

Scotland has a new rowing club located in the heart of the new Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park- the Loch Ard Rowing Club (or simply LARC). The club is looking for new members and welcomes guests to share what must be one of the best-suited stretches of natural water for rowing. Visitors are warned, however, that the facilities are currently limited and on a still, wet day, you should bring a bottle of midge repellent! LARC is based in one of Scotland's most idyllic spots on the banks of Loch Ard, just under 3 miles west of Aberfoyle in the Strathard valley. As you approach the club's home, you look westward down Loch Ard to Ben Lomond rising like Mount Fuji in the distance - a picture postcard view. Ben Venue, with its hill walkers, rises to the North.

Loch Ard has ideal qualities for rowing and sculling, qualities that have been recognized by visitors who have travelled from as far away as south of London to row on the loch. The main section of the loch is 3,600m long and ranges from 500m to 1,200 wide. The prevailing wind blows straight down the loch, making irritating cross-winds a rarity. Most of the time the water is fairly flat - there is virtually no wake from other boats as motorboats are restricted to 4 hp, and no current or tide to contend with. With few boats on the water, tranquillity prevails.

SCULLING IN THE NATIONAL PARK



Building a new club - the new rowing pontoon is delivered! Photo courtesy of James Cowderoy

The busiest times are summer Sunday afternoons when Loch Ard Sailing Club holds a weekly regatta, and the Watersports Centre is busy below Forest Hills. Yet these events are staged more at the west end of the loch, leaving 2,000m free for uninterrupted rowing.

This tranquillity is set to continue. As part of the new Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, Loch Ard will be managed by the new National Parks Authority. Speedboats and water scooters will continue to be banned from the loch, preserving the water for the more compatible sports of sailing, canoeing, kayaking, fishing, rowing and sculling.

Nothing comes free in life, and the price you pay for these ideal rowing conditions are the weather, the midges, and the distance from major cities. Strathard has one of the highest rainfalls in Scotland, so it is often raining - "what's new?", I hear you say. And the rain brings the midges, which scare some people off. In reality the midges are not that bad - they are only at their worst on the loch side in wet, still conditions and hardly noticeable with a little bit of wind and heat. As soon as you get 10m offshore you leave them behind. So for the faint at heart it might be advisable to bring a bottle of midge repellent the first time you visit the loch.

Whilst the facilities on the water might be ideal, LARC's club facilities are at the moment somewhat more limited. We boat from the bottom of my garden, wading out into the water in our wellies. There are no club boats, although the founding members are happy to share their double sculls, two single sculls, and Virus training scull with visiting members.

But we have big plans for the future. We have recently taken delivery of a new rowing pontoon to make boat launching a less treacherous and wet operation and hope to build a wooden boat shed to house an expanding fleet of boats. A further ambition is to acquire a 4x4.

To achieve these goals we need to build up our membership, so visitors and new members will all be welcomed. For more details, please contact Douglas Harrison, The Secretary, Renagour House, Aberfoyle, Stirling, FK8 3TF (Tel: 01877 382 275, E-Mail: Douglas@Renagour.cc) or visit www.lochard.net.

We look forward to seeing you on Loch Ard.

James Cowderoy,
Founder and Captain

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