

The annual Firefly Open at Chipstead Sailing Club was a cracking affair this year. Overnight rain cleared to give blue skies and a lovely force 2-3 with a few stronger gusts blowing straight down the lake for a day that was to be shared with the Enterprise open. Seven visitors joined the five Chipstead boats on the start line of the first race.

The race officer had gone a bit retro by reinstating the five minute / ten minute sequence, but this was merely a way of letting the Enterprises have a sporting chance of getting away from us as they started first. With a little confusion the fleet managed to get away neatly and the first mark was peppered with a series of parent / offspring combo's using their light weight but developing skills to great advantage. The first race was a constant tussle between the Mason boat of Will and Polly, fighting it out with the Greaves boat of Steve and Arthur. They were kept very honest with multiple champion Stu Hudson crewed by son Robbie. At the line it was the Masons whose superior jib stick technique saw them win through from the Greaves and Hudsons, followed up by regular team Lucy Boreham and Rachel Crebbin.

Race 2 was sailed almost straight away with some stronger gusts getting the better of a few of the crews, but at least that gave the rescue teams something to do. It was all change at the front with the recently repatriated Dom Johnson hitting the front, crewed by daughter Izzy who was loving the sailing despite it not being quite as warm as Singapore! They pulled out a decent lead by the finish from the Hudsons. Third were Roger and Anna Morris with the Boreham / Crebbin team 4th again. The Masons bagged 6th with Ben Green and Fi Edwards beating them to 5th. Steve Greaves, crewed this time by Madeleine was 7th, Neil and Jennie Banks 8th and Rob Ellis and Jane Cassidy completing the finishers in 9th.

After a good lunch and with only two of the three races to count, it looked like a winner takes all final race. The fleet got away cleanly again and it was the Masons who were off like hares, with the greyhounds of Greaveses and Johnsons nipping at their heels. The Mason / Greaves battle raged for the first lap and a half, and was so intense they missed the Johnsons taking a sneaky lift up the left hand shore and popping out in the lead. Steve and Arthur managed to get past Will and Polly when the latter's jib stick came back to bite them and engaged the Johnsons in a tacking duel, but it was a case of too little too late with the Johnsons crossing the line to take the win and the event. The Masons finished 3rd in the race but pipped the Greaves boat for 2nd overall on count back. Lots of smiles all round after a great day of racing in the best conditions an inland lake can offer. We'll certainly be back next year!

