

## **2022 Dainty Dish Report**

Some forty Sunbeam sailors gathered at ISC on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> July for the 51<sup>st</sup> running of the Dainty Dish race. The Dainty Dish is an open passage race to Cowes or other Solent port and is part of the V3 series and is often sailed to position boats prior to either Cowes or Classic Cowes Week. Friday had started overcast and it was hard to believe that the Monday and Tuesday of the same week had seen new high temperature records set in the UK, with the day's forecast hinting at the threat of morning thunderstorms over parts of the south coast.

Our Class Captain had been down to the club early to collect his boat Joie de Vivre from her mooring and have her ready to collect competitors' bags at 0815 and all were ready for a 0830 brief and race start at 10am. Following some discussion about the colour of the mooring buoys off Cowes, all crews were aboard in plenty of time for the start with a strong wind blowing from the East and the ebb in full flow. During the short wait on the moorings, a quick glance at Chimet showed 25 knots at the bar and the CC, much to the relief of most helms, decided to delay the start until the wind moderated. Back at the other bar, much discussion about weather apps, lightning strikes and wind strength ensued, but following a review of the rain radar in the club's office and the latest actual wind strength at various points en route, a decision was made for an 11:15 start.

After an uneventful departure in the still strong ebb, but reduced wind, the fleet gathered at Park for a reaching start with a line that was nicely biased to provide the downwind boats with clear air and a distance advantage, with the upwind boats in the stronger tide. Possibly as a result of a previous Dainty Dish 'winner' being OCS, the fleet behaved well in the ebb and the race began in a medium to strong south-easterly swinging between a very close fetch to an angle where spinnakers might just hold. The leg down the Chichester channel toward Camber post was closely fought with the boats who had started further back but upwind benefiting from the extra tide and able to accommodate the wind when it headed more easily than the boats near the western channel edge.

Slowly Sky, Kitty and Betty pulled abeam of Danny and Argosy, and as the tip of the Pilsea shallows was cleared, they were able to bear away and hoist spinnakers as the fleet headed for the green buoys marking the (first) Winner bank. Sadly, the magnetic attraction of the channel edge inexorably dragged Harmony into its clutches. However, with some outside help, she was able to get clear without having to wait for a rising tide. The fleet rushed past Hayling Island SC as they downed spinnakers and trimmed for another very fine reach down the channel to the bar beacon – the order here was Betty, Danny, Sky, Argosy and Serendipity with the latter boats calling for room on the bank. By this stage the rain was testing the quality of everyone's foul weather gear and a few flashes of sheet lightning to the east showed that the thunderstorm was behaving as earlier predicted in the club's office. Chimet archive shows the (true) wind at this time between 16kts and 19kts but disappointingly does not record the temperature of the water, which felt surprisingly warm when it came aboard at times in large lumps. At West Pole the order was Betty, Danny, Argosy, Sky, Serendipity, and the fleet bore away for an exciting spinnaker run towards Winner – a heading best described as 'aim for No Man's Land fort when you can see it through the rain'.

The run down to Winner was a testing time with the boats rolling heavily in the shallow waters and confused seas of Hayling bay. Gradually, Danny drew level with Betty and by Winner had drawn slightly ahead. Some boats gybed here and headed for the right hand (Horse Sand) fort; a small but determined group (Sky, Argosy, and Dainty) led by the Class Captain also gybed at Winner, rolled the dice and headed for the Dolphins and the south shore of the mainland hoping to trade the extra distance for better tidal protection. Still making excellent speed over the ground the two groups sailed on, the rain stopped, the sun threatened, and the rolling became commonplace. The northern

group cleared the Dolphins very slightly ahead of the group going through the forts and then a further split in the fleet took place with a small group taking the rhumb line aiming directly for the Shrape beacon just beyond Old Castle point and a larger group heading for the Ryde Sand post and the shallows along the north side of the Island in Osborne bay.

It is eight miles from the forts to the Shrape beacon (this free tool [here](#) works well on PCs). As the middle group passed south of North Sturbridge and edged south for the tidal relief below Peel Bank it seemed that the rhumb line might be paying off. The northern fleet had not made their expected gains but Dainty had shown excellent downwind speed catching the two boats in front by the time they reached Spit Sand Fort, calling starboard on them as they approached on opposite gybes. Dainty then crossed to the South Island shore, also overhauling some of this fleet as she sailed down Osborne bay. The remainders of the mainland fleet continued along Stokes Bay before crossing towards the island. Meanwhile, the extra distance sailed along the Isle of Wight shore appeared to show the mid-stream Betty and Kitty at least level with Danny just off Wootton Creek. Betty and Kitty had a lovely sail with the boats apparently joined by a piece of elastic about 5 boat lengths long, surfing down the waves towards Cowes in the sunshine. A similar battle was being fought between Query and Serendipity inshore along the edge of Osborne Bay, with the boats separated by a small distance and trading gybes. Eventually, Query decided to take a slightly more northerly route aiming to intercept Betty and Kitty and she slowly pulled away from Serendipity who had decided to stay further inshore.

As Norris Castle approached at the western end of Osborne Bay it became clear that the inshore tidal eddy had become established and both Danny, Query and Serendipity sailing up the shoreline on a good wind angle made more speed than the boats converging from midstream. By now the group from the mainland shore had also joined the stream of Sunbeams heading for the north side of the Shrape beacon and the perils of the Royal London finishing line. The order was Danny with a good lead on Query who was about 6 boat lengths ahead of Betty with Kitty a similar distance behind but just within the clutches of Serendipity and Minty who both slowly caught her up from behind thanks to a bit of careful blanketing. The tide had now really slowed progress over the ground and there was ample time to check the lines of mooring buoys to ensure compliance with the race instructions by staying north of the northernmost buoys. Kitty, Minty and Serendipity sailed past the mooring buoys exchanging places, gybing and calling water on the mooring buoy obstruction. Serendipity managed to edge ahead at the finish line where all three were overlapped after some 18 miles of racing. The big question was, just how far did you have to sail to cross the RLYC finish line whose transit was beyond the western edge of the moorings. Once again, this transit caught out an unsuspecting victim and Maisy sadly scored a DNF. Full results are shown on the class website.

So finished another Dainty Dish race. The good news was that despite the testing conditions there were no significant breakages and some helms realised that they and their boats could withstand true wind speeds gusting up to 20 knots with a further one to two knots of adverse tide added to the choppy Solent mix. Good training for Cowes Week.

The Dainty Dish race is followed by a much-anticipated dinner, this year also held at the Royal London Yacht Club. Pre-dinner drinks were kindly provided by Evelyn Partners and the London room generated a convivial atmosphere with seating around tables of eight and an excellent meal. Peter Nicholson gave a short resume of the Dainty Dish's history whilst the day's winner Roger Wickens explained how the Dainty Dish trophy was once lost and then found.

Finally, whilst many people contribute to the success of the event, a large vote of thanks is due to several people including Nick and Juliette Leach who drove the boat and baggage over and found time to photo and comment on the race, to Ryan at the club for laying on a Friday morning start, to Anne Taylor who ensured finishers were properly recorded, and to Ollie Gilchrist for the loan of his launch and making a good call on the weather, lightning and start time.