

## English Open Challenger Sailing Championship – June 2025

I was delighted to attend the English Open Challenger Sailing Championship (EOCC) at Farmoor Reservoir, Oxfordshire over the weekend of 7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> June, on behalf of the Company.

The EOCC is a flagship event in the Challenger Class Association's calendar.

The sailor placing 1<sup>st</sup> overall at the EOCC – thereby earning the title “English Champion” – is awarded *The Shipwrights English National Trophy*.

The regatta is hosted by Oxford Sailability, a charity dedicated to enabling people with disabilities to experience the fun and adventure of small-boat sailing.

In June 2024, the Education and Charities Committee (E&C) awarded Oxford Sailability a 5-year Outdoor Activities Bursary from the Charitable Fund, in particular to support the continuance of the EOCC at Farmoor Reservoir. The bursary also reaffirms the Company's connection to Challenger Class sailing through *The Shipwrights English National Trophy*, which dates back 32 years.

### Race Report

Weather forecasts leading up to the regatta were unpromising to say the least. Midweek, forecasters were predicting heavy rains, winds and thunderstorms for the Saturday. Sunday was looking better, but not by much.

However, the worst of the predictions did not come to pass and while the skies were moody all day on **Saturday**, intermittent rain showers, F3 winds out of the southwest (gusting F4), and a lee shore, made for some challenging and exciting racing around the trapezoidal course marked out by the Race Officer.

12 boats (out of 16 originally entered), were launched from the beach by a team of volunteers willing to wade up to their waists in water to make sure the sailors got onto the water safely.

3 safety boats were standing-by, with this Shipwright guesting on “Safety One”; a 200-HP RHIB with a top speed of something exceeding the limits of the reservoir, but enough grunt to chase foiling wing-surfers and International Moth foiling dinghies (also out that day to take advantage of the wind) and keep the race course clear.

Following a single race in the morning and two back-to-back races in the afternoon, Saturday closed with the positions tight in all three fleets: Rutland's Graham Hall leading the Gold Fleet by a single point; Rutland's Caz Jerromes leading the Silver Fleet; and Oxford's Bill Poupart together with his buddy, Iain Smith (both new to Challenger sailing) at the head of the Bronze Fleet.

**Sunday** was definitely a day for sunblock! The reservoir was bathed in glorious sunshine from dawn to dusk. The Beach team were more than happy to go in and get wet, and the safety boat teams were posing in their mirrored, wrap-around sunglasses (yes, me included 😎).

Fortunately, the winds had not abated. Blowing out of the southwest at F3/4 gusting up to F5, and although with a lee shore again, racing was set to be interesting.

The fleet was launched for races 4 and 5 back-to-back in the morning, again on a trapezoidal course, with everything still to compete for. By lunch Caz Jerromes was closing in on the Silver Fleet trophy, but nothing was certain yet in the outcome of the Gold and the Bronze Fleets.

A busy morning crewing on "Safety 3" (only 70 HP sadly), was followed by lunch ashore in the sunshine with everyone.

Mother nature saved the strongest winds of the weekend for Sunday afternoon.

This brought out club sailors in Lasers, Fevas and Fusions, as well as on sail boards and wingfoilers. The International Moths were back too. With this Shipwright at the helm for the afternoon shift, "Safety 3" and all of its 70 HP was busy keeping the race course clear.

The single and final race of the regatta was a corker and Challenger legend Val Millward put on a masterclass. End the end of the racing, the result in the Gold Fleet was tight. Everyone knew it and even the most seasoned of the sailors were not quite sure where they had finished over the course of the weekend. The sunshine and wind had scrambled their maths.

### Prize Giving

HRH The Princess Royal, President of the Royal Yachting Association (RYA) and Patron of RYA Sailability, had been asked by Oxford Sailability to present the prizes at this year's regatta. Unfortunately, HRH Princess Anne was not able to attend. Therefore, Oxford Sailability had to make do with me.

It was an honour to be asked, of course. So, in my best yachty rig (i.e., Shipwrights' tie, a blazer, blue shirt, cream chinos and an old pair of deck shoes) it was a pleasure to undertake the task.

The winner this year of *The Shipwrights English National Trophy* and English Champion was Graham Hall (1<sup>st</sup> in the Gold Fleet).

A highly experienced Challenger sailor from Rutland Sailing Club, Graham has been English Champion on multiple previous occasions (as he pointed out to me with a competitive glint in his eye).

The full results and prizes are set out at the end of this report.

### Vote of thanks

I would like to express my thanks to David Newton and all of his colleagues on the Race Organising Committee, the Challenger Class Association and Oxford Sailability, for inviting me to this year's regatta as their VIP guest. It was a privilege to attend both personally and on behalf of the Company.

I'd also like to thank them for the massive plate of "Birthday cupcakes" they presented to me at the regatta supper on the Saturday evening (the number of candles was definitely a fire hazard), and for making my family feel so welcome over the course of the weekend.

In return, David has asked me to record and pass on his profound thanks to the Company for its continued charitable support of Oxford Sailability, the EOCC and Challenger sailing. I do so accordingly here.

James Wilkes  
Court Assistant  
June 2025

### Trophies awarded:

The Shipwrights English National Trophy (1st overall) - Graham Hall

Anglo Marine Plate (1st Silver) - Caz Jerromes

Bronze Barometer (1st Bronze) - Bill Poupart

Oxford Sailability Challenger Championship trophy - Nic Bishop

Pam Gee Endeavour Trophy - Neil and Alison Bartlett

### Overall Results:

Pos	Fleet	Sail No	Helm	Crew	Club	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	Pts
1st	Gold	270	Graham Hall		Rutland SC	2	2	1	2	2	-3	9
2nd	Gold	263	James Coxon		Tata Steel SC	-3	1	3	1	3	2	10
3rd	Gold	312	Val Millward		Rutland SC / Rutland Sailability	-6	5	2	3	1	1	12
4th	Gold	280	Duncan Greenhalgh		Bassenthwaite SC	1	-4	4	4	4	4	17
5th	Gold	221	Dave Hodson		Rutland SC	5	-7	5	5	5	5	25
6th	Silver	291	Caz Jerromes		Rutland SC	7	6	-8	6	6	7	32
7th	Silver	258	Nic Bishop		Oxford Sailability	8	8	7	-9	8	6	37
8th	Gold	304	Alex Hovden		Papercourt SC / Rutland SC	4	3	6	(DNF)	RET	DNC	41
9th	Silver	292	David Craig		Whitefriars Sailability	9	9	(DNC)	7	9	8	42
10th	Silver	272	Lydia Johnston		Oxford Sailability	-12	10	9	8	7	9	43
11th	Bronze	117	Bill Poupart	Iain Smith	Oxford Sailability	11	11	10	-12	10	11	53
12th	Bronze	232	Neil Bartlett	Ros Hall/Murray Palmer	Oxford Sailability	10	12	(DNC)	10	12	10	54
13th	Silver	138	Ray Andrews		Chelmarsh SC	(DNC)	DNC	DNC	11	11	12	62

## Photographs from the EOCC 2025

















Further information on Challenger sailing can be found here:

<https://www.shipwrights.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/JEW-English-Open-Challenger-Championship-May-2023.pdf>

<https://www.challenger-sailing.org.uk/index.php>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/OxfordSailability/>

[https://www.facebook.com/ChallengerClassAssociationCommunity?locale=en\\_GB](https://www.facebook.com/ChallengerClassAssociationCommunity?locale=en_GB)