

LARGS SC HISTORY - CAIRNIE'S QUAY SLIPWAY

As many members will know, before Largs SC moved to Largs Yacht Haven in 1999, the club was based in John Street, and sailed from the slipway at Cairnie's Quay - so named as it was originally constructed by [Dr John Cairnie](#) of Curling Hall (he developed curling as a sport in the early 1800's). Largs SC itself was founded in 1936, by the "... local apprentices (15-19) ... because the Royal Largs Yacht Club [*which is long defunct*] had conditions of entry that an applicant had to be 21, a master in his trade, and subject to the "black ball" as a member." How times have changed!!

The John Street clubhouse site is now a block of flats, and almost everything of the dinghy park etc at Cairnie's Quay has gone - just the wide area of promenade, and a metal framework where the starters hut used to be. A post in late March 2020 on the Largs People Facebook page asked what this frame was, and various members posted replies - Brian Rankin, George McCree, Kirsty Paterson and myself, plus Donald White, who contributed a historic photo of one of the later starters huts.



There were many suggestions on Facebook re the remaining frame - "hanging people who feed seagulls" was one of many! However, George McCree gave the most definitive answer - "The present frame probably went up in the late 80's. When I joined the club in 1977, it was still the old hexagonal starters huts and flags from the flag pole. After it was demolished and after the last hut put up, the committee later opted for painted sliding boards for the course to sail and the class flags on the present frame. I doubt if it was used for national events as the RYA would always insist on using flags for classes, starting etc."

We have some old photographs of the original Cairnie's Quay, probably taken in the late 1950's, mainly at (I guess) a GP14 open meeting.



An unknown member (wearing a tie!) does some maintenance.



Note the rowing dinghies in the foreground, used by owners to go out to the many boats on the moorings off the slipway. There was no Largs Yacht Haven at this time, of course - this wasn't opened until 1984. (Kip Marina opened in 1971.)



Note the wooden masts, and the cotton sails in the GP14 in the foreground - and the dress of the sailors! Traditional yellow oilskins, kapok lifejackets, and not a wet suit in sight!

(Why the postponement flag - looks like a good breeze!)

These photographs show the tall flagpole I remember from joining the club in the mid 1960's - but the "traditional" starters hut had by then been replaced by the interconnected plywood hexagons.



Possibly a GP14 Open Meeting in the late 1950's. The club's rescue boat, Monsoon (hence the name of race control), is on her mooring, extreme right.





The starters hut I remember from the mid 1960's into the 1970's - interconnected hexagonal plywood pods. The starting line was the transit between the tall flagpole, and the moveable striped pole on the beach.

From an old postcard, courtesy of Donald White, Largs People Facebook page.

Note the Marine and Curlinghall Hotel in the background - Curling Hall (to the left) was based on John Cairnie's original house, from around 1810, much extended by John Clark (of Clark's threads, Paisley - and the sponsor of Clark Memorial Church in Largs) in the 1890's. It became a hotel in 1920, and was joined to the adjacent Marine Hotel in 1955, to become the most fashionable hotel in Largs. Cheap overseas travel with guaranteed sunshine resulted in the hotel closing in 1983, and the site was redeveloped as houses and flats, with the first flat sold in 1989.

For a period before the opening of the John Street clubhouse in the early 1960's, the club was based in the old stables block of the hotel.



Amazingly, the remains of the track for the striped pole are still visible on the beach, and the tabernacle for the base of the original tall flagpole is also still there!

George McCree's post says there was a later starters hut - does anyone have any photos of that?

The narrow slipway shown in the photographs on the previous pages was only really wide enough for tenders - the Shearwater catamarans overhung both sides! - and the slipway was widened around 1968. The 1960's of course were a time when dinghy sailing boomed, with many clubs being expanded, or indeed founded.



Work on the wider slipway was supposed to have been completed over the winter, but overran, so for some weeks, the dinghies were on the grass near what is now Mackerston play and skateboard park (was the yachting pond), and we lugged our boats over the stones. Hard work, particularly when the tide was out!



You can see more on the club's history on the history page of our web site (<http://www.largssc.co.uk/club/history>), and the articles on that page, including the one compiled as we celebrated the 80th anniversary of our founding in 2016. See <http://www.largssc.co.uk/sites/default/files/Largs%20SC%20-%201936%20on%200.pdf>.

Gordon Cochrane

Largs SC

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