding and the session will be interactive with ample opportunity for Q&A.

To book your place, please contact the Secretary of the RLYC by 11th April 2008 (The Secretary, RLYC, The Parade, Cowes, Isle of Wight, PO31 7QS Fax: 01983 299083 or email secretary@rlyc.org.uk)

Events and Regattas

Classic Dragon Festival

Classics have suffered a disappointing drop in numbers in recent years. I am therefore delighted, not least as a classic owner myself, that the Cowes Fleet this year is able to offer a festival of events for Classic Dragons. There has already been some interest from the French Classic Dragon fleet for the first of these events!

Classic Keelboat Regatta

The Classic Keelboat Regatta will take place from 21-25 July. The event is being run alongside the British Classic Yacht Club Regatta with the intention being to organise racing

for classic keel dayboats. At the current stage of planning, it is anticipated that boats will sail in mixed fleets under some sort of rating system or more than one fleet if there are substantial numbers. If sufficient numbers of any class attend, a separate start may be arranged. With interest from France and additional English boats we may be able to have our own start.

For more information contact david.elliott@classickeelboats.org or else visit the website at www.classickeelboats.org

BDA Classic Championship in Cowes Week

The BDA has offered the Solent Fleet to host the BDA Classic Championship as part of Cowes Week. This event has in the past being held in conjunction with Burnham Week and other events so we are delighted to be holding it in Cowes. We hope this event will encourage many of the Classics attending the Classic Yacht Regatta to stay for Cowes Week as well.

We are also hoping classics attending either of the above events will also enter the Yarmouth Regatta, which is open to all Dragons, not just Classics (see below for more details). If you are a Classic Dragon owner or know an owner who may be interested in any of these events then please contact the Class Captain at solentclasscaptain@yahoo.com.

The BDA is supporting the Classic Festival and it is intended that a special prize will be presented at the BDA dinner next January for the best performer in the three events, to be decided in a manner similar to that for the Citron Trophy that is presented annually at the dinner.

Cowes Week

Many of you will know this is being held from 2nd to 9th of August this year. Notice of race and other information will be sent out in early April. Please note that this year you should enter directly (either on-line or to the Cowes Week office) rather than through the class secretary. This change has come from feedback and is supported by the class officers.

Please also note, as usual, the local class rules will apply. These are set out in the Blue Book (which we aim to circulate before the season starts).

Yarmouth Regatta

Due to take place the weekend after Cowes Week, we have been invited to this event and support it as a class. The Royal Solent Yacht Club will shortly send out a notice of race.

The proposed schedule is that attending Dragons will be taken down late on Friday afternoon (help for those who cannot take their own boat and a tow boat will be provided). Boats will be berthed alongside in a marina. On Friday night there will be a champagne reception at the Yacht Club followed by supper. Travel back to Cowes after dinner will be on a rib. This is no ordinary rib...it has 3 x 300hp engines...and just completed the round Britain Powerboat Race!

Racing will consist of 2 or 3 races on Saturday and a further 2 races on Sunday. On Saturday night there will be a huge party at the Caulcutt's house (next to the yacht club) with excellent hospitality and rock bands. All those competing at Cowes Week, particularly visitors and

Classics, are encouraged to take in this additional event the weekend immediately after Cowes Week. The entry fee is expected to be minimal and the hospitality huge! Please contact Gavia Wilkinson Cox for further information.

Paying up – Racing Fees and Membership

Race fees

Fleet members are reminded that they must complete a declaration and send it with their race fees to the class treasurer before they start racing. Declaration forms will be circulated as soon as we receive them from the CCCA.

Racing fees for this year will be as follows:

Per Race Day	£15
Per Series	£60
Whole Season	£150

Fleet membership and Blue Book entry

Membership fees remain unchanged:

Boat Owners	£70
Non-owners	£40

All fleet members should have paid their annual fee by direct debit on 1st February. Non-payers will be removed from the Blue Book and its circulation. We aim to have the Blue Book completed and sent to members before the sailing season starts.

Here is a reminder of account details for direct transfers and cheques:

Bank: Barclays Bank plc
Sort Code: 20-96-89
Account: 90425443
Dragon Class Solent Division
Reference: please state: "Mem [your name]"

Action for fleet members: If you have any amendments to your blue book entry or queries on membership details please forward to Josy Roberts-Pay by 15th March.

E-mail: josy_robertspay@yahoo.co.uk Mob: 07973 762636
Address: Dragon Lodge, Jumps Road, Churt, Surrey GU10 2JY

British Dragon Association

BDA Membership

Fleet members are reminded that their BDA membership is a separate subscription, and they are responsible for ensuring payment and their contact details are correct. We do supply the BDA with updated membership lists, so they may contact you.

BDA Events 2008

May 24th – 26th East Coast Championship Lowestoft
July 6th -12th South Coast Championship and Edinburgh Cup Plymouth

South Coast Championship 2009

In response to feedback for the AGM last October we have agreed with the BDA's committee that the South Coast Championship will return to Cowes in 2009 on the second May Bank holiday weekend.

BDA E-news

As Solent Fleet members you should have received by email the first BDA E-news circulated last November. The E-news is a round up of BDA news at both a national and local level, including items of interest from the Solent and other fleets.

The intention is to publish the E-news 4 times a year, with the next issue going out in early April. If you are not already on the circulation list and would like to be sure that you receive it next time around (or know of others who would be interested in receiving it) then please drop Fiona Brown (the BDA Publicity Officer) an email at FionaBrown@fionabrown.com

Social Events

Probably the most important element of the sailing schedule the following socials will be organised by members of the management committee:

When and Where	What	Organiser
May 3 rd Evening RLYC	Fitting Out Supper, and 'Champagne' Weekend	Rachel Grimshaw
May 10 th Morning RCYC	11:00 am Brunch, 4 th person weekend	Richard Cullen
May 10 th RCYC	Champagne Weekend Dinner	Richard Cullen
May 25 th Evening CCYC	Jubilee Cup Weekend Barbeque	Rachel Grimshaw
June 21 st Morning TBC	11:00 am Brunch, 4 th person weekend	Richard Cullen
June 21 st Evening RCYC	Nearly Midsummer's Party (with other keel boat fleets)	Josy Roberts-Pay/Gavia Wilkinson-Cox
3rd August - Evening RCYC	Dragon Supper, Cowes Week Buffet and band	Rachel Grimshaw
6 th September – Evening ISC (provisional)	Dragon Casual Supper – Red Funnel Weekend	Josy Roberts-Pay
18 th October – Evening TBC	ISC Red Funnel Prizegiving Solent Fleet AGM and dinner with prizegiving	Ben Hancock

The committee does not intend to arrange formal fleet dinners on any other weekends but we encourage fleet members to set up additional socials should they be so inclined!

Fitting Out Supper

As you can see, the first social event of the year will be the Fitting Out Supper, which we are having on the second weekend of racing to coincide with the first Champagne weekend. There will be Champagne on arrival (well, it is the first Champagne weekend...) followed by dinner. Price is £30 per person.


To order tickets please send a cheque no later than April 26th made out to "Dragon Class Solent Division" for £30 per person to Rachel Grimshaw at: Albury House, 39 Park Way, Camberley, Surrey GU15 2PD. Please let Rachel know if you require a vegetarian option.

... And Finally

I believe we have a solid foundation from which we will have a great year of racing. Indications are that numbers should be up on last year with almost everyone who raced last year out again and others returning to the fold. I hope this proves to be the case and if anyone needs help getting on the water please contact any officer of the class.

I wish you all fair winds and good racing for the season ahead!

Best wishes



Ben Hancock
Solent Fleet Class Captain
solentclasscaptain@yahoo.com