

# Channel Islands Race

October 17, 2021

Written by Tony Brogan, pictures by Peter Toby, Bob Jones, and Jim Raddysch



The day dawned cloudy , damp, and windless. Saturday had blown a half gale with strenuous periodic blasts of higher wind, but it appeared the front had blown through.

The forecast called for 5-10 knots of NW to Northerly wind and I imagined a nice spinnaker run to the Channel Islands.

The course was the brainchild of our scorer, Paul, and it was a good one being Start, round Channel Islands in a direction of the skipper's choice and then back to Batt Rock(S) then around the islands again in the opposite direction chosen the first time and then home: 15 miles and a 7.5 hour limit.

Arriving at the club we were met with occasional drizzle, cloudy skies and the flags on the mast wet, dissolute, saggy and still. By the time of the skippers meeting there was the stirring of a southerly breeze fitfully showing itself on the water mostly across on the pin end of the line.

*(It was a pleasure to welcome back Heather, who was riding the dinosaur, which was sporting its new, and aptly named, 'screecher' – FCR)*

"It seems to be filling in", ventured the Fleet captain and so it was up the harbour and beyond at 5 knots or so, but not the promised Northerly.

It was a big boat turnout with Oasis at 42 feet the longest and Radiant Heat and Battle Axe at 30' the shortest, with Evangeline, Ptubodactyl, and Shingebiss filling the midrange.

Prior to the start the wind veered about favouring the club end starboard side. Before the start it filled in with a slight advantage to the Port end.

Thus Radiant Heat in a bit of a lull at the Port end saw that all other boats were at the starboard end and with 2.5 minutes to go and all turning back to the line on starboard tack. Radiant Heat heading back in the other direction was on Port tack. Not wanting to be in the bad air of the bigger boats RH decided to tack to the line ahead of the fleet and now on starboard was safer, in clear air, and to leeward. But we ran out of room and with a minute to go turned away and gybed a circle before heading to the line again. I think it was Battle Axe and Evangeline both passed us by and we fell in behind and as the gun went off. All boats were close hauled and we were in the middle of the fleet.



We knew while heading to the left side, to the Chain islands, that flipping to Port would leave us vulnerable to the boats still on Starboard tack. We were prepared to do some close crossings or ducking the sterns.

That is what we did, Oasis, Shingebiss, Evangeline and Pturbodactyl, were ducked in their turn on the first crossings. As the wind varied we hoped we tacked on the headers and rode the lifts and by the third crossing Radiant Heat was ahead of all the boats except Pturbodactyl who was steadily building a lead never to be relinquished.

Despite the diffident early breeze, it had now filled in, and as we passed 2nd Sisters just 32 minutes had elapsed and so our progress was average for a beat out in a modest SE breeze.



Wind varied from 3-8 knots and it depended where you were when the wind softened as to how progress was made. Evangeline ventured to the Saltspring shore and was sucked into an invisible area of light air. She never recovered.

*(From Evangeline: Things started out well and we were well placed exiting the harbour. We then put a lot of effort into avoiding the current in the middle of the passage by tacking down the Salt Spring shore, where it turned out there was less wind and hence less speed. When we finally elected to head away from the shore into the middle of the passage we discovered there was no current. By that time we discovered we had been passed by everyone except Battle Axe. However, it turned out to be a good day on the water with only moderate rain and good company.)*

Oasis tried longer tacks including out into the Captains Passage and back to the Saltspring side and she lagged behind RH a few hundred yards now. Radiant Heat covered her tacks while declining either of the longer tacks out to either side. We tried to stay in the wind.

Shingebiss, often not far from Oasis, was lagging too but recovering distance as she settled into a groove of fast sailing from time to time.

As we approached the Islands we had not yet decided which way around to go. There was some flood tide but it was limited from a half knot or a maximum of 1 knot in places. It was not a big factor.

In the end we relied on the final tack to make our decision for the way around. We were close to Yeo Point as we turned to a Starboard tack which took us across the north side of the first island and headed for the north east point of the inner Island. We eased a couple of boat lengths, for safety's sake, as we passed the point and hardened up and went the short distance required before tacking back to clear the east end of the Channel islands.

We met Oasis coming the other way and passed each other as we rounded into the Channel to head for Batt Rock. Shingebiss was following us in the same direction, but we could not see where the other two boats passed each other.



We raised the Spinnaker and noted a peculiar effect of the wind and tide. What current there was, was now with us. The difference in direction doubled the effect of the apparent wind or the lack of apparent wind. On the beat we had noted as much as 11 or 12 knots apparent. All of a sudden the apparent wind was close to zero even while the speed over ground was still three knots.

The spinnaker was often on the point of collapse. Looking back and across to Oasis I was relieved to see they were having similar problems. We gybed 4 times on a deep reach as the wind varied back and forth and made steady progress to Batt Rock . We maintained our distance from Oasis but noted that Shingebiss gained on us both.

As we raised the genoa and made ready to douse the kite the wind picked up and the time to the rounding was suddenly shortened. Swift work to clear the decks of sails and poles allowed a close rounding and a beat back to Channel Islands.

One of the pleasantries was our meetings on crossings with Battle Axe. As we were leaving the Channel Islands we passed close to Battle Axe still headed for the island and we exchanged pleasantries. It happened again on the second rounding. 😊



We noted that Oasis and Shingebiss were close to each other on the Batt Rock rounding and were about 3 minutes back.

It should be noted that it showered quite often but not enough to be uncomfortable.

Our second approach was uneventful requiring two quick tacks near the Southern Island as this time we went around leaving to the Port side.

It was now a run home. Shingebiss steadily gained on us; while Oasis appeared to fall back..

Approaching Sisters Islands the wind was lighter and the harbour looked to have several holes. Then we noted a change in the water coming into the harbour over the Chain Islands. It was rippling and the ripple was moving into the harbour.

Was this the fabled, previously forecast Northerly. We decided yes but before we could act the wind moved forward of the beam and we scrambled to get the sails changed. Genoa up and set , Spinnaker down, and stowed. Meanwhile, Shingebiss, still riding the South Easter, rapidly closed the gap. They were within shouting distance but forced to the left of the harbour.

As the wind filled in from the North it was a beat down the harbour. RH tried to move to the centre of the channel as Shingebiss slid along the Saltspring shore. They managed to avoid shoals and rocks to arrive at the edge of Walters spit. RH was forced to chase the wind which was light in the centre but better on the shore and so now was just boat lengths ahead.

We managed to stay on the windward side of the anchored boats and looking back, so did Shingebiss, but she headed up and pinched to slide past with inches to spare.

Now both of us were too close in and not able to clear the inner finish flag and as we approached three boat lengths shy we were forced to tack across only to be given a lift . That meant further to go before we could tack for the line when as if on cue the wind headed us again and a quick tack put us over the line to finish. We lucked out to be in perfect sync with the wind changes.

Meanwhile Shingebiss, closer to the docks, was just a minute or so back . As she tacked away from the dock she got a header and briefly was headed away from the line. With the oscillating wind she struggled to make the line 2- 3 minutes back of RH.

We considered it a fortuitous sail as we made few mistakes except at the start and enjoyed a good sailing day and a race finished in time for a leisurely drive home for supper.



Club			Finish	Corrected	Rating for	club	
Rating	Boat	Skipper	Time	Time	Next Race	points	
132	RADIANT HEAT	Brogan	15:12:11	04:41:19	1	126	100
131	SHINGEBISS	Keating	15:15:45	04:45:19	2	128	83
150	OASIS	Jones	15:24:50	04:46:02	3	150	67
160	EVANGELINE	Sutton	16:00:57	05:16:21	4	163	50
-21	PTURBODACTYL	Tulip	14:37:27	05:22:20	5	-15	33
294	BATTLE AXE	Raddysh	dnf		6	294	17