

The Blaze Association visited Bala SC for its 2007 Inland championships over the weekend of 22/23 September. This first championship visit to Wales attracted an excellent 29 entries, a near record and the competitors were met with an ideal 15kn wind right down the 4 mile lake for the first race. The RO set long beats to spread the fleet out and a series of tight reaches and occasional runs back down the lake. Mike Lyons continued his winning ways with 3 first day wins but had to manage serious challenges by both Nick Miller (740) of Glasson and Andrew Taylor (716) of Blackpool and Fleetwood who were also as consistent posting equally reliable seconds and thirds respectively. Behind this group was newcomer youth Alex Stothert in a borrowed boat (587) who produced an excellent fourth in the first race chased by grand-master Roger Williams (684). In the second race Stuart Brown (713) came through to fourth followed by Christian Smart (741). The third race was held in an increasing wind and the RO decided to make it a just that bit longer in case anyone felt an hour was too short ! This time it was Rondar Raceboats' Andy Hewitt (658) who got within reach of the lead group with Brown and Bob Cowan (743) close behind.

The Saturday night curry in the clubhouse with live music and additional entertainment provided by DJ James Dyson (629) was a highlight of this year's event and has raised the bar for any club hosting the Blaze Inlands in the future.

There had been talk of gale force winds for Sunday, but when it arrived a stable and strong 'down lake' wind developed, rising to around 20+knots. If anything the courses were better than Saturdays, although the first race was little complicated for those with sore heads from the previous night. Race four – Hewitt and Miller made it to the windward mark first followed a little distance behind by Smart and Lyons. This order lasted for the next 20 minutes until Lyons broke through the lighter Smart to windward on lap 2 and rapidly closed on the leading pair downwind. At this point fate intervened as leader Hewitt's forestay detached at the deck, blowing out in front of his boat. He was left with the tricky challenge of getting back to the club about a mile away without losing the rig, his racing over. Lyons got the inside line at the next gybe mark and screamed away from Miller to win. Taylor slotted into his usual position of third followed by Smart, Hull and Brown.

Race 5 – By now some had decided that with only 4 races to count out of the 6 race programme they had had enough – and in other cases their boats had ! The wind continued to make it a classic Blaze event for those still on the water with clouds of spray marking some of the tighter reaches and an increasing number of spills back down the fleet. This race was led away by Miller but Lyons pulled through to win. Miller was followed by David Angwin (710) who was now coming though on the increasing wind, Smart, Hull and Peter Barlow (733) another who thrives in a good breeze.

Race 6 - By now the fleet was becoming depleted; job done Lyons returned to shore to join Taylor and others whose positions were already set or where exhaustion and damage had taken their toll. Stuart Brown led the fleet from start to finish as the wind continued to rise, and was more than a minute clear at the end. He was followed by Miller, Smart and Hull to the line.

The consensus was that this had been one of the very best Blaze events of the year and the association will be looking to return to Bala for its Inland Championships in a couple of years. A big thank you to Bala and particularly to local Tim Heaton (696) who organised a quality embroidered kit bag for every single competitor. The season 'closer' and traditional designated Blaze 'curry n beer fest' – and our last event of 2007 will be held at Oxford SC on 27/28th October.

1 st	Mike Lyons	720	Burghfield SC	4 points
2 nd	Nick Miller	740	Glasson	8 points
3 rd	Andrew Taylor	716	Blackpool & Fleetwood	12 points
4 th	Stuart Brown	713	Burghfield SC	15 points
5 th	Christian Smart	741	Pembrokeshire	16 points
6 th	Ken Hull	685	Bala SC	24 points

1st Master – Mike Lyons – Burghfield (1st)

1st Grand Master – Ken Hull – Bala (6th)

1st Youth – Alex Stothert – Glasson (11th)

1st Lady – Becky Wigley – Lymington Town (15th)