

Comet Class Open Meeting at Merthyr Tydfil Sailing Club on 18th September 2016

This is starting to become a trend: For the past several years the equinoctial storms have completely bypassed the weekend we chose to run the Comet class open meeting at MTSC. Yes, on arrival we were again greeted by near zero wind. Maybe not quite as flat as in recent years but still it was awfully light. The forecast was for very light wind at first turning to the southwest and increasing to a F1 to 2. It didn't quite go like that...

Six visitors from as far away as Crawley Mariners Yacht Club and Hunts Sailing Club joined four local boats entering this year's competition. The briefing was held shortly after 11am by which time there was occasionally wind straight across the lake from due west. So the course and starting sequence was explained and everyone headed out onto the water. Today everyone was using the standard Comet rig.

The first start was, well, "awkward" as the wind swung around at the last minute and for some it was a fetch or reaching start with few tacks to the "windward" mark. Now, I was not in a good position to figure out what was going on up front, becalmed at the back is never a good place. On the first lap Ben Palmer (Comet 597) was in front followed by Bob Dodds (Comet 869) then came Chris Hatton (Comet 48). During the second lap Chris Hatton moved up to the front and John Coppenhall (Comet 532) got into third place. Chris managed to pull further ahead to secure first, Bob was second and John was third.

We then came ashore for some lunch and drinks on the patio overlooking the lake. The baked potatoes with chilli and salad followed by spiced apple and fruit crumble and custard went down very well. The wind after lunch had maybe filled in a little more towards the northern end of the reservoir so we switch the course to an L shape so that we had a true run.

This different course didn't defeat the fickle wind; in the final minute before the start it died and shifted. Without the luxury of infinite time that Olympians have to reset courses and races, one boat drifted over at the start and four others were "drawn together" by the vacuum left by the disappearing wind. However, everyone eventually got away; even I thought I'd done well this time; but no. Everyone was in front of me by the windward mark. At least that was true, it did remain a beat to the first mark and a fairly dead run back allowing the front of the fleet to battle over places upwind, downwind and along the reaches. Bob Dodds got round the first lap in front followed by Chris Hatton and Henry Jaggars (Comet 800). On the second lap Chris Hatton again managed to get to the front of the fleet and was followed over the line that time by Ben Palmer with Henry in third. On the final lap Chris remained at the front but Henry managed to squeeze past Ben into second place.

The third race of the day was started as soon as the sailors and race officer were ready; we didn't want to hang around as the wind seemed to be sticking around too and maybe a little stronger. This start everyone made a fair start in the slightly more consistent wind. This time Chris Hatton got to the front and stayed there. He was followed around the first lap by Robert Wookey (Comet 165) and Bob Dodds. On the second lap's reaches Robert was overhauled by Ben Palmer, who moved into second place and Bob Dodds who held onto third. On the third and final lap the front three was maintained, with Chris Hatton first, Ben Palmer second and Bob Dodds third.

The prize giving was accompanied by friendly chatter over sandwiches, tea and cakes. Many thanks again to the visitors for making the effort to visit us and all those who helped at the club adding greatly to a great day in the light autumn winds.

Mark Govier, Comet 460, Merthyr Tydfil Sailing Club