

Solo Fleet Review – October 2008

The season got off to a good start with fourteen of our number competing regularly in the spring handicap. Chris Cleaves again took victory in the series, but Paul Ellis, Alister Morley and 'Pink' Dave Greening were always there with him ready to pounce on the slightest mistake. Morley & Cleaves even fought all the way to the line to take joint line honours in one race. These four took the top four places before the first Yawl of Geof Gilson & Chris Spencer-Chapman.

With 26 boats making it to the beach in time for the next series, the Morley/Cleaves battle continued with only Billy Jago managing to dislodge one of this pair from taking line honours. Alister won this series by a single point, but there were some notable and consistently good performances only just behind the top three from Peter Hammond, Paul Ellis and Dave Greening and Simon 'Yotter' Yates who by now, was sailing regularly at Salcombe, having left Starcross in search of fresh challenges.

Eleven visitors came to our spring open meeting over the bank holiday week-end at the end of May. It was left to all 10 ½ stone of Godfrey Clarke to knock Salcombe's heavyweights off their perches and take overall victory in a week-end which saw a wide range of conditions including some fierce winds which led to Monday's racing being abandoned in favour of enjoying the continued and generous beer sponsorship from Barney Greenhill.

The summer series was contested by a total of 28 boats with Billy Jago reminding us all just who was top dog whenever the Cleaves/Morley show was out of town at an open meeting. Toby Spittle was absent for a large part of the series enjoying his scientific expedition to the North Pole which was, in part sponsored by his peers in the Solo fleet. It was cruelly suggested that some might want to see the back of him for a spell, rather than their usual view of his transom, but this was unfounded. Toby returned and gave a very confident and informative presentation at the first of the autumn series of Friday evening talks in the Chart Room

On the away front, Salcombe did not do much travelling, but lack of quantity was compensated for with quality. Alister Morley travelled to the Bristol Corinthians open meeting on 20th April and was narrowly beaten into second placed by Chris Goldhawk in a day of strong winds gusting up to force 6.

The Weymouth & Portland Sailing Academy put on a pre-championship week-end event on 28th & 29th June. Owing to a clash of dates, only 38 boats entered, but nevertheless the quality of the entries was very high & included seven Solos from Salcombe who duly served notice on the rest of the world, to be aware of the competitive standard that they could expect from our fleet at the forthcoming Nationals in Torquay. The event was well organised with three back to back races each day, which left some of the older members of our fleet with aching muscles for the following week. However, Chris 'Chubby' Cleaves came in a heroic 3rd with Alister Morley just behind in 4th after two days of winds between 22 and 28 knots and a very nasty chop, which Chubby hardly noticed. Only Jim Hunt and Vic Crawshaw could put themselves in front of Salcombe's two heavy weather specialists which, given the number of high profile names from the national fleet who were in attendance, including Andy Davis the national champion, was quite some

achievement. Peter Hammond & Simon 'Yotter' Yates finished 13th & 14th overall with Malcolm Bell, Peter Edwards & Andrew Borne classified 26th, 29th & 30th respectively

Salcombe turned out in force for this year's national championships in Torquay held on 20th – 26th July. Characteristically, Peter Hammond's was the very first of the 83 boats to be scrutineered and Alister Morley's was the very last. These two went on to show all comers the way home in the third of the twelve race series, by taking first and second places respectively. The Fleet made its presence felt in the boat park with the customary plastic deck chairs and stainless thermos flasks setting a trend which will probably be mimicked across the country by those seeking next season's 'must have' accessories.

There is a full report on the week's events on this year's Solo page of our website. Suffice it to say that Salcombe put up some noteworthy performances from all of its members and brought home the team trophy for the first time since another, equally well known team trophy was won in 1966.

Final results were:- Alister Morley 4th, Paul Ellis 6th, Chris Cleaves 16th, Peter Hammond 27th, Simon Yates 32nd, Dave Greening 35th, Trevor Williams 65th, Peter Edwards 67th

Over the course of the year the rapid expansion of the Solo fleet has been undiminished, with seven more boats swelling our numbers to 34 and no sign of the credit crunch arresting progress. Other prospective new members have been shown around this autumn and one or two more members of our aging fishing fleet are now contemplating the final ascent into the Club's premier league. We look forward to even greater competition in 2009.

Adrian Griffin