

Fisherrow Yacht Club Regatta 2020

Fisherrow Yacht Club held its Annual Regatta on the weekend of Saturday 19th and Sunday 20th September 2020. In normal circumstances the annual regatta is a special event but this year with all the COVID restrictions the event was very special indeed as Fisherrow Yacht Club was one of the few Forth Estuary sailing clubs to hold a regatta. The regatta's significance, this year was a moment to be cherished as Former Commodore of the Club and Race Officer for the 2020 regatta, Mark McClelland, posted a fun, in depth analysis of the event on the club's forum.

Mark stated;

"I wanted to give a full account of the FYC Regatta as we are one of the few Forth Estuary yacht clubs managing to sail this year and also able to hold a regatta; that in itself is an achievement! I also wanted to acknowledge all the participants especially as we were not able to hold a prize ceremony at the end".

Saturday, day one, the weather forecast was for light winds which are ideal for the club beginners. However, the wind picked up to Force 4 coming in from the North East and with an onshore wind the sea swell on the beach made it impossible for all but a couple of the dinghies to get launched, moreover, the crews of the two powered rib safety boats had a huge challenge to lay the large buoys that are used as race marks.

One experienced dinghy sailor, Ben Saunders, managed to launch and race his catamaran which must have been a fascinating sight for the beach spectators as he almost flew around the course with his windward hull well out of the water. Ben inadvertently started his course at the same time as the yachts even although the dinghies have their own course and start time.

Three yachts: "Swirley", skippered by David Banks; "Deantoun", skippered by Stuart McDonald and "Sulamar" skippered by Dennis Walton competed and because of the conditions all boats carried one reef in their main sails.. The boats were very competitively raced each with a respective first second and third in the three races that they competed in.

Sunday, day two, light favourable winds and both yachts and dinghies enjoyed a great afternoon's racing. The yachts sailed almost neck and neck, and the dinghies enjoyed lovely conditions for the most part until the wind dropped on the last race and it took a lot longer to complete the course. The ten competing dinghy sailors were classed into three groups: two from Longhorns: the most experienced; six from Silverhorns, intermediate sailors and two from Greenhorns the novice sailors. These three horn groupings are devised by and for only Fisherrow Yacht Club and gives every sailor a chance to win at their own level, however, officially all sailing boat hulls and rigs are handicapped by classifications set down by the Royal Yachting Association.

The overall winners awarded by race times and corrected handicaps were: David Banks, on yacht "Swirley" a Westerley Griffon and Colin and Steph Robertson on dinghy "B-witched" a RS 200. Ben Saunders who had done so excitingly well with his catamaran on Saturday did not gain much advantage as the lighter Sunday winds were less well suited to his rig.

Throughout 2020 COVID restrictions the sailing club premises and the planning processes for sailing sessions have been managed online. Actual sailing activities have been undertaken with care given to ensure crews are from same households or from "Bubbles".

The club has also been able to welcome 11 new ordinary members, 2 new family memberships and one new associate member. There's been huge interest in courses, about 20 people in total enquired about level two dinghy sailing all keen to learn once training can resume. The new members have enthusiastically joined in the sailing sessions wherever possible, which has had a very positive impact and will hopefully contribute to a successful year ahead in all the club's undertakings.

Another very positive intention is, weather permitting, to be able to sail the dinghies until December. However, most of the yachts owned by FYC members will soon be craned out onto the harbour wall in readiness for the winter.

The club's social programme which is a mainstay of the winter season will be determined by the Government guidelines; for the moment the club bar which is open on Friday evenings has adopted the new restricted opening hours and with three rooms where members can be seated the current guidelines can easily be followed.

One special new boat acquisition delivered on Saturday 26th September is a laser dinghy called "Thelonius". Thelonius was brought to Britain from Australia by its owner a former competitor in the Perth, Australia, Laser National Championships. The boat will go into the club's fleet which is used by members who do not own a boat of their own. Non boat owning members pay a little more on their membership fee and this "Pay and Play" system is working very well for the club as it has helped enormously to attract new members. Currently, club bosun, Max Blinkhorn is also keen to set up a Laser club system where a couple of laser dinghies have several owners which means that the boats are sailed more often and space in the club yard is not taken up with rarely sailed boats.

Anyone interested in learning more about Fisherrow Yacht Club should contact:

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