

Great Guillemot! – The 2016 Scottish Islands Peaks Race Log

In 2015 our Scottish Islands Peaks Race team were forced to make a last minute switch to the Sigma 33 “Green Ginger” as engine issues prevented us from taking the Sigma 41 Guillemot. This year engine trouble paid us another visit in Oban Marina 45 minutes before the race start – and it nearly caused us to miss the race!



We were, of course, blissfully unaware of this as we sailed up past Insh Island on Thursday morning in amongst a gaggle of other damp competitors making their way to Oban such as **Red Coat** which had impressively made the trip from Gosport. Time indeed, the skipper thought, for a hearty bowl of crew porridge. Mysteriously there was no water available from the fresh water tanks which had been filled up in Bangor before departure so I used the hot water tap which seemed to have a relatively healthy supply. In no time a stream of steaming bowls was issued

and Phil soon wolfed his down like a hungry Labrador puppy however Mark did not find it so appetising and started to discreetly spoon the contents overboard. Perhaps the chef's skills left something to be desired? At this point I tucked in as well and was nearly sick due to the overwhelming saltiness. It was truly disgusting but I could have sworn Phil would have had second helpings if the leftovers hadn't been rapidly ejected into the sea. The engine was the chief suspect as it appeared that it was drawing water from the seawater cooling inlet and somehow mixing this with the supposedly fresh water from the hot water cylinder!

In Kerrera the source of the empty water tanks was traced to a bit of misdirected engine plumbing which caused the entire 100L contents (port and starboard) to be pumped through the engine and out the air intake. This resulted in a hydraulic lock on Friday morning and queue some serious sweating as injectors and fuel pipes were removed to exhaust the water in time to get across to Oban Sailing Club for the start.



THE START – OBAN TO SALEN (ISLE OF MULL)

The 2016 race was punctuated by a number of classic statements from Guillemots crew and fortunately, between us all, we manage to record a few:



“Donuts and cigarettes are the staple diet of a true adventure racer” – Michael, Oban 2016.

Michael and Phil had been handed the task of trotting round the hills of Oban and they made good progress allowing for a speedy pick up just outside the moorings before rounding the West Cardinal in Oban Bay. Things got a little hairy at this point with a large catamaran two boats higher than us being blown down towards the mark, leaving a rapidly diminishing gap for ourselves and one other competitor to squeeze through – top marks to the two helms for avoiding a crunch and a protest!

With a strong breeze we moved at great pace up the sound of Mull. Local rivalry came to the fore as we overhauled Carrick boat **Wildwood** on this leg and indeed this was a portent of things to come as we enjoyed close racing with Wildwood all the way round the course – especially at the Mull of Kintyre!



Ben More proved a pleasant outing as we met up with the girls from **Triptych** when Mark and I scrambled up the final approaches to the summit. We were slightly faster uphill but the girls soon overtook us as they fairly sprinted down the boggy descent to the track. We caught them up at the end of the track



where one of their parents offered us a much appreciated cup of coffee to help us on the 8 miles back. The run back is always a bit of a slog but it was made so much nicer having the **Triptych** runners to chat with. It has to be said however, that when meal plans were discussed we seemed to have prepared a rather more substantial menu for the weekend!

SALEN TO CRAIGHOUSE (JURA)

With Phil, Michael and Rick taking the first watch after returning to Guillemot, Mark and I retired to the bunks to grab a few zzzz's. Sadly aggressive tacking was required down the Sound of Mull in a strong breeze leading to absolutely zero rest. 4 hours later it was Mark & I's turn to return the favour except the wind died as had the torrential rain and we punched the tide and the wind through the Sound of Luing – a route via the Corryvreckan was even seriously contemplated by Rick!

Most boats experienced a frustrating sail to Craighouse with constantly shifting winds and adverse tides making progress down the Sound of Jura difficult. This led to a number of random conversations where the quantity of chocolate that competitors were required to carry was discussed. The consensus, it seemed, was that it's most useful function would be to keep the casualty from getting bored whilst waiting to be extracted by Mountain Rescue.



We eventually arrived in Craighouse in a decent time however as we came in for the drop off our engine failed to start. This was greeted with no surprise and we immediately worked away under sail. Tricky to do with gusty wind in really quite shallow waters when you draw 2.3m and with the added hazard of loads of boats on moorings in close proximity. We did manage to successfully pick up a mooring and avoid running aground and our pumped up second pair of runners, Phil and Michael, blasted off on their run. A small navigation error at the start caused the pair to do four Pap's and three extra miles rather than the required three summits but they knuckled down and completed the course as fast as they could.



A longer time than normal was therefore inevitable but the fine weather back in Craighouse allowed Rick to get some much needed rest as he had not slept in almost thirty hours whilst Mark and I dried out the kit. As things turned out the extra one and a half hours did not cause any lasting damage to our race as the tides round the Mull of Kintyre soon evened things up.



CRAIGHOUSE TO LAMLASH (ISLE OF ARRAN)

We had watched **Wildwood**, our local rivals, depart Craighouse at a fair lick whilst we waited for our runners to return. We were very aware that the tidal gate at the Mull was closing rapidly and it was going to be touch and go especially as the YB Tracker showed all other competitors tacking furiously towards the North Channel. Guillemot however was up to the task and with a lifting wind was able to point pretty much directly at Machrihanish. We slowly picked off 3 or 4 competitors but as the brilliant full moon appeared the wind became variable and then died completely preventing most of the

boats ahead of us from making it round the Mull before the tide turned. **Wildwood**, like us, had decided that close to the Mull was going to be the best tactic and overnight the watch of Phil, Rick and Michael cursed, trimmed and paddled Guillemot down the steep side of the Mull as close as they dared. After a particularly fruitless effort of paddling with dinghy oars the smartphones were brought out to confirm **Newton's second law of motion** – two small aluminium and plastic paddles were never going shift 10 tons of Sigma 41. Mathematics had proved that they were rowing for morale rather than actual material gain.

Back to the trimming and Phil commented that this aggressive effort in little or no wind seemed akin to fitting Pirelli P Zero's to a double decker bus in that it wasn't going to make the slightest difference! They persevered however and by the watch changeover at 6.30am they had managed to drift us down to the light house whereupon the tide was now turning in our favour. A quick look over the shoulder showed that every boat which had been out in the North Channel had not done well were a long way back. A check of YB Tracker confirmed what a great job the night watch had done as we had overhauled at least 10 boats with **Wildwood** only just ahead of us slowly drifting up the Kilbrannan Sound along with **Laura, Umiak** and a number of other Class 2 fliers.



This bunch of boats slowly drifted towards Arran with the tide and almost negligible wind. About halfway across we met **Warship Mike 108 "Conducting Underwater Operations"** and her officers appeared most anxious that competitors stay at least 4 cables clear leading to a number of radio calls to boats in the race. On board Guillemot Google was again pressed into service to work out what length a cable actually was! The most amusing episode was **Disk Drive's** conversation with **Warship Mike 108** who after being

targeted on the radio were able to use their own radar to tell the Navy that they were **"currently two nautical miles clear and what exactly was the problem?"**

The drift across to Pladda Lighthouse was hot and sunny but very long - broken up by servings of sausages rolls and bacon butties. At one point we were royally entertained by a pod of dolphins frolicking around the boat. Phil, who must have been suffering a little from the heat mused that with so many dolphins in the sea - we should really start eating them! Rick chose this point to answer a call of nature himself but very soon after the dolphin show inexplicably ended – much to everyone's vocal disappointment. Rick blamed Michael's delicious but fairly hot chilli that had been served the night before!



The production of crew pork pies at Pladda seemed to invigorate the wind and we fairly sprinted up the east coast of Arran and into a sun drenched Lamlash bay. A text book drop-off and a very pleasant run up Goat Fell ensued. With Mark and I revelling in the sunshine where last year we had endured torrential rain, sleet, hail, snow and gale force winds. We knocked over

half an hour off our 2015 time and headed back to Guillemot in good spirits. As we left Holy Isle in our wake Mark produced a fine bottle of **Jura Scotch** to toast a successful race and a great boat as the sun began to set. A fitting end as Guillemot and her crew headed to the Troon race office to finish just before 11pm and keep our 100% finishing record (2/2)!



The team at Guillemot would like to thank the Scottish Islands Peaks Race organising committee for a great event – once again!

THE 2016 TEAM – FIT4NOTHING

1. Brian Corry
2. Rick Harwood
3. Michael Ennis
4. Mark Lennon
5. Phil Anderson

Thanks also to Mark & Alistair Fletcher for allowing us to borrow their fine yacht “Guillemot” – sadly Alistair couldn't join us in 2016 due to unavoidable and unmovable work commitments plus an unexpired/perpetual doctors note!