



*Kerry Christie puts in an extreme support stroke.*



*C1 champion Louis Passernig.*

# Britain's best ever sprint results

## Llangollen Wild Water Race

It seemed inevitable that the settled weather of October and early November must fail before the ECA final sprint WWR in late November. Such was the case. A week before the race it turned bitterly cold and North Wales was hit by snow, which was still lying on the sides of the valley. One of the winter storms was set to arrive on Saturday but the strong winds forecast to sweep up through the Irish Sea were minimal on the Dee.

Even the persistent rain dropped away nearly to nothing at times but it was melting the snow to add to water levels. However, it was a murky autumn afternoon, then banks of fog even appearing briefly. The Serpent's Tail, to be used for this final ECA sprint of the year, was at its optimum level, challenging water in a scenic setting, a complete contrast with the Holme Pierrepont slalom course event of equal status in the spring, attracting several continental teams.

The programme began with a raft race, giving participants a rare chance to get on decent water, producing some collisions with the overhanging rock at the crux of the Tail. More than one raft capsized spectacularly, spilling out all its paddlers.

There was a solid turnout of home racers, enhanced by visitors from Czechia, Slovakia, Germany, the Netherlands and France, small numbers but good to see European names on decent home water.

The course was challenging, as ever, and there were frequent breakouts. However, from Break Out Canoe Unit came Molly Sandercock with the sweetest line I saw from anyone in the whole event, like a hot knife through butter, to win the women's kayaks by over two seconds from Victoria Murray of Pinkston Panthers. The men's kayaks were won by Czech Jan Sindelar with Freddie Brown of Wiltshire Youth 0.17 sec behind.

There were only two women's C1s, Czech Alexandra Plachtova four seconds clear of Slovakian Viktoria Scholzova. Louis Passernig of

Colmar took the men's C1 from Czech Tobias Trnka and Nicky Cresser of Nottingham, Filip Stratil being the only other finisher.

The Christie sisters took a one second C2 win from the international crew of Scholzova/Plachtova while the men's C2 went to Stratil/Trnka from Jefferies/Holmes. By the end of the first runs the river was rising so the course would be different for second runs and there would be increasing technical problems with running the race, including safety cover, so results were decided on first runs only.

Being the second ECA sprint in Britain this year, British racers had an attendance advantage. Perhaps the Holme Pierrepont event should have been run with the Dee, contrasting courses.

Elsie Lansborough of Nottingham ended as European junior champion while the first four senior women were Kerry Christie, Molly Sandercock, Emma Christie and Laura Milne. Alex Sheppy was European men's champion and women's C1 went to Molly Sandercock from Kerry Christie, the Christie sisters also taking the C2 title. Nicky Cresser had our best men's C1 result, 4th, while Holmes/Jefferies were in 3rd place in men's C2. We have never had such a good set of sprint WWR results as these.

On Sunday the start area was underwater and the river was running out into the trees in places. Thus, a race on the river was discounted, the Welsh Open taking the form of a time trial on the canal. It was not ideal but it gave a weekend of varied races, sometimes challenging, in an attractive setting, a memorable couple of days.

Being flat water, the time trial gave less advantage from knowing the water. Kerry Christie and Jan Sindelar were the two kayak winners and Molly Sandercock and Tobias Trnka took the C1s. The Christie sisters and Jefferies/Holmes took the women's and men's C2s and there were a couple of mixed C2s, won by Phil Dean and Viktoria Scholzova.

Jamie Christie and team pulled off an event that could have been far less successful.



*Tobias Trnka struggles to hold his line.*



*Alexandra Plachtova was women's C1 winner.*