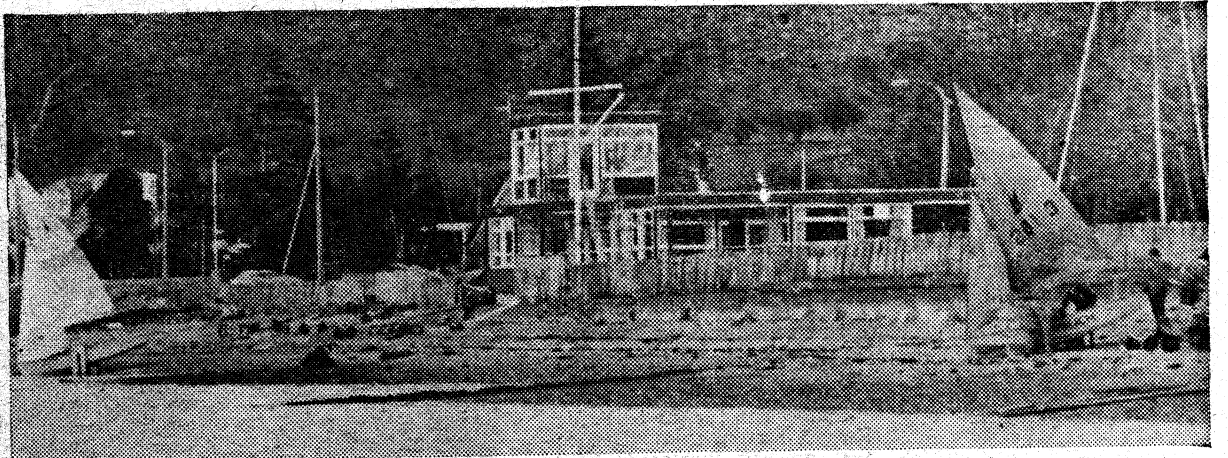


# On the crest of a wave



With a variety of boats and a long waiting list, Helensburgh Sailing Club has emerged from its humble beginnings in 1951 as one of the most progressive and popular sailing clubs in the country.

And as it has staged several National Championships and a World Championship, the club's reputation has also been carried overseas.

For some of the 650 members, the club offers the excitement of taking part in the various races, some of which are very competitive, and for others, the enjoyment of plain sailing is enough.

But no matter what their reasons are for joining the club, the members owe much to the man mainly responsible for starting it. He was the late Duncan Crawford, who owned a butcher's shop in West Clyde Street.

## Permanent base

Until 1955 all club boats were moored off Helensburgh Pier. The Army then gave permission for the club to use the Rhu hanger site. And four years later, the boats were moved again, to the permanent base at Kidston Park.

The club has always kept a handicap class for keelboats and another for dinghies and out of these two classes came the present scratch racing classes.

In 1953 the first GP 14 was introduced to the club by A Iain MacNeill and received class status two years later. By 1960 two other classes had arrived, the Enterprise followed by the Albacore.

## Come-back

There was then a gap of 10 years before, another class emerged, this one was the OK dinghy. It was a single-handed boat which solved one problem of sailing—finding a crew. The Mirror class followed but the time wasn't right and it fell away only to rise again in greater numbers last year.

During the club's development a gap was left in the racing fleets for a high performance dinghy. Some members tried Hornets, Ospreys, Javelins and Dorings, but they didn't catch on.

Then in 1968, Ronnie Fairley came up with the answer when he introduced

the first 505 to the club. Commodore of the club, Mr Stewart Douglas, said: "This boat alone, I feel, did more good for the club in the early 70's than any other."

## Switched over

As a result, names which had appeared regularly on the winners sheets, McLaren and Carlaw in the Enterprise class, Scott and Douglas in the GP 14's, Hunt in the OK class and many others, disappeared. They had all gone into the 505's which offered them more competitive races in more sophisticated boats.

Through the years, the club has held many important competitions, including a World National Championship, but Mr Douglas feels the best ones were the Scottish Championships for the various classes.

Special regattas are also held in aid of the Royal National Lifeboat Institute and this year the club is holding an endurance raid in aid of Scottish Spastics on Sunday, September 14. On August 3 to 8, the Mirror National Championships are being held and 250 boats are expected.

## Special regatta

Next month, on Saturday May 10, the boats return to their old mooring place at Helensburgh Pier for a special regatta to mark the end of the Town Council.

For years, the old building on the pierhead was used as a clubroom and starting box until it was completely gutted by a fire started by vandals.

But the club kept going and in 1968 after many years of struggling against "red tape" the clubhouse at Kidston was finally completed and opened. This caused an increase in membership and within a few years it became clear the building would have to be extended.

## Extensions

However, this work couldn't be carried out as the club didn't have the money and there were no grants available. But where there is a will there is a way, and said Mr Douglas: "With the help of a few dedicated members over the winter we have achieved all the extension plans."

He also said that alterations were made to the clubhouse as well as the extension. There is now a new bar and lounge area, there has been a swop

between the ladies and gents changing rooms, and a new sophisticated alarm system has been installed throughout the building.

An enlarged dinghy park was to provide spaces for an extra 50 dinghies, but planning restrictions, forced the club, in 1972, to rethink the scheme as they would have had to provide two car park spaces for every dinghy space.

Mr Douglas said: "It has since been agreed that we will provide a car park capable of taking 194 cars." The car park is nearly ready and according to the Commodore should prove useful during this season.

## Waiting list

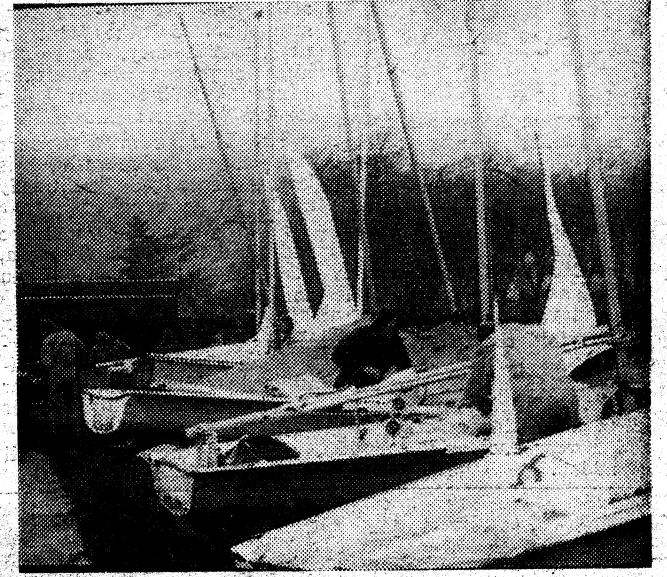
Membership of the club is at present restricted to 500 adults and 150 cadets and there is a waiting list of 70. But Mr Douglas said: "We

Above — the clubhouse of the Helensburgh Sailing Club. Right — Members preparing for racing at the dinghy park.

hope that when all the resignations come in, the 70 people on the list will be able to join us."

He pointed out: "Membership rates are very reasonable with adults paying £10 and juniors £2.50. This has been kept low to agree with our constitution which states the club was formed to encourage sailing off Helensburgh."

The extensions and alterations which are being made to the club will certainly help promote this aim and if things continue to improve the way they have over the past few years, the club's future will be very bright indeed.



Club Secretary Ian MacDonald keeps on eye on things. With him is Mrs Scott, keeping times.