

Channel Islands #1 and 2: October 18 and 25th, 2020
Report by Tony Brogan, Pictures by the Phoenix crew

Tony wrote the first of his two reports on our Channel Islands Race after the first race was abandoned. I delayed posting it, fearing that a similar forecast for the second running might deter some from coming out. I needn't have worried! We had more boats out, and what's more, the forecasts were wrong, we had excellent breeze – for the first half of the race, at least. Some of us got to enjoy the beautiful, if chilly, fall day longer than others. So here is Tony's report for both the first and second running of the race, plus some pictures. Thanks ladies. What's up guys, lost your cameras? - FCR

Channel Islands #1

Sunday dawned damp and cool and little wind. We arrived on the docks to find a variable 3-5 knots breeze, with fog shrouding the sisters and opaquely covering the Channel Islands .

The radio roll call identified 5 boats in attendance: RADIANT HEAT, SOUL THYME, SKEENA CLOUD, OASIS and EVANGELINE.

We all cruised around in the WNW wind that came and went and slowly congregated toward the start line.

Radiant Heat was the first up with a spinnaker and slowly eased to the front. Here it became evident as all the other 4 boats had asymmetric spinnakers, that Radiant Heats symmetric spinnaker was a superior armament in light fluky air. The asymmetric all had to gybe at wide angles and while making speed through the water gave up significant velocity made good down the harbour. *(There is no doubt that trying to sail anywhere near downwind with an asymmetric in a poor breeze can be frustrating when watching a symmetric easily do the same. But did he have to rub it in? – FCR)*

Boat speeds seldom reached 2 knots over ground even with the assisting ebb tide.

By the time RH reached the vicinity of Batt Rock, Soul Thyme was within shouting distance while the other three were closer to Sisters Island and reaching up into Captains passage looking, I think, for the ebb current expressway. *(Proving once again, what others find difficult, Soul Thyme does almost effortlessly – FCR)*

(Skeena Cloud did well to stay relatively close to Evangeline and Oasis until we all got to Batt Rock where we (I) made a bad decision. As the wind eased and came forward, the others switched to white sails and quickly made a half mile on Skeena Cloud. A distance never to be recovered. We were using our biggest spinnaker with a long luff for going downwind, whereas I usually use a smaller spinnaker with a shorter luff. The smaller spinnaker can be used as a poor man's Code 0 when the wind comes onto a close reach. Instead of changing to white sails, I tried to do the same with the large spinnaker. We made excellent speed with this configuration – sideways. The luff, of course, well, luffed, the aft belly of the sail filled, and we watched the world go sideways across our bow, like a slowed animated cartoon – FCR)

As the wind dropped to near zero, RH's spinnaker collapsed. The ebb current forward movement pushed the apparent wind forward of the beam. Soul Thyme looked sad with a saggy spinnaker and the other three, still in some wind drew closer.

RH downed the spinnaker and upped the Whimper. this little spinnaker cloth 50% jib tells us where the apparent wind is and where to have the main. Just when Soul Thyme was salivating about

overtaking in to the lead, RH caught the tide induced wind and crawled away again to the Channel Islands. The instruments told us that we had 30-40 degrees of leeway from our apparent direction to the course overground and although headed for Liddel Point, we made our way to Yeo Point.

The nearest boat was a quarter mile back.

We crabbed our way around the backside of Channel Islands and at one point we found a stream of the coming flood current. Mostly it was still an ebb stream and while headed inside of U60 our course for a while was to Liddel Point.

We then had a freshening wind and the wind seeker gave us nearly 3 knots. We were now passing U60. Meanwhile Soul Thyme was in turn being swept back past Channel Islands.

Now we heard that the slower boats were retiring as they were getting a tide reversal and still had no wind.

RH switched to the genoa and made as much as 4 knots heading back toward Batt Rock. Soul Thyme in lesser wind nevertheless made it around the Channel Islands.

A calculation of time and distance suggested it was now impossible to finish the short course within the time and so RH and Soul Thyme both abandoned the race. Soul Thyme delayed retiring until she too achieved Batt Rock.

Notwithstanding the lack of wind it was another dreamy day on the water with sea life and birds and a lingering mist on the water.

Channel Islands #2

(I could tell, from my perspective, at the back of the fleet, it was a frustrating day for Tony. Typically, he is like a scratch golfer who sets up every shot to put himself in position to make another good shot, making a difficult game appear effortless. I could tell Radiant Heat somehow got off their game in the early going, and instead of making it look easy, made it appear as they struggled for every foot. It says something for him and his crew that they finished as well as they did – FCR)

I do not have a lot to say today as the wind was funny from the beginning and we seemed to be slower and beset by constant changes in wind speed and direction.

We tacked into headers and stayed with the lifts to no avail.

The bigger boats had more air aloft and drew ahead . Phoenix and Skeena Cloud grew further in arrears.

We had a long lift along the SS shore and stayed with it. We had an easy tack across the front of the islands only to be headed 40 degrees as we did. The wind backed to the east.

Once around we were denied the spinnaker run we expected and made with the current to Horda to have the wind go NE then SE and back again . Here we caught Oasis stuck in a near hole and we cruised together passed Sisters. The wind went forward and we were under head sail until again the wind went aft and we finished just boat lengths behind Oasis who out maneuvered us down the harbour.

The lead boats were already at their docks and the later boats out of sight.

It was cool on the helm and comfortable for a busy crew.

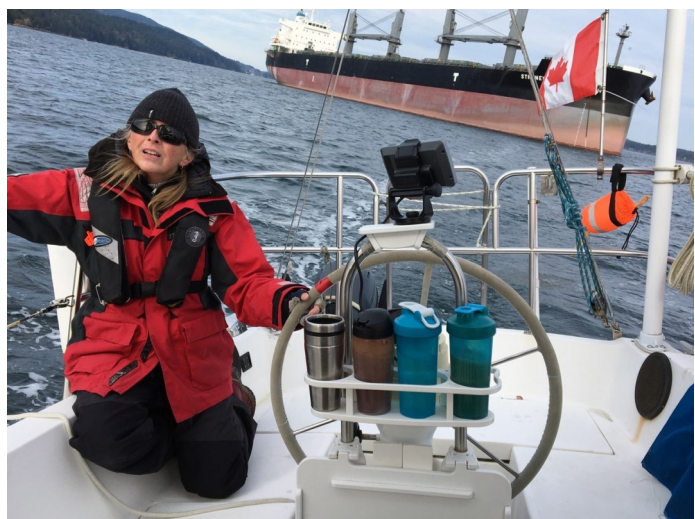
After munchies and a beer at the dock table we cheered Skeena Cloud over the line. Phoenix was still up by Sisters and in a breeze. Good for them for a gallant finish.

Phoenix and Skeena Cloud had an excellent race until Channel Islands. I made the brilliant tactical decision to cross the start line on port. My goal was to start just past the far flag, tighten the sheets, and take off, thinking this would place me far enough away from the boats starting at the inner flag on starboard. Unfortunately, the decent breeze – even under reefed main and genoa – placed me more towards the middle of the line before the pseudo horn went off. Once across the line, I could see Oasis bearing down on me, shouting starboard, as if I couldn't see my life passing in front of my eyes.

I tacked onto starboard, slowing me some, but thought, 'let him pass and I can tack across his stern and into clear air, instead of eating bad air beneath most of the fleet.' I did so, and what did Ray do, but tack onto port, right on top of me. This brought me to a dead stop as I had to tack away again. It is no easy feat for me to complete one clean, graceful tack single handed where I don't lose much speed in that kind of breeze. Three panicky ones had all the grace of what my Sister-in Law would describe as a 'goat-rodeo'. I watched, hardly saying more than a sour sonnet of foul words, as the rest of the fleet, including Phoenix sailed away.

From there on my goal was to catch Phoenix. Sorry ladies, but you were the rabbit to this hound. Races are so much more fun when similar boats are match racing each other. We traded tacks, staying close to the Salt Spring shore to stay out of the flood, while also avoiding the freighter. They are good sailors. Their tacks crisp. Their sails always trimmed well. Then Phoenix made just one tactical error that cost them the race, and me my racing partner. They tacked a bit early towards U60 in a dropping breeze and building flood current (I had before long before shaken out the reefs). I waited until I could tack within spitting distance of the Islands. I made it across the Islands and then around behind them. But looking at the lee side of the Islands, I could see dead air. Delaying my final tack to when I was almost onto the SS shore, I was able to catch the dying breeze and building tide through the gap. But from there to the finish, except for a brief fun spinnaker run from U62 to Welbury (what was I doing there you might rightly ask. It was only place there was any wind to sail to), it was a frustrating slog.

Meanwhile, Phoenix was caught in the bane of every racer's life: more current than breeze. It took them a long time to finally round the Islands. I was nearing U62. But it says much for their grit, determination, skills, and love of sailing that they not only completed the race, but did well. Until they made the harbour entrance, they made up considerable distance on Skeena Cloud. Well done! – FCR.



And I must say congratulations to Paul and crew for a great race. It was their first time out this season with Hotfoot. Paul refused to take the rating I recommended and is raced it under its true handicap. They are always up for a challenge! Maybe he had forgotten that he now has to lower his own handicap 😊



Club	Rating	Boat	Skipper	Finish Time	Corrected Time	Place	Rating for Next Race	club points
	180	POCO	Faget	12:28:15	02:45:31	1	171	100
	144	SOUL THYME	Simpson	12:33:25	02:59:33	2	138	86
	98	SORCERY X	Slakov	12:25:03	03:04:07	3	95	72
	173	OASIS	Jones	12:50:40	03:08:13	4	173	57
	138	RADIANT HEAT	Brogan	12:51:12	03:18:45	5	141	43
	313	SKEENA CLOUD	Taylor	14:45:37	04:06:17	6	319	28
	384	PHOENIX	Lipsett	15:48:50	04:32:23	7	393	14