

Manx Sailing and Cruising Club

Watling Streetworks Injebreck January Series Races 1 and 2, 7th Jan 2024

Copes to the fore.

The MS&CC's final festive fling took place on 7th January at Injebreck in brilliant sunshine and with a light mostly North-Easterly breeze, quite a contrast to last year's wet and windy (but warmer) weather.

8 boats turned out on a forecast of around 5 knots of breeze from the East expecting to find it flat calm but as always Injebreck was not as expected with a light Northerly gently ruffling the waters and the sun highlighting the colours on the hills above us. So we started to rig, but there were issues here as any drops of water were now frozen and ropes were solid as gas pipes and reluctant to run through blocks and pulleys. A short delay due to the patrol boat driver Peter Hoosen-Owen's pickup truck's frozen locks allowed a bit of a thaw and all ropes were running reasonably free by the start of the first race.

The Northerly breeze called for a start heading up the lake. In the light conditions it was important to cross the start line right on time and at speed and thereby gain a boat length or 2 on the opposition. It's normal to start on starboard tack which has right of way but sooner or later one has to tack on to port and if you can get across in front of the rest of the fleet that's much better than having to dip behind them.

On rounding no 6 mark at the North end of the lake a further issue became apparent. The sun was shining low and strong right in front blotting out not only any chance of spotting the no 3 mark down the other end but also a clear view of approaching boats coming at you out of the sun with rights. However despite some very close encounters there were no contacts and no penalties called for so off we all went downwind towards no 3.

It's the wind flowing over the sails that drives the boat along so when you're going downwind the speed of the flow is reduced by the boat's own speed so there's a lot less push. A good plan is to set the sail, get the boat at the right trim and angle of heel then stay very still and don't move anything as she gathers speed down the hill. This works until the wind increases which is inevitably from behind and is foreshadowed by the sound of the approaching bow waves catching you up but then that's yachting.

On the first lap after a good start and lucky gap at the weather mark your correspondent (Jerry Colman, MS&CC) found himself running second on the water at no 3 in the Finn behind Dave Batchelor (IOMYC) in the H2. Peter and Max Cope (IOMYC) in the Laser 2000 were next with Joe and Eric Whitelegg (PS&CC) in the blue-sailed Enterprise leading the chasing bunch which for the first time this season included Keith Holden (LSC) in his beautiful Finn, Zada. Good to see such a spread of entries from all round the Island. During the second lap the dreaded breeze from behind effect applied and was skilfully employed by the Whileleggs, the Copes and Simon Cain in the RS Aero 7 to overhaul your correspondent on corrected time albeit only by a few seconds. Andrew Dean in the Laser Radial was just a few seconds behind with Will Osbourne and Keith Holden still getting to grips with their steeds a few more seconds back.

The 2 lap race took over half an hour to run so the Race Officer Keith Poole wisely decided to shorten the course by about half so the downwind or leeward mark was now no 1. This also put the boats in more favourable positions for photography so the otherwise unpressed patrol boat crew could get the light in the right place.

For this race the wind dropped away almost to a flat calm everywhere so only one lap was completed, with just Will Osbourn (RS Aero 5) retiring becalmed. The Copes showed great light airs skills to take the race on corrected time with Batchelor and Colman taking second and third. Holden was now going notably faster, finishing just 12 seconds behind your correspondent although Dean managed to slot in between us. I detect a challenge coming especially if this light stuff continues.

So the Watling Streetworks January Series at Injebreck starts with Peter and Max Cope leading with a 1st and a 2nd followed by Batchelor, the Whiteleggs, Colman and Dean.

As the photos demonstrate, this event showed Injebreck off at its aesthetic best especially with all the dinghies on the water. We look forward to more of the same if the high pressure system over us for now manages to hang on a bit longer.

Thanks to our sponsor, Doug Watling, OOD Keith Poole for the usual excellent race management throughout and Peter Hoosen-Owen for patrol boat. Full results and great pics from Peter H-O and others on MS&CC FB.