



## Leeds Halloween Howler 2015



Colourful fleets offset a grey and windy day as the teams battle to the line © James Saul

### **Birmingham's double-triumph with Gold and Silver while Leeds Freshers win some races and Lucy demos her gunwale walk**

The weekend of 23 – 15 October saw the return of the much-anticipated Leeds University Sailing Club Halloween Howler. As the first team racing event in the academic year, for the teams attending it was an opportunity for many of the veterans of the circuit to pass on their skills to Fresher's who are new to team racing. Twenty one teams attended from eleven universities across the United Kingdom to team race in Fireflies at West Riding Sailing Club, which kindly allows us to host the event each year.

The teams registered on Friday night and were shown to their hosts' houses before heading out for a social. Despite the late night for many, the Howler organisers were heading to West Riding Sailing Club as early as 06:45 to set up ready for the event briefing at 08:30. After bacon rolls (thanks to Louise Pickering, Trish Blackham and the Tate twins who catered fantastically throughout the weekend – feeding 150 students is not easy!), the racing got off to a flying start.

The racing began with all boats using storm sails due to the variable weather. After the race organisers had slickly dealt with a 90° wind shift and a squall, the afternoon brought brighter skies and a more steady wind which allowed us to switch to full mainsails. Quick responses

by the helpers allowed all 63 races of the round robin to be completed with time to spare. The teams were ranked into Gold, Silver and Bronze fleets ready for Sunday's racing. Birmingham Green were in the lead at the end of Saturday and all the teams headed out for a curry to celebrate a good day of racing.

Another early start on Sunday, but the odds were in our favour with sun and a light but steady wind, and an extra hour of sleep as the clocks went back. This allowed us to complete another 63 races by 14:30 with Warwick showing everyone how its done! Once the results were assimilated, the semi-finals commenced with the top three teams from gold fleet (Warwick Black, Birmingham Yellow and Birmingham Green) joined by the top team from silver fleet Swansea White. Birmingham took first and second place after some tricky races with Warwick in third.

This meant an all-Brummie final, would it be green or yellow? In the best of three final, Birmingham Yellow took the first two races meaning the Leeds Halloween Howler 2015 title went their way!



The racing was very close at times © Rory Turnbull

A massive thanks to the Leeds University Sailing Club Commodore, Sam Pickering, for the months of preparation that he put into the event and the running of the event on the weekend as well as to the club committee and team of volunteers who ensured that the Howler ran smoothly. Help from Wakefield Sea Cadet's was invaluable in facilitating smooth changeovers between boats as well as their supply of a rib. Further thanks to the umpires; Carol, John and David. We are also grateful to Chris from Chase Sailing Club for bringing a RIB along for us.

The Leeds University Fresher's team made their debut at the event and despite competing against more seasoned teams (they had only had one training session prior to the Howler), they managed to win a few races. Team member Will Eaton said, "It was a fantastic opportunity to apply the skills and tactics we had learnt in training and to gain some experience of competitive racing".





Leeds Fresher's team watch on as Lucy attempts the gunwale walk © James Saul

While Lucy Clark said of the event, "It was a great weekend and was good to be able to get a better understanding of how team racing works and put into practice what tactics we had been taught in training."

After winning the event, the Birmingham captain took the time to thank all of the organizers and was clearly delighted at the double win for his teams. Following a brilliant start to the season, Leeds are now looking forward to upcoming events.

Rachel Glendening  
Leeds' Training Coordinator and rapporteur



The sun came out for Sunday's racing © Rory Turnbull