

The Harlow Connection



The Harlow (Blackwater) Sailing Club is a local sailing club that sits on the tidal Lawling creek in Maylandsea, but what is the Harlow connection? To find out you need to look back to the club's origins in the 1950's.

The country was recovering from the Second World War and ordinary people had more leisure time than previously. What better way to use this time than messing about in boats on the water, foreign holidays at this time still being a rarity. Sailing was also becoming more affordable, with the advent of new materials such as marine ply, for building boats. If you could not afford to buy a new boat you could always build one, with some simple tools and hard work.

In Harlow a group of individuals

got together to found a new sailing club on their local river, the Stort, which ran through the town. They rented an old barn by the river from the council in Old Harlow and so was born the Harlow sailing club. The River Stort is not particularly wide, but the members still had plenty of fun mainly sailing small eleven plus dinghies and in canoes. The old barn also provided the venue for some great socials and parties. Sailing however, is infectious and some members having learnt to sail soon wanted to sail faster boats on larger stretches of water. Post war transport was becoming easier and cheaper, many people could now afford a car of their own. This new freedom of movement enabled members to sail and compete in regattas on the East Coast during the summer. The River Blackwater was a popular venue for Harlow members, who often sailed at established clubs such as Maldon, Stone and Marconi.

The Harlow members were an enthusiastic bunch of friends who soon decided to set up their own base on the Blackwater. They initially tried Steeple Bay, where they used an old hut and built a launching ramp. Then in 1960 they purchased their own site in Maylandsea. At this time Maylandsea was still developing from the original plot lands holiday homes of the 1930's to the residential village that it is today. There were two caravan parks in the village and many members soon acquired caravans spending their weekends by the sea. Other members slept in the backs of vans or pitched a tent in the club grounds. The first club house was a captured Dutch/German Rhine barge, which had formerly been used by the Maylandsea Bay Yacht Club, established in the 1930's. It was a great club house and venue for socialising, but unfortunately leaked and was nearing the end of its useful life. It was the unenviable duty of the officer of the day to empty the Elsan toilets over the side. The enterprising members not afraid of hard work soon set out to build

the land based clubhouse.

They acquired an old army officer's mess hut and over the course of four years reconstructed this on piles to form the basis of the club house, which is still used today.

For a while the club ran with its Maylandsea club house alongside its old base in Harlow.

Racing reports and articles were still published in the Harlow Citizen. However, the Barn in Harlow in need of repairs was relinquished back to the council so Maylandsea became the club's permanent base in the late 1960's.

The old barn is still there by the river in Harlow and is now the Coho Brassiere restaurant. Also, around this time the Club name changed to Harlow (Blackwater) Sailing Club. Harlow was retained in the name, members wishing to maintain their link to the Club's roots in Harlow.

The Club is now very much a local sailing club with the majority of its members living in Mayland and surrounding areas. Our aim as a local club is to integrate with the local community providing facilities for all water-based activities. Just as in the early days in Harlow it is being on the

water and socialising with likeminded individuals that is important.

In conjunction with Maylandsea Bay Sailing Club we provide regular racing for dinghies throughout the year. Some members own larger boats and regularly cruise to destinations along the East Coast. Other activities include canoeing, windsurfing and paddle boarding, which is becoming increasingly popular. Swimming from the jetty in the summer last year proved particularly popular during lockdowns. The water is actually quite warm on a sunny day as the heat comes out of the sun warmed mud.

We have club moorings and winter storage for larger boats. As well as dinghy, canoe and board storage in the dinghy park. The club has a number of club boats which can be used by our members. We also have members who are more than happy to help or coach less experienced members, who may be new to boating or windsurfing. If you are passing by

this year and see the club open then please come in, introduce yourselves and look around. If the galley is open you can also get refreshments; tea, cakes and sandwiches which are often available.

We are a local club so please join us, make new friends and make use of our facilities. We hope this year that as the vaccine is rolled out we can get back to a full sailing and social calendar. We hope to restart regular activities in March, if not we will do so as soon as the COVID restrictions allow.

If you are interested in finding out more about our club please see our website at www.harlowblackwatersailingclub.com or email us at: hbsccommittee@gmail.com For membership secretary please ring 07929 734684.