

Crawley Mariners Yacht Club – Comet Open

It's unusual for anyone to finish ahead of Bob Dodds in races held at his home venue of Hedgecourt Lake, and this once again proved to be the case at the Crawley Mariners Comet Open meeting held on 18 September, when twelve club members were joined by three visitors. Over the course of the day Bob faced strong challenges from visitor Eddie Pope and from locally based helms Dan Gibson and Izac Dodds, but drew on all his skills and experience to hold them off to secure victory with three first places out of the four races sailed.

The prevailing southerly winds made course selection problematic, resulting in three short beats across the lake, together with one longer diagonal downwind leg. The wind remained shifty and unpredictable all day, even by Hedgecourt standards, putting skills and wind awareness at a premium. The downwind section proved as tricky to negotiate as the beats, with the breeze often evaporating both in the centre of the lake and around the leeward mark.

Throughout the day smaller groups developed within each of the races, meaning that good tactical skills were required around the marks in order to maintain hard-won gains. In the second race of the day, with Bob distracted following a start line contretemps, Dan took an early lead and held it throughout, only to be pipped at the line by Izac in a very close finish. In the third race Bob made amends with a textbook start taking him into clear air and well on the way to overall victory. Second and third places overall went to Izac and Eddie, followed by Dan, Simon Thompson and our other two visitors, Michael Ettershank and John Sturgeon.