

SHSC Comet Open

The curtain came down on the 2019 Comet Open season at SHSC where 10 visitors joined the 7 home boats; we count Peter Mountford as a home boat even though he has to travel over 300 miles to get here!

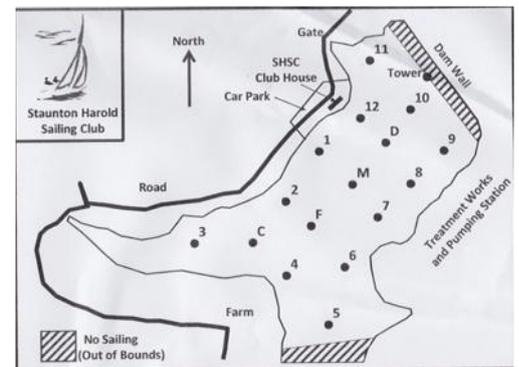
Andy Simmonds had arranged to drop off spares and sails at the event and had brought with him a new Mk2 White Xtra (slab reefing and 2nd window) as well as the original Mk2 prototype, without the reefing points, to sell. On arrival in the car park Peter M informed Nigel Fern (aka Nigel F) that he was to use the new Mk2 for the Open so Nigel F slyly and successfully suggested that he could use Peter's White Xtra to gauge its performance with regard to a future purchase!

Race Officer Simon Forbes held a short and to the point briefing and the fleet launched in a moderate South Westerly-ish breeze. Everyone was pleased to see the water lapping the banks in comparison to last year where 'exhausted and up to our neck in mud' was a repeated comment on launching and recovering.

Race 1

Course – Fp 6 4 1 Mp D 8 Gate

Simon had set a very square line with the fleet spread across it. Very quickly the fleet split across the lake looking for an advantage over their fellow competitors. John Sturgeon (C400) had a flyer and was first to **F** closely followed by Henry Jagers (C800). The usual front runners (i.e. Bob Dodds (C869) and Eddie Pope (C377)) were, for once, not out front but for quite some time had Nigel Pepperdine (C616 – aka Nigel P) and Nigel F (C864) for company! At **F** on lap 2 all four nearly came together in a heap, the two Nigel's approaching on Port had to give way to Eddie who belatedly but legally tacked onto Starboard.



Further back Hilary Weatherdon (C688) capsized in front of the rapidly approaching Solo fleet who we were sharing the water with. In sympathy Dave Waymont (C527) joined her! His comment being "All of a sudden I was surrounded by water with the tiller in my hand!!"

As the race progressed Eddie P and Nigel P pulled away but Bob D couldn't, for once, go with them and he became embroiled with Scott Waterland (C412) and Nigel F. It was only in the latter stages of the race that he broke away.

Eddie P continued to forge ahead to take Race 1

The fleet returned to the shore for lunch and the Association Committee held their end of year meeting.

Race 2

Course – C 4 Ms 8 1 6s

Race 2 started with a bang, quite literally! For once Michael Ettershank (C84) had a poor start and was just crossing the line when Chris Blundell (C563) 'T-boned' him. Chris B was nearly launched out of his boat and both of them immediately retired to assess their respective damage and exchange details!!

Nigel P led at **C** followed by Bob D, Eddie P and Alan Bennett (C126). On the following broad reach Eddie's boom caught the water and he capsized, dropping several places. That left Nigel P and Alan B to

fight it out but Nigel P extended his lead, even though he was using Nigel F's old and very well worn Standard sail!

Further back mini battles were taking place throughout the fleet keeping everyone on their toes. The third Nigel, Nigel Austin (aka Nigel A) (C875) was having a bit of a torrid time, the light wind not being to his liking.

Nigel P took the race to keep the overall lead open to make Race 3 the decider.

As the light was soon to go a short comfort break was held.

Race 3

Course – C 6 7 Fs Ds 9s Gate

The wind began to drop as race 3 commenced which forced Eddie to be OCS and as he rounded the pin he became the 2nd 'steak – er' as he 'T-boned' Peter M. Peter's boat will soon join Michael's in Andy's workshop for gunwale repairs! Fortunately both boats continued with Eddie P doing his requisite turns.

Nigel P led at C closely followed by Alan B and Henry J. On the subsequent legs the two SHSC members pulled away from Henry J who was quickly joined by Nigel A having, finally, found some pace. Behind John Sturgeon (C400) was in ballet mood having to execute a pair of turns and Bob D decided to retire. At F John S tacked too soon and gave Dave W a nudge so he had to, again, get his ballet shoes on, this dropped him virtually to the back of the fleet.

By now the wind had dropped considerably and Nigel F being not convinced that he could make C tacked off to ensure a safe rounding but a fast closing John S slipped inside and using his momentum overtook Nigel F who, on the subsequent gybe, tapped the rear of John's boat so he, also, had to join the ballet troupe!

In the latter stages of the race the wind moved further around from the West giving some of the fleet an advantageous lift to C. Peter M was one of many to gain from this as he gained 4 or 5 places but equally others lost out, Nigel P had strayed out to the left and dropped back losing the lead in the process.

The race officer decided to move the Committee boat to shorten the course which caused some head scratching as the course was through the start gate!

At the line it was Alan B who took the race from Eddie P, who had recovered extremely well from his earlier mishap; so with 3 different winners the previous results came into play.

On count back Alan Bennett (SHSC) won the event from Eddie Pope (Ogston) with Nigel Pepperdine (SHSC) in third.

Report compiled from comments by Alan Bennett, Dave Waymont, Peter Mountford, Michael Ettershank and Nigel Fern.



Alan Bennett being awarded the winner's prize by Nigel Pepperdine.

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