

Solo Fleet Review – 2006

The season began with Chris Cleaves in a brand new Winder staking his claim on the record books by beating all comers to win the handicap series.

The spring series saw races fought out mainly in strong winds and the pair of Alister Morley and Chris Cleaves trading first and second places race by race. Such was their supremacy that only Peter Sturgess and Adrian Griffin succeeded in dislodging either of them, to take one second place each.

The Open Meeting over the late May Bank Holiday week-end, brought a good turnout of locals and visitors who had to contend with difficult NW conditions. These gave rise during the final race, to the situation of being almost becalmed off Smalls Cove and yet completely overpowered on the beat up to Gerston. The second of these beats claimed Peter Edwards in a big way and necessitated a new mast and half a new foredeck before his boat was ready to race a gain a few weeks later.

Alister Morley had a successful summer away from home, starting with the Inland Championships at Rutland Water where he claimed his first national title at the weekend event on 17/18th June. A month later Alister, Andrew Borne and Peter Edwards travelled to Lake Garda in Italy to compete in the Nations Cup. The stormy conditions were not for the faint hearted, but Alister revelled in them to take overall victory, with Andrew finishing 14th and Peter a creditable 21st. Alister's fiercest competition then came at the National Championships at Felpham during the first week in August. He improved upon last year's sixth place in Berwick, by finishing third overall behind last year's winner Jamie Lea and second placed Steve Cockerill

Meanwhile back at home the Summer Series was fought out by the usual suspects of Cleaves, Jago & Peter Sturgess, with Malcolm Bell putting in some good results. With Morley out of the way, Cleaves was not seriously challenged and took a convincing series win, having conceded first place only twice to Peter Sturgess and once to a rare appearance from Alister. The old fox did not have it all his own way in the autumn series however and Morley cleaned up by winning each of the six races that he entered.

Towards the end of the summer series, James Hannaford suffered misfortune at the hands of a two-masted vessel demonstrating that *Droit de Seigneur* can still take preference over the rule book. James's transom was destroyed in the ensuing collision. Hasty temporary repairs at Chubby's workshop saw the boat ready to sail within a week & she is now undergoing full repairs over the winter.

New faces on the water in 2006 included Trevor Williams who has had some exciting moments at the proper, 'wooden-built' end of the fleet with Peter Edwards and Adrian Griffin. Hugh Tubbs took delivery of a brand new Boon built Solo to replace the one destroyed in the October gales of 2004. He was spotted at Batson rigging up for one race, but failed to make the start line owing to a goose-neck which would not fit the boom. He has not been seen since, but hopefully will be out again next year.

The second open meeting, shared with the National 12s on 21st/22nd October, was fought out in winds of such increasing ferocity that the final race was watched from the beach at Smalls Cove by 15 of the 18 strong entry, while Alister Morley gave a master-class to them & to two competitors with a death-wish who dared to follow him onto the water. Race officer Dan Bridger kept the course mercifully short and as the rescue boats busied themselves with two half-drowned bodies, overall victory for the week-end was in no doubt.

The following week-end, Salcombe was well represented at the end of season championship meeting at Draycote Water, with Alister Morley having to concede overall victory by virtue of his finishing positions, having shared an equal points score with the eventual winner.

In keeping with tradition, at the annual laying up supper, Cleaves had to find several large boxes to take away all of his trophies. Alister was unfortunately absent due to illness but was awarded the Endeavour Trophy and Peter Edwards was voted winner of the Capsize Belt by his peers, in recognition of some gritty performances.