

Write-up by Jerry Colman

There was bright sunshine for a change in the Baldwin Valley for the competitors of the Watling Streetworks winter dinghy series. However, as it was the MS&CC's annual dinner dance and prize-giving on Saturday night at the Park Hotel in Ramsey it made the start time of 1000 hrs at Injebreck next morning a bit of a struggle for some.

For Race 1 a slightly over-eager Jerry Colman jumped the gun and was judged 'over the start line' so had to swing the Finn back over the line and restart behind the rest of the fleet of 14 mixed designs. However, it can be helpful to have boats in front to tell you what the wind is doing so he was able to slip through and around most of them by the first mark and rounded third with just Simon Cain in the Aero 7 getting clean away almost a leg ahead.

Having correctly rounded mark no 4 Simon unfortunately then set off for no 6 instead of no 5 and fell into the large wind hole that the Race Officer was hoping we would avoid. The rest of the fleet did avoid it leaving Jerry in the lead on the water and Simon at the back. The Finn surged ahead in the light conditions sailing very close to the wind and maintaining good speed through the lulls with the momentum that a heavier boat (with a heavier helm) can carry.

All seemed well for the next 2 laps of the short course until a more sustained lull with a bigger gust filling in from behind saw the Finn almost caught at no 4 mark and only just able to hold off the Fireball (Chris Hill and Phil Hardisty) and the Aero 7s of Peter Cope and Dave Batchelor at the finish. All, however, were pipped on handicap by Simon Pressly in the Laser Radial who was just too close behind the leaders on the water. Despite a tight 4<sup>th</sup> over the water, the Fireball finished up last on handicap, an unlikely result for the current Island champions albeit sailing a slightly more venerable dinghy than their Ultra 18.

The second race was run over the same short course meaning lots of mark rounding and so important to get your tactics right. The first mark was a bit of a squeeze but all got round without too much shouting and soon there was a spreading out of the fleet as the wind gurus made their predictions and either gained or lost vital boat lengths as a result. It's easy to lose a couple of boat lengths by making a little error such as poor tack or getting into someone's wind shadow but it's much harder to get them back again. This time a lead group of Peter Cope (handicap winner this time), the Finn, the Fireball (line honours but eighth on handicap) and Batchelor got away but handicaps again came into the game with the Finn pushed back to third and Simon Pressly fourth.

Also notable were performances by Junior dinner attendees Teddy Dunn (3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>) and Ivan Nichols (with Levi Baugh in the Feva XL), who can now say that they have beaten the Island Champions in a race. It was great to see Jim Whitelegg out again in the deadly Gull taking a creditable 6<sup>th</sup> in the first race thus beating his offspring Joe and Eric in the Enterprise by 3 places.

Currently Dave Batchelor leads the series with Teddy Dunn and Jerry Colman 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> but discards will come into play if next Sunday's racing goes ahead so all may change and much to play for.

Many thanks to Watling Streetworks for sponsoring the Winter Series, outgoing Commodore Keith Poole for Race Officer, incoming Commodore May Shiu Chan and her band of merry men for manning the patrol boat Hilary. Full results and pictures can be found on the Club Facebook and website.