

# Upper Tamar Lake Sailing Club



[www.utlsc.org.uk](http://www.utlsc.org.uk)

## ***Who We Are and What We Do***

Upper Tamar Lake is one of several South West Water Authority reservoirs where sailing is encouraged. Watersports on the lake are controlled by the South West Lakes Trust; they have dinghies available for hire, run courses and provide safety cover for all users of the lake. However, in addition, Upper Tamar Lake is also the home of the Upper Tamar Lake Sailing Club (UTLSC). The UTLSC is a small friendly club of people who (mostly) have their own sailing dinghies and the majority of them regularly



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in the regular sailing races held on the lake. They also organise cruising events away from the lake during the summer. Weekend racing is normally held on Sunday mornings and afternoons, starting around March and continuing on through the Spring, Summer and Autumn to finish in mid-November. In addition, during the Summer holidays, there is also racing on Wednesday afternoons, usually starting at 3:45pm.

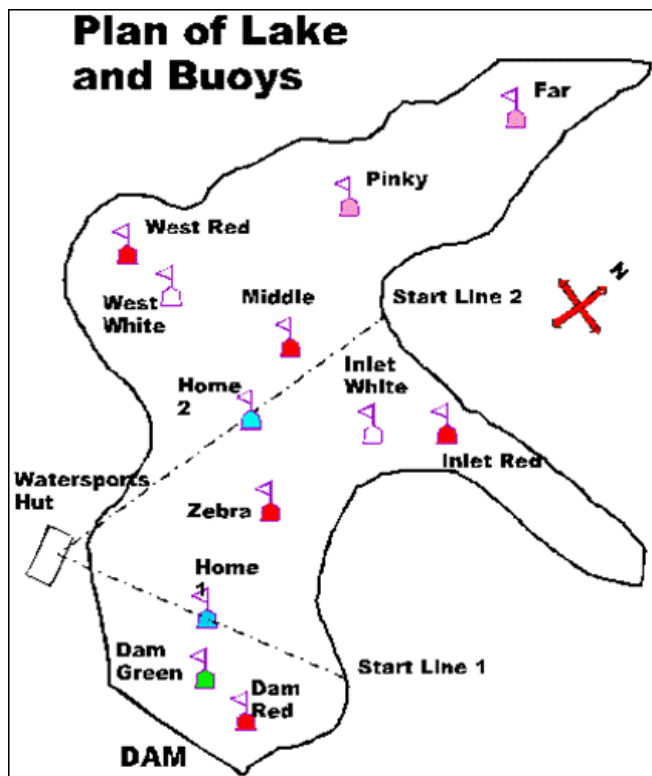
Being a relatively small lake, Upper Tamar makes an ideal environment for youngsters who want to learn to sail and progress to racing. The club's friendly membership positively encourages young members to develop their sailing ability, whilst having fun. In the summer, a specific race series is run at Sunday lunchtimes for youngsters called the Peter Pocock Achievement Trophy (see more details on final page). However, the club encourages all sailors to enjoy the sport at all levels. Over recent years, more ladies have joined the club and now include some of the most successful competitors in the racing programme. The club also has a long standing tradition of attracting mature sailors, both those returning to sailing after having sailed in their youth, and those taking up sailing for the first time, perhaps as a new challenge when retiring to the area.

The cruising programme often includes weekends away (often spent on the sheltered water of Carrick Roads, near Falmouth) and/or single days out closer to home, at locations such as Roadford Reservoir. To round off, we also organise a varied social programme (especially during the coldest part of the year!), including cycling, skittles, swimming etc.

## ***How Does Dinghy Racing Work?***

Watching a sailing race from the shore can be a very confusing business and it can be very difficult to work out what's going on. Often it's not clear when

the race has started, where the course goes, which boats are taking part or even when the race has finished. For most of the season, Sunday races start at midday and 2:30pm (except that the afternoon race starts at 2pm in the Autumn). For the half-hour before each race, more dinghies tend to appear on the water and sail up and down, checking that the boat is set up properly and sailing well, assessing the strength and direction of the wind and so on. The main start line for all the races is adjacent to the Race Hut, near the Angling and Watersports Centre (see the plan of the lake) but races may start in either direction, up the lake or back towards the Dam), depending on the direction of the wind. As



the start time approaches, all the boats racing tend to mill about just behind the start line, getting ready for the start. To help the sailors, a hooter is used to indicate the time; the first blast comes five minutes before the start, with further hooters at four minutes and one minute beforehand and then a final blast to indicate the start itself. If you can see the Race hut, you'll also notice different flags being hoisted on the flagpole in front as the start sequence progresses and then all the flags being pulled down when the eventual winner.

final hooter sounds. At the start, all the boats gradually head off in roughly the same direction and the race is under way. The layout of the course for the day's race will vary from week to week. There are a number of buoys used for setting the course; in some cases, these can be confused with the buoys for mooring boats, but the location of the racing buoys are marked on the plan of the lake and it should soon become clear which ones are being used. A typical race can involve lots of going to and fro in different directions before returning back to the start line; for example, they might start by heading down the lake towards the dam, around the Dam Green Buoy, then up to the Inlet and then Far Buoy before heading back down the lake to the Middle Buoy and back to the start. Usually, the boats will do three laps round the course, (with most races lasting about an hour) though this can be shortened to two or even one if the wind drops and makes progress slow-going.

### ***Dinghy Handicapping System***

Even a casual glance at a race in progress on Upper Tamar Lake will show that often different types of dinghies are taking part in the same race, with one sail or two, one, two or even three crew and so on. Obviously some of the dinghy classes are quicker than others and the faster ones gradually draw clear of the slower, until in the latter stages of the race the dinghies can be strung out all round the course, with some of the slowest sometimes even being lapped. At the end of the race, the hooter is blown as each dinghy crosses the finish line until the last has finished. To compensate for the fact that some types of dinghy are faster, the finishing times of each dinghy are taken as it crosses the line. When the very last boat has finished, a complex handicapping system (known as the Portsmouth Yardstick) is applied to finishing times and the results calculated. The results of this handicap system mean that the first boat to cross the line will often turn out not to be

## **Pursuit Races**

As if all this wasn't enough, on some occasions the club runs a different type of event, known as a Pursuit race. In this, boats start at different times (slowest boats starting first) and then sail round the course for a fixed length of time (often an hour). The calculations are done so that, in theory at least, all the boats will be finishing in roughly a line as the hour is up, so this can make for a very exciting finish. At Upper Tamar Lake, the handicapping calculations for pursuit races also take into account how well (or badly) the different skippers have done in previous races; those who have previously done well receive an extra penalty, whilst conversely those who have done poorly have their handicap reduced. As a consequence, both the stronger and weaker sailors in the club have a good chance of being successful in the Pursuit Race

## **Interested in Joining In?**

Sailing is a marvelous sport, which is suited to a wide variety of people. It can range from competitive racing, to gentle afternoon sails on scenic estuaries on sunny days in summer; it really can be exactly what you want to make of it.



**Part of a 20-strong fleet heading up the lake**

*(picture courtesy of Mandy Pollard)*

If you are interested in joining in (and Upper Tamar Lake is an excellent place to start), there are lots of different ways of doing it.:

**a) If you have never sailed before**, then try taking a course. The club itself (in association with

taking a course. The club itself (in association with the South West Lakes Trust) sometimes offers attractively-priced courses under the banner of 'Starting Sailing Without That Sinking Feeling', suitable for all ages, where boats and buoyancy aids are provided. The South West Lakes Trust also run RYA-accredited courses. Details are posted in the Angling and Watersports Centre or ask South West Lakes Trust staff for details. If you're not sure whether sailing is for you, ask one of the sailing club committee if you can go out for a half-hour sail one day. They'll be happy to arrange a gentle sail and see if you take to it.

**b) If you already have some experience of dinghy sailing**, then there are several ways of getting on the water at Upper Tamar Lake. For a one-off, the easiest is to hire a boat from the South West Lakes Trust; they have Optimist and Laser Pico dinghies, plus the larger RS Vision dinghies (as well as a variety of windsurfers and canoes). If you've got a dinghy of your own, then you can bring it down and sail it. You will have to pay a day launch fee to the South West Lakes Trust. Alternatively, if you're intending to sail often during a season, it is worthwhile getting a season launch membership and boat storage permit.

**c) Whatever your current level of sailing experience**, we would very much like to encourage you to join the sailing club at Upper Tamar. The UTLSC is a very friendly group who welcome new members to the club, even if you haven't got a boat. The UTLSC membership fee is very low, just £22.50 per year. (£37.50 for families, and for juniors, £5, but free in the first year) - though this is on top of the Lakes Trust launch membership, if you want to helm a boat. If you don't own a dinghy, then you can take part in the club races by borrowing one of the UTLSC's own Toppers for a small fee or by hiring a Laser Pico, Optimist or RS Vision dinghies from the Lakes Trust. For competent sailors, the UTLSC also has larger two-hander sailing dinghies,



including Bosuns and a Wayfarer, that can also be borrowed for free-sailing or club races for a small donation. An alternative way of getting afloat is to enquire about crewing one of the club Bosuns, whilst an experienced club member helms, perhaps on a Sunday race; contact club member Roger Heasman (01288-331847) to ask about this.

If you also take out a South West Lakes trust membership and boat storage permit, as mentioned above in **b)**, this entitles you to keep your dinghy in the dinghy park and sail as often as you wish during the season, without further payment. If you don't currently have a boat and are thinking of buying, club members will be happy to advise on what type of boat might be suitable. Popular single-handed classes include Lasers, Toppers and Solos, whilst the most popular two-handed class is probably the Bosun. However, there are lots of other types, from out-and-out racers to gentler cruising dinghies which can also race.

Secondhand dinghies can be bought for anything from a hundred or two, right up into the thousands at the top end. For low-maintenance, it is preferable to stick to boats with glassfibre hulls. However, it is often possible to pick up wooden/plywood boats quite cheaply, if you're prepared to spend a little extra time painting and/or varnishing.

**d) For junior sailors**, there are some special attractions. The South West Lakes Trust offers a Saturday club (contact the Lakes Trust for details, dates and prices) which gets youngsters doing a range of fun watersports activities. The club also organizes a Sunday lunchtime series for youngsters called the Peter Pocock Achievement Trophy; the Lakes Trust have in recent years offered Picos for this series free of charge, so there are no costs attached to competing for this cup; quite often, juniors who have tried out racing on the Saturday club then move on to the Peter Pocock Trophy. Beyond this, many juniors then continue on to take

part in the club's general sailing programme, both in the senior races and in the specific Junior Helm series. With the availability of club Toppers which can be borrowed for a small donation, now is an excellent time to find out if sailing is for you.

### ***Like To Find Out More?***

If you'd like to find out more about sailing at Upper Tamar Lake, contact Sue Murray, the UTLSC Commodore (01237-477405) or Mandy Pollard, the Secretary, (01288-381288) or look online at: [www.utlsc.org.uk](http://www.utlsc.org.uk)

Everyone is very welcome, from beginners up to experienced sailors. For the South West Lakes Trust, Chief Instructor Steph Colwill and her colleagues can be found at the Angling and Watersports Centre down by the lake side near the slipway, or can be contacted on 01288-321712.

### ***Keep Up-to-Date with the Club Website***

The club's website is at: [www.utlsc.org.uk](http://www.utlsc.org.uk)

The 'News and Events' link has text and pictures of what is going on at the club, whilst details of what's been happening in each Sunday's racing can be found in the 'Race Reports' section, for those who do not see the write-ups in the 'Bude and Stratton Post'. There is also a 'Pictures' link, with galleries of photos of sailing on the lake. For those who have not been to the lake before, there are directions on the 'How to Get to the Lake' page, with a link to Bing maps, showing a map of the general area.



**Rigged and ready to go**