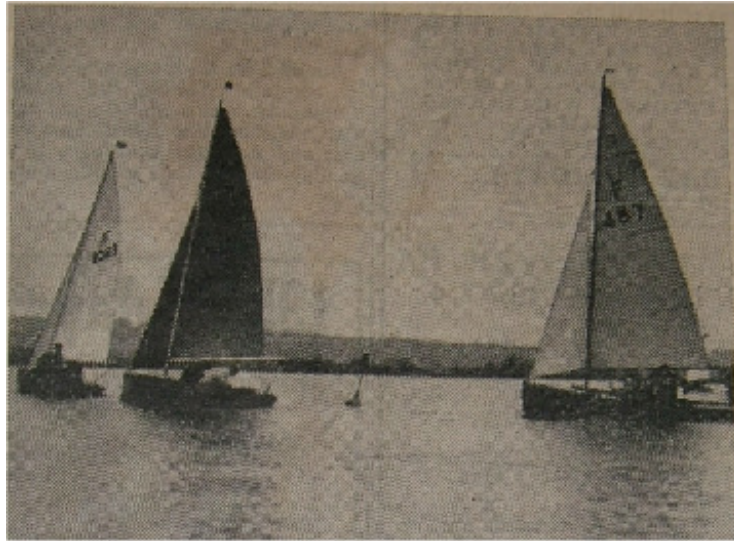


A 'Sailing We Will Go



All About The New Local Club

IT is a fact of simple geography, often bemoaned by local holidaymakers, that Northampton and its environs are just about as far from the sea as it is possible to get anywhere in Britain.

But a resolution passed at last week's meeting of the Mid-Northamptonshire Water Board means that no longer will this distance from the sea represent a handicap for those who would enjoy that away-from-it-all sport - boat-sailing.

For the Water Board, after many months of careful deliberation, have at last set their official seal of approval to long-laid plans for Pitsford Reservoir, now nearing completion, to become a venue for sailing.

Northampton Sailing Club, for 18 years merely a name for a future imagined only by a little band of local sailing enthusiasts, has now come into official being, and full-scale sailing will be in operation within a year.

What Will It Cost?

Even before last week's announcement, scores of people have evinced close interest in the possibility of sailing on the reservoir, and the organising committee, which kept matters going until the club could be properly constituted, have all the names carefully filed.

And now that the official go-ahead has been received, these people - and many more who fancy their chances at the helm of a boat on the reservoir - will be wondering just what the costs of this sport will be.

The facts are simple - and rather surprising. As Britain's leading sailing boat designer, Uffa Fox, has said : "If you can afford a television set, you can buy a boat and go sailing."

Perhaps he meant a rather expensive TV set or, maybe, he was thinking of a second-hand craft. There are many classes of boat but one of the most popular is the National 12ft. Firefly. New, they cost £127 10s. - plus sails costing another £25. Because they are so popular, their second-hand values drop only a little although one can sometimes pick one up for as little as £50.

Home-made Craft

You can get one much more cheaply by buying one as a kit set and making it at home in i) e evenings and weekend. Purchased this way, it costs £120 inclusive of sails - and the builders say that anyone can put it together, for the hull, which otherwise would be the most difficult part in its construction, is completely moulded.

Syndicates of three, four, or more people could also be formed to purchase a boat, thus cutting down the cost to the individual sailor.

There are several other craft suitable for sailing at Pitsford, some costing as little as £30-£40. And of great interest to schools and youth organisations is the 10ft. 7ins. Y.W. Cadet, a type which the Northampton S.C. intends to adopt.

This boat is suitable for building in school workshops and it is almost certain that several local schools will combine class-room work with the pleasure of being able to sail their own product on Pitsford.

In this respect, it is interesting to note that one of the chief aims of the new club will be the training of young people and that, in this, they already have the full support of the Central Council of Physical Recreation.

The enthusiasts behind the club make no secret of their determination to train their members to take their place with the country's best. Indeed, they believe that they have, at Pitsford, waters where some of Britain's international and Olympic helmsmen of the future may have their first introduction to the sport,

No Hasty Decision

What has pleased the club particularly is the way in which the Water Board have dealt with their application. There was no immediate approval of their plan. Instead, it was considered over a lengthy period and members of the Board travelled to several reservoirs in various parts of the country, inspecting the use other inland sailing clubs were making of their waters, and investigating very closely every aspect of reservoir sailing.

Pitsford is considered by experts to be eminently suitable for sailing for it affords a much greater area of open water than is usual at most inland sailing venues. A causeway crosses the reservoir, thus splitting the total acreage of 831 acres into two lakes. The larger of these is of some 600 acres and it would be on this portion that the main events would be staged.

Those who may be wondering whether Pitsford is to become a sort of cheap holiday centre, attracting rowdies, litter louts and other social pests can be reassured. The sailing club is intended for the sailing enthusiast alone although, of course, it hopes to develop its social side. Strict discipline both on water and ashore will be maintained - as, indeed, it must, if full safety standards are to be observed.

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