

Swallowing in Cowes 09

Migrant - a bridesmaid no more!

- It was a three horse race all week long (but a mention in despatches to ABC - Archon, Boomerang and Cockersootie) for securing one podium finish apiece. Otherwise SMS (Solitude, Migrant and Skua) hogged the limelight, no matter whether the breeze was up or down.
- A sequence of 3 wins and a 2nd in the first 4 days set Solitude up for another tilt at the Cowes Week title. Andrew reckoned the new Batt jib was a particular benefit, others wondered whether there might be a slight weight advantage in the more robust conditions that lasted until Tuesday.
- Mostly these races were on decent courses in good conditions and lasted a sensible time. The laid mark G fiasco on Sunday was very contentious – it was marked on the chart supplied but amended before kick off having been re-laid miles (literally) away. A technically correct procedure - but totally daft and unnecessary and resulting in many protests and large numbers of boats in several fleets ultimately DSQ'd (47 SB3's, and all but one in each of the Etchells and 1720 fleets). Best not to mention it to Skua either.
- Class PR guru Lunch (A) recounted the excitement of rounding W Ryde Middle on Tuesday to the Cowes media in characteristically glowing terms - '5 boats all alongside and in close encounters with a third kind' (Redwings?!) etc - and it just so happened that (after some others had popped out ahead) Solitude then made it to the front for a 1 minute victory. The "entire" (!) fleet finished within 5 minutes 43 seconds, he gushed. Good on yer mate!
- It certainly was different on Thursday when the 5th boat finished a shortened course after 1 hr and 30 mins – and the 6th boat an hour later!
- The ISC party at the RYS was a more subdued affair this year – but a plentiful supply of Pimms on the hallowed lawns was a welcome change and it was good to have everyone together.
- Everything then changed – not perhaps the generally grey and cool weather (though Monday had hit all the buttons) but the now lingering front to the West of the Solent introduced light winds that shuffled the pack. Migrant secured her second victory and Solitude had her 'worst' result thus far – a 3rd!
- Social supremo Charles Prescott organised an excellent pub dinner in the hinterland as a change from the Royal Solent. Glad we still had the coach ride
- Let's skip to Friday: lousy course, 3 hours long, first two legs interminable fetches, 10 minutes of beating. There was no excuse, the forecast and reality matched closely enough – it was just mindless race management (did the computer say no?). The race was immediately processional as a consequence and offered no recovery potential. Exit an unhappy Skua from the final showdown
- A postponement for wind before the Richard Thompson (Migrant) vs Richard Thompson (Solitude) grand finale got going – and Skua won! Solitude did well to get 2nd - but Migrant took 3rd to preserve a lead that had effectively given them the week by the end of Friday. Only a point in it when all sorted.
- Thanks to Crocs Monsieur (Nigel P) for coming to get us after – good to be back home (at 9pm!).

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- There can be no hiding the fact that the 9 boat fleet (down to 6 on the final Saturday) was very disappointing. Total CW entries were down by 100 (of which 25 were SB3's, deprived of VW's substantial class patronage). The

town was quieter (partly because of fewer IoW tourists - some of Skandia's lucre had gone into more general pre-event awareness PR, which had been cut). Yes the buzz was still about, but this was not the same as the halcyon years, whatever the reasons. There was even vacant accommodation and tables available in restaurants (but still queues at the chippie!).

- The issues? Overall costs, dubious race management on too many occasions, regatta duration, some disquiet about playing Swallow submarines? The benefits - starting 200 metres from your mooring, open water blast reaching, tidal foibles capable of redeeming earlier race mistakes, and sharing Dinner at the top table of yachting? Is it enough? We await the promised consultation.

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- Edwina Glennie and her Bursary team (including the old man on Thursday) managed a commendable 4th on Tuesday and kept their noses clean. It is a very good scheme that deserves more universal recognition. What about another variation – the Class Association has a draw to reimburse one other boat for its entry fees in 2010 to encourage a higher attendance?
- Swallow sailors elsewhere: Neville Upton and his Listening Company Sunsail 37 blitzed the oppo – a fantastic performance in the waterborne boardroom battle. Christine Graves was pressing the (electric winch) buttons on a 56' liner in IRC 2 and Michael Ewart-Smith won the ever-competitive J109 class, again. No doubt William Mills was there somewhere but we didn't hear him.
- Note for David Leon: When Mimie hops off your beautiful Merlin to go and do some wizardry on big boats remember the backstay (an 'in' story).
- Bobby Rusack eventually left Spindrift in Aldeburgh but much enjoyed his Cowes Week visit on Harrier and looks forward to the team racing later on this year (but when?).
- Let us remember: the Vernon Trophy. Abs(olutely) demanding. Steve Hammett is still staggering around a fortnight later.
- The Red Arrows are simply amazing, especially on a bright, clear and warm evening. The combination of a Facebook subscription (you do have a page?) and an RYS benefactor ensured the Fireworks happened – and they were good.
- Diary note: CW starts in July 010.