

## Up River Open

A small but decent breeze greeted the 10 boats lining up for the Up River Open. With the tide forcing a later than usual start those that had propped up the bar on the night before managed to fully recover in time for the start!

### Race 1

The first race began at the club and took the fleet downstream into the more spacious parts of the club's part of the Crouch. This race was mainly downwind which somewhat suited the feather weight Annette Walter who managed to sail away and cross the finish first followed by Jeff Smith in second and Andy Dale in third.

### Race 2

The second race started where the previous finished and mainly consisted of a long light wind beat back to club. Michael Ettershank led from the start to about half way where despite local knowledge was overtaken by Bob Dodds due to his higher boat speed.

The boats then came ashore for tea and cake before heading out again while the wind started to drop away. Nigel Austin and Paul Hinde wisely realized that with the tide starting to get out of Essex and back to the sea this wasn't ideal so decided to pack up early.

### Race 3

Despite the best efforts of the race officer's wind dance the only boats that successfully battled against the tide up the shortened windward leg were Bob Dodds and Jeff Smith who then drifted back to the club to become the only boats to finish 1st and 2nd respectively.

With 2 firsts Bob sealed the win while Jeff's good racing all day earned him a 2nd. Michael's results in the first races earned him a pleasing 3rd.

Michael Ettershank

Comet 84

And now a personal view of the Up River Open.

Sometimes you have to just try something outside your comfort zone. Mr Ettershank had gone on and on about his patch, and so with a beautifully packed up boat in tow (thanks Sar!), I headed for the east coast.

I loved the briefing comprising a gentle perambulation along the river bank, with an occasional finger pointing at some distant buoy amongst other buoys – or just the skyline! The start was similar to salmon lining up to jump upstream, all crowded where the current was the least, and then we were off, a quick few tacks up to the windward mark and then a bit of bank hugging,

except Paul Hinde, Henry and I hugged the wrong one! I just didn't seem to get the boat going, whether there were too many variables, tide, wind, moored boats, creeks, seawater, etc., resulting in just hanging on to the back of the fleet.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> race started with a rather biased starboard fetch but I was slightly mesmerized as the line was formed by a buoy and the race officer who was abandoned on a mudflat with a hooter! Once again I struggled but in a dying wind managed to wangle a little better result. Unfortunately the wind was dying and as was my epic estuary episode, so I decided to call it a day, as the remainder of the fleet slowly drifted upstream with the tide.

I am not sure if I will ever learn, but it wasn't unpleasant as a first low wind river experience, I am just not sure I could ever get to grips with the start times being constantly changing due to the tide. With a slight feeling of ticking a box, but still with L plates on, I headed back to the safety of Middle Earth at Cransley!!!

Nigel Austin

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