

Falmouth Week 2011.

This is written from a personal point of view by Simon Sugrue, in his Shrimper VAGABOND (355) There were twenty-odd entries in our Class and about 250 yachts all together, racing in Carrick Roads and out in the Bay. In our Class we have local boats of course and visitors from up-country, mainly Poole, Rock and East Anglia.

Sunday

Changeable weather is an understatement! We left the mooring in Falmouth with no reef, we put one in on the way to the Committee Boat and another after the ten-minute gun! The wind had increased from Force 4 to Force 5-6, gusting more up to 7. We started with two reefs and very soon shook one out but not before we had a very close encounter with Philip Atha in ISOLDE (10) who was shaking out his reef while on the port tack and we had had to take decisive avoiding action because he had no-one on his helm. He apologised and took a 360 penalty.

During this race we had high winds, torrential rain – the sort that bounces off the surface of the sea and reduces visibility to ‘not much’, thunder – at least one Working Boat reported that they had been struck by lightning, and then no wind whatever; this last while we were trying to sail back onto our mooring. We came 4th.

Monday

It was pretty rough, Force six with some gusts to Force seven. All of us came out with one reef in and some with two. The start, near Carricknath was the usual scramble for the windward end of the line and this resulted in two or three boats becoming entangled to windward of us and the knock-on effect was to send about half the fleet off the line. Of course it was all sorted out eventually but it allowed the wiser sailors such as Mark Osborn (245) and Philip Swatman (976) to get away. Mark had two reefs in and was always at or near the front. By the time we got clear of the *melee* we were in something like twelfth place. The beat to the Windward Mark was eventful only in that we had to keep the boat ‘on her feet’ and to pump her out when we didn’t manage to do that.

We overtook a few boats and on the way from Pendennis to Trefusus we managed to ‘deal with’ Derek Holman in MAY BEE (343) and caught up a little with Philip Atha (10) and those sailing with him; they were having a fine ‘race within a race’. Mark Osborn and Philip Swatman were simply too far ahead to be of anything but academic interest to us ordinary mortals.

Part of the race was distracted by the rescue helicopter taking someone off Luke Godden’s gaffer; we hope whoever it was is OK. (I checked on Tuesday and all was well)

On the final beat to the finish from West Narrows, we were to Windward of John Bengé in GRACE (433) and managed to get in between him and the finish; so we finished seventh.

An enjoyable but very tiring race. We probably didn’t cleat either sail throughout the race and we had our lunch sandwiches after the finish. We hadn’t the energy to go into Mylor for the post-race tea. We put the second reef in to ensure a safe sail onto our mooring near Prince of Wales Pier.

Tuesday

A gentler day today. Wind NNW Force 3.

The last of the flood tide was flowing under the Start Line and we chose to stay clear of the scrum at the start. This seemed like a good idea but those in the scrum seemed to do better and we were almost in last place when the fleet sorted itself out for the long beat up to the Windward Mark which was close East of the North part of Trefusis. We rounded the Windward Mark in 9th. The run down to Black Rock was interesting in that the other fleets were crossing our course. We managed to pick off a couple more, and rounded Black Rock in 7th, as far as we could tell; we were just behind a group of four Shrimpers and there were a couple more, well ahead.

The beat up to Vilt was uneventful and followed except that, while we were on the Starboard tack we were confronted by a Large Working Boat, GRACE or MOON, on Port and on a very broad reach and on a collision course with us! Knowing the complications that can arise in a Working Boat, we decided to tack away despite the right of way being our's.

The short run back to West Narrows was followed by the long beat up to the finish at the entrance to Mylor Harbour. The fleet divided here, some choosing to avoid the ebb on the Roseland side and others doing the same over by Trefusis; we chose the Trefusis side. This wasn't a bad choice but the better one was to ignore the ebb altogether and beat straight up the middle of the Roads. Mark Osborn (245) did this and gained on us because we lost some wind when we were under Trefusis.

The first three boats crossed the finish a few minutes before Mark, Philip Atha and we arrived and crossed the line in this order.

As we weren't going to trouble the givers of prizes, we decided to duck the tea again and sail back to the mooring and go home. It was a glorious day on the water and we should have done better. We came 6th.

Wednesday

Wind SW Force 4 (mostly). An odd day. There was enough wind but there were some 'holes' in the wind in the middle of Carrick Roads too. (That is our excuse anyway!) Some people appeared at the Start with one reef in, we didn't. There was no bias on the line and a fairly powerful Flood Tide running across it.

We chose to go for a conventional windward end, Starboard tack start, and to tack away into clear air as soon as we could. We achieved this but it was the wrong tactic! We had started well but ended up handing our place to at least a dozen boats, we are not sure why and are blaming a wind-shift. We rounded the Windward Mark, in the mouth of the Penryn River, in 8th place. There was a long run out to Black Rock and we rounded this in 6th or 7th. Then it was into St Mawes and round Bohella. We rounded this in 4th or 5th. The Flood was still running on the next very long beat out to Headland; this is a large red inflatable mark about half a mile outside Pendennis Head. We elected to tack South close by St Anthony to avoid the worst of the flood but we fell into one of those windless 'holes' and with the short sea still running we were making no headway at all for a few minutes. We let about half a dozen boats that had gone a bit further across the harbour get through! Not good! We also noticed that, outside St Anthony, we were being set Eastwards, so we tacked back towards Pendennis. We were in about 8th place with John Bengel (433), Julian Wolfram (262) and Mark Pollington in POLLY (1067) in hot pursuit. We rounded Headland (a buoy at sea off Pendennis Point) in a confused sea and current which forced a couple of boats to hit this mark. 360 degree penalty turns taken out there looked interesting. The run back to Black Rock was a bit frantic with the four of us rounding it almost together; the reach continued up to Vilt. On our boat we had

a little incident on this leg; the keel lifting gear jammed! We waited for a patch of clear water and your scribe went below leaving the boat's helm in crew Nick's capable hands, rearranged the cabin a bit and, with his head in the trotter box of the port bunk, he was able to fix the jam in a very few minutes. We rounded Vilt in 8th. On the beat into the finish in the mouth of the Penryn River we traded places with Julian (262) and John (433) a couple of times – POLLY (1067) had managed to get away from us.

A 'double-figure' place was unthinkable! After a few tacks, including one that found us having to avoid a collision by giving way to Julian when HE was on Port and we were on Starboard, we took a chance. We hoped that the ebb tide had not set in yet, and tacked away from John and Julian and into the centre of the River where the wind was steadier. This paid off and we stayed in 8th place. Our worst place of the Week so far but perhaps the hardest earned.

Thursday

We rearranged the horse and the set of the mainsail a bit before the race, It may have done a little good.

The weather was SSW F5-6 at first and this dropped later. We started with a reef in because it was more comfortable but within about five minutes the wind dropped to F4 and the gusts were less severe. After the Windward Mark, we shook the reef out and caught up with a few boats on the way to Carricknath. We rounded Carricknath in 10th or 11th and were in the same position but a bit more 'bunched up' with the others at Bohella, in St Mawes Harbour. The beat out towards Pendennis went a bit better for us and we rounded that in 9th or 10th. Then it was a long reach up to Water Tower which we also rounded in 10th.

The last beat to the finish went very well, we had got to grips with the new set of the Main and we overtook John Bengé (433), Julian Wolfram (262), the 'kids' in 442, POLLY (1067), and PUFFIN (431). Yes I know, that is five boats 'dealt with' but we came 6th never-the-less!

A tiring day. After the race we went into RCYC and I had a yarn with Philip Atha. (A top sailor from Poole)

Friday

A better day, weather-wise. WSW Force 3 (ish)

We started well, at the windward end and on Starboard. The Windward Mark was, as yesterday, in the mouth of the Penryn River near Trefusus. We rounded this in 3rd or 4th. The only odd thing was that we sailed away from John Bengé (433) at the start but then he appeared in 2nd at the Wx Mark. Well done him! We shared the reach down to Carricknath with KITTIWAKE (722) and Philip Atha (10); these both got ahead of us before we got there. Bohella was the next mark and we rounded it still in 5th. Here at least one of boats sailed in among the moorings on the North Side of St Mawes Harbour, this was in breach of Cl. 9.2 of the Sailing Instructions; your scribe didn't protest mainly because he has never done so and is not sure how to. Their move into the moorings made quite a difference, had we followed the same course we may well have cleared the entrance to St Mawes on the next tack. As it was we tacked just before the moorings and added two tacks to the beat out to Headland. They know who they are, and as I have said previously, in connection with sail measuring, those who cheat knowingly have a problem, not the rest of us. I say knowingly, because they may have just made a mistake but they gained some advantage from doing so. *(They did repeat their 'mistake' on Saturday too though)*. I doubt that this mistake influenced the outcome of the race at all. The boat concerned is capably sailed and a consistently good performer.

Your scribe's crew thinks they should have been disqualified, and we suppose they might have been had we protested them; but we Shrimpers are nice people and we just don't DO that, until next year anyway.

After Bohella it was a beat out to Headland and a run back to the finish in St Mawes, we remained in 5th throughout. This beat was interesting simply because of the variation of the routes chosen to counter the strong flood tide. At one stage, we saw John Hindmarsh (133) pass well ahead of us, heading South, a few minutes later we saw him do this again, but closer to us; he was over by Pendennis and the tide must have been strong over there. John has that boat going like a train and he won the race convincingly anyway. We chose to tack South in the 'tidal lee' of Black Rock, as did Philip Atha (10). John Bengé (433) went a long way out, probably bought a bottle of Breton Wine, and still rounded Headland in second. The run back into St Mawes was a relaxing procession.

The rain held off until we had finished and packed the boat away.

Saturday

Less wind today, but from the same direction, WSW.

Again we got a good start, Starboard tack, windward end, and again we managed not to make the best of it! Of course it was a beat to the Windward Mark and we rounded this in 9th. After the start we had, this was poor. After the Windward Mark it was a very broad reach down to Carricknath. Three boats were ahead, John Hindmarsh (133), John Bengé (433) and Philip Atha (10), and about six of us were in a bit of a bunch not too far behind them. There was a bit of luffing but common sense seemed to prevail and we all ran down to Carricknath together. In our boat we played the sails for every minute change of wind and gradually we drew ahead of PUFFIN (431), KITTYWAKE (722), Mark Osborn (245), 442, Derek Holman (343), and the others and we rounded C-nath in 4th. It was a reach into St Mawes and Bohella and the others were a bit too close behind us but they stayed there. We rounded Bohella in 4th too.

After this there was a repeat of yesterday's venturing out of bounds into the moorings in St Mawes by some boats, this time witnessed by others as well as me. We tacked out of St Mawes, those who gained an advantage by going out of bounds soon lost it. There is some natural justice after all! It was a long beat out the Headland, long and against a strong flood and in a dying wind We elected to go outside Black Rock Beacon this time and found more wind out there, we able to maintain 4th place. It was still a struggle to get round Headland in a tidy fashion but we derived some wry amusement from seeing some other boats falling into a hole off Pendennis Head. A couple of boats even retired at this stage because they were unable to stem the tide there in the easing wind.

After the long beat the run back to Black Rock was a pleasure *albeit* a lonely one because the first three boats were well ahead and we were well ahead of the fifth and subsequent boats. It was a one tack beat to the Finish from Black Rock. We remained in 4th place.

We sailed back onto the mooring, had lunch (at about 4:30) and gave some thanks for a good Week on the water.

We came sixth overall for the Week. Not too good, we were second last year.
