

Crawley Mariners Comet Open Meeting 22 September 2018

In recent years visitor numbers for our Comet Open meetings have been dwindling, so it was pleasing to be able to welcome five helms from other clubs this time. Under cloudy skies a total of thirteen helms set forth in a light but fairly steady breeze to contest the first of two morning races. Eddie Pope was the first to reach the windward mark and to claim a lead that he never subsequently relinquished, although closely pursued at this point by Simon Thompson and John Coppenhall. For the first two laps this group remained clear of the rest, but as the race went on Eddie went well ahead, while Bob Dodds moved into contention for the places and Simon fell back into the pack. Despite a strong final section Bob could not quite catch Eddie at the finish; they were followed home by John and then Jeff Smith.

For the second race it was John's turn to take the early lead, followed by Mark Feltham, Izac Dodds and Simon. At the start of the second lap Bob and Eddie had found their way into this group. By the end of the lap the expected drizzle started to fall, and with it came a significant falling off of the wind strength, resulting in somewhat trying conditions. John had a clear lead at this point but was gradually overhauled first by Eddie and then by Mark. As they neared the finish Mark was poised to take what would have been an excellent second place but an unfortunate contact with the final mark meant he lost out to John and Bob who were following closely and able to capitalise.



Fortified by a warming lunch, the indomitable competitors set out for the first of two afternoon races in conditions that remained distinctly unattractive. The wind was by this stage very light, to the extent that only a single lap could be sailed in the time available, while the drizzle became heavier and more persistent. Bob had an early lead but was later overtaken by Eddie, who went on to secure a hat-trick of first places. He was followed home by Bob, Izac, Simon and John, this group finishing well clear of the remainder of the fleet.

For the final race the rain eased somewhat and a light breeze returned, allowing two laps of the course to be completed. On this occasion it was Bob who took an early lead and was able to hold it through until the finish to gain a consolation victory, with Eddie taking second place. Simon had been steadily improving his finishing positions over the course of the day and did so again to claim third place followed by Michael Ettershank.

The final placings and prizewinners for the event were:

- 1st Eddie Pope
- 2nd Bob Dodds
- 3rd John Coppenhall

In addition the prize for the best placed Crawley Mariners helm outside the top three went to Simon Thompson. The event also formed the final round of the Southern Aphelion. This was won by Bob Dodds, to whom Michael Ettershank presented the trophy at the end of what had been an enjoyable and successful day despite the less-than-ideal conditions.