

Swallows at Cowes 08

Skua dominates

The racing

- Another grand slam title for Skua – only one more to go and it will be a clean sweep this year (is the NM a grand slam event too?). A minimum points total from 6 race victories is amazing (and if other competitors might be lost for words to describe their performance try any one of excellent, pre-eminent, superior, sterling, transcendent, admirable or estimable!)
- So what is the secret? We all do the same – we sleep on the tidal atlas, we note the course, from Cowes Radio, on VHF, by text and read the boards, we calculate the bearings, and set off (probably to the East, with kites up). Then Skua does a dinky little gybe from the ODM into better tide (Monday) or spots the new breeze coming down the Medina (Wednesday) and it's mostly game over. Harry is not the only one who knows his way around the central Solent but that knowledge is a huge asset, Prue's navigation and kite work is faultless and with David's ever-cheerful demeanour and contribution to windward performance it makes a potent combination. Very well done.
- Under the watchful eyes of Queen Vic in Osborne House the immortal 'Madam there is no second' springs to mind. Migrant was by far the best of the rest (six second places) and only just lost out to Skua on the final beat on Friday. Solitude won on Monday and again on the final Saturday – the other Richard Thompson (extraordinary) undoubtedly helping the gents to their silverware.
- David Royse (sailing Curlew – thank you Simon Slater for the bursary loan) was very quickly into his stride and the two 2nd places and 3rd o/a testimony to the team's skills. Together with Marengo (Joanna Brigg and team) the youthful injection into the fleet was most welcome and their performances a reminder that our pace and experience may not be quite what we thought. Time for some coaching?
- 'Cowes is a regatta and not a championship'. The lack of beats and endless runs early in the week were not very user-friendly but things got better later on. One course was considerably improved when the wind went N instead of S! There have been years when days were cancelled for lack of wind. Not this time! It was wet, cool and windy – so which do we prefer?
- Avocet enjoyed the breeze counting a 3rd and 4th but not quite good enough for Dad (Nick) to get ahead of son David in Curlew.

Back ashore

- The other ISC do a huge amount for us – to their advantage of course but the dayboat fleets couldn't really function without the Island.
- Many thanks to Jeremy Buckwell for organising the various Cowes Week social extravaganzas – the RYS drinks party is always a laugh as we eagerly descend on the excellent but scarce canapés and 'manage' the modest supply of grog. A great gathering – probably the biggest Club presence at Cowes?

- So you weren't at Inferno's Night Club at Shepherd's Wharf or at the lap-dancing at the Waterside? The XOD's were (well some of them – or so they said).
- Malcolm has to balance his Cowes Week commitments with some care – as bass guitarist with the Accelerators (the Yacht Haven on Sunday) – well could you tell the difference? A great local band.
- Give the man a microphone and he's unstoppable. Anthony Lunch worked the Swallow PR oracle yet again on Cowes radio – who could forget when having been clobbered by the boom two years ago he dutifully turned up for the interview the next day swathed in head bandages and looking like an Ayatollah.

Brass tacks

- It would be somewhat heretical to say that the very best bit of the week was the sail back on Saturday but when did you last do a 16 mile reach in a Swallow and barely drop of the plane the whole way? Did anyone better Archon's 2hrs 10 mins from mooring to mooring?
- Why did Skua finish 10th in Monday's race? It was a fantastic three sail blast over to Hill Head but Skua got skewered by a starboarder from another class. The resultant virtual capsized and waterlogged state might have signalled a retirement but the two bucket crew (nb. preparation!) got Skua sailable again and they overtook three boats by the finish.
- Malcolm had two more get out of jail cards than the rest of us. After being perched high and dry on the rocks (in front of the Squadron!) Archon finished 3rd and then having been left becalmed in a back eddy at the start on Wednesday he got back to 5th. It really is never over at Cowes until you cross the line.
- As ever Carol Thompson takes the award for the most capable (marine) hiker, though Debbie Gardner is not far behind. Do dyed-in-the-wool dinghy sailors lean out forever? Does it make any difference?
- So Skandia leave the stage after 14 years. The event has prospered in that time and who knows what might happen next. Where exactly does the rumoured £1m actually go? What might happen next year if no-one steps up? Are we thinking that Classic Week might be an acceptable alternative if entry fees might rise substantially or in any event?