



May 2018

LONG HARBOUR SERIES

The second of the Long Harbour races was held on 29 April and the forecasts leading up to the day had indicated probable southeast gales. On the day the morning was grey with low cloud and no wind. At the briefing the advice was that the start would be delayed and that was a good idea as outside there was light rain falling.

The yachts straggled out to the start line and then there was a time of waiting. The rain stopped and at 1055 the preparatory signal was sounded and with a light wind from the south the combined division was started five minutes later. There had been an expectation of north east winds developing so the course had been set for that wind direction. The result was a downwind start and some of the fleet had spinnakers flying as they crossed the line. Others were still fuddling with spinnaker sheets and tweakers.

It was a nice run to buoy 23 by the Petone foreshore but to get to buoy 20 and 4 meant a westerly course into an area of glassy calm water. All but Mint Condition elected to turn hard to port and take a southerly circular course hoping to avoid the calm. Just as Mint Condition arrived at 23 the wind ripples seemed move to the west so it made some sense to follow them. It made little difference as within fifteen minutes all of the yachts were becalmed. To the south of Somes Island the wind had arrived but it took an age to gather up the yachts waiting at the north end. Eventually Squid Viscous and Celebrity pulled away heading for mark 4. After a while there was a call on the VHF from Celebrity asking if Squid Viscous could see mark 4. There reply was uncertain and there must have then been phone calls. The result was that the private drifting race between Freedom and Kama II ended, as the latter started motor and powered to the west to take up position as the mark. Shortly afterwards the wind arrived at about 16 knots.

The new wind had all of the yachts moving at best speed. It was a grand reach up to Kama II and from there across to Days Bay. The rain returned for ten minutes and then eased to very light drizzle. From Days Bay it was a beat to get to the rear lead. Most of the yachts were just a little over canvassed and even on the

heaviest cruising boat the angle of heel was a little more than comfortable - crockery was fired out of the shelves above the sink.

Once around the mark it was an easy run back to the finish line. Spinnakers were flying and the only challenge was to guess exactly when to douse the colourful sails. Once the finish line was crossed the yachts needed to gybe the sails, clear the decks and then motor into the marina. Almost all of the yachts prudently elected to get the spinnaker down onto the deck a little before the finish line.

Squid Vicious took line honours and handicap in the combined division and Bojangles was first on handicap in the cruising division.

The third race in the series was on 13 May and again with light winds but this time also with grey skies and drizzle. The weather put off many and the fleet started with nine yachts but only six finished the shortened course. There were insufficient boats to run a cruising division. The winner on handicap was Kama II and for the series White Heat won the Combined division and Impulsive the Cruising division.

SPRINT SERIES

Held on 6 May the day was warm and sunny and by race time the wind was pumping at about 20 knots. Gusts were stronger and some were recorded at 30 knots. It was a of course a day for the heavier boats to shine and they did. The Lotus yachts were near the front of the results and Kama II took handicap honours.

The down wind runs provided much excitement for some.

Others looked to be in perfect control despite the large shoulders on the spinnaker.

But there were mishaps with happy endings. Kiore ran out of fuel whilst shadowing the fleet and Smokie after looking great had a lie down in the water and when they popped upright one crew person was missing. She was soon retrieved.





CRUISE TO ENDEAVOUR INLET, MINER'S CAMP

Molly Melhuish

Following a very successful cruise with Jen Vinton on Anniversary Weekend, I was determined to do at least one more before winter set in. And very keen to include Perce Harpham, who is vastly experienced in offshore passage-making in very small (25 foot) sailboats.

Easter weekend looked good, but Perce said no, he likes to pick up un-used club moorings and they will be mostly in use over Easter. Two others were keen to go, the following weekend or the one after, and we spent Easter testing two of three of Perce's prerequisites for offshore sailing – a storm jib and a gybe preventer.

In the end it was just Perce and myself leaving on April 23 at 8 am to catch the tide. There was a nice little northerly breeze but less than 10 knots, so we motored down towards Chaffers passage hoping to get sails up as the breeze picked up. No such luck – even in the narrows the breeze was dying rather than increasing. but past the heads the water was just boiling – with at least a hundred dolphins, maybe more, many of them very small. What a sight!

Approaching our “waypoint” about a mile and a half off Sinclair head at slack water Wellington, the windex was twirling – apparent wind approximately zero instead of the 15-20 knot forecast. Despite our perfect timing the rip was up and



combined with a 2 meter southerly swell – we wished we’d put the main up just for stability. Ollie saw us from Bluebridge and said we were rolling gunwale to gunwale.

Once we got the sails up, I recognised what I’ve long observed – steering in a seaway is actually easier than steering in flat water. You lay your hand on the tiller, holding it typically a couple of degrees to windward (you set your sails so this keeps you going in exactly the right direction). Then you feel the tiller swing – sometimes quite a long way as the swell moves the boat around. But only if the boat has begun to move away from the course, you simply hold the tiller hard – at the right moment – the boat returns to the proper course and you let the tiller go. Just feel ...HOLD – let go ... repeat. It’s fascinating, and so easy!

Finally the current did its thing and we were round Koamaru by 1:30 in the afternoon. There was a horror show of craypots a long way out between Koamaru and Long Island, lucky it was a nice sunny day so the visibility was excellent. Looking forward to an early afternoon at Motuara and perhaps a nice walk up the track to see the native birds – but the club mooring was taken and three other boats at anchor. Ships Cove seemed to have several boats too, but we found a Compass Charter mooring free at Ship Cove south bay. It proved to be a bit rolly in the northerly swell, but not too bad and the bellbirds were lovely the next morning.

We’d planned to spend the morning setting up Perce’s third requirement for offshore sailing – a single-line reefing system so you can reef from the cockpit. Perce had brought a big roll of 10mm polyprop line, and I’d dredged through my bosun’s stores for pulleys and hose clips to attach them to the boom. Setting it up took most of the morning, and the promised 25-knot northerly never arrived. We sailed ever so slowly out of the cove; then the wind died and we had to motor most of the rest of the way to Miner’s Camp (at the head of Endeavour Inlet across the valley from Furneaux) where Gillian Anderson and Graham McMillan (Delta Tango and Blue Water) said we could use a mooring.

They treated us to a wonderful dinner, and non-stop talk fuelled partly by a bottle of champagne I’d won last year. Gillian was over the moon, having finally sold Delta Tango, which helped their rather scant capital reserves. They’re very busy January through March but almost no business for their camp site (in their orchard) and farm-stay for the rest of the year, partly because mountain bikes are allowed on the Queen Charlotte track in the off-season and the walkers don’t like them.

Graham helped us with the new outboard which was not yet properly run in.

In exchange we helped them put in a couple of fence posts, part of developing their lovely little farm. They have tunnel houses where they’re still growing “micro-greens” to sell to Furneaux Lodge where they have a very good chef.

And we helped paint the back wall of the house, a must-do before winter set in. We decided to spend a second night there, lest other moorings be taken up.



So it was a 3 am start heading for Koamaru – tricky as the compass light had failed, as well as the depth sounder. (Mark from Ex-tension checked it later and found it was fine, probably the settings for the instruments had re-set). No moon but lucky the stars were out. We steered out of Endeavour by the barely visible ridge-lines against the sky - Perce said I went much too close to some of the headlands. Then set a course east of Motuara but well away from those craypots. I learned the reality of “a star to steer her by” – but preferred Perce’s description – “you hang a star in the rigging”. And I did so, choosing a different star when he said “20 degrees to starboard please”, and finally in the dawn’s early light, finding a place off the boom to put the brightest remaining star. On Graham’s recommendation, we went north of Brothers, a beautiful sight with its lighthouse in the dimly lit sky.

The Brothers at dawn



Finally the sails were hoisted(as tacking up the northern entrance in light airs and starlight didn't bear thinking about). As Graham said, we were spat out of the narrows and around Terawhiti in double-quick time. There were the usual little blasts of breeze off Karori, but full main and jib were perfectly comfortable. As



usual, the wind eased when past Sinclair head, and there was a two or perhaps three metre southerly swell as we approached the Barrett Reef buoy, so in the deepest swells the whole of the Hutt Valley hills occasionally disappeared.

Once again, this was a passage not a sailing holiday, so on with the motor, and back to the berth at 12 noon in time for Spring Chickens to greet us and Ollie to remark on our unseemly appearance off Sinclair Head.

There's a postscript, too. I went in the second of the sprint series with just one rather inexperienced crew (but she's learning ever so fast). In a good 20 knots, after the first race we decided to try out Perce's single-line reefing system – it was set up for the second reef. Well it took a while, but set pretty well in the end, and it will be worth refining the positioning of the four blocks. So late for the second start, we retired, happy to have done a little “windy cruise” to test the system.