

Round the Island Race

By Edward Hooper

Saturday 1st June

Boat: *Amiina* (Van de Stadt Splinter)

Crew: Edward Hooper (owner) Steve Peake (owner of *Alanouwoly*)

Slieve McGalliard (designer of *Amiina's* sail).

Weather forecast pre-race was NW force 3-4 (8-12knots).

We decided the night before to get as much weight out of the boat as possible, even if that made her a little more tender. This did not affect our handicap as we were well above our

declared weight (which was one of the reasons our handicap was so high, to our detriment).

We were moored alongside *Alanouwoly*, 2 miles up the Medina from Cowes (by the Folly Inn), so had quite a way to go to the start line. In fact we left a bit late, and *Amiina's* little outboard was struggling against the strong wind funnelling up the Medina, so we only just made it to the southern edge of the start line for our start time of 0640 and had no time to get positioned for a good start. (Our initial plan had been to go for the middle of the line, but we did not quite make it). Instead of Force 3/4, it was a good F5, with gusts up to 25 knots (F6).

The boats in the Northern half of the start line had a better wind angle, but we had a stronger current in our favour. We had a good close reach down to the Needles, which we gybed round at 0810, just 1hr 30mins after the start! It seemed as if there were, by now, a good 100 boats behind us.

With the NW wind we followed the rhumb line to St.Catherine's Point on a fast broad reach. We were trying to keep inshore enough to be out of the strong adverse tide, but sufficiently off shore to be out of the wind shadow of the island. We rounded St.Catherine's Point very

close in at 1030, just under four hours after the start. On this leg we passed one boat that had lost its mast, and another that had run aground, cutting it too fine on Atherfield Ledges. By this stage we were well up on our schedule and looking good. Feeling very chipper!

From St Catherine's Point, the wind seemed to have veered to a bit East of North and became noticeably more gusty, so we ended up close hauled on the Sandown Bay leg. The sea was very lumpy and it was difficult to control with full sail up, so we decided to drop one panel.

The short lumpy waves were stopping all the little boats in their tracks, while the longer water-lines definitely helped the bigger boats cut through the chop. We kept out a bit to keep out of the wind shadow, but some boats seemed to have less contrary tide, or a positive back-eddy further inshore. By the time we reached Bembridge Ledge (1253) we felt we had lost some of our momentum, and a few places.

The long slog home started from Bembridge, (where we went back up to

full sail) beating up to the forts, and with the tide against us all the way home, making being in the shallow water with the slackest tides very important. In the shallows, the helmsman threw in a quick tack that the deaf skipper did not expect, (he was the 'moving ballast' at the time!) and resulted in a complete dunking. Luckily the sun kept shining and he soon dried up.

From the forts we had to skirt Ryde Sands as close as possible to minimise the contrary tides and take the shortest



Patrick Eden



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route to the finish, which turned out to be a very long and short leg beat. A nervous skipper was glued to the echosounder, but when the depth showed 1.1 metres (our draught) and a boat outside us had already gone aground, we decided discretion was the better part of valour and we made for the deeper water.

After St. Catherine's I really hoped we could make it round the course in less than 10 hours. We failed by 14 minutes!

Our elapsed time was 10.14.08; and our corrected time was 08.31.29. (elapsed time multiplied by our handicap of 0.833)

Amiina's final position, taking handicap into account was 28th out of 52 (in our sub-group ISC8D).

Out of those that started when we did, we were 79th out of 190.

Overall we were 305th out of 730.

Not as good as we hoped, but by no means a bad result for what was one of the smallest, oldest and cheapest boats in the race.

It might be of interest to mention that St. Catherine's Point is half way round the course at 26 nm out of 51 total, and that we only took 3 hours 50 minutes for that, even with the section from the Needles to St.Cats being against the tide. {at just over 6.5knots - for a 21' boat - we were averaging over our theoretical max. hull speed!} As we rounded St.Catherine's Point, the tide started to change to East going, so it

was against us from Bembridge Ledge to the finish.

The Island race is quite a difficult tactical affair, and it shows just how difficult the tide can be on the long slog home.

Start line	0640
Yarmouth pier	0710?
Hurst Castle	0740?
Needles Lt. abeam	0810
St.Catherine's	1030
Dunnose	1128
Sandown abeam	1205
Bembridge Ledge buoy	1253
St.Helen's Fort abeam	1346
Ryde Outer abeam	1501
Ryde Pier abeam	1530
Finish line	1629:53

PS. Some of the handicaps seemed a little odd. I could not work out why the *Contessa 26's* (which have one of the best records in the RTI race) had a better handicap than *Amiina*, nor why a boat as long as *Gilla* (30ft.), with a 408 sq.ft. sail, also had a very much better handicap, the fourth lowest in the fleet at 0.781. (*Gilla* is very similar to a *Westerly Konsort* which has a handicap in the range 0.912 to 0.929) Even the *Westerly Windrush* had a higher handicap at 0.860!



Paul Wyeth

