

## 2009 National Championships - Littleton Sailing Club

### Report by:

Our National Championships were held on the May Bank Holiday weekend, at Littleton Sailing Club, just off the M3/M25 junction and close to Heathrow, with great views of the planes! Despite the lack of silence this is an excellent medium sized lake with great clubhouse facilities, and we were made very welcome, both by the Club and by the Comet Class Association, who let us join in on their Championship weekend. This has proved in the past to be a successful partnership, and of course the Comet Duo was developed from the single-handed Comet class in the 1990s.

So we were expecting a good weekend of sailing, which indeed we had except for one essential element – the wind! Three out of the four races actually sailed were more drifts than sailing, and it became a bit of a lottery as to whether you were totally becalmed, or creeping along inch by inch! Nevertheless the sun shone and we enjoyed a very relaxed sailing event. Five Duos came along for the 2-day event, 3 sailing double-handed, and 2 single-handed. In my report, for convenience I've just used the helm's name, but the crews were as always a vital part of the action (or inaction in this case!) The boats and crews were:

Sail No. 97	David Dray and Nicola Miles
Sail No. 108	David and Elizabeth Willey
Sail No. 132	John and Jacqui Sturgeon
Sail No. 69	John Linnell
Sail No. 150	Stephen Linton

The first race began in a light breeze, which quickly died. Stephen became becalmed on the left side of the course, while the other 4 boats did find some wind on the right. David Dray took the lead at the first mark and held it until the last leg, when John Linnell found a puff of wind to finish first. Once again we adopted a handicap system with a PY rating of 1175 for double-handed and 1150 for single-handed. Using this the handicap result was very close with David D winning by 25 seconds from John Sturgeon, and John Linnell a further 25 seconds behind. David Willey and Stephen drifted in some time behind!

The second race was postponed, and we had our AGM (see report elsewhere). Once again this race was in similarly minimal wind, and John Linnell and David Dray were close together throughout, with John again crossing the line first (by 11 seconds) but losing out on handicap. This time John Sturgeon came third, and again David Willey and Stephen followed them in.

On Bank Holiday Monday, we arrived in a light drizzle and little wind, which suddenly changed into an amazing squall with strong wind and significant white-horse waves on the lake! Within half an hour this had died considerably, but we did enjoy a light breeze of force 1-2 for the first race of the day, and in this wind Stephen (who had set off reefed, but quickly reverted to full sail before the start) suddenly found himself at the front on the first leg and held this to the finish, though narrowly losing out on handicap to John Sturgeon and David Dray as the wind went through 180 degrees on the last leg and he failed to notice!

Our fourth and final race was another drift, with John and Jacqui Sturgeon best mastering the very light conditions to win on the line from David Dray. After an hour's delay the 5<sup>th</sup> race was cancelled and we sorted out the results for the prize-giving.

The single-handed result was clear, with John L having 3 wins to Stephen's single victory. The handicap race was close and an interesting outcome, and showed again that our adjusted PY for single-handers does give a fair way of matching them with the double-handers. On handicap the order was different in every race, and in the light winds the double-handers had more to gain from the handicap. David Dray had 2 wins and 2 second places, while John Sturgeon had 2 wins, one second and one third, so David Dray triumphed and earned the 'Champion of Champions' trophy.

But of course the National Trophy goes to the 'proper' double-handed Duo, and here we had a dead heat, with both David Dray and John Sturgeon having 2 firsts and 2 seconds. Under the sailing rules the winner was decided on the outcome of the final race, so John and Jacqui Sturgeon are the national Champions for 2009 – but commiserations to David Dray and Nicola Miles who were in fact first equal and only lost out because 'rules are rules!' An honourable mention should go to David and Liz Willey who provided extra competition and kept us all going during the prolonged drifts!

We all enjoyed ourselves, despite the lack of wind, and there were prizes for all. As we've now abandoned the 'other' Inland/Tidal Championships, the second set of trophies are now awarded for single-handed sailing, and so Fred Kent's four beautiful wooded trophies were all awarded this year. These consist of a fine Duo model for the second in the Nationals, a wooden comet emblem for the first single-hander with a wooden goblet for second place, and another Comet Duo model for the handicap race. We paid tribute to Fred at the AGM and also at the prize-giving for his contribution to our Duo Class Association.

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