

# Brixham Royal Torbay Heritage Sailing Regatta May 27th 2018

by Chris Coote

Brixham was crowded with not only bank holiday tourists and visitors last weekend, but also by a veritable forest of masts of classic and historic sailing vessels gathering for the annual Heritage Sailing Regatta. This event originally organised by Brixham fishermen for races with their traditional sailing trawlers started before the turn of the last century, and was revived in Brixham just over 20 years ago. Since then the popularity of this event has grown to the extent that this year we had a record breaking entry of well over 30 boats and visitors from Brittany in France.

The town pontoon at Prince William Quay became the focal point for a weekend-long party and celebration of classic sail. Brixham Yacht Club provided the hosting of the event with a complimentary fish pie supper and party on the Saturday night followed by a magnificent running buffet for hungry sailors when they came off the water on Sunday afternoon before the traditional prize giving.

The sight of over 30 classic sailing vessels, ranging from the largest 100ft plus Brixham trawlers to the smallest 20ft gaff rigged tosher types proceeding out of the harbour in the parade of sail, produced a magnificent and nostalgic sight for many.

Unfortunately this spectacle did not last into the afternoon as the boats took to the waters of Torbay. An already misty day turned into a thick sea mist just within the Bay with visibility down to less than 20 yards on occasions. The sailing organisers reluctantly had to cancel any further sailing and make arrangements for the larger boats equipped with GPS navigation systems to lead the smaller vessels safely back home to Brixham harbour.

A notable visitor was the green Breton lugger **Le Grand Lejon** who had sailed over from Brittany especially to take part. Her crew were awarded the furthest distance travelled award plus the Concours D'Elegance "Ibex Cup" trophy for

the best kept and presented vessel. This award in particular is special to Brixham because the cup itself was “lost” for over 60 years but returned to its proper home last year after being donated back to Brixham Yacht Club by an elderly couple from N Devon. They had befriended one of the last members of the famous Brixham boat building Upham family, and had been the custodians of the Cup for many years before deciding it should return to its original home. The **Ibex** was the famous Brixham trawler designed and built by Andrew Upham on yacht-like lines to speed its return to port with the first of the catch. She was so fast that even after her sails were cut down, she still won most of her Regatta races. The record was 29 wins out of 33 races entered. She also made record breaking passages with her catch, on one occasion averaging over 10 knots from the Bristol Channel around Lands End and back to Brixham.

The Regatta organisers would like to thank Torbay harbour authority in particular for providing berthing facilities, and to all the helpers and volunteers at Brixham Yacht Club for providing both the on-the-water and off-the-water facilities which make this traditional event such a must in the summer holiday calendar.