



# Mirror Nationals

The four-day English Braids-sponsored Mirror National Championship attracted 72 boats to Brightlingsea on August 25-28...

**F**or many years Brightlingsea SC has been an active and leading Mirror club, producing many top sailors including world champions in the class. So it was fitting that the club hosted what many of the competitors have commented on as the best championship they have attended...

## Sunshine coast

The Mirror is a fantastic boat to learn to sail in, first as a beginner and then sharpening one's racing skills, and the class association organises many training events for all levels. So it was no surprise that the two days of training organised before the nationals proved very popular with 30 boats attending, led by RYA national squad coach Peter Aitken, assisted by locals Craig Bond and

Dave Saker. As has been the pattern this summer the weather for the training was typically wet and often windy, nevertheless the 60 sailors came away improving their sailing and learning a bit more about racing at Brightlingsea.

With the start of the August Bank Holiday weekend, it was a pleasant surprise to see that summer had arrived, and Brightlingsea was living up to its billing as the 'sunshine coast'. However, with a stubborn land breeze it took some time for the sea breeze to build on each day, giving rise to light winds and plenty of shifts.

Mirror sailors are a helpful and friendly bunch and it was great to see the majority of the fleet entering into the spirit of the buddy system. For some of the youngsters competing in their first championship there was the delight at being teamed with world, European and national champions. The first challenge was to shuffle the dinghy park so buddies were parked next to each other.

## Eager fleet

Race 1 saw an eager fleet pushing the line, and with the tide under them it was not surprising that it took two general recalls and the black flag to get the nationals under way. At the finish it was the Grey family showing the way home, with Ed Grey and Hannah Mitchell winning from David and Beth Grey, with local sisters Emma and Martina Barry third.

The end of day one saw the Barry sisters heading the leaderboard. The competitors and their families enjoyed a superb commodore's reception and buffet, with the Brightlingsea mayor as guest of honour. The chairman of English Braids, Peter Earp visited the National Championship, flying over the racing in his helicopter and was very impressed by the standard of sailing throughout the fleet.

Day two saw more warm weather and a similar pattern of the first races held in a light land breeze, followed by a light sea breeze, with some shifty



conditions. After a relatively slow start on day one (10th and sixth), defending champions Hector and son Ben Cisneros, stepped up a gear with two bullets and a fifth, making it clear that they were looking to make it a hat-trick of national titles.

The first two days were also designated as the Mirror youth and junior championships. This saw local girls teams walk away with both titles with Emma and Martina Barry crowned youth champions from fellow Brightlingsea members, Chris Rust and Oliver Newman. Millie Newman and Sarah Bines won the junior championships from Tom and James Lovesey.

The evening entertainments started with an excellent hog roast followed by games on the beach, including tug of war for the more energetic.

## Good day at the office

Day three again bought similar weather conditions, starting with a light land breeze followed by a sea breeze setting in mid-afternoon. The first race of the day saw locals, David Conlon and Mitchell Bond win from father Craig Bond and daughter Charlotte, with the Barry sisters completing the local trio on the podium. Hector and Ben again had another good day at the office, with a first and second to put them on top of the leader board going into the final day of the championships.

The final day again brought light shifty winds and plenty of sunshine. Ross Kearney, 2005 world champion, sailing with Katy Jones made a strong effort to add the national title to their growing list of wins, and despite winning the penultimate race by some margin, Hector and Ben's second place was sufficient and they were crowned 2008 national champions: making it a hat-trick of wins, a feat only surpassed by double-Olympic medallist Ian Walker, with four straight championship wins.

The final race saw a fantastic win for RYA zone squad members Charlotte Fitzgerald (13 years old) and Tara Bottomley, from fellow squad members Hugo Sloper and Aidan McCarthy.

Ross Kearney and Katy Jones secured second place, with Emma and Martina Barry, third overall. The Barry sisters were also ladies champions and top youths. Hugo Sloper and Aidan McCarthy in seventh place were top juniors in their first National Championship. With so many prize winners, it was no surprise that Brightlingsea won the top club trophy.

“Many competitors have ranked the 2007 Mirror nationals as the best they have attended ever”

This year the Mirror class introduced a new Classic Trophy for Mirrors built before 1990 with gaff rigs, and this fine trophy was won by the Read family: with dad Stewart on the helm and crewed by different children at various times.

## Going solo

Whilst the main fleet were battling it out, a small group of single-handers were competing to find their national champion. The fleet contained a mixture of fathers who didn't want to be left ashore whilst their offspring were enjoying themselves, and those who enjoy the delights of sailing a Mirror on ones own. Class secretary Simon Lovesey and singlehanded rep Angus Carlisle enjoyed a very close battle, separated by one point after 10 races, with Angus taking the championship.

In addition to title sponsorship from English Braids, support from P&B, Speed, Z Spars, Mersea trailers, Tesco, Morgan Marine and French Marine allowed a daily prize draw to be run. With free competitors' meals and evening socials all adding to the atmosphere of a memorable championships.

Despite the light fickle winds, many of the competitors have ranked the 2007 Mirror nationals as the best they have attended ever, attributing the warm friendly welcome from all the Brightlingsea members as a key factor.

Special praise must go to Phil Rust and his race team who managed to complete all 10 races on schedule, despite the challenge of light sea breezes fighting a stubborn land breeze during the whole of the championship. The ability to re-align the course quickly certainly helped.

English Braids were very pleased with their involvement with the championships, and the Mirror class association is pleased to announce they have committed to long-term support, including the 2009 World Championship, which the UK are hosting. ■

**Above** The sunshine came out for the nationals at Brightlingsea, and there was something for everyone including a new Classic Trophy and singlehanded event alongside the main national title that was up for grabs.

## Overall Standings:

1st 70426 Hector Cisneros & Ben Cisneros (Reading SC) 25pts; 2nd 70347 Ross Kearney & Katie Jones (RNIYC/Northampton SC) 38pts; 3rd 69776 Emma Barry & Martina Barry (Brightlingsea SC) 40pts; 4th 70281 Craig Bond & Charlotte Bond (Brightlingsea SC) 41pts; 5th 70362 Chris Rust & Oliver Newman (Brightlingsea SC) 63pts; 6th 70015 Edward Grey & Hannah Mitchell (Royal Windermere YC) 68pts; 7th 70429 Hugo Sloper & Aidan McCarthy (Itchenor SC) 69pts; 8th 69906 Millie Newman & Sarah Bines (Brightlingsea SC) 79pts; 9th 67120 Mark Taylor & Suzanne Taylor (Poole YC) 83pts; 10th 70450 David Grey & Bethany Grey (Royal Windermere YC) 89pts.