

Comet Class Association Championships 2021

Winsford Flash Sailing Club

Saturday 17th July 2021

Competitors were met with radiant sunshine and glorious 28 degree temperatures at Winsford Flash for the 2021 Comet Class Association Championships. Race one start was delayed for lack of wind until the northerly filled in down the lake giving 3 or 4 knots by the time the hooter sounded in anger.



With the wind coming straight down the lake the 30 competitors had a wide choice of lines and Bob Dodds of Crawley Mariners SC, Peter Mountford of Staunton Harold SC and John Sturgeon of Hawley Lake SC got the best of the scrap for the windward mark from the eastern side of the Flash after a massive lift from the committee boat end of the line.

As the fleet became strung out, Bob consolidated the lead with a great downwind leg sailing by the lee, adding distance to a fiercely competitive chasing pack consisting of ten boats. In the middle of the fleet there was close racing between Pete Chambers and Steve Bellamy. With the wind rising slightly to around 6 knots and light gusts working down the lake Bob took race one by some margin from Eddie Pope of Ogston in second and our own Pete Coop in third, a great third place having initially rounded the windward mark in 7th.

The course remained the same after lunch and after the wind dropped again at the start it rose steadily through the race, with Peter Mountford and Pete Chambers making great starts, again on the Committee boat end of the line.

After a tricky initial leg the windward mark rounding order was Eddie, Bob and a strong start from another local competitor Jonathan Latham. Two distinct groups formed with 8 boats battling for the lead and the rest of the fleet fighting hard with some great battles all through the midfield.

Local sailors Pete Coop, Pete Chambers and Steve Bellamy lead the chasing pack and had a good dice on the upwind leg on the second lap, while at the front of the race Eddie pulled out a big lead as the breeze rose to around 6 or 7 knots before dropping once again to near zero setting all helms a real challenge.

As Eddie Pope coasted over the line followed by Jonathan Latham, 7 boats battled it out for third place with honours going to Ben Palmer.

After a short break the feast of Comet fun resumed in the third race, yet again almost unbearably hot, with 3 or 4 knots of wind at the start. First to the windward mark was Ben Palmer of Baltic SC with Henry Jagers of Beer SC and WFSC's Charlotte Coop hot on their heels.



A leading pack of 6 boats developed with everyone else seemingly using the same piece of the Flash at the same time around the gybe mark at 2, the ensuing pandemonium saw a number of boats either doing turns or going back to round the mark, and a spectacular capsize as Linda Shaw pushing hard downwind was hit by a gust that nearly caught out half the fleet.

After that the fleet spread fairly evenly but with good close racing right the way through and the second beat up to Four saw every millimetre of the Flash being used as competitors tried every imaginable line.

Eventually building another storming lead Ben Palmer took the honours from Pete Coop in second and Henry Jagers in third and the wind yet again changed down a gear as the fleet crossed the line.

A great days racing in glorious sunshine.

Sunday 18th July 2021

Competitors woke to another radiant day on Sunday with even more sweltering heat and no wind at all, not a breath of air to break the surface. Sadly racing was abandoned but it takes more than a cancelled race to dampen a Comet sailor's spirits.

Before the prize giving ceremony there were excellent speeches from our Chairman Peter Mountford and long time former chairman Henry Jagers and of course Andy Simmons celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Comet dinghy. Andy had travelled up from Devon with urgent Comet supplies and Comet 896.

It was really an honour to have Andy at Winsford Flash Sailing Club and great to see him competing in Comet 896, 40 years after he created the boat we all love so much.

WFSC's own Ros Stevenson had prepared a superb cake celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Comet Dinghy.

1st place went to Eddie Pope of Ogston SC, a well deserved win after a consistent performance over the three races on Saturday.

Second place was taken by Ben Palmer from Baltic Wharf SC with a valiant third going to Winsford's very own Pete Coop.

Thanks and congratulations to all involved in delivering this event under considerable difficulties with a special mention for Winsford Flash Sailing Club Comet Fleet Captain Martin Loud whose tireless efforts and indefatigable spirit carried the whole team through months of planning and re-planning.

Joe Cleary and Martin Loud