

## Solo Offshore Racing Club Channel Week

The late May bank holiday saw SORC boats competing in our annual Channel Week. This year we included the Sussex Yacht Club Royal Escape Race (<https://www.susseyachtclub.org.uk/royal-escape-race/>) in the programme, so the event started with a feeder race from the Solent to Brighton. Whilst the forecast for the overnight race was fresh westerly winds moderating, great downwind sailing, the strong winds during the day leading up to the race made getting to the start line more of a challenge, and all were hesitant with their spinnakers, which gradually started to appear only after Owers. Rampion windfarm followed as an obstruction, then the challenge of finding an unlit black buoy in the dark to finish, thank goodness for GPS (the website said it was lit!). Jester (Chris Morton) was going well, only to misread his plotter and drop early, allowing Bonkers (Donald MacDonald) the win in his first race of the season.

After a rest day in Brighton, our friends at the Sussex Yacht Club (SYC) welcomed us for the pre-race briefing, dinner and a drink in Shoreham. The day of the Royal Escape Race dawned sunny with a light-moderate easterly wind. After a short windward leg, we headed south for a fast comfortable reach, superb sailing conditions. The Sailing Instructions designated all windfarms and the separation scheme (TSS) as obstructions, and care was needed to avoid being swept into the TSS on the tide, with 10% penalty for those that erred. Mustigo (Stephen Scholefield) kept going to the finish, winning the short-handed division and coming 3<sup>rd</sup> in IRC1. For the rest of us, the wind stopped immediately south of the Fecamp windfarm, maybe the meter had run out of money? On Pyxis (Kirsteen Donaldson), I was surprised to find Jester sailing a reciprocal course, one of us must be going the wrong way! In the end, Bonkers and Pyxis completed the short-handed podium, with Pyxis additionally coming 3<sup>rd</sup> in IRC2. Saturday saw entertainments in the form of both lunch and dinner in local restaurants, Benedictine tasting, Sailing's Got Talent (though SORC didn't rise to the challenge) and prize giving.

Some of the SORC fleet departed back to England on Sunday due to time pressures. For those left, a planned race to Cherbourg was initially frustrated by lack of wind, starting with a long motor during which both Mustigo and Pyxis found their alternators had failed – coincidence or what? Pyxis started with fully charged batteries and was not too badly affected, whilst Mustigo was not so lucky, having to hand steer and navigate the old-fashioned way. The wind filled in sufficiently to race a great spinnaker leg across about half of the Seine Bay, before shortening at Barfleur in anticipation of the wind hole to follow. This time the win was taken by Salamander (Juan Moreno).

After the long day on the water, a rest day followed in Cherbourg to re-charge batteries, in all senses of the expression, followed by a return race to the Solent. Despite the good sailing breeze from the northeast across channel, again we had a well forecast hole in the wind from St Catherine's to Bembridge and agreed to finish the race at the latitude of St Catherine's light. This was Pyxis' turn to take the win and, after a tie break with Salamander based on the longest race, the Petit Bateau ZTL Trophy for Channel Week, with Mustigo taking the Ana Cup for most firsts on the water.

Next offshore event on the SORC calendar is 10-12 July, comprising an overnight race starting from the Central Solent on Friday evening and finishing 10-15 hours later for celebrations and resting in Chichester before starting a 6-9 hour race on Sunday morning returning to the Central Solent. As this is designated a "Technical Race", which we experienced with our French friends in the Normandie Solo, you can be sure to have plenty of course changes and sail changes!