

CHICHESTER CRUISER RACING CLUB

RACE REPORT

Race No. 23. There were some that made it and some that didn't.

The 6 a.m. shipping forecast for Wight was SW 5/6 occasionally 7 and the chances of the crossing being made looked decidedly thin. However, as the day progressed all those monitoring the forecasts must have been somewhat relieved to hear they were now talking about SW 4/5 occasionally 6.

That evening after a final check with Coastguards we motored to HISC to tie up alongside Marigold and review the situation with Race Officer John Dunkley. Not an easy decision as the spring ebb was likely to make it a rough ride and I suspected many of those competing would have preferred, in view of the generally unsettled weather pattern, to have raced in the Solent. It was decided that the forecast was not bad enough to cancel and anyway in the dark there was no way to contact the boats competing. From the mooring the only boats we had seen were Penrose II, La Premier, Tarquah V and Ard Righ. We assumed that the other six boats listed as taking part had decided that a channel crossing was not for them and had stayed put at mooring, pontoon or nearest local. But none of it, the C.C.R.C. are a hardy lot (or are they) for when we got to the start there were 11 sets of lights sculling around in the vicinity of Chi buoy, though I wonder how many boats actually found the buoy in the dark, we only came across it ourselves a couple of minutes before the start. The Club is going to have to review its procedures for night starts. Its a dangerous game to have 11 boats charging about on a dark night in the vicinity of two unlit buoys.

Having had two crew members call off on Wednesday evening, I had none of the experienced regulars on board Lynx. Our team was made up of Graham who had sailed with me once before, his wife Christine and David who has come into sailing this season. Graham had the first watch and I had the intention of coming on at midnight which was when we would be approaching the shipping lanes.

Once we were on our way I went down below to try and grab some shuteye. It was not long however before Channel 77 burst into song. The Advocate was first on the air, apparently their main boom had decided to retire to Chichester while the rest of the boat was still on course to St. Vaast. Next on the air was Penrose with crew stricken down by Mal de Mer, Gosport was to be her retirement home. Once again I got my head down but the VHF was in action again with another trying to contact Marigold safely ensconced in Chichester Yacht Basin. But with all the traffic on the air John must have been having a busy night. A while later Denis in Fohn Wind announced their retirement, the dreaded Mal de Mer had struck again.

At midnight I went out into the cockpit to find us much too close to a large ship for comfort, after taking avoiding action Lynx was put back on course for St. Vaast. The sea was now decidedly lively and Lynx was sailing on her ear, not her best point of sailing. One reef was pulled in with no effect on the angle of heel. The 2nd reef was pulled in and this produced a definite improvement in the attitude of the boat and no loss of speed. While all this was going on Christine had her head through the rails and at times nearly disappeared through them. It was an attitude that I believe she had adopted since shortly after the start. Christine had not been on a boat for two years and this was not the best of times to re-acquaint herself with what the Channel had to offer, furthermore it was now her birthday, another 8 to 9 hours of this was not the best of birthday presents. I must be getting soft-hearted in my old age for the decision was made to turn back and the Coastguard was informed of our impending return. On the way back we passed the lights of another boat heading for Chichester, this we believe was La Premier, I

understand that Vernon also retired at about the same time.

Reviewing the situation with John later, he had rung St. Vaast to be told the only CCRC boat in was Leacarola. He had also notified Coastguards of the boats he hadn't been able to contact. As Leacarola was the boat reported in St. Vaast I phoned Trevor after the holiday to find out if any others had got there. As he hadn't seen any others in the marina it did seem that they were the only one to get to St. Vaast, a fact his crew would be very chuffed to learn. Sorry to disappoint you Trevor but my subsequent telephone calls revealed that Tarquah V, Ard Righ and Sareema also made St. Vaast. The extraordinary thing was that not one of them was able to identify the other CCRC boats. The Club is obviously going to have to increase the size of their burgees or if you haven't got one, Mike Smith is your man. He's got a stack of them he's dying to get rid of.

Both Ard Righ and Leacarola had a particularly hard time for as the wind fell away after dawn both were swept into Seine Bay, missed the morning dock opening and weren't able to get in until the evening. The question of the trip came from one of Ard Righ's crew members when a couple of miles past the Nab asked "Are we nearly There?"

For those who retired to the Solent, Penrose, Electronique, the Advocate, Red Cloud and Fohn Wind, Bill and Denise organised a fair old knees up by the sound of it. This will be the subject of a separate report from that ace reporter from the CCRC News of the World.

River Hamble to Chichester on Sunday 11th September, 1988

Due to the accusation of Caragh having had its own private wind on Saturday, I was told that as a penance I had to do the race report for Sunday's race.

Sunday began very early, in fact, as the crew of Duchess decided that the smell of their cooking might upset some weaker stomachs after the previous evening's festivities at the Jolly Sailor. So at 0700 we cast them off and settled back to what we thought would be a leisurely breakfast. The ASS, however, had other thoughts and decided that he also wished to leave early. As Marigold was moored inside of us it seemed that the fates were against us and so we too motored down the Hamble at 0730 for a 0900 start.

The forecast was Force 4, W veering NW, which never quite materialised. Once across the start line the main decision was whether spinnakers could be carried from Clipper to S.E. Ryde Middle. Sareema hoisted hers, Penrose appeared to have hoisted her cruising (or is it cursing) shute but the majority of the fleet took longer to decide. A similar difference of opinion existed amongst the Alpha fleet as Lynx and Anna Louise quickly had their spinnakers raised but Major Gamble, Brown Bomber and Caragh all seemed to believe that it was asking a lot of the forestay to take the weight of the pole. However, as the first leg progressed the wind appeared to veer and Major Gamble hoisted her (his?) spinnaker along with Fohn Wind and Banshee. Fohn Wind experienced some difficulty with her spinnaker and eventually lowered it. The race itself gradually became a procession as we hardened up for Peel Bank and N.E. Ryde Middle. On the long run to Saddle, Caragh dropped back and so the happenings at the front of the fleet were out of sight.

At the back of the fleet, however, both Fohn Wind and ourselves were experimenting with different methods of flying spinnakers. On Caragh we tried the "let's see what its like without an uphaul" approach, whilst Fohn Wind appeared to favour "let's try it without the guy attached to the pole". Fohn Wind managed to overcome their problems, but using the excuse of shorthanded and inexperienced crew I decided enough was enough. The results will tell the story of the time lost through broad reaching rather than running under spinnaker back to Chi. The weekend's sailing had proved very enjoyable without the almost prevailing force 5 to 6 that has been our lot this summer but if anyone knows where there are two experienced crew "at least one male" available on a regular basis, please let me know.