



## Castle Semple Sailing Club

Castle Semple Sailing Club came into being in 1966. It was started by a small group of enthusiasts, led by local GP, Dr Fyfe Waterston, who was the first Commodore, serving from 1966 to 1972. At the start Castle Semple Sailing Club was based at the East (Howwood) end of the loch, with a small hut for the use of the members.

Jim Steel, who farmed at Low Semple, gave permission for the members to launch from his ground and to park boats there, although some members kept their boats at home. There was no fenced off compound so no real security, apart from the remote nature of the site. Informality was the feature of CSSC at that time. Racing at the beginning was Handicap Class with quite a number of different dinghies participating.



Dinghies at Low Semple

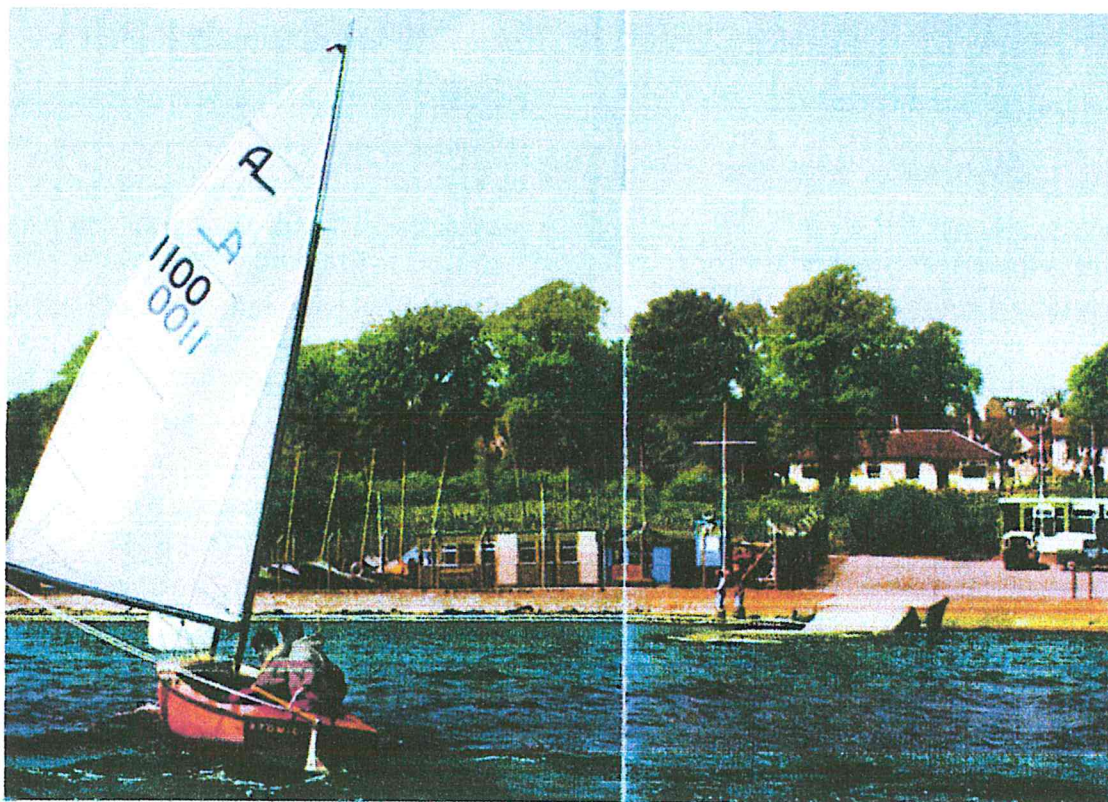
It was, of course, necessary to get permission from the Local Authority to use the water and initially the Club was restricted to a maximum of 12 boats. Rent would presumably be charged by the then Strathclyde Regional Council.

Among the names of the first members were; Waterston, Armstrong, Denholm, Hall, Struthers, McFarlane, Moffat, Sutton, Cliff - quite a few reflected in the names on the original club trophies.

In 1970 Muirshiel Country Park was opened, as a contribution by Renfrew County Council to European Conservation Year and was the first step in the development of the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park. The first Park Director was Mr D. Skelley who, incidentally, sailed his Albacore dinghy on the loch.

Castle Semple Water Park (as it was called then) was opened in July 1971. This gave access for water sports of all kinds, initially rowing, canoeing and sailing. The provision of a concrete launching ramp, and, crucially, toilet facilities in the new centre, made sailing on Castle Semple Loch more accessible and convenient.

CSSC also had fenced off boat parking and were able to increase membership. Types of dinghies sailed included GP14, Enterprise, Mirror, Firefly, Cygnet, National 12 etc. There was no move as yet to restricting racing to 3 classes. CSSC developed and grew in conjunction with the Water Park.



Mr Skelley, in his Albacore with CSSC boat park in the background.

In 1973 Bob Armstrong took over as Commodore. By this time the Club had grown significantly and was moving to restricting the classes (for racing only) to GP14, Laser and Mirror.

George Dickson became Commodore in 1976. By this time Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park had grown to include Muirshiel Country Park (1970), Castle Semple Water Park (1971) and, from 1973, Cornalees Bridge Centre, Lunderson Bay and Barnbrock, which is now the Park HQ. Things were moving on rapidly, as was Castle Semple Sailing Club.

The social side of the Club was also becoming important. Apart from the formality of the Annual Dinner Dance (a black tie affair) at which the Club trophies were presented, the members also ran informal dances and did the catering themselves. These became increasingly important, along with children's games on the grass and barbecues to keep everyone fed.

By the late 70s into the 80s the Club had expanded greatly. There were more events like Club one-day regattas, restricted to members, and Open Days where racing was open to other GP14, Laser or Mirror sailors. Some club members were taking part in the GP14 Scottish Travellers Series and CSSC did its part in hosting this event.

At the end of John Ives' period as Commodore, in 1994, the GP14 Scottish National Championship was held at Castle Semple, on 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> September 1994. This was a big event and a first for the Club, with just over 20 GP14s taking part.



Preparing to race in GP14 Scottish Championship 1994



Preparing to launch



“on the run” at the Scottish Nationals  
1994

Presentation of prizes was held in the recently opened new centre with hospitality provided by the local Council. The presentations were by the President and Secretary of the GP14 Association with our local Provost, complete with chain of office, in attendance.



By this time, 1994, the impending abolition of the Regional Council led to stalemate over plans for the development of the clubhouse. Membership at this time was, according to Minutes, 33 Adults, 22 Family, 3 Cadets and Honorary Members, Participation in races was about 9 or 10 GP14s on average. Unfortunately, there were plenty of Mirrors but few taking part in races. The Laser Class had also declined since 1988 and was at an all time low - just 13 entries in 70 races.

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When the present Water Sports Centre was opened in 1994 the Sailing Club was given fenced off boat parking at the present site and a portacabin was used as a clubhouse. At that time there was no provision of electricity or mains water. This was to be added later.

Temporary planning permission was given for these premises which was due to run out on 31-5-1995. The Council's policy was to lease on a "temporary" basis so that the site could legally be cleared at short notice - presumably to make it easier for them to develop the site as and when required.

After a period of over 30 years, from its beginnings in 1966 until the late 1990s, during which the club thrived and grew, it went into a serious decline until by about 2002 it had virtually died. Only a few members participated in the club's activities, including racing. By 2003 when Alan Seymour took over as Commodore there was no racing and virtually no activity at CSSC. Gradually things improved as the members discovered the fun side of sailing and a new spirit of co-operation returned.

The Summer 2002 edition of "Mainsail" (the GP14 Association Magazine) stated: 'Interest has been shown in resurrecting the GP14 Scottish Team Racing event for the following year (2003)'. "Mainsail" also ran an item on "Sailability", the RYA charity for disabled sailors, asking for volunteers to help get disabled people on the water.

In 2003/4 the clubhouse acquired running water, toilet and electricity, plus another safety boat to replace the existing one, with the help of a Lottery grant. The sail store and ladies' changing room with shower were also added.

At this time the Club also bought from the Local Council, a number of GRP dinghies - all GP14s. The best of them were kept as Club boats and the others sold to club members. The addition of these GP14s meant that there were several classes of boats available to members who were not yet boat owners.

In 2004 racing was held on Wednesday evenings and alternate Saturdays and Sundays. By 2005 racing took place on Wednesday evenings and Sunday afternoons. Around this time an informal partnership with Sailability Scotland developed and Challenger Dinghies, suitable for disabled sailors, were introduced to the loch.

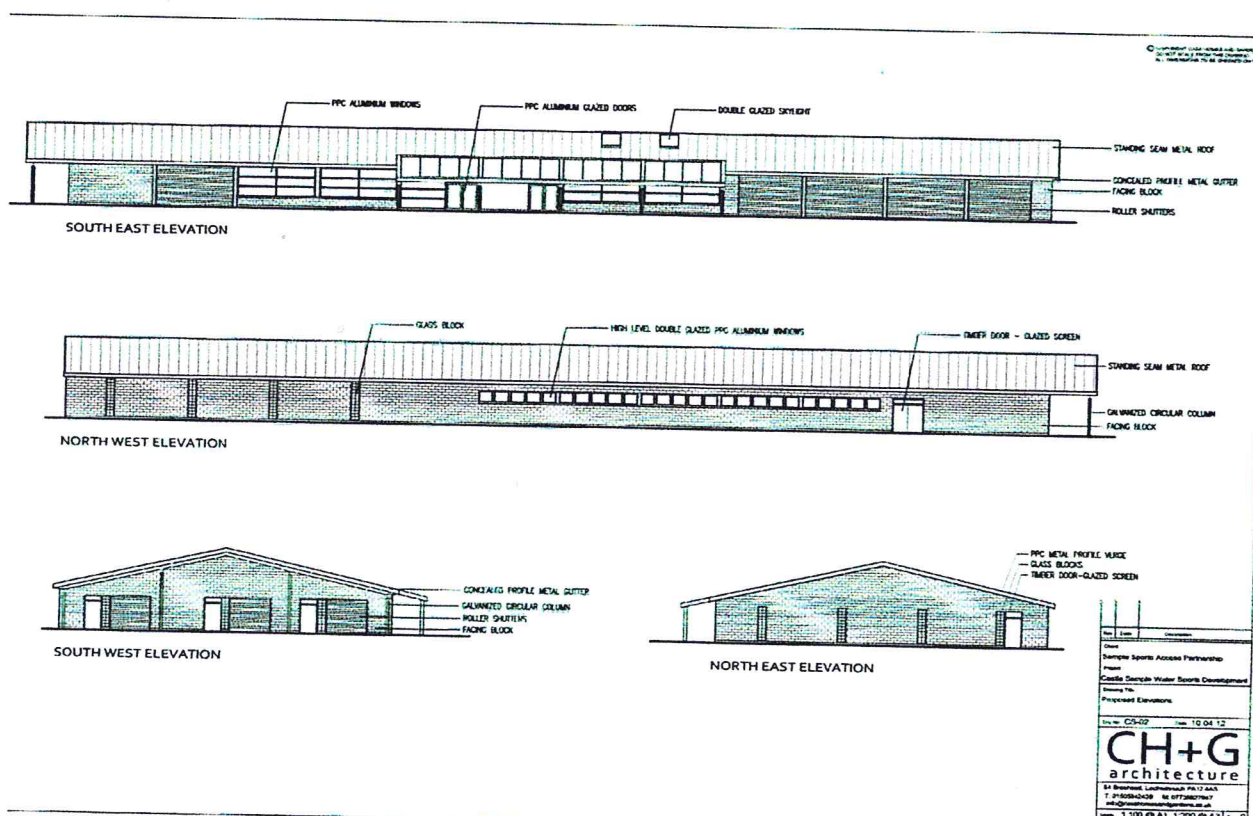
From this point, sailing at Castle Semple and racing picked up. Team racing for GP14s was held several times in Arran and also at Castle Semple. CSSC and also the GP14 Association were trying to revive interest in the class, which was largely successful. From being on the point of folding, CSSC became one of the more successful GP14 fleets.

Spring 2009 - training week-end at CSSC led by Mark Greenhalgh. At this point, 2009, enthusiasm for GP sailing was on the "up" in Scotland - this, from a fairly low level with barely half a dozen racing fleets in a country which was dominated by handicap racing and a penchant for single handed or asymmetric classes. Hoping to improve the popularity of the class by resurrecting the GP14 Travellers series, there were 4 events in 2009, one hosted by CSSC. May 2009 saw Team Racing for GP14s at Loch Ryan and also the Scottish Championships.

In 2010 the Semple Sports Access Partnership (SSAP) was formed under the chairmanship of Tom Kelly to investigate the possibility of obtaining funding for a new Clubhouse for the use of all the groups using the loch. The original plan was for a two storey building. This was shelved in favour of the single storey building shown in the current plans.

By this time CSSC had one of the most active GP fleets in the country and (according to "Mainsail") had an important role in forming the Semple Sports Access Partnership - SSAP. After years of fund raising CSSC took ownership of the field adjacent to the boat park on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2012. Having received Planning Permission for change of use the club's current boat space has increased three-fold. Consultations are ongoing for the provision of a new single storey clubhouse in partnership with the other loch users.

Planning consent has been granted for the new Castle Semple club house...





CSSC Trophies - 1991

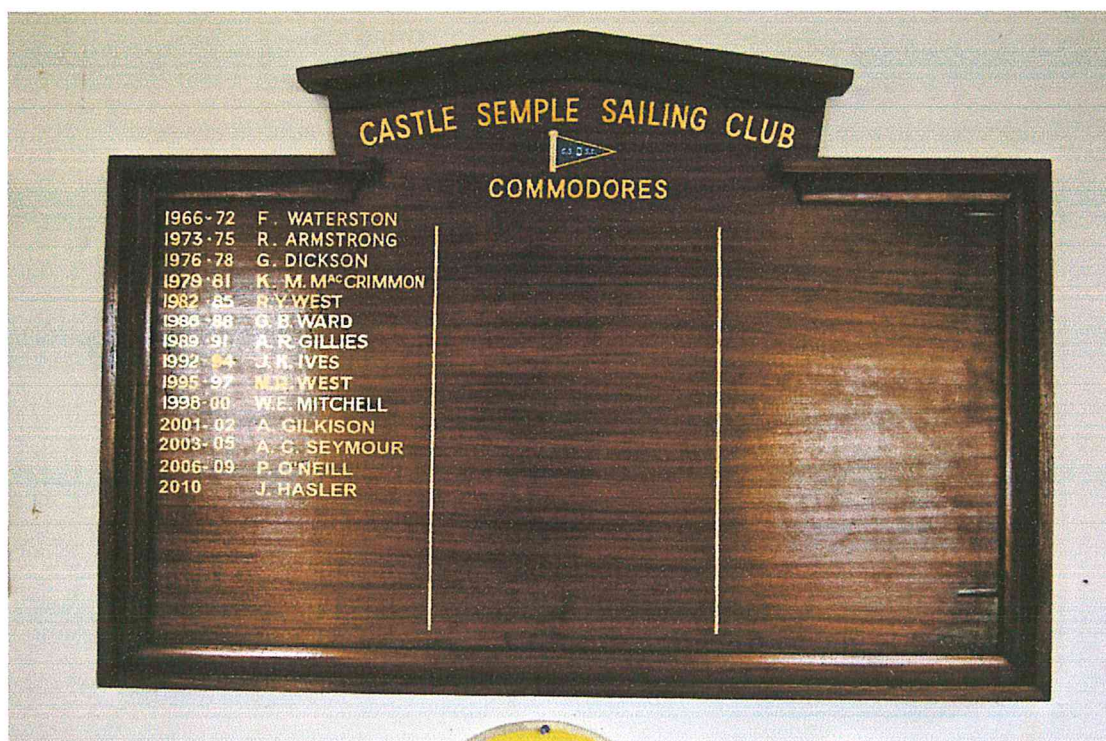


CSSC Trophies- 1991

In 2013 Largs Sailing Club hosted the GP14 Assoc. UK National Championships over one week, with several CSSC members taking part. After this event the GP Assoc. training boat No. 14114 appeared at Castle Semple. One of our members, Tom Kelly, sailed this boat in the last of the Travellers series for 2013 which was held at Castle Semple and wrote a very detailed review of the experience for "Mainsail". Paul O'Neill, as Scottish Rep. for the GP14 Assoc., contributed a very full report on various events in the GP calendar. CSSC was very well represented at all these events and as Paul remarked in his article 'CSSC has the largest fleet of GP14s in Scotland and is still growing.' Plans for the new clubhouse were printed alongside Paul's article.

Although the club has, for some years, been largely formed of GP14 sailors there are other classes now sailing - Vago, National 12, Laser, Enterprise, RS200, Vortex etc. This has meant only Handicap class for racing.

A significant part of CSSC now is the association with "Options" which is run by CSSC member, Jon Hasler. The class of boat sailed by the group is "Challenger". Boat space is rented from CSSC and the expansion of the boat park has been a big help in housing these fairly large dinghies.



Commodores' Board in Clubhouse

The GP14 Scottish National Championships were held at Castle Semple on 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> May 2015. 17 GP14s entered for this event which was last held at Castle Semple in 1994. It was a very successful week-end overall with bright conditions and challenging winds. GP14 Association Vice-President, Ann Penny, expressed her appreciation on behalf of the Association for the hospitality shown by CSSC which contributed to a most successful weekend.

