

Swallow Cowes Week 2008

Cowes this year started early for Harry and Prue Roome who had qualified for the King of Cowes – a one day invitation event for those who had won their classes in Cowes 2007, held in SB3s on the Friday before the main week. The day produced winds of up to 35 knots and gave some dramatic downwind legs with the masthead asymmetric spinnaker – they finished 7th overall from the 30 participants. No, they are not planning a move to the SB3 fleet – who would when you can have a Swallow!

Sunshine was in short supply for the week this year, but the upside was that every day had southwesterly winds of between force 3 and 7, giving eight days of great racing. Racing took place across the time when the tide turned, with the time of this moving later each day, giving a complex set of varying wind and tidal situations. The first day and the last three had beating starts to the west for a difficult beat around Gurnard Point (taken “on the rocks” by some) whilst there were downwind starts to the east for the other four days.

Races 1 and 2 showed Harry and Prue Roome with David Lees in Skua with the best starts, leading at the first mark and holding the lead throughout to win. Race 1 saw Mimie Currey in the new Merlin second at the first mark, but it was Migrant, sailed by Richard and Carol Thompson and Charles Fisher showing good form to pull through to finish second in both races.

Race 3 had a force 5 gusting 6 and Solitude, with Andrew Reid, Anthony Lunch and Richard Thompson, showed her pedigree to win a hard fought race. David Royce, Tom Heywood and Ed Green in Curlew, the Bursary boat, followed through from a good start to secure second place, seconds ahead of Jo Brigg, Bethan Carden and Oli Sloper in Marengo.

Races 4 to 7 showed Skua back on form, winning all four to take the week with six firsts. It wasn't all easy however – in Race 5 they led at mark 2 by a large margin only to see the wind drop and fill in some time later from the opposite side of the course to give them a fight back from fifth place. Migrant continued to sail consistently notching up a string of second places with only Curlew, in race 4, able to push them down to third. Race 6 was the best of the week with a steady force 3 gusting 4, bright sunshine, and a three hour race with three perfect beats and a variety of downwind legs – perfect Swallow sailing.

The week ended with a bang with the final race sailed in a force 7. Solitude again showed her windy weather form with another race win (“King of the Mountains”?) with Migrant taking yet another second place And what better way to end than a force 8 sleigh ride back to Itchenor!

Jeremy Buckwell organised two successful parties for the Swallows – a barbeque at the Royal Corinthian on Sunday and a class dinner at the Royal Solent on Thursday – and there was also an all classes Itchenor drinks party on the Squadron lawn.

A few incidents:

- Oxford beat Cambridge in the race to roll down the bank on the Squadron lawn
- Skua recorded the “Jacuzzi moment” of the week, following a crash gybe in race 3 – water right up to the gunwales
- Both Oli Sloper and Charles Fisher picked up mooring buoys from in the water – a new technique?
- Boomerang called starboard on a large ship when the rest of the fleet chickened out – successfully – they gained 5 places
- James Vernon and Miranda Kemlo had the best limerick at the class dinner
- Is Darter’s 1 hour 45 minutes from Cowes to Eastoke point a record? Or was Archon’s 2 hours 10 minutes to her mooring faster?

And a question:

The SB3’s require a 360 for an infringement rather than a 720, which seems a fairer penalty for a keelboat that turns relatively slowly – should we do the same in the Swallow class at Itchenor? Opinions to Carolyn please.

Overall places:

1. Skua Harry & Prue Roome, David Lees
2. Migrant Richard & Carol Thompson, Charles Fisher
3. Solitude Anthony Lunch, Andrew Reid, Richard Thompson
4. Curlew David Royce, Tom Heywood, Ed Green