

**Barry Yacht Club – Race Report – Brian Dotchon**  
**30<sup>th</sup> April 2016.**  
**80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Bristol Channel Race.**

**Smaller boats enjoy great success.**

On Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> April 2016 the Barry Yacht Club ran the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Bristol Channel Race in conjunction with the Bristol Channel Pilot Cutters Association and very generously sponsored by Simon Winter Marine. The weather leading up to this event was not particularly favourable but a total of seven vessels entered the race with five arriving on Friday and most taking advantage of the free docking and berths provided by ABP. The remaining boats arranged to arrive on Saturday morning before the midday race start. The fleet comprised a total of four original Bristol Channel Pilot Cutters and three other gaff rigged vessels. All crews attended a very successful fish and chip supper at the BYC Clubhouse on Friday evening where we were also joined by members of the Old Gaffers Association.

The course for this event requires the boats to round Lundy Island and then sail north to a buoy at the west end of the Helwick sands off the Gower peninsular before returning to finish at Barry. The straight line distance is about 125 nautical miles. The weather on Saturday morning was ideal with a force 3 to 4 westerly wind and some pleasant sunshine. The wind freshened just before the start and some vessels tacked inshore to cheat the last hour of the flood tide. Others kept offshore on starboard tack and most of the fleet ended up reaching the southern coast of the channel somewhere between Lynmouth and Ilfracombe. They encountered some fairly strong winds and the usual choppy sea produced by the ebb tide running against the westerly wind. One of the pilot cutters, *Alpha*, retired due to seasickness and an injury to a crew member. She returned to Barry that evening.

In the late afternoon and evening the wind lightened and some boats had to anchor to prevent being pushed back up channel by the next flood tide. The leading boats at this stage were the gaff rigged *Jan Rorlan* and the pilot cutter *Mascotte*. They both reached Lundy at about 0400 on Sunday morning and then had a broad reach to the Helwick buoy. The Bristol Channel Cutter *Olga* rounded Lundy at about 0500 with the Scillies Cutter *Agnes* about an hour astern. *Working Yacht 1* and the final pilot cutter *Dolphin* rounded Lundy several hours later and they all made fairly fast passages to the Helwick with the increased westerly breeze. The leading three boats reached the Helwick between 0900 and 1000 with *Agnes* rounding at about midday and *Working Yacht* at about 1300. *Dolphin*, the smallest boat in the race, was still in fairly close touch with the rest of the fleet.

Almost all the vessels encountered a lightening wind and some flat calm for their return up channel but the slower boats had the best of the wind whilst the leaders had to anchor to prevent being set back down channel by the ebb tide. Progress for all vessels was very slow in the very light conditions and the weather turned pretty miserable with thick mist and drizzly rain. Some boats spent several hours at anchor and the *Jan Rorlan* had to use her motor to keep clear of the shallow sands off Nash Point. She eventually retired and motored home.

The first boat to finish was *Mascotte* at 13 minutes past midnight on Monday morning having completed the course in just over 36 hours. She was followed about 1½ hours later by *Agnes* which was some ¾ hour ahead of *Olga*. *Working Yacht 1* finished shortly before 0400 with the last boat, *Dolphin*, only about 40 minutes astern. Considering the variety of vessels entered in the race and the very variable conditions, it is surprising that all boats finished so

close to one another after this long race. On corrected time the two winning boats were only 4 minutes and 16 seconds apart and the whole fleet were only a little over 2 hours apart after more than 40 hours of racing.

Following the race BYC put on a buffet lunch for all competitors at Monday lunchtime. Following this lunch the Commodore of BYC, Joe Frearson, expressed particular thanks to the crews of the vessels who had attended this very successful anniversary race. He also thanked all those who were involved in the organisation of the race and the ladies who had prepared the supper and the buffet lunch. The prizes were then presented to the winners by the Commodore's wife, Lis.

Each of the boats is allocated an individual handicap and the calculations produced the following corrected overall results:-

1<sup>st</sup> Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter

*Dolphin* (Roger Capps) winning the Cock o' the Bristol Channel Trophy, a BYC Burgee defaced with a golden cockerel and £200.

1<sup>st</sup> Non Pilot Cutter

*Working Yacht 1* (John Laband) winning the Tern Challenge Trophy and £200.

There was also a prize for the first boat to finish and this was *Mascotte* (Mark Tyndall) winning the Lundy Challenge Trophy and £100.

Each of the above winners will also receive a half model of their boat.

All competitors received a commemorative brass plaque and an individual mug incorporating an illustration of their boat.