

Swallow Boats Informal Rally on Lake Bala, Wales

15/16 June 2013

The Bala Sailing Club (BSC) has kindly agreed to make their facilities available to all attendees of this informal Swallow Boats event during the weekend of 15/16 June. A good slipway, landing pontoons, showers, bar and catering are available. Participants are responsible for paying their own temporary membership fees to BSC, which are a discounted £15 per double-hander boat per day and £7.50 per day for solo sailors.

As there is no tidal gate to worry about, you can either arrive in the area on Friday evening (the entrance to the BSC should be open) or the following morning, when we will be launching and generally milling about at the northern end of the lake.

Responsibility

Skippers bear sole responsibility for the safety of their boats and crew and for providing sufficient safety equipment. Each skipper must decide on whether or not to launch and sail in the conditions prevailing on the day. Here are links to some fairly good weather forecasts:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather/2656615>

<http://www.xcweather.co.uk/forecast/bala>

There is also a webcam at the NE end of the lake <http://www.balawatersports.com/index.php/webcam>

I think mobile phones (certainly O2 and probably Vodafone and Orange) work quite well on the lake on 2G and we will set up a VHF channel (possibly 33, to be confirmed), which will be monitored to a reasonable degree for boat-to-boat communications. However, as none of us have engines, there is a limit to what we can do for each other in an emergency.

The far NE and SW ends of the lake are very shallow and should be treated with caution, as should kayakers on the margins and very fast catamarans that often sail in the middle section of the lake.

The Area

Lake Bala (or Llyn Tegid in Welsh) is in Snowdonia National Park. It is over 100 ft deep, four miles long (SW to NE) by one mile wide and surrounded by mountains and high hills. Think Ullswater on a smaller scale. Winds at this time of year are predominantly from the SW but can be changeable and fluky, which makes the sailing even more interesting. It can be a great place to try out that previously unused spinnaker. Outboards (except electric ones) are forbidden, so oars will be essential in the unlikely event that the winds die completely.

There are plenty of accommodation options in the area. The closest campsite to the BSC is <http://www.penybont-bala.co.uk/> (the one used for the previous rally in June 2009). There are other campsites but you may find yourself at the wrong end of the lake. There were limited BSC pontoon berths available for those wishing to sleep on their boats but these were all snapped up long ago. For those who want something more substantial over their heads, here is a link to a list of local B&B's http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Hotels-g672155-c2-Bala_Snowdonia_National_Park_North_Wales_Wales-Hotels.html

Alternative activities

For those who do not want to sail, the following are some of the many activities available in the area:

- Narrow Gauge steam railway trip along the lake shore, starting close to the Pen y Bont campsite <http://www.bala-lake-railway.co.uk/journey/default.html>
- Spectacular Snowdonia walks
- Cycling around the lake (bikes for hire nearby) - few hills, but the west bank is a busy holiday traffic road so it might be better to confine yourself to the quieter east bank road
- White water rafting <http://www.ukrafting.co.uk/>

This is the link to the local tourist authority website <http://www.visitbala.org/>

Suggested Programme

Saturday morning (15 June)

Arrive at BSC, pay temporary membership fees to Ken Hull, launch, tuck trailer and car away somewhere on the club's extensive hard standings.

General milling about at the north end of the lake, including informal courses around the BSC cans out on the lake. Depending on the amount and direction of the wind, head SW down the lake later in the morning to draw up on a shingly beach at the SE end, where we will have a picnic lunch (bring your own picnic).

Saturday afternoon

Again depending on the weather, an informal race back to the other end of the lake, possibly including a few diversions around cans, and then stop for tea at the BSC. When you've had enough, take your boat out of the water on its trailer and park it up somewhere for the night, either at the BSC or at your campsite. Take loose items with you and secure your trailer as you think fit (the club will accept no responsibility in the unlikely event of loss or damage).

Saturday evening at 8.30 pm (arrive earlier if you need additional refreshment)

Pub meal at the Bryntirion Inn, about 10 minutes away <http://www.bryntirioninn.co.uk/> There are at least two vehicles that have kindly agreed to shuttle participants backwards and forwards – timings to be advised. As we are quite a large group, the Inn asked us to choose between 6pm and 8.30pm. It will still be very light at 8.30pm, so that is the time that we chose.

Sunday

More of the same starting at around 9.30am, depending on what people want to do. If the weather allows, this may include:

- More milling about
- Trying to keep up with Matt's BC23
- Swapping crews to get a feel for different Swallow Boats
- Exchanging rigging and sailing hints and tips
- Trying previously unused sails and/or other bits of equipment
- Another picnic at the SW end
- Another informal race or two?

I suggest that we finish at teatime on Sunday but some may want to finish earlier or later.

Thanks to the Teifi Rally's Gareth Rowlands for unknowingly providing the template for this note. All errors and omissions are entirely my own.

Looking forward to seeing you all.

Graham W
3 June 2013