

## Enterprise Thames Valley Area Championship at Broadwater Sailing Club



Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March, a misty early morning, with forecast wind speeds well in the single digits. Not the most encouraging prospect, but the mist lifted and soon clouds gave way to blue skies, sunshine and ripples across the water. A promising start to the first official event of the Enterprise 2026 calendar – the Thames Valley Area Championships at Broadwater SC, who were honoured to host the championships in the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the class.

Local boats were uncovered while visitors arrived and found a spot, bringing the total to ten boats, 6 visitors and 4 Broadwater locals. Coffee/tea/pastry was deployed while rigging in preparation for the 1030 competitors briefing. While this was going on a fickle breeze from the east could be seen dancing across the water – there were definite holes to be seen, but enough to sail with and, for inland sailors, par for the course.



If RO Dave Patrick and Assistant RO Neil Parsloe felt the stresses of managing two fleet starts (Solos also being in attendance), it didn't show. With big shifts coming and going as the air tumbled down the hill from Harefield into the Colne Valley, they stroked their chins, used their experience, made the call and a course was set with two beats, two runs and two reaches.

With the 1030 briefing complete, boats launched and it was competition time! The committee boat was anchored to set the line to fixed pin end mark, which sounds easy, but in a shifty breeze in a part of the lake you can turtle in, it is not straightforward. All things considered, they did an excellent job. A temporary windward mark was dropped and a safety boat assigned to show the way.

## Race 1

Started in a gentle breeze, port biased and shifty. Ann Jackson/Alan Skeens (Burghfield/Lee-on-Solent) got away cleanly and were first to the windward mark, closely followed by Broadwater duo Jon Dyas/Dave Phillips. Andy Cooney/Hilgard Muller were not far behind, and the trio were neck and neck down the first reach.



The rest of the fleet struggled as a dead patch appeared mid-reach, but it soon dispersed and the pack closed up again, applying pressure to the leaders. The leading trio held on, with Jon/Dave squeezing past Ann/Alan to take the first win of the day, and Andy/Hilgard in third.

#### Race 2

The conditions at the start of Race 2 were not a lot different, which is to say they were very different – in direction and strength – you know what I mean?

Ann/Alan, ever consistent, led up the beat, but this time with new pursuers in the form of Paul Young/Igor Bakowski (Midland) and Chris Rowsell/Teresa Burton (Lensbury). Not far behind were David Hodgson/Sue Whitehill (Papercourt) and Jon/Dave who both came up through the fleet and, by the finish, seem to have displaced both Paul/Igor and Chris/Teresa. Ann/Alan retained the lead, took first, Jon/Dave second and David/Sue third.

Now a stop for lunch of chilli and baked potatoes, proper sailing food, a proper chat and maybe a chocolate brownie or two.

### Race 3

Conditions at the start of race 3 were a creative blend of both previous races but on a slightly adjusted course. Ann/Alan led the way to the windward mark, this time closely pursued by Ian Peerless/Ben Peerless (Hampton), enjoying their best start of the day, and Les Smith/Alex Smith (Broadwater) coming through close behind. A good mix of competitors in the mix so far. The trio held those positions all the way to the finish. Andy/Hilgard made a minor comeback to take fourth place after a ninth in race 2 (it is all about the start). Jon/David, previously 'up there' and having had a good pin end start, maybe too good, were deemed over the line and had to turn back. However, back up to 7<sup>th</sup> by the finish is not bad.



### Race 4 Part 1.

The usual conditions (see above) with an added twist. Most of the fleet favoured the pin end. Those who stayed to the starboard end had plenty of space and a bonus – fast approaching pressure from the right, just in time, for a full speed assault on the start line. Great, a brilliant start while the pin end got all tangled up in less pressure and no, wait, four over the line.....general recall.....reset! What could have been for those at the committee boat end? Such is the sport.

### Race 4 Part 2.

The restart initially felt like a replay of Race 1 with Ann/Alan, Jon/Dave and Andy/Hilgard in the same order at the windward mark. Deja Vue? Well, not for long. After their (assumed) ninth place discard in race 2, the pressure was on Andy/Hilgard to keep up (and not let by). Queue the second windward mark, still in third, crew (the author) counting down to tack onto the starboard lay line....3,2,1, tack.....too low... spectacularly so....grrr! Down to 10<sup>th</sup> in an instant. Can't judge a lay line? Perhaps. Tacked into a header? I am going with that. Well done to everyone else for forming an impenetrable wall of blue as we gybed around onto port. Apologies to my helm, Andy, you made 23094 go faster than I would have.



So the day deservedly belonged to Ann Jackson and Alan Skeens, they are the 2026 Thames Valley Area Champions – winners of the area trophy and the Broadwater Chess Board. Very well done to both of you. Honourable second place goes to Jon Dyas and Dave Phillips from Broadwater. Jon modestly claimed “I don’t do the waggly stick stuff in the back very well”. We’ll let the results speak for themselves. Third placed were Les Smith and Alex Smith from Broadwater and, I think, they deserve the silent improvers award with a 8-5-3-3 set of results. Well done.

Thanks to Dave Patrick and Neil Parsloe for the excellent racing, Alastair Fischbacher for safety boat cover and Sailwave results, Andy Wheeler and John Greaves for on the water photography, Brian O’Leary and Paul Dean for stepping into the galley at short notice and John O’Dowd for shoreside help. Special mention to Solo fleet captain Alex Beard for helping the event organisation.

It turned out to be a lovely spring day of sailing. No collisions, no breakages, no capsizes and everyone sailed every race. A successful day’s sailing. Well done to all the competitors and thank you for participating. Happy 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary year to the Enterprise (and Solo of course). Til next time, Muller out.

By Hilgard Muller with input from the competitors

Photos by John Greaves, Andy Wheeler and Chris Rowsell

Photos <https://broadwatersc.org.uk/photo-gallery/enterprise-open-2026/>

Timelapse video by Andy Wheeler: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YsYxxFrqFYA>