

Colourful Albacores line the shore of Shelburne Harbour Yacht Club, in Shelburne, Nova Scotia photographed by Helen Archer.

# The Albacore EVOLUTION

*The Albacore Association and Evolution Sails join forces for Success*

*“Believe me, my young friend, there is nothing - absolutely nothing - half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.”*

*K. Grahame The Wind in the Willows*

With beloved sailing vessels huddled under snow covered canvas tarp through the cold Canadian winter months, avid sailors are always on the lookout for the closest thing to “messing about on boats”. One grey day this past February, sixty plus enthusiastic Albacore sailors and racers, members of the Canadian Albacore Association, found just that opportunity at Evolution Sail’s 11,000 sq. ft. sail loft in Toronto, spending a great afternoon gamming with fellow sailors and learning the art and science of sailmaking first hand from a couple of the most experienced sailmakers in the country. Representing half of the entire Toronto fleet of 100 Albacores, docked at several clubs within the Toronto Harbour, it was an impressive

turnout by any measure, and a sold out event.

The afternoon with Greg Bratkiw, John Dakin and their dedicated team, offered attendees the opportunity to gain a greater appreciation for the aspects of sail design and production, including everything from optimal sail shape design and the technical aspects of CAM-cutting fabric, to taping, stitching and finishing. Discussions could be overheard covering subjects only a sailor could love, including the level of complexity of cutting and stitching a jib sail compared to a mainsail, vertical depth distribution, and the importance of creating just the right curve in the stitch line for optimum sail shape. You could have even participated in discussion on the bendiness of individual masts. It seems that even if all Albacore sails were made exactly the same, sail performance will differ on each boat depending on the bendiness of the individual mast. It makes sense, but



who knew bendiness was even a word, and yet in the depth of winter such words are like oxygen to sailors deprived of their favourite pastime.

Albacores are a common sight on Canada’s lakes and sailing schools, and Toronto’s Friday night racing series held from early May through September consistently starts with 45–60 boats. The Commodore of the Canadian Albacore Association Mary Neumann and Secretary Ian Brayshaw commented that this successful event was not only a wonderful example of the ongoing support and collaborative relationship between Evolution Sails and the Albacore fleet, but also a clear example of the immense enthusiasm



*The Commodore of the Canadian Albacore Association Mary Neumann shown here with Secretary Ian Brayshaw*

Albacore sailors have fun for their sport and their class.

## CANADIAN ALBACORE ASSOCIATION

The Canadian Albacore Association (CAS) is a volunteer association

for Canadian sailors and racers of Albacore dinghies, proudly committing on its website to the promotion and support of “anyone in Canada who races, learns to sail on, or simply just loves this awesome boat.” The CAS acts as a facilitator, coordinating regattas, ensuring national standards are maintained, coordinating purchases of boats, (The Albacore fleet is constantly being renewed. Twelve new Albacores will be delivered to the Toronto Harbour in 2013.) and assisting participating clubs, in every way they can. The clubs purchase the fleet of Albacores and the club racers maintain them, and for reasonable monthly club fees, offered unlimited

use of the boats and participation in the social activities, creating a wonderful community in which to step into the wonderful world of sailing, or take the next step to excel in racing.



Toronto Clubs maintaining an Albacore fleet include Toronto Island Club, Moordale Club, St. James Town and Westwood. Other Ontario clubs with fleets include Hamilton Bay, Nepean and Kanata Sailing Clubs.

## THE ALBACORE SAILING DINGHY

The 2011 International Albacore Champion described the Albacore as



**Evolution Sails** is a world-renowned manufacturer of cruising and racing sails, with a worldwide network of lofts all linked by cutting edge technology and world-class expertise.

With locations in Canada, U.S. Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and The Netherlands, Evolution Sails offers world-class expertise in the art and science of sailmaking. Of all the sails manufactured in their Toronto location, Albacores top the chart with 40-60 sails produced annually, and more when the Internationals and Worlds are held locally.

*PHOTOS: TOP CLOCKWISE: John Dakin demonstrates taping cut sail pieces, Greg Bratkiw reviewing components of good sail design. Greg demonstrating computerized sail cutting systems.*



a boat that is simple to get into at first, but one that will challenge the tuning and tactical skills of a sailor for the rest of their life.

The Albacore is a 4.6 m (15 ft) two person planing dinghy, for lake and near-inshore day sailing. Hulls are made of either wood or fibreglass. The basic shape was developed in 1954 from an Uffa Fox design. Recent boats retain the same classic dimensions, and use modern materials and modern control systems. A deep airfoil section centerboard and rudder make the Albacore highly manoeuvrable. The Albacore's rig uses swept spreaders supporting a tapered mast, a powerful vang, and adjustable jib halyard and other sail controls to depower in high winds. This adjustability enables light crews and heavy crews to race head-to-head in all but the most extreme conditions. It does not have a trapeze or spinnaker, and hence avoids the difficult handling of sport boats. The powerful rig and easily-driven hull give excellent performance over a wide range of wind and wave conditions. The

Albacore is considered a very forgiving boat to learn to sail on. Regatta results show that the Albacore is often sailed by husband/wife and parent/child combinations, and that some of the all-women teams are the most competitive in the class.

Albacore dinghies gather for fun, sailing and racing from Nova Scotia to the Ontario cottage country, and in states along the Eastern US and throughout the United Kingdom, with a particularly large concentration of Albacores in Toronto, where the Friday night club race series sees an average of 45 boats, and peaks at over 60 boats, on the start line every week during the summer sailing season.

## **CANADIAN ALBACORE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIPS**

The 2013 CAA Canadian Albacore National Championships will take place on Shelburne Harbour from July 26 to 28, hosted by the Shelburne Harbour Yacht Club, reputed to be one of the most welcoming yacht clubs on the East Coast.

Shelburne Harbour, jutting 10 km into Nova Scotia's southwest shoreline, is situated in an area affectionately known locally as the banana belt, in reference to the warming effect of the ocean that tends to keep local temperatures reasonably moderate. Situated at the head of the expansive Shelburne Harbour, Shelburne Yacht Club, (SHYC) is situated well in from open ocean so, although the winds can be sporty especially in the afternoon when the diurnal effect kicks in, the seas are normally flat, making for ideal sailing conditions.

Formally established in 1903, SHYC has supported a keelboat racing program for many years, and has only recently taken an active role in re-starting dinghy sailing in the harbour. For the past five years SHYC hosted the East Coast Alba-

core Championships, attracting sailors mostly from Nova Scotia and Ontario, so hosting the Nationals marks a significant and proud step forward for SHYC.

Guy Tipton was one of the main catalysts for the interest in dinghy sailing. Representing SHYC, Guy and his crewman, Matt King, placed 1st in the 2012 North American Albacore Championships and, with enthusiastic Club support, has introduced many local youngsters to sailing, with some already proving to be highly proficient racers; young SHYC crew has placed 1st two years in a row at the Sea Cadet 420.

In preparation for hosting the Nationals, SHYC has invested extensively to improve its infrastructure, including the recent conversion of an adjacent former boatyard building into new premises for the Sailing Academy and Family Watersports Centre. The inception of the Family Watersports Centre recognizes the value SHYC places on encouraging a broader spectrum of interest in nautical pursuits, particularly targeting the younger families. As well, an additional launching slipway has been constructed, bringing the number of slipways to three in order to maximize speed of launch and recovery of competitors. These improvements will ensure that Shelburne Harbour Yacht Club will not only be an excellent venue for the 2013 CAA Canadian Albacore National Championship races, but also a place where competitors' families can enjoy lovely Club facilities. GAM

*The 2013 Canadian Albacore Championships will be held July 26-28 at the SHYC, in Shelburne, Nova Scotia. Albacore International Championships are held every two years, rotating between Canada, U.S. and U.K. The 2011 Championships were hosted in Toronto. This year's 2013 races will be in Wales, UK.*



The Shelburne Sailing Academy has put over 300 children and adults through it's Learn to Sail program. Every year since 2008, SHYC has hosted the East Coast Albacore Championships, the largest open International Class Dinghy regatta in the whole of the Province of Nova Scotia. For more information on the Nationals, how to transport your boats, accommodations etc., please watch the CAA site at [albacore.ca](http://albacore.ca) and SHYC site at [shyc.ca](http://shyc.ca)

- The docks of the historic Shelburne
- Harbour Yacht Club, photographed
- by Helen Archer of Shelburne, Nova
- Scotia. You can view more of Helen's
- photos via Facebook or contact
- her through GAM

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