

Wayfarer UK and Irish Nationals 2011 – Dun Laoghaire, Ireland

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For our second year since acquiring our Hartley Mark 4 Wayfarer 'Sudden Comfort', Sue and I set out for the UKWA Nationals on July 6th, this time combined with the Irish Nationals and run in conjunction with the very popular Volvo Dun Laoghaire Regatta in the Emerald Isle. Our hosts for the 4 days were the aptly named National Yacht Club, ideally positioned in the harbour for the racing area just outside in Dublin Bay. Several hardy souls opted to stay in their camper vans on the adjacent pier, but we were happy in a handy hotel with a great sea view just across the road. All competitors were invited to the mayor's civic reception the evening before racing commenced and the Wayfarer contingent were first there, most fun (see the unofficial report link) and the last to leave the free wine and canapés.

Day 1: After a practice period the previous day in which our fearless 'wind dummies' suffered a rather public capsizing on return to the quayside, the first race day dawned extremely wet, even for Ireland. The fleet of some 30 Wayfarers were soon off to clean start in a southerly breeze which steadily increased from F4 to F7 in the gusts. After a steady start Sudden Comfort was coping amazingly well, fairly flying along chasing the early-starting Fireballs in glorious surfing conditions and passing several. It couldn't last, and nearing the finish line a 'racing incident' concluded with us drifting over fully inverted and classed DNF. Lesson: put sail numbers on the bottom too! We were not alone; due to a still-increasing wind and steep seas which saw two of our fleet dismasted, further racing was abandoned for the day as the rescue boats went into overdrive and we limped back to our haven in the harbour in wild and gusty conditions. Safely back and refuelled with barbeque chicken and real Guinness we learned that 3 cruisers were also missing rigs and that although the lifeboat and rescue helicopter were both called out, happily all were safe.

Day 2 began badly for us with a DNC due to sail measuring and over-running repairs and consequently a missed photo session, but we took the opportunity to shadow the fleet around the course in much more pleasant sunny conditions. Other fleets sharing the course included Fireballs, Lasers, IDRA 14s, Mermaids, Squibs and Flying Fifteens. We were joined by class cruising stalwart Ralph Roberts in Spree Lady who had sailed 200 miles from Cork in sometimes atrocious F9 conditions to take part in the regatta. Ralph was awarded the 'Spirit of the Regatta' prize for his endeavours. We completed the next 2 races in lower mid-fleet in an ever-lighter easterly; the return this time required some extensive paddling. All the boats arriving together created something a nautical traffic jam at the quayside, but there was an orderly queuing system and plenty of good-humoured banter. Ashore the entertainment was in full party mode with live bands and various promotions featuring at each of the four host clubs on the waterfront, so we took advantage of our regatta passes to visit a couple of the other clubs and to sample their wares.

Day 3 saw 3 further races run in strong currents but generally light and shifty winds which caused the OD some challenges with delayed and recalled starts, but in the very close racing we were beginning to work the shifts and inch our way steadily up the Bronze fleet rankings while the leaders in Gold were constantly changing places. By the end of the day we were second in Bronze. It was starting to get interesting! Sue and I decided to go for a training jog along the harbour wall and re-waxed the hull ready for the final push. Spree Lady was attracting lots of interest as Ralph explained

his versatile cruising set-up and many innovative touches of his own design including a nifty boat tent and rigid spar roller reefing jib. The evening was rounded-off by a Wayfarer class dinner and spot prizes; we won 'Your First Swim' kits for our heroics on Day 1!

The final day was forecast as rain and no wind, but the weather gods were kind and we enjoyed two races in a lovely sunny F3 northerly. We needed to gain 18 points on our rival in Bronze 'Aeowen', so we were relieved to recover from a spinnaker under the bow on lap 1 and gain 2 places on the next leg due to a fortunate 30 degree lifter and 2 more as we fine reached over the line on the plane. The final race was delayed in an increasingly shifty breeze, then a general recall jangled the nerves. Another late start and quick tack onto port helped us to clear the pack and we were again blessed with good shifts to reach the first mark in mid-fleet. Sue battled hard with the new spinnaker on the reaches to fend off several more expert boat challenges and record our second 14th spot. We were still unsure how our rivals had fared until we saw the final results once finally 'piped ashore' by a full Irish bagpipe band; special! We were 19th overall and first in Bronze – a great result rewarded by a pair of lovely wooden Wayfarer trophies to remind us of a fantastic four days sailing.

The results are at: http://dublinbayregatta.org/results/wf_os.html

The official event report is available at:

http://www.wayfarer.org.uk/images/stories/Irish_and_UK_National_Championships_report_2011.pdf

Pictures (sadly none of us): <http://www.fotosail.com/events/2011dlregatta/dingies/wayfarers/>

Unofficial report:

http://www.wayfarer.org.uk/images/stories/Alternative_Report_by_Liam_McGrath.pdf

Many thanks go to Monica Schaefer, organiser UKWA Ireland and all the countless volunteer helpers who made it all possible.