

Killyleagh Yacht Club was the place to be on Saturday afternoon as the long established Lightning fleet celebrated their 65th birthday with a special anniversary regatta, held in memory of Lightning stalwart Denis Bennett. The day's regatta was followed by an evening of entertainment in the club with a jazz band and a display on the history of the Lightning fleet. It was excellent to see so many competitors and local people enjoying the après-sail.

Killyleagh Yacht Club has seen the Lightning fleet come from their early days of cotton sails and no spinnakers, to the epoxyed racing dinghies in use today. They have shown true endurance in Killyleagh, consistently competing around the Lough since Alec Sutherland spent the winter of 1943 building one of the first Lightning dinghies, Gwen.

Despite many conflicting events in the Lough, a good turnout of boats participated in twelve different classes, including the Lightning class, where the full fleet turned out to compete for the 65th Anniversary trophy. Strong winds made sailing in the Lightnings both challenging and exhilarating and the crews had to work hard to keep their boats flat! Despite an unlucky start, Rachel Bennett's Mean Machine powered through the fleet from last to first to win the day, just ahead of Andrew Shields' White Knuckles.

Third place went to veteran sailor Willie Lindsay in Rainbow, with stiff competition provided by Gus Moore in Hysteria, Paul Brown in Ecila, Ronnie Barr in Yahoo and John Scott in Stars and Stripes.

Killyleagh commodore, Neil Logan, with crew Barry Bridges, lifted the prize in the highly competitive Flying Fifteen class, with Strangford Sailing Club's Marcus Crichton coming a close second.

In the Squib class, Killyleagh's Don Bridges claimed first place in Firecracker, holding off the challenge from his niece Vicky and nephew Scott who came second racing Vicky's Winnie Wot!

The full results from the event were as follows:-

IRC1 – 1st Movistar Bleu, R Killops, PY1 – 1st Tiger Lily, R Beattie, 2nd Crackajack, L McMahon, IRC2 – 1st Apache, J Gifford, PY2 – 1st Beci Boo, J Murray, 2nd Escape, D Swail, 3rd Fascinator, C Curran, Sonata – 1st Gladiator, M Clarke, Flying Fifteen – 1st Ffiring Blanks, N Logan & B Bridges, 2nd Don't Look Back, Marcus Crichton & R Scott, 3rd Dream Catcher, O Curran, PY Restricted Sail – 1st Straidorn, J Herron, 2nd Moonshadow, Nicky McNamara, 3rd Self Expression, R Ramsey, Lightning – 1st Mean Machine, Rachel Bennett, 2nd White Knuckles, A Shields, 3rd Rainbow, W Lindsay, Squib – 1st Firecracker, D Bridges, 2nd Winnie What, Victoria Bridges, 3rd Blue, H Curran, Dinghy Handicap 1130 & under – 1st Laser, H Baker, 2nd Fake ID, A McClenaghan, 3rd Laser, F Bowsie, Laser 4.7 – 1st Pink Laser, Harriet McNamara, Topper – 1st C Bowsie

Deborah, Rachel and Ben Bennett who organised the event would like to thank Killyleagh commodore, Neil Logan, Angela Gilmore and everyone else who contributed in any way to the success of the day.



Prizewinners (all classes)



The Lightnings all lined up – all wooden except for the white one at the very end. There's even a wooden mast in there!



Some of the current Lightning sailors.



Ready to go!



My boat 'Mean Machine' just launched



Home-made birthday cake – Yummy!!



Gus Moore in 'Hysteria' ready to go!



Brown Brothers in 'Ecila' – Wooden hull and mast



Over the line at the start!! Oops!



We decided before the race not to fly spinnakers a) to avoid a capsize on the 'big day' b) to make it fairer on those without spinnakers.





