

Keyhaven Yacht Club were the hosts for this year's Lymington River Scow Class Association (LRSCA) Championships over the weekend of 6th and 7th September.

The event saw 28 boats taking part with lively sailing in demanding conditions over both days. The weather gods were undecided what to throw at us, so a bit of pretty much everything kept the race team, support boats and competitors on their toes.

HW Hurst at 10:34 on Saturday meant an early start to the day with registration opening at 07:30. Red streaks in the dawn sky gave a hint of the day to come.

The wind was gusting 20kn from the southeast for the start of the first race at 10:00. By the third and final race of the day it was gusting up to 25kn with a 28kn gust to 'help' the boats on their way home.

A triangle/sausage course was set by the race officer, Cy Grisley, in the Solent outside Hawkers Lake. Even with Hurst Spit providing a degree of shelter, the high winds and corresponding sea conditions proved challenging with a number of capsizes and a few early retirements. One competitor said it was his first capsize in about 13 years, only be topped by another who last went 'swimming' 23 years ago. The capsizes and the repositioning of marks between races due to wind shifts kept the support and race teams busy.

In the single handed fleet, Robbie Claridge sailing LR327 Hot & Spicy, gave a Scow sailing master class and finished first in all 3 races. Maria Claridge was hard on his heels in second place and John Chaundy third.

In the doubles fleet, Tom Hebbert sailing LR586 Jonathan with M Littlejohn finished top with 2 firsts and a third place but only just ahead of Chris and Grace Cecil-Wright also on 5 points. Catherine Maguire sailing with Karl Thorne were in third place.

The racing on Sunday followed a similar pattern. The first race started in a 19kn southeast wind gusting 23kn amid a darkening sky with lightning flashing in the near distance, around Christchurch. Luckily the storm tracked north, skirting the racing area, although the racers were soaked in a heavy, thankfully short lived, rain shower. The strong wind continued throughout racing and fluctuated between southeast and south although not reaching the 25kn and 28kn gusts encountered on Saturday. Nevertheless there were a few more capsizes and early retirements.

Luckily, having been able to run 3 races on Saturday, only 2 were required to complete the planned 5 race series, so racers and volunteers alike were glad to return to a post race 'tea' at the Club, provided by the LRSCA committee with sandwiches and cakes donated by members.

Robbie Claridge continued his winning streak, chalking up five first places to win the Builder's Trophy in the single handed fleet with Maria Claridge second and John Chaundy third.

The double handed fleet was a closely fought affair with only ONE point separating first and third. Catherine Maguire and Karl Thorne sailing LR587 Manx Cat narrowly took first place and the Sailmaker's Trophy with 7 points after winning both of Sunday's races. Second were Chris and Grace Cecil-Wright also on 7 points. Tom Hebbert, sailing with Ava on Sunday, came third with 8 points.

The winner of President's Trophy for the top single handed Master was John Chaundy.

The winners of President's Trophy for the top double handed Masters were Jeremy and Max Vines.

The winner of the Keyhaven Commodore's Trophy for the best Newcomer was Ray Mitchell sailing his Scow LR601 Only If... which was only just off the production line.

Unfortunately, there were no entries in the Junior fleet although 3 junior sailors took part. Olivia Maguire, helming in her first Championships, was presented with the 1st Junior Helm prize bowl. Cleo Johnson, sailing with Red Johnson, was given the first Junior crew prize and Ava Hebbert received the 2nd Junior crew prize.

At the prize giving, the Race Officer was able to present 'capsize' polo shorts which had been hibernating in one of John Claridge's cupboards for many years. Although there were not quite enough to go round this year....

The trophies and prizes were presented at the Club by Mary Montagu-Scott, President of the LRSCA.

In his speech, as well as thanking all concerned in running the Championships, Robbie Claridge summed up the weekend of sailing by congratulating his fellow competitors saying "if you can sail in those conditions you can sail in any...!".

A massive thank you to all the KYC volunteers and staff for their many roles throughout the weekend and to the LRSCA committee and members for the much enjoyed tea and cakes.

Brendan Nellis