

**Racing Reports by John Olliff-Cooper  
(Evening Reports by William Norris)**

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> August 2011**

Those of us who had previously experienced the (exquisite?) terror of Cowes Week starts with perhaps eighty yachts on the line, beheld the near one-hundred-and-forty strong Centenary fleet with some concern for our lives. It was probably that very concern that encouraged the whole fleet to behave remarkably well, and to get off the exceptionally well-set line with only the minimum of screaming. From the Committee Boat, it was later reported, there was the extraordinarily memorable sight of our Armada of yachts, perfectly in line, and respecting the Z flag, which would have otherwise imposed a 7% penalty on anyone over the line within a minute to go to the gun. Amazingly, there were no individual recalls, with not a single boat in breach.

The committee laid an enormously long line, allowing skippers plenty of room, and the perfect opportunity to choose the wrong end. Several stars of the past got it remarkably wrong. The left looked wonderful for a while, but the right was right. It paid to stand on until the mark could be laid with certainty. Anyone tacking back into the fleet on port was confronted by an impenetrable line of starboard yachts, queuing to turn the mark: anxious stuff. At that stage *X177 Relaxation*, sailed by John Long and Class Secretary Tina Scott, led the fleet, holding that place to the leeward mark. At the second windward mark David da Cunha in *Mayday X161*, had taken the lead which he held to the last leeward mark, threatened only by the Lawrences in *X26 Catherine* who had made their way through to second place, sailing very well, and amazingly fast. There followed an interesting final beat back to the Shrape finish with a turning tide and shifty breeze, which meant that a great many places were made and lost throughout the fleet. One example was *X123 Lara* sailed by Willie McNeil, which gained in spectacular fashion, gobbling up the middle of the fleet to finish a creditable 33<sup>rd</sup>.

Final result: at the line, *X26 Catherine* finished comfortably ahead of *X161 Mayday*, with *X177 Relaxation* a close third.

Quote of the day came from a bemused skipper who commented. "I have no idea how *Catherine* goes so fast with a jib that looks like Grannie's Sunday knickers on the line."

Yes, we would all like to know that.

*Evening Report*

*In preparation for the rigours of the rest of the week, most X sailors spent the evening in the bar or consoled themselves in their own homes with no official events organised. A number of us were lucky enough to enjoy the splendid hospitality of John and Graham Knowles at the annual dinner of the Birmingham Navy at the Royal Corinthian Yacht Club.*

**Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> August - Racing Abandoned.**

After the outstanding success of yesterday - anti-climax. The forecast had always been for a great deal more breeze, but nevertheless with an expectation of raceable conditions. The intention had been to start over by Hamble Yacht Services buoy off the Lee-on-Solent shore,

and have a similar course to yesterday. However, shortly before 10:00, with the wind already at 22-25k in our racing area, and a forecast of much more to come (especially in the gusts) in the afternoon, the Race Officers and Class Captain took the difficult decision to abandon racing for reasons of safety and good seamanship. Racing in lots of wind with a fleet of 50 odd boats is one thing: to do so with 140 or thereabouts is another matter entirely. And the size of the fleet rendered it impractical to race in Osborne Bay where conditions would be easier, but where there was not sufficient room for the 2 mile first beat we need.

### *Evening Report*

*Evening Service at the Holy Trinity Church, attended by several members, included special mention of the Class. It was followed by the excellent annual Yarmouth Division Dinner at the Royal Solent Yacht Club.*

### **Monday 8<sup>th</sup> August.**

Cor! What a day. The Met Office promised us wind, and by the start of the race we had it, a'plenty. The recorded statistics suggest that the gusts peaked at around 28k., but they certainly felt like more. We were set an up and down course of three long beats, and two roly-poly surfing spinnaker runs.

We started off another very long line near Mother Bank Buoy. After a couple of postponements as a result of major wind shifts, the fleet set off on an incredibly shifty beat up the Island shore to a laid mark. And there, it became interesting, to say the very least of it, because the mark had to be turned to port, with a wing mark close by to port. The poor dear (and we think – wonderful) race-officers had perhaps not quite envisioned how the fleet would approach the rounding, although the logic of rounding a windward mark to port if possible when there is such a large number of boats is obvious. The difficulty was that as scores of yachts came into the mark on port, they were confronted by an overlapped line of starboard tackers. Skippers aged ten years in a matter of minutes. Crew were heard to call upon the intervention of their favourite saints. James Meaning from *X 156 Gleam*, who has always enjoyed an admirable shock of fine brown hair, became a grey-haired senior. No deaths were reported, but stories from the event will be handed down the generations.

Somehow, and perhaps more by good fortune than judgment, most competitors rounded the mark, and set spinnakers for a dead run back to Craftinsure.

At the first windward mark the fleet was led handsomely by *X50 Excitation* helmed by John Tremlett, who is a recent star signing from the Victory Class: she was followed by 'Basher' Baines in his beautifully-restored *X59 Iona*, and Neil Payne in *X172 Lizz Whizz*. Poor Basher retired soon after when his mainsail track began to peel off the mast. It was that sort of day.

So up and down we careered, with some place changes. Sailors developed white knuckles from hanging on for their lives as 30 degree wind shifts came off the land.

The early inshore ebb attracted many competitors, but the resulting lumpy sea put paid to many a crews' remaining hope of keeping their underwear dry.

At the line *X186 Phoenix* sailed by Andy Shaw led *X50 Xcitation* by just 45 seconds, with *X172 Lizz Wizz* a further 32 seconds behind.

There is talk of a midnight prayer meeting in quest of blue skies, powder-puff clouds, and lighter winds.

### *Evening Report*

*We held a 'VIP and Media Reception' at the Royal Corinthian. It was a very good opportunity to say thank-you to those many members of various yacht clubs, race organizers and officials, Cowes Harbour representatives, civic dignitaries, sailors from other classes, XOD Captain's Cup winners, officers and sponsors who attended. The Class Captain proposed their health and Amanda Dreyer, Commodore of the Royal Corinthian YC, responded on behalf of the guests by proposing the health of the Class.*

### **Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> August.**

What a change in the weather. The prayer meeting obviously worked well. Despite a forecast suggesting a south-westerly wind, we had sunny skies, and delicious gentle shifty breezes dancing around northerly.

Although a long line had been set off the Squadron, there was very little room on the favoured right side where everyone hoped to pick up the last drain of ebb tide. For anyone caught in the entangled raft of yachts, the starting line became an invisible dream. Some lost mariner in the middle of it all shouted 'Protest,' and that at least gave all the crews something to laugh about. Nineteen OCS boats were penalized 7%.

The wind went progressively right, so those who had tacked right off the line found themselves on an all-too-easy fetch to the 'windward' mark. Many skippers laid it in one long starboard tack. *X80 Lass* sailed by Richard Bullock led a very fluky run to Universal Marine, and there followed a fetch back to RORC, and another shifty run to West Ryde Middle.

Veteran Olympian Ado Jardine showed his dinghy sailing training when he held up his boat in the back-eddy of the buoy, waiting for a vociferous gaggle of boats to clear the mark, before he brilliantly whipped around to head for the line, gaining about thirty places in the process: quite a Masterclass. Adrian Summers in *X87 Excalibur* also scored well by holding up for the new breeze.

The final beat from West Ryde Middle to the line proved to be doom-laden for many of the leading hopefuls. In the light airs it was either into the shore out of the tide, or holding up hard in the hope of a breeze. Those who know Cowes know too that the advantage can go either way. On the day it was those who stayed high and found the new breeze who scored. The finishing line became quite an anxious place to be, with boats on port coming off the shore having to tack under the Committee Boat as an unbroken line of starboard yachts streamed into the line. A few were forced so close that stiff gins could have been passed down by the Committee; but your correspondent has been assured that no-one found such favour forthcoming.

At the gun David Humphrey in *X169 Perdix* led home Ben Paton in *X48 XL*, and James Meaning in *X156 Gleam*.

Overheard in the Island Sailing Club: "So there I was on the starting line, with fifty boats between me and the wind. I had no speed, and no steerage. And up comes this chap from

underneath me shouting, ‘up, up, up.’” “Honestly, I’m a regular churchgoer, but I’m afraid I said something I shouldn’t have”.

### *Evening Report*

*We held a very happy and successful drinks party for all XOD members at the Royal London YC. All present were able to celebrate the announcement that our Class Secretary, Tina Scott, had – to no-one’s surprise and everybody’s delight – deservedly been awarded the Ladies Day Trophy by Cowes Week Ltd.*

### **Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> August**

The wind Gods spoke again. The maximum predicted was a force 5, but the steady wind was around 26k and there were reported gusts of 35k. That’s pretty bracing stuff whether you think in Fahrenheit or Centigrade.

The fleet was treated to two false starts; the first owing to a dragging buoy, and the second in response to a general recall after too many boats were judged OCS. They got away to a good start at the third attempt, in wind strengths that caused quite a few skippers to head for their moorings.

A long beat was set from the start near Fastnet Insurance to a laid mark near Air Canada. With wind against tide it was gruelling work in big seas, much of which seemed to go in at the neck, and out at the boots, having warmed-up a little en-route.

The run back to Aberdeen laid mark was as hairy as a spinnaker run can be, with tremendous surfing surges on big waves. Skippers who knew how to ride the waves gained well. One or two ran under white sails, but despite the rolling, and the hiss of flying spray, it paid to fly the kite. It was not for those of nervous disposition.

So then it was another long beat, this time to Williams Shipping mark, with *Phoenix*, *Excitation*, *Lara*, and *Lizz Whizz* in the van.

Another white-knuckle ride back east to West Ryde Middle took the fleet back, and so to the finishing line, where *X186 Phoenix* sailed by young Andy Shaw had a good lead over John Tremlett’s *X50 Excitation*, followed by the evergreen Willie McNeil in *X123 Lara*.

Among the salt-encrusted sailors dragging their sodden way up the ISC dock after the race, Tom Tait was spotted sporting his dashing new XOD soft crash-hat. Despite his ninety years, the amazingly sprightly Tom had finished in 64<sup>th</sup> place.

Many sailors clutched sundered rigging and expensive blocks, bleeding ball-bearings. Harken shares rose nearly 9%. Crew wore that ex-sanguinated pallor so typical of those who have suffered a near-death experience

Overheard in the Island Sailing Club: “I borrowed my wife’s new pink iPhone to get the course, but it stopped working when a big wave got it. She’ll be bloody furious.”

*Report from ashore*

*Ashore after racing, there was an XOD All-White-Group Crews Party - subsidised drinks for all at the Island Sailing Club. The ISC has long been the Class's destination of choice and habit before and after racing (and its boatmen did sterling work getting our huge numbers on to their boats before and off them after racing). The Field family of Cowes were present in force to see a magnificent trophy (model on an XOD) presented on their behalf to the Class Captain by Ian Lallow. The Commodore of the ISC, Rod Nicholls, was present to supervise the presentation and graciously agreed that the trophy would remain at the Club in future.*

### **Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> August**

What a day! The forecast was dire, and on this day of all days, when HRH. the Princess Royal was due to fire the starting cannon, there was real doubt about whether there actually would be a race. It was blowing that hard.

Over the years, poor old Enoch Powell has been desperately mis-quoted, paraphrased, and misconstrued. Those of us who had enjoyed (huh!) a classical education had heard it all before. Powell was quoting Virgil's *Aeneid*, and he really didn't mean to offend. He was simply pointing out what to him was barn-door bleedin' obvious.

"I see wars, horrid wars, the Tiber foaming with much blood," wrote Virgil.

Those witnessing the Armada assemble on this day might well have recalled Virgil's words. On this special Thursday, after a century of its own history, one hundred and forty 'X' boats headed out to their own bloody Tiber, the Royal Yacht Squadron starting line.

It had been planned to send the fleet west, perhaps as far as Hampstead Ledge; but it quickly became clear that to send a testosterone-driven fleet of 'X' boats down-tide, into the bared teeth of a brewing south-westerly, would be courting close encounters of the dismasting kind. The final decision was to send the fleet off on a spinnaker run to the east. Photographers at the Squadron fidgeted in anticipation, and sail-makers made plans to send their children to expensive schools: "Winchester, Millfield, Eton – no problem Darling."

The wind rose in intensity as the fleet surged off towards a laid mark near Browndown. There were two yachts OCS. 'X178 over the line,' reported the observer. "Isn't that your boat William?" asked HRH. Our Class Captain's reply is not recorded, but a certain clearing of the throat would have been forgiven.

It was a long line. It had to be. Some yachts started fairly close to the Squadron, and others set off out of sight in the mist, far to the north. As the tale of the first leg unfolded, the Island-side start proved to be superior, with *X177 Relaxation*, *X186 Phoenix*, and *X26 Catherine* in the van.

After a short reach to a sensibly-placed wing mark, there followed a brutal windward leg in huge seas, towards a laid mark near Hillhead, then it was back towards Browndown. With spinnakers set, yachts flew from wave-top to wave-top, sporting great rooster tail wakes as they surfed on teetering breakers. One young Turk, probably from Hamble, was heard to scream, 'jehaaaaa.' An expression of enthusiasm perhaps better reserved for less auspicious fleets, and Wild West rodeos. But everyone knew what he meant.

The course was shortened, to the extreme relief of most of the exhausted sailors. At the line *X186 Phoenix* triumphed yet again: this yacht being skippered by the brilliant Andrew Shaw, the reigning student match racing champion. *Phoenix* was followed by Simon Russell's *X166 Swallow*, and the reigning Captain's Cup champion Steve Lawrence, in *X26 Catherine*. The latter yacht sails so swiftly, some say it is an Etchells in disguise.

Everyone had a story to tell, but few could cap that of John Wilson in *X196 Saranna*, which had her starboard side rigging swept away by an (un-named) XOD in a frantic shemozzle of yachts attempting to raft their way around the leeward mark in 30k of wind. With halyards set down to the chainplates to hold the rig – after a fashion, the redoubtable skipper set off on a long starboard tack towards the Island, hoping to make landfall under a lee somewhere near Ryde, where he might drop the hook, and call for assistance. Which all seemed right fine, until a huge ship appeared in the distant east, with every possibility that it might join the stricken *X196* for an unhappy lunch. At that stage *X196* set off a distress flare, and pan-pan'd for assistance. She was duly towed to safety by the Gosport Lifeboat, which, we understand, had radioed to the ship to slow down. Of course, the grandchildren will all think it's yet another tall story.

On shore at the RYS, where the day was somewhat more benign in nature, the Class Captain, William Norris, entertained HRH the Princess Royal; introducing her to various XOD luminaries - Ken Latham (Parkstone), Jane Pitt-Pitts (Lymington), Gerry Goulding (Hamble), John Flanders (Yarmouth), Alex Jones (Cowes), Mike Tombs (RMYC) and Robin Wilson (Itchenor).

There may have been more illustrious and memorable days in the one-hundred-year history of the 'X' One Design, but it would take a member exceedingly long in the tooth to recall them.

The quote of the day is entirely unrepeatable.

*Thursday ashore: Breakfast Reception and Centenary Dinner*

*Many of those who were not sailing, plus family and friends, met at 0830 for breakfast in the RYS Pavilion before HRH the Princess Royal arrived shortly after 0930 at the RYS Gate. There she met the Class Captain and his wife Lesley and was introduced to the Divisions' nominees: Mike Tombs (RMYC), Alex Jones (Cowes), Gerry Goulding (Hamble), Ken Latham (Parkstone), Robin Wilson (Itchenor), John Flanders (Yarmouth) and Jane Pitt-Pitts (Lymington - having completed the VHC radio talk-down to the start)*

*After starting the race, HRH made herself available to meet a substantial number of other XOD friends and relations and Ted Roose, on behalf of the Class, presented with her with a beautiful half-model of an XOD which had been made by Nick China. She spent nearly two hours with us (twice the allocated time) and her genuine interest in and enthusiasm for our affairs gave real pleasure to a great many.*

*Our Centenary Dinner was held at the Cowes Yacht Haven in the evening. A drab and soulless building was transformed and Jeremy Willcock's team (of which his wife, Amy, was a key member) succeeded in achieving a truly memorable and thoroughly enjoyable. 400-odd guests had a very happy time.*

*After Dinner, Stuart Quarrie, CEO of Cowes Week Limited, proposed the health of the Class on behalf of the guests. The Class Captain responded on behalf of the Class and, having thanked those many people who had made Cowes Week in general and this evening in particular such a success, gave one of the 'short speeches' that he so strongly favours: it was based on the best - -or one of the best – short speeches in history.*

### **XOD CENTENARY SPEECH:**

**(Based on President Lincoln's Gettysburg Address – which was itself based on Pericles's Funeral Oration during the Peloponnesian War as described by Thucydides)**

*MY FELLOW SAILORS OF THE XOD ONE DESIGN*

*FIVE SCORE YEARS AGO OUR FOREFATHERS – AND WILLIAM WESTMACOTT'S GRANDFATHER – BROUGHT FORTH ONTO THESE WATERS A NEW VESSEL, CONCEIVED IN BEMBRIDGE, AND DEDICATED TO THE PROPOSITION THAT ALL BOATS SHOULD BE CREATED EQUAL AND THAT MAN (AND WOMAN) SHOULD BE ABLE TO COMPETE, EACH WITH THE OTHER, ON EQUAL TERMS, AS ONE CLASS.*

*NOW WE ARE ENGAGED NOT IN A GREAT WAR BUT IN A GREAT WEEK OF RACING, TESTING HOW WE AS A CLASS MAY ENDURE AND HOW WE AS INDIVIDUALS MAY PREVAIL. WE ARE MET ON THESE GREAT WATERS OF THE SOLENT, WHICH IS A SPECIAL PLACE, LONG DEDICATED TO OUR CONTESTS, WHERE WE REMEMBER GREAT THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN DONE BEFORE AND ARE DONE STILL. IT IS ALTOGETHER FITTING AND PROPER THAT WE SHOULD DO THIS.*

*BUT IN A LARGER SENSE WE CANNOT HALLOW THIS REGATTA ALONE. WE MUST REMEMBER BRAVE AND GREAT MEN AND WOMEN WHO ARE NO LONGER WITH US, WHOSE MEMORY WE HONOUR. THE WORLD MAY LITTLE NOTE NOR LONG REMEMBER WHAT WE DO OR SAY HERE THIS WEEK BUT WE SHOULD NEVER FORGET WHAT OTHERS HAVE DONE BEFORE. IT FALLS TO US TO CONTINUE THEIR WORK WHICH THEY HAVE SO NOBLY ADVANCED. WE MUST SHOW THAT THEIR WORK HAS NOT BEEN IN VAIN SO THAT THIS X ONE DESIGN, UNDER GOD'S SKY AND UPON HIS WATERS, SHALL HAVE A CONTINUED LIFE OF FREEDOM, FRIENDSHIP AND PROSPERITY AND SO THAT OURS REMAINS A CLASS RUN BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE WHICH SHALL LONG FLOURISH UPON THIS EARTH AND UPON ITS SEAS*

*After the speeches, Mrs Lesley Norris presented the prizes to the winners of the Centenary Regatta – and others.*

*The Overall Winner of the 3 day regatta was Phoenix (Andrew Shaw). The top ten (all of whom received very generous prizes presented by Aberdeen Asset Management, who also supported the dinner in person through Chris Ellyatt (deputy CEO) and Andrew White of WSM who manage their sponsorship) were as follows*

*1st, (winner of the RMYC Centenary Trophy) – Phoenix, Andrew Shaw, Phoenix, X186  
2<sup>nd</sup> - XL, Ben Paton; 3<sup>rd</sup> – Excalibur, Adrian Summers; 4<sup>th</sup> – Swallow, Simon Russell; 5<sup>th</sup> – Lara, Willie McNeill; 6<sup>th</sup> – Lucrezia, Ado Jardine; 7<sup>th</sup> – Lizz Whizz, Neil Payne; 8<sup>th</sup> – Lass,*

*Richard Jordan/Richard Bullock; 9<sup>th</sup> – Catherine, Steve Lawrence; 10<sup>th</sup>, Perdix (David Humphrey).*

*AAM also generously provided several other prizes which were awarded to X151, Xanadu (Jasper Bardon/Tony Monks), for achieving 100<sup>th</sup> position in the Centenary Regatta, to Tom Tait, Father of the Class (X181 Xtravagance), to John Wilson ( X196, Saranna) popular and valued Class Measurer who had had a trying day), and to Chris Torrens (owner of X5, Madcap, built in 1911 which competed in the very first XOD race: Madcap and Saranna, dressed overall, have been moored inside the Trinity Landing all week and very fine they looked, whilst X154 Drover (John Mills) , recently and beautifully restored by Haines Boatyard, stood on the Parade attracting much attention and admiration). A further award was presented to David Glenn, Editor of Yachting World, who had sailed with Peter Barton and Vernon Nock on Beatrix in the absence of the Class Captain (detained ashore on ceremonial duties) who held him personally and publicly responsible for Beatrix having been OCS!*

*Following the prize-giving, Anthony Mellery-Pratt auctioned a painting of the start that day – work in progress by the renowned marine artist Rowena Wright – for which the successful bidder was Chairman of the Marketing Committee and former Class Captain, Ted Roose – as well as a limited edition of prints (for which the winning bid for Print One came from Simon Hand, our PRO). Proceeds from the sale (after paying the artist and print costs) will go to our 2 nominated charities, Sailability and Toe in the Water.*

*The evening was generally reckoned to be an enormous success, for which the greatest credit should be given to Jeremy Willcock, Chairman of the Centenary Committee, his wife Amy and Committee Secretary, Nicky Henderson and all others who devoted so much time to making the evening a real triumph..*

### **Friday 12<sup>th</sup> August.**

After several days of survival conditions, Friday dawned with the promise of perfect Cowes weather: oh bliss.

The huge fleet was well spread along the RYS line, and having held well back, a'feared of being swept over the line by the strong ebb, got away first time on a long offshore beat west, to Saltmead.

John Tremlett in X50 *Excitation* held a good lead as yachts set spinnakers and headed for the weaker tide inshore. He was followed by a breakaway group of five others, who sensibly didn't interfere with each other's wind, and so pulled well away from the following pack, who played more destructive luffing games.

In efforts to cheat the strong ebb, many yachts tested the limits of their shallow draught, and some paid the price with unscheduled stops. John Miller in X16 *Mystery* went very hard aground on Quarry Ledge, and was reportedly towed off by the Lympington Lifeboat at some time in the dead of night.

With *Excitation* in a seemingly unassailable position at the front, the five other breakaways held their private race with great skill. The question for them was - when to break off the

shore for East Lepe mark. In what proved to be a rash move, *Excitation* gybed out far too early, and was punished severely by the strong ebb. Heading out much later the following group stole away her lead, and as they gybed back to the Island the race was far from decided. As they crept up the final run to the line in light airs under the lee of the land, the skippers knew well that they were dicing with the notoriously cruel rocks off Cowes Green. No matter how many times salty sailors sail The Green, those rocks always claim their share of victims. On the top of the tide yachts can sail inside them, and yachts can sail outside them; but yachts that sail into them stop very suddenly indeed. On this day it was *X50 Excitation*, and *X177 Relaxation* who scuppered their chances of entering the winner's enclosure.

With but fifty yards to go to the line, veteran Olympian, and eight-times Captains Cup winner Stuart Jardine gybed out for more wind, and headed the fleet home in *X119 Lone Star*, followed by Neil Payne in *X172 Lizz Whizz*, and Ado Jardine in *X140 Lucrezia*. The normally dead-pan Stuart was quite overcome by his victory, and there were hugs all-round in *Lone Star*, illustrating just how much it mattered to him.

Andy Shaw in *X186 Phoenix* finished 17<sup>th</sup>, to then his lowest placing of the week. But with three wins and other good scores, the day's race was enough to secure the Captains Cup with a day to spare. The Captains Cup is widely recognised as one of the hardest National Championships to win, and to win so resoundingly in a ferociously competitive fleet of over one hundred and forty yachts, is a magnificent achievement.

The spectators had their fun too. The cloud of XOD's jousting their way up the shore provided a glorious spectacle for the thousands-strong crowd lining The Green and Squadron approaches. It was what they had come to witness, with a carnival atmosphere, and a running commentary from Cowes Radio. Oooh, aah, sighed the crowd, as the massed fleet diced for places. Oh, if only we were set to finish thus every day. The XOD's were the bantam-weight stars of the day. But then, we know that XOD's are always the stars of the day.

This was Cowes at it best.

Overheard in the Island Sailing Club

"Did you see all that hugging on *Lone Star*? More like a scuffle of Argentinean footballers."

### **Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> August**

Although the Captain's Cup result had already been decided, there was still plenty of adrenaline pumping on the boats vying for the remaining places on the leader-board.

The first mark set was Garmin on the north shore, west of the Beaulieu River. On a well-set line, it was vitally important to find clean air, so with many of the fleet wary of being swept OCS by the big ebb, it was those who were brave who arrived first at the weather mark. Neil Payne in *X172 Lizz Whizz* lead straight off the line, and with precious clear air all the way, led a first division group including *X186 Phoenix* (who was later adjudged OCS) and *X52 Anitra*, with consistent top runners *X87 Excalibur*, *X123 Lara*, and *X48 XL* in close attendance.

Towards South Brambles, which was pretty much a passing mark, the fleet split; some bumping and grinding out of the tide in shallow water, and others taking a more direct but

tide-assailed route. It was the latter course that proved to be better, and several low rankers made good gains by staying high. Staying low beyond South Brambles *X26 Catherine* and *X166 Swallow* paid heavily, whilst *X172* and *X186* gained by their direct course. At all times the wily leaders improved their advantage by clearing their wind and avoiding confrontation, whilst the following pack snapped at each-other's heels.

At South Ryde Middle turn for the down-tide beat back to the line, *X123 Lara* was seen to whip very expertly around the mark, gaining places. With the week's final placings to be decided there was much close covering by the highly competitive helmsmen, although with a favourable tide, and no shore to hold yachts captive, there was only so much corralling possible.

At the gun Neil Payne in *X172 Lizz Whizz* prevailed after leading in testing tactical conditions from start to finish: a fine win. Second, just 25 seconds in arrears, was *X52 Anitra* sailed by Barney Sandeman, which had showed tremendous speed throughout the race. Third, having sailed fast and consistently throughout the week, was Adrian Summers in *X87 Excalibur*; a position that secured his second placing in the Captains Cup. With his outstanding first place on the day Neil Payne in *X173 Lizz Whizz* snatched third place overall from impressive newcomer to the fleet John Tremlett, in *X50 Excitation*.

The quote of the day might have come from any number of XOD sailors in any of the last hundred years. "Cowes racing is bloody expensive. On top of all the race fees and hotel, I have to shell out another £1,000 for my osteopath"

So, there ended the first one hundred years of XOD racing, and there too started the second hundred.