

The University of Limerick Sailing Club was established in 1993 by Jim Ryan to promote sailing in the University. Initially the club was mainly consisted of students, but staff also got involved. Jim was the first commodore with Gordon Young the other staff representative on the committee.

The club's meagre beginnings started in Dromineer with a small fleet of 6 refurbished Larks purchased from the UK at a cost £6000. Sailing in these early days was not glamorous, no sipping gin & tonics and chatting about your new yacht, far from it. Imagine a cool April evening and it starting to rain, now try struggle into your wetsuit beside the boot of your car before you scare the locals and/or freeze. The dinghies were stored in Shannon Sailing Ltd. (Teddy Knights) premises while they were not being used. To suit the needs of the different groups in the club staff members sailed on Tuesday evenings after work while the students sailed on Wednesday afternoons and at the weekend. Things got more comfortable when Jim negotiated with the Lough Derg Yacht Club (LDYC) to use their changing rooms and all was plain sailing for the next few years.

In 1996 it was proposed to move the club's activities to the newly formed University of Limerick Activity Centre (ULAC) in Killaloe. After much debate it was decided that both staff and students would now move to ULAC. ULAC replaced the now aging and leaky Larks with a fleet of International 420's. Sailing times remained the same and life for the club was good in its new location, proper dinghy park, launching facilities and plenty of hot water in the showers! Relationships grew with the staff of the activity centre, in particularly with Ciaran Murphy who in later years became very friendly with the club and a great help to the club. As is now tradition in the sailing club, a pit stop in a local pub for a drink, a snack and a chat (or dispute about who had the right of way at a mark!!) about the evening's sailing. The beer and free bowls of chips were provided by the Pipers Inn in Killaloe (near ULAC) which at the time was owned by a member of the staff sailors.

The UL spring challenge started in 1998. This event invited sailors from other local sailing clubs to compete in an open event for all dinghies under a PY handicap. The cup for this was designed and built by the student sailor Darragh McCarthy and has seen good use every year since.

At around this time the Club expanded its activities to include a number of cruising events during the year. 2001 saw the first offshore event leaving Kinsale harbour on the Friday 18th May. With 32 crew on 5 yachts the offshore events were proving to be popular and continue to be until this day. Club members had recently completed yachtmaster course and were eager to put in the practice the skills that they had learned. These trips take place every May and September/October of each year. Cruising on Lough Derg also became part of the annual event calendar with a number of the staff volunteering their yachts for trip while the other members helped to crew the boats. With the weather reasonably good during June the barbecue made an appearance along with a few bottles of beer chilling in the lake.

The major change in the club happened in 2002 when it was felt that club should be split in to 2 separate clubs to facilitate the needs of the staff and students. After all, the staff sailed on Tuesday evenings and the students on Wednesday afternoons but the

times were not the main problem. The staff sailed an Olympic style of racing where by a triangular course is set and all boats competed against each other for line honours. The student club on the other hand was now getting involved in team racing. This style of racing is set over a much shorter course and involves the use of the racing rules to manoeuvre the opposing team into lower scoring positions. It also allows the students to compete against the other 3rd level institutions. The student club retained the name of UL sailing club and the staff sailors changed their name to the UL staff sailing club. The clubs now worked completely separately from each other. The student club now used a fleet of Firefly dinghies that they purchased themselves for team racing.

Inevitably the fleet of International 420's aged and the years were not kind to them as some of us. Leaky and with some equipment not working as it should be, people grew frustrated with the 420's. A number of members in the club purchased their own dinghies partly because of this but also due to the growing competitive ambition of some of the members. A number of Fireball dinghies were introduced in to the club. These dinghies are a 2 person high performance symmetric single trapeze dinghy. This class of dinghy enjoys one of the biggest and most competitive fleets in the country. As members competed in these national events the standard of sailing in the club improved with knowledge gained at these events making it way to the other members in the club.

The club is now entering a new era with the successful negotiation of a boat replacement plan between the ULSSC, ULAC and the University's sports department. In the spring of 2005 the Topper dinghies owned by the centre were replaced with a brand new fleet of 9 RS Feva single handed dinghies. These new boats fitted the bill for single handed sailing and training purposes of both ULAC and ULSSC. In August of 2005 we waved good buy to the venerable 420's which have been replaced 4 new RS Visions boats. These boats have all the advantages of a modern dinghy being easy to maintain, sail and fast. With the agreement in place the Dinghies will be replaced every 5 years so that the situation like the aging 420's cannot happen again.

ULAC and the Sailing club have held a numbers of sailing competitions at the ULAC site through the years. This helped enormously to get ULAC and the sailing club noticed on the national sailing scene. Events held to date.

1997 – Connaught Laser championship

1998 – Munster Fireball championship, Laser 2 western championship, UL spring challenge

1999 – Connaught Laser championship, Munster Fireball championship, UL spring challenge

2000 – Inland Enterprise championships, Munster Fireball championship, inland laser 2 championship, UL spring challenge

2001 – UL spring challenge

2002 – Munster Fireball championship, UL spring challenge

2003 – UL spring challenge

2004 – Munster Fireball championship, western multi-hull championships, UL spring challenge

2005 – UL spring challenge

Past commodores:

Jim Ryan 1993

Patrick Frawley

Michael Campion

Triona Campbell 2005

Susan Coote 2006