

The Centenary Henry Chisholm Weekend Regatta

Nineteen Sunbeams took part in the annual Henry Chisholm weekend regatta at Itchenor Sailing Club on the 29th & 30th April which celebrates the impact of Sir Henry Chisholm in the 1950s and 60s when he re-invigorated the Sunbeam Class at Itchenor. Consistency was the key to success given that all 4 races were sailed in very light shifty conditions with the wind speed generally in single figures. The first race was run in a light 6-8 knot breeze and consisted of 4 laps of a short windward/leeward course at the head of the Thorney Channel. The start was hotly contested, and a number of boats were over the line at the start and had to restart after being pushed over by the ebb tide. First at the windward mark was Tina Webster's V66 Molly but on the following run the wind became very light and patchy and there were numerous place changes. The race became a close battle between former International 14 world champion Martin Jones in V32 Holly and the husband and wife team of Joe & Cathy Burnie in V41 Fleury, closely followed by Ollie Gilchrist and Becky Wickens in V68 Sky and Nick Leach and Martin Evans in V18 Polly and the race finished in that order.

The winners of last year's Regatta, V26 Danny sailed by Roger Wickens and Tim Martell did not fare so well and recovered to finish fifth, having been last at the first mark.

There was more wind at times in the second race which took place in the afternoon on the beginnings of the flood tide. The PRO set a longer course with a long close reach from Ellanore, through the John's Folly channel and along the south side of Thorney Island to Mill Rythe, followed by a beat up to a zone mark near Dunes and thence to the finish at the Galleon line. V41 Fleury led the race from the start with Holly pulling through the fleet on the reach into second place, with Sky taking third. The Folly channel caught a couple of boats out who had to retire after being helped off the mud.

The weather forecast for the second day's racing promised slightly more wind, but this largely failed to appear with all racing again taking place in the Thorney Channel in under 10 knots of wind. Race 3 saw the fleet undertake a 5-lap race on a short course where clear air was essential in order to maximise performance. V41 Fleury mastered the conditions once again to take the win. V26 Danny recovered from their poor start to the Regatta by stealing second place from V68 Sky on the finish line whilst V32 Holly did well to recover from a poor opening leg and take fourth place.

With one race to go V41 Fleury led the Regatta but could not relax as V32 Holly could still win overall if they won the final race and Fleury was outside the top three. V18 Polly got the best start and led the fleet for the first 3 legs until the wind died and was passed by Danny and Holly. The final beat became a race between four boats as Fleury caught the leading three. Fleury managed to take the lead at Astra from Danny and Polly, and this looked to be the likely finishing order. However, the wind had other ideas and switched off for the leaders completely within yards of the finish. Fleury crept over the finish line to take the race and Regatta win, followed by Danny. Polly and Holly were becalmed and overtaken by boats who had their own private breeze on the Itchenor shore!

As a result, Joe & Cathy Burnie sailing Fleury took victory in the Regatta with three firsts and a second followed by Holly and Sky.

In the evening, 40 Sunbeamers enjoyed the hospitality of Itchenor Sailing Club and raised their glasses to Sir Henry Chisholm which is especially pertinent this year as the Sunbeam Class celebrates its Centenary.