

## Dartmouth Sailing Week Pilot Financial Dinghy Regatta @ Dittisham SC

### Day 2

#### Long Distance Race (even longer for some)

It is a tradition of the Royal Dart Yacht Regatta to hold a Long Distance Bay Race on one of the days to see the further-flung parts of Start Bay (counting double) – and at DSC we sometimes try something similar for the Dinghy Regatta...

Today was deemed to be such a day, although with rain and a mirror-flat calm at 10am, the chances of making it out to the start seemed bleak, let alone any further-flung parts of the River Dart. But Mike our PRO made the ballsy call to hold the Long Distance Race anyway, with the seemingly laughable objective of sending us round the corner all the way to Stoke Gabriel, and that after having a few windward-leeward legs as a warm up (more about them later), and then round the local buoys first.

And at 11.45, when 60 boats were milling around fighting over a couple of inconsequential zephyrs, making it from one end of the line to other seemed equally unlikely. The only highlight amongst the general grey nothingness being the contralto tones of our Commodore extemporising upon a well-known aria about the “Sails on the boat go flap,flap,flap” – except they didn’t...

However, at 11.50 a dark patch of potential breeze appeared from Flat Owers (windward mark) and our PRO took this as evidence enough to begin proceedings. So at 12.00, as planned, our travels and travails began...

Now, the long distance race is envisaged as a supreme test of navigational skills over a long and complicated course over unfamiliar waters. What is not envisaged is that entire fleets get lost somewhere between the first two marks of the course.

Yet this being Dittisham, this is exactly what happened, as the entire PY fleet tried various ways of making the long distance race even longer, either by setting off in the wrong direction after the statutory couple of simple windward/leeward bits, or in extreme cases, adding an entire extra sausage. James Dodd in his Phantom and Howard Frear in his Streaker were the first to see the error of their ways, and headed off away from Dittisham Lake. In the end, Howard won comfortably on handicap, with Dan Bridger and Charlie Gilmore in their Aeros second and third. Jennie Richardson, who had apparently been very vocal in her belief that the early extra sausage was absolutely the done thing, did remarkably well to bring her Streaker back into fourth place!

In the Lasers, Ian Wakeling had built up a comfortable windward/leeward lead, but was seduced by the wayward wanderings of the PY fleet and also threw in an extra lap, leaving Simon Hardiman from Bartley near Birmingham to lead the Lasers off into the unknown of the River Dart. Which he did to great effect leaving everyone else rather a long way behind. And well done to Graeme Montgomery and David Bomby for taking the initiative after the massive Gurrow Point pile-up (see below), and then keeping ahead of the chasing pack to claim the next two places.

While the just the actual leaving of Dittisham grieved enough competitors, there was plenty more pain and distress further afield as well. Sue Thomas had opened up a nifty lead over her fellow Laser Radials over the opening windward/leeward bits, but found the hole of all holes just north of Gurrow Point, well ahead of an enormous pile up of all the other Lasers (Radial and Full rig) and lots of rather naffed-off PY boats – who all then proceeded to catch a new wind, circumvent Sue (and me), and then passing either side off into the yonder towards Stoke Gabriel. Issy Glazebrook from Bridport was able to take full advantage of Sue’s misfortune to take her first win of the week – well done Issy. Megan Hardiman took second to consolidate her position at the top of the leader board, with Sue coming back to claim third.

The Solo start was enlivened by Jon Clarke performing an impromptu slot-gasket inspection right on the pin-end – “split-second from genius” was how Jon later described his not quite genius enough attempt at a port-tack pin end start with 26 other Solos thundering down on starboard.

The Solos, having had time to digest the navigational chaos amongst the fleets ahead, managed to only sail the distance prescribed. Stuart Hydon charged off into a lead he didn't relinquish. Peter Sturgess used all his long years of experience of Salcombe marathons to glide effortlessly into second, while John Ellis from Chew Valley showed that sailing on an ever-diminishing inland reservoir is no barrier to long distance excellence, taking an impressive third. Johnny Mouldsdale was lucky that nobody saw his rather relaxed approach to roll-tacking – so relaxed that on rounding the Pilot Financial furthest-distance mark off Stoke Gabriel, he didn't worry himself about such fripperies as changing sides during the tack and apparently just sat back and rolled into the water with his boat on top of him. But fortunately there was nobody there to report back...apart from Anne-marie!

So there was lots to talk about when we finally made it ashore for the most wonderful BBQ conjured up by Julie & John – thank you both of you, it was marvellous.

After tomorrow's racing, we can all enjoy the legendary Ditsum Belles tea...can't wait – but before that, we will be back to two shorter races, with less chance for navigational cock-ups (allegedly) – have fun...