



THE 2019 CLASSIC CHANNEL REGATTA WAS TRULY A CLASSIC

The Classic Channel Regatta, which takes place every two years, returned to Dartmouth last weekend for the first stage of the regatta before setting off on the Lewmar Classic Channel Race to St Helier on Monday. After an overnight stay in Jersey on Tuesday the fleet of about 80 boats raced on to Paimpol in Northern Brittany, thus visiting three of the finest ports in the English Channel.

The boats started arriving in Dartmouth on Friday and the harbour gradually filled with over 80 beautiful and historic craft. On Saturday morning these nautical ladies paraded downstream from the higher ferry, led by the paddle steamer Kingswear Castle, herself an historic vessel, and out to sea for the start of the day's race.

The weather was perfect for sailing by this stage of the regatta, but the gales of the previous couple of days had prevented some of the French boats from crossing the channel in time for the Saturday racing. The regatta race director decided to adapt the scoring system for the overall regatta result so that late arrivals would not be penalised, although many intrepid French yachts did brave the severe weather and sailed across to Dartmouth, many straight to the start line of Saturday's race. In fact, the Doug Bristow trophy, which is awarded at every Classic Channel Regatta for achievement under sail was given to the entire French fleet in recognition of their perseverance.

Saturday's racing was around a course of buoys off Dartmouth in glorious sunshine and the fine weather continued for Sunday's race across the bay past Blackpool Sands, out towards Start Point Lighthouse and back.

On Sunday evening the classic yacht's crews enjoyed a dinner in the Market Square with music and dancing. The social events are a very important ingredient of the Classic Channel Regatta and there is a crew dinner in each of the three ports that the boats visit over the week long regatta. There are also several non-sailing activities for the crews to enjoy – this year they included blindfold rubber dinghy racing, an England vs the rest of the world cricket match and a France vs the rest of the world boule match.

The regatta's racing is deliberately designed to include varied types of sailing from the "round the cans" style of race on Saturday, the longer bay race on Sunday, the two passage races across the channel (one long and one shorter) and finally *La Course du Tour de l'Île de Bréhat* (around the island of Bréhat race) off Paimpol on Friday. Any sailors among our readers who are familiar with the northern coast on Brittany will know that it is a very treacherous and rocky coastline and to do well in this race crews will need careful navigation as well as good boat speed.

The weather gods were very kind after the gales immediately before the regatta and many people were heard discussing their week, describing it as “perfect” sailing conditions and some even saying that the week included some of the best sailing experiences of their lives.

The Classic Channel Regatta has been starting in Dartmouth since it’s inception in 2005. It was the brainchild of chairman Bruce Thorogood who this year said “we are so grateful to the Dart Harbour Authority, the Dartmouth Town Council, the Royal Dart Yacht Club and all of our local sponsors who have enabled us to bring this special, international sailing regatta to Dartmouth. We are also very grateful to the traders in the Market Square for being so tolerant of our overnight invasion for the crew dinner. All of the competitors have had a fabulous time in Dartmouth and we look forward to returning in 2021.”



