

SMALL SHIPS RACE IN ALL KINDS OF WEATHER

The annual ASTO Small Ships race saw its 13th start off Cowes on Saturday. This is a race for sail training vessels, with 5 different classes, and boats made from wood, steel, glass fibre and concrete and rigs including Bermudan, ketch, cutter - and even a catamaran.

The race start, off the Royal Yacht Squadron, was delayed by the passage of some large commercial traffic, by which time the wind, nonexistent during the parade past the Squadron platform, and some monsoon-like rain storms, had changed for sunshine and a light breeze.

This breeze varied in strength and had almost eased off by the time the fleet had reached the Eastern Solent but then strengthened as they passed through the forts off Portsmouth. It stayed strong for the beat back up to Cowes with some very exciting sailing especially in Osborne Bay. At one point a squall strong enough to make the surface of the sea turn 'milky' pushed through some of the competitors.

After the race ASTO Chairman James Stevens said: "it is a tribute to the Captains and crews of these vessels that during weather that included gale-force gusts they kept their trainees safe"

Winner in class B and overall was Hamble-based *Jolie Brise*, operated by Dauntsey's School in Devon. *Yoda* – from the Portsmouth Sail Training Trust was first in class C2 and *Scaramouche*, crewed by youngsters from the Greig City Academy in Tottenham, London, came first in class D.

And because this race is as much about taking part as the actual racing, the Richard Langhorn trophy – awarded on votes from the rest of the fleet for the vessel that best represents the spirit of the race – went to the Sea Cadet yacht T.S. *Vigilant*, who also came first in Class C1: in a mammoth baking session they titled the Great British Sail Off and using the small oven onboard their vessel, they somehow managed to create over 300 cupcakes to give to all the other crews.

Notes to Editors: ASTO is the Association of Sail Training Organisations, a Gosport based charity that promotes and supports Sail Training, representing more than 30 members and 50 vessels.

The Small Ships race takes place under Sail Training International (STI) racing and sailing rules but the underlying intent of the Small Ships races is that the most important thing is that the young trainees have fun.

In this race there were 200 trainees aged under 25 of which 145 were under 18.