

Write-up by Jerry Colman

Sunday morning brought an early taste of Spring to the fleet of 10 dinghies on West Baldwin reservoir in a moderate and almost warm Southerly breeze. This was quite a contrast to the last round of the Watling Streetworks Winter Series, held in a northerly blast with slivers of ice around the boats.

The start line works well with a Southerly so that everyone on the line at the gun has a good shot at winning clear air up the first beat, to no. 1 mark. Employing the 'trigger' technique accelerates the boat off the line at the gun and Ffinlo Wright (Aero 9) got it exactly right at the first start and was never headed thereafter. The breeze was a little stiffer nearer the left-hand end of the line and those of us starting towards the pin gained over those who started nearer the West bank. The header we encountered a little way in asked the question – how far into the header to sail before you tack? A little way further than first knock meant you could cross the fleet on port tack as they all approached on starboard. There were a few shouts nonetheless. A lot of thinking to do so early on a Sunday morning as well as the effort required to wrestle the boats upwind through the gusts, lulls and shifts.

Clean tacks and sharp mark roundings were the order of the day with every boat length gained a little victory and every one lost very hard to recover. Some of my mark manoeuvres in the Finn were a little too relaxed resulting in Teddy Dunn (Aero 5) shooting through on the inside and grabbing a few metres which I was fortunate to recover up the next beat. He will be hard to beat sailing like that and despite the lead held by Ffinlo on the water at the finish he took race 1 by 14 seconds from Ffinlo with Dave Batchelor (Aero 7) a further minute behind. A good race for the IOMYC Aeros then. The MS&CC Lasers and Finn (Simon Pressly, Ralph Kee and James Allison with Jerry Colman in the Finn) all finished within the next minute on corrected time so pretty close racing. Nice to see Keith Holden (LSC) back racing again in his beautiful Finn, finishing less than another minute behind the MS&CC bunch. The RS Teras of Ivan Nicholls and Levi Baugh completed the leader board, finishing their own private and quite noisy battle around the course with Ivan a little way in front.

Race 2 ran over the same course in similar conditions. This time Colman made it to the windward mark first thanks to a couple of lucky shifts but was unable to hold Ffinlo off on the long downwind leg to the top of the lake. There was a nasty shock for your correspondent when James Allison (Laser standard) tacked on top of me threatening to take my wind. However the Finn had a little more momentum and we were able to squeeze him away, disturbing the airflow over his sail using the lee bow technique, forcing him to tack away hopefully into oblivion. The finishing order looked good to me with only Ffinlo in front but the rest did look a bit close behind and so they were. Teddy took the race again by 11 seconds from James, who had dug back out of oblivion to slip in 7 seconds in front of yours truly who was just 4 seconds in front of Dave Batchelor. He finished another 4 seconds ahead of Ffinlo, all on corrected. Simon and Ralph, generally nearer the top of the ratings, were within a minute with Keith and the lads in the Teras a little way back. Ivan took the Tera honours again but by only 3 seconds from Levi in race 2 so a marked improvement by Levi there.

We observed at the end that the sun had popped out and the spring did seem for a while to have sprung. Hopefully next weekend's races which will complete the series will get some of this weather too.

Before signing off I have to sadly mark the passing of Ed Whipp, a fine local sailor, friend and frequent crew on my boat Sea-Pie of Cultra. Sincere condolences to Jane who also sailed with us and to Mum Barbara and the rest of the family.

Many thanks to Keith Poole for Race Officer, ably assisted by Phil Hardisty, patrol boat crew of Helen Kee, James Nicholls and Andy Dunn and of course our sponsor Doug Watling. Some photos and the full results are on the club website. They were remarkably close again despite the variations in the wind etc. Looking forward now to next Sunday.