

Record turnout for youth regatta

Held at Alton Watersports Centre near Holbrook, at the beginning of July in conditions could not have been better; warm, sunny and with a good south westerly breeze that gave the more experienced sailors the opportunity to show off their skills while giving the beginners an excuse to get wet.

The 170 youngsters, sailing in 132 boats, were divided into three fleets, fast handicap, slow handicap and Topper. In addition for the first time this year youngsters whose school is taking part in the RYA OnBoard scheme were also competing on a different course. Some of the older youngsters sailing in Lasers, RS500 and 800 and Larks, proved extremely competent sailors.

The OnBoard fleet comprised Laser Bugs, Picos, and Optimists, while the main regatta fleets contained Laser Fevas, Teras and Q'BAs, a large number of Toppers, RS500 and 800, Larks, and Mirrors.

Kevin Connolly, chairman of SWSA said: "The beginner regatta is new for 2010. It's intended for beginner sailors and those with no race experience, with coaching provided on the day to help all competitors enjoy and learn. The turnout this year has been far greater than we expected, nearly double the number when we started organising this event. My thanks to all who helped support and organise the event."

As RYA East vice-Chairman Fiona Wylie commented after spending the day afloat in the start boat: "It was great to see so many youngsters here today enjoying themselves. And judging by the smiles and thank yous as they passed the committee boat at the end of the third race, every one of them clearly enjoyed the experience."

"This has been one of the best run and best enjoyed youth events I've been associated with in a long time – congratulations to everyone, and especially to SWSA for encouraging more schools to add sailing to their extra curricular activities."

Chris Hussey, RYA OnBoard Officer for Suffolk and Essex who ran the beginners fleet said: "It was fun. Everyone on the water enjoyed it. One of the funniest sights though was in the morning when we were running a teaching session a gust came through and blew over most of the OnBoard fleet. No one was hurt and most seemed to enjoy the experience."

Presenting trophies in the main hall of the adjacent Royal Hospital School, Babergh District Council chairman David Wood said: "I must congratulate all the youngsters who took part. Although my own activity afloat has been limited to windsurfing, I can appreciate the skill and expertise most of you have shown. The conditions today were ideal, a lot better than when I took part in the recent mile swim in these same waters."

The event was organised by SWSA and supported by Suffolk County Council, Alton Watersports Centre, and the Royal Hospital School and RYA OnBoard. Boat manufacturers RS and Topper along with RYA East loaned boats for the regatta.



Farlingay School's Harry O'Riordan won the Topper class trophy. David Woods, chairman of Baberg DC presented



Among the Onboard fleet young Jack Adams proved tops, winning the Onboard Topper trophy



Some SWSA students are proving to be highly skilled sailors



The SWSA regatta fleet head off downwind having successfully cleared the windward gybe mark



A good lesson in awareness. Youngsters competing or the first time in an OnBoard regatta learn the rudiments on competitive sailing