

NEWS OF THE CCRC WORLD

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Produced by Brian Dandridge

Passage Race to St. Vaast as seen from RIMAU

6.30pm saw us debating whether to leave without two of our crew. 6.40pm they arrived and we left Northney. Various boats appeared on the start line while others called up Brian on THE ADVOCATE to say they'd be starting late. The wind freshened nicely before the start and spinners were hastily attached ready for a close reaching start, with both Alpha and Beta fleets going off together.

TOO MUCH were soon heading the field with ourselves and LYNX close behind, unfortunately our foredeck "gorilla" was not up to scratch and had attached the spinny the wrong side of the forestay - not a good start to the night - he was duly subjected to much verbal abuse!

As we headed out for the Nab Tower we wondered if we should reconsider the crossing as we heard on the radio a mysterious female voice proclaiming that the conditions off Bembridge were very rough and at least a Force 3!! We were reassured to hear PETRA calling Solent Coastguard to report their departure. In fine male voice Glen was heard to say "Two crew both male including myself". This caused more raucous laughter amongst the crew and the atmosphere seemed set for a jolly night.

As the drizzle and gloom arrived so various boats disappeared. TOO MUCH and LYNX off ahead on the horizon, but to our good fortune ARD RIGH remained behind. The close reaching course gave us a good 7 knots and we began watch keeping at 21.00 with the "old man" and myself on first stint. By 22.00 I was getting very irritated as the wind dropped and veered and to my dismay ARD RIGH flew past us and disappeared off to starboard. By midnight the

wind had picked up again and when the "pirates" took over we left strict instructions not to let any more boats pass.

At some point during the night there was much banging and crashing and various words like "Bother" beginning with S and "Spinnaker Wrap" floated below. The "old man" come navigator got out of his bunk to see what was afoot. The spinnaker was round the forestay and a rather large 5000ton "Rust Bucket" was within hailing distance on the starboard side! Avoiding action having been taken the spinny was duly lowered and the genoa hoisted. Boat speed built up and our course was looking good for an arrival at the finish around 8.00am.

The 03.00 watch change came and went with little of interest except there was a small yacht fine on the starboard bow about three miles ahead. Gradually they seemed to converge or we caught it up and by 04.30 we decided to alter course to starboard take its stern and avoid a collision. We still were unable to identify said vessel. As we passed her we were surprised to be luffed and decided it had to be ARD RIGH! However we never did see the name?!

As the dawn broke we saw several yachts to the west of us and as the finish line approached we closed on FOHN WIND and just pipped them over the line with PETRA not far behind. The time was 08.10 and the lock gates were due to close so it was a mad dash engines on full to get into the marina. We made it but unfortunately the gates closed behind FOHN WIND so ARD RIGH, who finished at about 08.20, just missed getting in and took a berth on the outer wall.

We were soon all tied up next to LYNX and bacon butties and showers were the order of the day followed by a trip to Ms. Gosselin for the important part of the trip - the ships store of liquor. Once this was done we enjoyed a wander through the market and arranged our evening meal at the "annex" to L'escale which unfortunately was already booked by the R.A.F. Club (Hamble) and Royal Lymington Y.C. (Do we need to book in advance in future?)

Heutre's as per Bert's selection were duly purchased and an enjoyable lunch was eaten in the sunshine. Sufficient wine was consumed to ensure a good afternoon's sleep to restore our energies for the evening's gastronomic experience. We ate well at the cafe next door to L'escale; food being provided by two waitresses dashing across the lane between the kitchen of L'escale and the cafe. Walter and crew from ARD RIGH joined us and later TOO MUCH also came in for coffee and brandies. It was not too much later that we all staggered back to bed for a well earned sleep.

Sunday passed with the usual ambience of good company and plenty of cheese, bread and wine etc. etc.. A vigorous walk was undertaken by LYNX's crew to Barfleur but the best RIMAU could manage was a walk round the Hogue. Another "cockpit" lunch was eaten (its all eating, drinking and sleeping on these CCRC passage races!) and an impromptu drinks and eats party developed on board with various bodies from LYNX, FOHN WIND, PETRA, ARD RIGH, and TOPPY TWO joining us and contributing delicious things like homemade chocolate cake.

Dinner was taken at the Cafe du Port and then an early night was agreed as we had to be up and away at 05.30 BST next morning. The weather forecast was not very wonderful N 4/5 dropping N 3/4. So when we set off oilskins were the order of the day. As we left the marina we passed LYNX who were holding onto the wall next to a fishing boat? We were enlightened a few minutes later when we heard them call Hugh on MONS MEG to remind him they had his croissant and bread order. Hugh was already ahead of us out at the fairway buoy and with the lumpy seas running doubted if a handover would be practical. We would have loved them but decided not to turn back and collect.

The wind was "dead on the nose" and a fairly short lumpy sea was running off Barfleur so we contrived to motorsail with a full main and small headsail set. Our speed was very poor about 3 knots and the "old man" was muttering about diverting to Cherbourg as our ETA for Chichester was 02.00 on the 29th August. However, things got better and as we crossed so our clothes began to come off and the sun came out. Eventually the wind freed off so we were able to sail a close reach for the last thirty miles. At one point Bert fed the fishes with his previous night's dog whelks and we were asked by another boat for a type of starting handle but could not oblige - ours was the wrong type.

We arrived at Northney at about 20.00 and luckily spotted the customs man on C pontoon. We were soon "cleared" and so packed up and left for home after a really super weekend.

"Boadicea"