

Noble Marine Laser Inland Championships, Grafham Water SC (4–5 November)

Reports by Sam Whaley, Jon Emmett and Tom Mitchell

Standard

43 Laser Standards gathered at Grafham Water SC to compete in the 2017 Laser Inland Championships. Notoriously shifty and unpredictable, the Inlands can throw up some real surprises and it really means that anyone can win.

Saturday

Heavy rain while unloading the boats on Saturday didn't deter any spirits and the fleet headed onto the water in a very gusty and shifty 7–16knts.

In Race 1, it was the biased pin-end who managed to get off cleanly, with Sam Whaley and Alistair Goodwin tacking over and just crossing the fleet on port and heading into the middle of the course ready for the next shift. However, it was the boats who continued over the port layline that gained significantly from a left-hand shift and more pressure. Sam Whaley managed to maintain a narrow lead around the windward mark from Joe Mullan and Craig Williamson. After a funky reach, the fleet descended upon a chaotic downwind, with huge pressure differences making it very easy to gain a lot but also very easy to lose it all! Joe Mullan snatched the lead from Whaley, with Williamson in third. The match racing tactics already seemed to have started with Mullan slamming tacks on Whaley, causing him to fall down to fifth, while Craig Williamson moved into second. Williamson and Mullan proceeded to have a small battle until the finish but Whaley managed to recover to third.

In Race 2, Craig Williamson made the best of another bin-biased start (unfortunately too good as he would later find out he was UFD!) tacking and leading the fleet to the windward mark from Joe Mullan and Ben Flower. On the first downwind, there was, once again, huge pressure differences and when Craig Williamson had a spectacular death roll, Sam Whaley managed to take a large gust to move into second place behind Mullan. On the second beat, Mullan and Whaley had another battle, with Whaley taking the final shift into the mark and taking the lead. On the remaining legs, the places remained the same with Whaley first, Mullan second and Ross Williams having a solid race to finish third.

Race 3 became much shiftier with bigger pressure differences. Sam Whaley got a good start at the pin-end to lead to the windward mark, but Ross Williams aced the right-hand side to give Whaley a run for his money and round directly behind him. On the downwind, Goodwin made some solid gains to move into second place and, after a quick double tack on the next upwind, took the lead with a huge right-hand shift. Goodwin played some ace shifts to extend his lead across the beat, while Whaley slipped to third after Orlando Gledhill made the right-hand side work coming into the windward mark. However, on the next downwind Whaley managed to find a big gust and surfed his

way back over 50 metres to take the lead from Goodwin, rounding the bottom mark next to each other. Once again, on the final upwind, Goodwin sniffed out some extraordinary shift, but Whaley managed to make the most of the final shift to lead around the windward and win the race, with Goodwin second and Mullan managing to pull back through to third place.

Sunday

Sunday dawned with higher winds and lower temperatures but a lot of sun to make up for the rain the previous day. In Race 4, Whaley again made the most of the biased pin-end of the line to lead at the windward mark, followed by Alistair Goodwin. Whaley extended on the downwind before Goodwin broke away from the group, while Jack Hopkins held on to third place. These positions stayed the same until the finish with Whaley taking the win.

Race 5 was very interesting with a huge right shift affecting half of the fleet soon after the start. Joe Drake led around the windward mark, followed by Mullan and Goodwin before a substantial gap. Mullan took the lead and while tussling for position up the next beat missed a large right shift which allowed Craig Williamson to go from sixth to first, closely followed by George Coles. Mullan managed to overtake Coles, but Williamson was too far away for anyone to launch a serious attack before the finish of the race.

Going into the final race of the championship, Whaley won the pin-end to lead around the windward mark, followed by Oliver Davenport. With a reasonable lead, these two were never challenged, with Whaley holding the lead to win, followed by Davenport and Orlando Gledhill. It then turned out Whaley was black flagged.

Despite the final race black flag, Sam Whaley had done enough to win the Inland Championship. Joe Mullan mounted a good challenge to finish second and Alistair Goodwin finished third overall.



Sam Whaley won the Standard fleet

Radial

A total of 61 Radials gathered for the last UKLA event of 2017 at Grafham Water SC, the Inland Championships, where, fortunately, there is still plenty of water, even if it does contain a few killer shrimp.

Saturday

Day one and the competitors were greeted with no wind and torrential rain, but this soon cleared to give 15knts from the northwest. In the end, a great day's racing was had by all in the best conditions we have had for an Inlands in a few years.

Race 1 started after a brief postponement – too brief for Ben Elvin who ended up racing in his Offshore jacket. He said he was very comfortable upwind, but it dragged in the water on the reaches. Ben Whaley set down the gauntlet for the event with a commanding lead as he slowly pulled away from the fleet. Although he did appear to be confused on the exact course and it was Daisy Collingridge, who finished second, who ensured that he went around the correct downwind mark on the final lap. Jon Emmett, freshly back from coaching in Japan, pulled through the fleet to take third.

Race 2 was initially led by Grafham local Krishan Bhogal, but by the start of the final beat, it had all closed up and Whaley was back in the hunt. Emmett got through to take the bullet and, despite a great performance, Bhogal slipped to fourth as both Bens (Elvin and Whaley) pulled through to take second and third respectively.

Race 3 was another bullet for Whaley, his second of the day, with the tussle behind between Barr, Elvin and Emmett. Down the final run, Emmett grabbed second from Elvin, who took third. However, with three races scheduled for the next day, there was still lots to play for and there was more wind and even sunshine forecast.

Sunday

In Race 4, Whaley initially led Emmett, but unfortunately, they went around the wrong windward mark (Mark 5 for the Standard/Radial course). As Emmett was reaching on starboard, back to the correct windward mark, he crossed Sam Whaley (Ben's brother who sails the Standard rig) reaching on port who very helpfully told him 'that's *my* mark'.

In the meantime, over to the left at the correct windward mark, Ben Elvin rounded with a comfortable lead over Alison Stevens and Chloe Barr. Elvin then nearly undid all the hard work at the end of the second lap, heading off to the reach mark a lap early, allowing Krishan Bhogal to briefly take the lead on the final beat, but he was eventually overhauled again by Elvin and Barr. Ben Whaley mounted a spectacular recovery from his earlier mistake to take third.

Race 5 and some of the fleet made the opposite mistake, initially heading for Mark 2 instead of Mark 1, being determined not to overstand the starboard layline, and this time there were port reaches into the windward mark. Emmett overstood the most as he was, obviously, enjoying reaching. Whaley made no such mistake a second time and led from start to finish after a good Committee Boat end start. Henry Beadsall was second and Elvin moved into second overall with a third.

Race 6 saw a series of general recalls and, ultimately, the black flag and an early shower for some, including Ben Whaley. However, with no racing being allowed to start after 2pm to allow competitors to go home (and enjoy the fireworks!), when the general recalls continued, the race was, ultimately, timed out.

National Champion Ben Whaley, who sailed a near perfect series, was a worthy winner – first overall and first Youth. Ben Elvin's consistency was rewarded with second, Jon Emmett, was third and first Master, Chloe Barr was fourth and first Lady, while Krishan Bhogal was fifth. This results clearly show the demographic of the class with a Youth, Senior, Master, Lady and a local making up the top five!



Ben Whaley being presented with the Radial Inland Trophy

4.7 fleet

A strong fleet of 46 sailors in the 4.7 rig travelled to Grafham Water for the Inland Championships.

Saturday

Day one brought winds of 10–15knts with oscillating shifts and flat water. The start of Race 1 brought confusion amongst the 4.7 fleet when the Race Committee started the race one minute early, with a number of boats getting a U-flag. However, despite this misunderstanding the race went ahead and finished with Drew Gibbons first, James Foster second and Barty Gray third. In Race 2, the breeze filled in from the right on the first beat, allowing Tom Mitchell to round the windward mark first, Elizabeth Beardsall was in second and Gray third. This order stayed the same after the second beat but on the third one Beardsall rounded first. The race ended with Beardsall first, Mitchell second and Gray third. The final race of the day was sailed in slightly less wind than the previous two, with Drew Barnes taking first, Finn Dickinson second and Sam Dickinson third.

Sunday

The second day of the Championships brought slightly more wind than the first, and with three points between sixth and first, it was anyone's game. Race 4 was a battle between Beardsall and Mitchell, with Mitchell taking first place, Beardsall was second and Finn Dickinson was in third. In Race 5, Finn Dickinson led, closely followed by Mitchell in second and Gray in third. Going into the last race, the results were close with Mitchell on equal points with Finn Dickinson and Beardsall just behind them. In the final race, Finn Dickinson took first place followed by Gary in second and Foster in third.

In the end, Finn Dickinson was the winner and is the new Inland Champion, Barty Gray was second and Tom Mitchell was third. First girl was Elizabeth Beardsall in fourth.



Finn Dickinson leading the 4.7 fleet

Overall

Thanks to Grafham Water SC for a great Championships; next year's event is being held at Rutland SC. We look forward to seeing everyone at Stokes Bay SC next year for the first of the Spring Qualifiers – bring a friend!

Full results: <http://www.kbsuk.com/laser/events/index.asp?EventID=100>