

ROCK SAILING CLUB AUTUMN SHRIMPER FEST 2014

Nibbled by a coincidental exodus of Shrimper sailors to Croatian waters cold, and a contra-commute of others to golf-courses Scottish as all others fled the Salmond land, RSWSC Autumn Shrimper Fest nevertheless boasted a dozen or so of Cornish Crabbers' best to while away halcyon days in the maturing Cornish sun. Shrimper Week had earlier seen hard races of attrition; Autumn Shrimper Fest was to be about fun.

Who better than professional funster Jon Greaves, oldest member - as in the longest-serving one - to figurehead the frolics, aided ably by the Pumphrey master-mariners in matters nautical and Anne Murray, of coming Bridge fame, in anything off the water. Along with all the rest of us in anarchic Shrimper tradition.

Day one was to be a cruise, Shrimper euphemism for a stealth race, to Port Quin for lunch and back. And dastardly a race it was, as the Le Mans style getaway did seem to favour those with sufficient water to leave their moorings at the start. The young Williams (everything is relative in Shrimper-speak), complete with Dilly their sea-dog, did however reach Port Quin just as the rest were returning and had a splendid time enroute, unwittingly missing the Cow & Calf rocks by a farmer's whiskers - slowed only by poor sailing and a buggerall line drifting behind.

Saturday, day two, saw a friendly afternoon race, with the pre-start precision of flies on a window-pane. Those who knew how to - or possibly those who didn't know how not to - hove-to at unlikely angles whilst others buzzed up and down (speed is relative too) and still others got themselves lost as the countdown ground to zero. Come the start there seemed to be room at the Committee Boat end and one or two not unreasonably went for it, only to jump out of their metaphorical skins when a two-tone Mk 1 came screaming up (relatively) claiming water, rights, collision and impending doom should one boat in particular not get out of the way and forfeit his own start altogether. The call was a right one, expressed as only an ex-dinghy-sailor could and, fleetest of the fleet, Aurora went on to win - or would have done - had not Jon Greaves had the temerity to pip him toward the post. Many a scone became a mark, along with tea-spoon boats on a table ocean at Henry's Cream Tea which came afterwards.

Day three - and memory recedes from this point on (we always remember the early days best) - coincided with Bart's Bash, the simultaneous global record-breaking sailing race attempt in memory of Andrew "Bart" Simpson and in support of the Andrew Simpson Sailing Trust. Clearly with most of us in our 60s through 70's Bart's cause is too late to help us, but what a sport it is, with Shrimperians competing head to head in this race with kids even under ten. Probably a child under ten won it, as local results are still in the melting pot, just as they are globally, with over 260,000 race entries clogging the ASST mainframe. (The rumour is that Tim & Wendy Grey, visitors in Lucy, were first Shrimper. First-time Shrimper racers in a lovely outboard, it was only noticed by some that this was the same Tim Grey who struck fear into the hearts of young Rock sailors in the 70s, with his name somewhere up in lights here to prove it.)

Monday was a further luncheon cruise, this time to the left outside the Estuary and into Trevoise as a further test of rock avoidance, emergency turns and double-parking. Allegedly as many returned as went out, and a good time was had by all. Not much could have been eaten though, if the rate of disappearance of Henry's Barbie food later that evening was any

judge. Fast food indeed, surpassed only by the blur of Richard and Carla's arms in pulling pints and passing bottles over the bar.

Tuesday now, and a cruise round the islands duly took place in our non-stop Indian summer. We are truly on holiday now – or we were, as that was the end of our Fest sailing at least; on the next, Wednesday, morning would begin the sad withdrawal of Shrimpers from the sea.

Shrimper Fest concluded with golf for those who could play it – and quite possibly by those who could not – followed by a memorable dinner and “alternative” prize-giving at Rock Sailing Club. A great success all round, Shrimper Autumn Fest is already in next year's calendar and, like the Shrimpers themselves and those who sail in them, looks as if it will run and run.

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