

## **Comet Open Meeting at Shustoke Sailing Club**

Shustoke Sailing club hosted its first ever Comet Open on Sunday 16th July. There was some doubt, in the days leading up to the event, whether or not the meeting would take place due to the forecast of high winds and thunderstorms. However, the decision to go ahead was agreed and turned out to be correct with the wind having moderated overnight to a pleasant force 3-4 blowing straight down the 100+ acre sausage shaped reservoir. It was going to be a good sailing day!

The club is located close to Coleshill in the West Midlands with excellent motorway links and attracted ten visiting boats from across the country. There were representatives from Baltic Wharf, Beer, Burghfield, Merthyr Tydfil, Ogston, Staunton Harold and Winsford Flash. Also, we were honoured by a surprise visit of the Comet designer and builder, Andy Simmons.

The Comet event was run successfully alongside normal club sailing using the same course with a five-minute interval between starts. There were two back-to-back races before lunch followed by a third race in the afternoon. The race team set some excellent courses making full use of the lake; there were no general recalls and on the few occasions where penalty turns were required, these were done without a fuss so often evident in some other classes!

The first lap of the first race saw several different leaders with close racing throughout the fleet as sailors became accustomed to the conditions. There were many place changes on both the upwind and downwind legs but on the second lap Eddie Pope (Ogston) was out in front and maintained that position to take first race honours. After many place changes, Chris Robinson (Burghfield) claimed second place and Dave Turtle (Shustoke) third. A sudden squall towards the end of the race swept through the fleet but everybody survived the gybe. However, nobody could escape the torrential rain which, thankfully, didn't last too long.

At the start of the second race there was a slight shift in wind direction giving port bias to the start line and the home boats took full advantage. Cole Briscoe led at the first mark from Dave with the rest of the fleet closely bunched behind. As the race progressed Eddie worked his way through to challenge for second place but was held off after a close tussle all the way to the finish. Meanwhile Cole had established a comfortable lead to take first place.

There was then a well-earned break while competitors and supporters enjoyed various baked potatoes and plenty of cakes provided by Dav and the team. There was another downpour during lunch which resulted in a short delay to allow the storm to pass.

A change of course for the final race added to the growing excitement with any of four boats able to win the event at this stage. However, at the first mark it was Ben Palmer (Baltic Wharf) setting the pace and went on to extend his lead throughout the race. Eddie and Chris had a long battle for second which left Chris in a wind-shadow allowing Cole and Dave to slip past on the last lap.

So, three races with three different winners but, after the number crunching, Eddie was a clear winner on three points with the next three boats all on five points. Ben claimed second place by virtue of his win in the last race and Cole third by winning the second race.

The day was concluded by prize-giving and a very welcome afternoon tea to sustain the visitors on their way home. Thanks went to the race team, safety crew and galley without whom these events just wouldn't take place. In conclusion, a successful event providing enjoyable and exciting racing from both on and off the water.