



Welsh National Championship at Dovey YC May 7th & 8th.



Our weekend started with us leaving a very rainy Lake District on the Friday lunch time, with a double stacker supporting the two RWYC GP14's in tow. I was slightly concerned for the boats, given only 5 days previously the double stacker wheel fell off on the way back from the Ullswater Daffodil Regatta, whilst only supporting Roberts (much lighter) Musto Skiff! However, JR assured me that his repair was thorough and off we went. As we passed Chester and entered Wales I thought to myself we were basically there.. how wrong I was! We left the three laned M56 behind and headed through the single lane country roads of Wales at a much slower pace; on the plus side at least, the double stacker would be taking less of a battering. We passed Bala (who are due to host the GP14 Inlands in May) but with the rain still pouring and lakes and mountains on the horizon, we could have been forgiven for thinking we were still at home! Following a very picturesque road along the cliffs on the side of the estuary, we soon arrived in Aberdovey and unhitched at Dovey Yacht Club. With it still pouring with rain we immediately got our priorities in order and headed for the haven of the Yacht Club. When in the Yacht Club we met our event organiser for the weekend, John Tildsley (whose father owned GP14 no. 2), who gave us a warm welcome and showed us to the bar – wahey! It wasn't long though before our priorities changed, as we were fast informed the local chippy shut at 20:00! With 10 minutes to go we set off at a brisk walk, racing Zena Martin and Leanne Pilkington from Bolton Sailing Club on the way, who were coincidentally also heading to the same chippy... little did we know that the tight racing between us was to continue throughout the weekend! With fish and chips in hand we all reconvened at the Yacht Club, where thankfully, no one had swiped our drinks from earlier. More sailors arrived, including the Dobson and Tunnicliffe families, who were taking the opportunity to have a family get away at the lovely Aberdovey coast (likely sincerely hoping the weather would improve!). Drinks were flowing and the excellent bar staff called last orders at a very respectable time, given some of them were also providing safety boat cover for us the next day. However, local sailor Frank Nickless informed us that the night was young and that we should follow him to his local. I had no reason to doubt his allegiance as he was wearing a cap adorning the pub's name, so off we went. Now quite merry, there were a few healthy debates and discussions about rig set up and rake. These soon turned into pestering Andy, owner of Impact Marine, for discount on GP14 sails, although he remained steadfast and wouldn't budge! With the first race scheduled for 12:00 the next day, the briefing was scheduled for 10:00; hence at 01:00 we all made a sensible decision to head home. It was only then we realised we still hadn't been to our accommodation, which turned out to be a bit of an adventure, especially given the steepness and narrowness of our stairs after an enjoyable night!

The next day, we were all very grateful to wake to find that the rain had passed, and the skies were blue! WOW – what a beautiful place Aberdovey was! We headed to the club to begin rigging our boats and laugh about the night before. John held the briefing and let us know that we would be sailing out on the open sea, with it taking at least an hour to get to the race area. Slightly daunted by the prospect of a long beat out whilst still feeling semi-fragile, he then went on to tell us we had to cross a very ominous sand bar. "Pass right of the green one, avoid the breakers, head to the white and red one". HUH? Thankfully, we all made a sensible decision and let the previous world champions head out first, safe in the knowledge that it would be them to run aground first! As we left the sandy beach, Graham Flynn's and Frank's boat was only just arriving, which didn't leave them much time to get the undercover off and the mast stepped; well done for making the first start! Is this the start of a trend as at Chase for the Midland Area Championship Ian Dobson was left on the shore awaiting his boat to arrive being driven by Andy and they missed the first race.

Being a championship event, we were racing relatively large port rounded sausage-triangle courses, with the wind direction on Day 1 meaning we were beating offshore towards the West. Race 1 got underway in a timely manner, with a committee boat bias but a clean start. The first beat was hotly contested with some close racing in about 6 knots of breeze. Ian & Andy rounded the windward mark in the lead, closely followed by Graham Flynn & Frank Nickless, then Rob Richardson & Ethan Leahy. After a 45 minute race, the lead order was unchanged, with Tomasz Szakola & Helen Allen finishing 4th followed by the rest of the fleet. Race 2 started promptly, again with a committee boat bias, this time resulting in Ian forcing Robert up towards the committee boat. However, Robert hung on in there and won the start. Unfortunately, by the windward mark his lead was lost and the order at the front as per Race 1. In Race 2 the lead three finished the same but this time Zena was 4th after she held me off at the reach mark (grrrr!), meaning I came 5th. Race 3 got underway after a general recall, but the difference being Robert & Ethan were slow off the line. This race fast became a match race between the RWYC boats, as I saw it as an opportunity to beat Robert in at least one race. JR, my crew, but also Robert's dad, was presumably slightly conflicted, as he tried his best to sabotage my efforts to beat his son! Thankfully we held him off and finished in 3rd, with Robert in 5th behind Zena Martin and Leanne Pilkington in 4th. Ian and Graham were 1st and 2nd again, which was fast becoming predictable! 3 races were scheduled for the Saturday, but with light wind scheduled for Sunday, the Race Officer made a sensible decision to keep us out for an extra race on Day 1. This was a great call, as with the wind now increased in strength to around 14 knots, this was personally my favourite race! Coincidentally, of course, it was also the first race we beat Zena, after we got inside of her at the leeward mark following a surf in on a wave! Ian and Graham were 1st and 2nd again, with Robert reverting back to his 3rd place position. With a great day of racing finished, we then set off back for the Club on a shy reach. Travelling over 2 miles to get back in, that was the longest time I have had the GP on the plane – great fun and the most commented on and enjoyed part of the sailing by most of the sailors! The Welsh Harp sailors, Richard Connett and Andy Wadsworth, absolutely smoked us on the way back in, really showing us how it's done on the sea in breeze. Boats back ashore and packed up for the evening, I downloaded my Strava activity - 26 miles sailed, max speed 10.0 knots! We then reconvened in the Yacht Club bar, enjoying drinks on the sunny balcony. It was only then we realised we really should have worn sun cream – I was getting a bit of grief for a rosy, red face, but at least I didn't look like Robert, who had a T-shirt tan line making his arm look like a drumstick lolly! The Dovey Yacht Club Team put on an excellent evening, with a meal available and some fantastic live music that got everyone dancing and singing. We had made a group decision that we were going to have a quieter night and get to bed earlier than the night before... that didn't last long! Soon enough we were once again following Frank towards the local. Unfortunately the pub had shut its doors, but Frank developed a contingency plan and was adamant we should head to his house for night cap. Hence, another 01:00 night for team RWYC!

Sunday, we awoke again to the same glorious sunshine and most of the sailors being fully covered so not to worsen their sunburn! Unfortunately no wind! Luckily the wind filled in, but this time from the East, so off we went sailing, this time leaving the club on a run. As we sailed out all relaxed, the board lifted up into JR's knackers! Presuming we had hit the sand bar; I was slightly worried. When I realised that it was just a jellyfish we had hit, I did laugh hysterically... JR did not find it so funny! In a light-moderate wind, Race 5 got underway on the Sunday morning after a few mark adjustments. With the wind shifting it was a big pin end bias and I got my worst start, starting well behind the others. Taking a gamble on the second beat and splitting from the pack paid off, as I was soon back up into the mix. The race finished with the same, now predictable, 1st, 2nd and 3rd, but Tomasz & Helen were back in the mix finishing 4th. The Race Office then tried his best to set us a sixth race, but with the wind dropping, Ian & Andy sailed for home, safe in the knowledge they had 5 bullets. It wasn't long before we all followed, grateful for the tows offered by the race team. We got back ashore and packed up the boats before a prize giving in the club house. The prizes were presented by Desmond, the Dovey Yacht Club Commodore, and Vanessa, from the Association. Fantastic

pewter tankards were belatedly awarded commemorating 70yrs of the GP14 in 2020; the event being postponed due to covid twice. Local boat sailed by Grant and Brian Hickson received a prize for attending their first open and their first racing over the bar, winning Bronze Fleet was Andy Wadsworth & Cathy Howard, from Welsh Harp. Winning Silver Fleet was Zena Martin and Leanne Pilkington, from Bolton Sailing Club. Third place overall was Robert Richardson and Ethan Leahy, from RWYC; the Prestatyn Trophy having appeared on the prize giving table that morning after being missing for a decade. Second place overall, with five second places, was Graham Flynn and Frank Nickless, from Chase Sailing Club. But winners of the 2022 GP14 Welsh Championships, with a faultless five wins, were Ian Dobson and Andy Tunnicliffe. Thanks to Dovey Yacht Club for hosting an excellent event at the birth place of the GP14. The event was run impeccably and the sailing fantastic; I will definitely be back again! The only shame was that we didn't have more entries to do justice for such a great sailing venue with such a history for the association! We are now looking forward to the remaining events in the run up to the Worlds in Skerries, with the Welsh Championships really whetting our appetite.

Many thanks to our series sponsors Justin Jones of Robline and Craftinsure for the prizes.

Full results and pictures below:

On the water pictures by Doris O'Keefe, prize giving photos by the contingent from RWYC

| Pos | Helm | Crew | Class | Sail no. | Race 1 | Race 2 | Race 3 | Race 4 | Race 5 | Gross | Net |
|-----|-------------------|-------------------|-------|----------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------|-----|
| 1 | Ian Dobson | Andy Tunnicliffe | GP14 | 14262 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 | 5 |
| 2 | Graham Flynn | Frank Nickless | GP14 | 14199 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 10 | 10 |
| 3 | Robert Richardson | Ethan Leaty | GP14 | 13161 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 17 | 17 |
| 4 | Rena Martin | Leahie Pilkington | GP14 | 13533 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 23 | 23 |
| 5 | Harry Frith | John Richardson | GP14 | 13509 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 24 | 24 |
| 6 | Tomasz Szakota | Helen | GP14 | 13237 | 4 | 9 | 6 | 8 | 4 | 31 | 31 |
| 7 | Andy Wadsworth | Cathy Howard | GP14 | 14014 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 7 | 34 | 34 |
| 8 | Grant Hickson | Brian Hickson | GP14 | 14268 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 6 | 8 | 37 | 37 |
| 9 | Richard Connett | Tom Jackson | GP14 | 14044 | 9 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 44 | 44 |











Harry Frith, Royal Windermere Yacht Club

