**2014 157th Regatta Captain's Report**

With sunshine and wind in abundance, the 53 entries of this year’s Logicalis Gorey Regatta over the weekend of 1st/2nd June, provided a colourful spectacle in Grouville Bay throughout that weekend. This annual sailing Regatta is the oldest known Regatta in the British Isles, highlighted by many of the Regatta trophies, understandably displaying names familiar within The Jersey Archives.

The entries were split across 9 classes, from large racing yachts based in St Helier to the smallest Optimist dinghies from St Catherine’s Sailing Club. The final results over the two days were never dominated in any of the individual Classes.

The yachts based in St Helier, started proceedings by racing to Gorey on the rising tide, early on Saturday morning. This was an eventful affair, as the boats were greeted with grey threatening clouds and winds gusting in excess of 25 knots as the exited the safe confines of the Harbour.  Nine yachts braved the elements knowing the improving forecast. At the start some yachts chose to hoist spinnakers with helms immediately struggling to keep their vessels upright and pointing in a southerly direction toward Demi des Pas and then along the south east coast.

Allen Brown in “The Dogs” soon opened a lead as he surged to the front of the fleet reaching speeds of 17 knots in a cloud of sea spray. Soon all of the faster yachts, with Rhys Perkins in Abracadabra and Alex Ohlson in Jai Ho we able to give chase along the south coast of the Island. Three smaller quarter tonners, Tom Bombadil, Super Q and 2Farr were having a close race amongst themselves as they approached the Violet Buoy with all of the faster yachts still in their sights.

Almost an hour into the race and on cue as the boats passed Seymour, the clouds parted and the sun made its presence felt in the stiff northerly breeze.  Welcome warmth for all the crews as they battled on towards Gorey. The race to the finish soon became a tactical one, with Ben Rogers in Tom Bombadil and Julian Barber in Super Q sailing superbly to close in on the faster leading boats to finish at Gorey Pier heads in just under two hours.  Abracadabra although taking line honours, found on corrected time, it was Tom Bombadil winning the Stevens Centenary Challenge Cup from Abracadabra and Super Q third. The Class 3 trophy, The Betty Bruce Challenge was ably sailed and won by Nick Bailhache in Fillipene finishing also in just over two hours, a credible performance in the testing conditions.

With all the boats now assembled at Gorey on the high tide, Bill Harris and his race management team of helpers, quickly got proceedings underway in the clear blue skies and a northerly force four breeze which remained for the next two days – idyllic sailing. The Orviss Challenge for day boats were first away with the first of three races that afternoon. It was Ben Jones in Baloo who took the spoils from Mike Harrison in Jigsaw with three straight wins this time.

Two races for the yachts soon followed and in Class 1 it was Allen Brown leading from the front in both races, taking both the Glendewar Challenge and De Faye Memorial Cups.  Abracadabra and Jai Hoi following literally in his wake in the first race but in the second, David de Cateret in Oz.Pom was a credible 2nd followed by Abracadabra.

Class 2 yachts were certainly a hotly contested affair, despite the low entries. On corrected time, it was  the Tom Bombadil taking the Richardson Trophy from Jeff Speller sailing 2Farr by a mere 15 seconds with Super Q third.  In the 2nd race for the Le Riche Challenge Trophy, the top 2 results were reversed and just 8 seconds separated  2Farr and Tom Bombadil again with Super Q third.

With three Classes now on the race course, five entries arrived at the line for Class 3 yachts.  The fleet included two visiting French yachts from Portbail, who had sailed over to Gorey on Friday. Their trip was not in vain, as both boats featured in the place prizes at the end of the day.  However, it was the Jersey yacht, Fillipene who won the Fairey Cup, with french helms Alain Houchard on Tortuga and Herve Limtaf on Blue Cat close behind.  The second race for the C.Austin Potter Trophy this time saw a different Jersey boat take the honours as Dave Yettram in his catamaran, Moku sailed well clear of the fleet to win, with Tortuga again second and Fillipene third.

By midday, with all the yachts now racing and scattered across all corners of the bay, this soon provided a colourful spectacle and entertainment for any inquisitive onlookers on the shore. However, there was no rest bite for the Race Officer and his deputies firing the starting cannons with precision timing.  Bill Harris in quick succession started the two main dinghy classes, another twenty boats, split evenly into two fleets for the first race. The 5th Gorey Trophy for the slow fleet was first away, with the Feva of Karen Roworth and her daughter Grace in her first regatta, soon opening up an unassailable lead to take the trophy, with William Holden and David Raimbault leading the chasing fleet of Optimists in second and third.  The fast dinghies were the last and final class to leave the pierhead start line. Those dinghies that managed the feisty conditions well and stayed upright simply disappeared in cloud of sea spray away from the start line. Their short, albeit exhilarating race was won by Island Games entrant Emma Speller in her Laser radial in fine style. Emma was followed by a brother and sister partnership of Henry and Mary Perkins in a RS200 aptly named Flying Eyeore while Lydia Carter in another Laser Radial finished third.

The second dinghy race of the day is one of the most prestigious of the Regatta for dinghies.  Both classes starting together soon saw 22 dinghies vying for a good start and clear wind for the Norman Challenge Trophy.  There was also an added incentive for the Junior sailors in this race, as the first junior would also take the George Thomas Labey Memorial Trophy. This race was the most testing of the day for senior and junior sailors alike.  After 45 minutes racing, the conditions forced the retirement of seven boats for a variety of reasons; fatigue and gear failure to name just two.  It was Emma Speller again who mastered the conditions best, taking the trophy with junior sailor David Raimbault an impressive second overall, very closely followed by another junior sailor, Elana st George just 30 seconds behind in third.

With the tide now on the ebb, the racing yachts from St Helier soon had to make a speedy retreat from Grouville Bay.  The race for all returning classes was quickly underway and all yachts disappeared over the horizon in the offshore breeze and onwards behind reef surrounding Seymour Tower before turning toward St Helier.  Again it was a fast passage in the afternoon sunshine with  all yachts arriving safely in just under 2 hours. Tom Bombadil took the honours on corrected time in the combined classes 1 & 2 for The Commodores Cup.

Sunday’s schedule of races got underway at midday and was a little less intense but the welcome sunshine arrived on queue however, the stiff northerly breeze showed no signs of moderating.  Without the St Helier yachts present and our French visitors left for Portbail on the high tide, the yacht racing for the Yantzee Cup over two races that afternoon was a local Gorey boat owner’s affair. Overall winner was Dave Yettram on Moku for his second trophy of the weekend, closely followed by Justin Horton and family aboard Sunbeam in second with Jonathan Vibert helming Silver Mist following in third.

The main dinghy classes also completed their final two races of the weekend before returning to St  Catherine’s Bay.  Class winners were Marin Speller in the Lasers, Mark Lamy in RS200, while Megan Roworth in her topper sailed superbly to win the Marmotier Trophy by a clear 2 minutes.

The Optimist class racing over 2 races was closely fought as usual. The top three boats only separated by a few points in a highly competitive fleet.  In the end, overall winner was David Raimbault with his brother Peter second and Elana St George third.  Also, one competitor in this fleet had certainly caught the attention of the Race Committee throughout the entire weekend.  As a result, Tom Pollard who had ably acquitted himself in his first Gorey Regatta finishing every race was awarded the prestigious Sir Edward Heath Memorial Trophy for his tenacity and achievement.

With all main races for the dinghy classes being competed for on large courses stretching the entire length of Grouville Bay, the Regatta for the first time introduced a new novice dinghy class to this years event.  Races were run separately on a small race course close to the shore over the both days. With some of the competitors only just 9 years old, they all showed great sailing skill and determination in completing what must have felt like a marathon event of 6 races over the weekend.  Overall winner was Annabel St George, closely followed by Finn Rogers and Toby Jones.  Judging by the excitement during the close racing and the smiles on all of their faces ashore, this novice class event is certain to become a regular feature in future Regattas.

This 157th Logicalis Gorey Regatta which is sailed in the confines of Grouville Bay and underneath the backdrop of Mont Orguiel Castle is magnificent venue. A special Regatta, that sailors plus spectators alike will look forward to and pencil in their diaries as a must for 2014.