

Burghfield Comet Open 2017

Burghfield's Comet Open took place on Saturday 22nd April. Sixteen helms arrived to find a light, but variable wind. The varied in both strength and direction, with calm spots appearing and then disappearing across the water making it difficult for the Race Officer to set a good course. The event was shared with the Streakers and Solos, who started before the Comets.



In race one the gun failed at the start. This caused a little confusion, with those who knew the rules – i.e. the start is when the flags drop so the lack of a starting signal doesn't invalidate the start – gaining over those who didn't. Those at the pin end of the line appeared to get the best start, with a lift almost putting them on the layline to the windward mark. However, half way up the beat they were headed, and the lead boats from both sides of the course arrived at the windward mark at about the same time. Michael Ettershank was first at the windward mark, but on the run the wind began to fill in from behind allowing the fleet to gain on him. However, he got to the leeward mark before being engulfed, only to be caught on the following beat. Bob Dodds and Chris Hatton pulled away from the fleet and fought for first and second place, with Eddie Pope and Izac Dodds further back fighting for third and fourth. The final order was Bob, Chris, Izac, Eddie.

The second race was held immediately after race two. The fleet became becalmed at the first mark. Bob was first to round, and along with Eddie and Izac pulled away from the fleet. The wind filled in again, but they were too far ahead to ever be caught. It wasn't easy for them though as they sailed into the back of the Streaker fleet. Eventually Eddie caught Bob to take first place, while Izac was third. Further back Henry Jagers took fourth place.

The third and fourth races took place after lunch. The Race Officer increased the time between starts to try and prevent the fleets from mixing. However, in race three the Solos had a general recall, and started behind the Comets. They eventually caught the Comets and began to sail through them. A wind shift at the start saw a very biased line and first beat, with the leaders laying the first mark on port tack. Bob was first around again, followed by Eddie, Chris and John Coppenhall. These four pulled away on the run as the wind dropped. They fought for the lead, with Chris eventually winning, followed by Bob and Eddie, with John being caught by Izac at the end of the race.

The first three races had three different winners. Bob was leading, but could be caught by either Chris or Eddie, who were only two and three points behind.

In race four Dave Harris was first around the windward mark followed by Peter Hunter. On the run everyone except Michael left an intervening island to port. However, Dave headed for the wrong leeward mark and the rest of the fleet blindly followed. Michael on his own made no such mistake and he had chosen to pass the island on the best side, so this allowed him to take the lead. Although the fleet realised their mistake, and headed for the right mark, the confusion resulted in several changes of place, and Chris and Bob moved up into second and third. Michael's lead was short lived, as Dave moved back into the lead followed by Chris. Dave's lead didn't last long either as he was caught by Chris who won, while Izac took second and Peter moved up to third.

Chris's win in the last race allowed him to win the event. Bob and Eddie discarded the last race, so their relative positions were unchanged, with Bob taking second. Izac's second place in the last race put him on equal points with Eddie, but Eddie's win in race two ensured he retained his third place.

Chris Robinson