

The Starcross Steamer on Sunday 24th January 2010

Written by John Donovan - PRO - Last Updated Friday, 05 February 2010 21:13

Updated: Photo gallery [here](#) - click any image to start "slide show".

It was only two weeks before the nineteenth running of the annual Starcross Steamer on the Exe estuary that Haldon and Telegraph hills (only two miles from the club) were in the national press having been closed by snow, causing tailbacks and gridlock over the whole area.



But what a difference a couple of weeks can make. On Sunday 24th January we were blessed with sunshine, a temperature of 9 degrees and the Exe looking like a mill pond. The entry of seventy two boats (well up on last year) were able to see the safety boats lay a small course off the club in readiness for the wind to arrive.

At the 10:00 briefing there was still no wind so it was decided to postpone the 10:30 Cadet start by half an hour and hope that the predicted NW wind would arrive. As there were no Cadets entered this year, a quick check of the entries revealed that the slowest boat was the Solo, so the class start times were hastily recalculated with the Solo the first boat away.

With the planned start gone, the eleven o'clock delayed start rapidly approaching and the Exe looking serene, the race did not look very hopeful. Then miraculously a whiff of wind from the North West appeared on the water and spread rapidly across the estuary. Now two races were on, one to get on the water in time and the other the Steamer.



The Starcross Steamer on Sunday 24th January 2010

Written by John Donovan - PRO - Last Updated Friday, 05 February 2010 21:13

So at 11:00, in bright sunlight and a pleasant force three the first class away were the two Solos followed 7 minutes later by a couple of Wayfarers and a further two minutes later the Lasers. Then followed the larger classes: 9 - RS200, 10 - Phantoms, followed by the largest fleet again this year of 16 - Merlin Rockets. After a short gap the Devoti D-One made its first outing at the Steamer, followed two minutes later by the 9 - RS400s. The last fleets to start were the 7 - B14s followed by the sole RS800 43 minutes after the start.

With the wind fading slightly, it was again looking like Merlin weather, or at least so they hoped. Half way through the race the leading Solo was Stephen Refell in 4809, just ahead of fellow Solo sailor Roger Battersby in 4986, but Simon Heusen in Phantom 1275 was ominously only three and a quarter minutes behind, with the leading Merlin just two minutes further back. As the race progressed it became obvious that the faster boats were never going to be able to sail to their handicap in the lighter conditions, as they struggled to get their boats on the plane.

At the finish, two and a half hours after the start, the Phantom of Simon Heusen just managed to stay ahead of Andy Davis and Tom Pygall in Merlin 3684. In fact the first eight places were filled either by Merlins or Phantoms, followed in 9th and 10th by two RS200s. We are always delighted to welcome entries from all over the South West and the Midlands, but congratulations must go to Bert Castleton who travelled all the way from Norwich to sail with us, obviously he won the furthest travelled prize. The first Ladies, first Starcross boat and first RS200 were Jayne Johnson helming and Nicki McIlroy crewing, and the first Junior was Amy Fitter in a Laser 2000.

Thanks as always must go to the competitors who travel to Starcross every year to make the event so memorable, the galley for producing vast quantities of hot food and drink, the rescue boat crews who were not too busy this year and not forgetting the multihull fleet who organize and man the event. A special thank you must also go to whoever organised the wind to blow just in time, it would have been nicer a little earlier but better late than never.

Next year, the difficult tides in January and February mean that the twentieth running of the Starcross Steamer will have to be delayed until the 13th March; the first start will be at 10:00. The planning has already started; we look forward to welcoming both old and new faces to the event.

Overall results

1st

Phantom 1275
Simon Heusen

Lyme Regis Sailing Club

2nd

Merlin Rocket
3684 Andy Davis Tom Pygall
Chase Sailing Club

3rd

Merlin Rocket 3610 Richard Dee

4th

Merlin Rocket 3691 Richard Whitworth

5th

Phantom 1359 Simon Hawkes

Chris C

Olly Tu

The Starcross Steamer on Sunday 24th January 2010

Written by John Donovan - PRO - Last Updated Friday, 05 February 2010 21:13

6th	Merlin Rocket	3655	Rich Adams	Turkish
7th	Merlin Rocket	3983	Chris Martin	Ben H
8th	Phantom	128	Ian Jay	
9th	RS200	960	Jayne Johnson	Nicki M
10th	RS200	1228	Paul Bartlett	Greg B

Furthest Travelled

Phantom
1181
Bert Castleton

Rollsby Broad SC

FirstLadies

RS200
960
Jayne Johnson

Nicki McIlroy

Starcross Yacht Club

First Junior

Laser 2000
21816
Amy Fitter

RN Sailing Association

A [full list](#) of the results can be viewed on the club web site and Mike Rice of www.fotoboat.com has all the pictures.

John Donovan PRO