

31st FOUR PEAKS Race

Scintilla, with Tim Ridley at the helm, powers through the chop off Cape d'Aguilar (main) and the J/80, *Javelin*, runs under kite (inset)



A record fleet of 40 boats turned up on Saturday, the 31st of December, for the 31st edition of the Aberdeen Boat Club's Four Peaks Race.

Title sponsor this year was Simpson Marine, and fitting it was, as Mike Simpson himself took part in the 1986 race in a works Beneteau First 345. In fact, this year seven Beneteaus crossed the start line and, as Simpson Marine is the Beneteau agent for China and most of Southeast Asia, this was a moment of immense pride for those on the company support

boat. Further, David Walder and Eric Chan, both from Simpson's Hong Kong sales team and both experienced sailors, raced aboard *Wonderwall*, a Beneteau Oceanis 45 in Division A1.

Simpson Marine has signed a three-year agreement with the ABC as title sponsor of the race (and the money is substantial, we are told).

After a breezy start under grey skies in Tai Tam Bay, the fleet enjoyed a brisk beat up to Sai Kung via Cape d'Aguilar and Shelter Island. First to the steps



beside the Marine Police base was Olivier Decamps' Farr 40, *Ramrod*, executing a near-perfect drop off and waving goodbye to its runners.

Some 90 minutes later and the first runners were back, having started at sea level and run 702 meters 'up' and 13 kilometres 'along'.

As if to prove that much of this race is won on the water, there was dead calm in Port Shelter at this point, with incoming boats dropping off kayaks and

runners a long way from the land, and outgoing boats using their paddlers to tow boats out towards the breeze.

Nick Southward, owner of the J/109, *Whiskey Jack*, a three-time overall winner of the Four Peaks Race, reported that from there on "it was an extremely functional race. We were towed out to the breeze, and then we sailed to Repulse Bay. Tick. The runners went up Violet Hill and then we sailed to Lantau. Tick. Runners away to Lantau Peak, and then a stiff (and glorious) 20-knots-on-the-nose beat back to Lamma for Mount Stenhouse. Tick, and on to the finish. Our UK

Titanium sails did a magnificent job, especially on the beat to Lamma."

Some unlucky boats were becalmed in unpredictable wind holes, resulting in early retirements. One unfortunate boat, *Yat Fung*, grounded on Cheung Sha Beach, Lantau. After two unsuccessful attempts by the safety stand-by boat to tow the open lugger off the beach, the crew of five abandoned ship.

First across the finish line at 0502 on Sunday, after 19 hours of sailing and running, was *Ramrod*, closely followed

by *Blackjack*, *Stella* and then *Whiskey Jack*, collecting the IRC 'A' Four Peaks Race Shield along the way — for the fourth time!

Thirty boats finished the race, showing that there were considerable demand on boats and crews.

A prizegiving took place at the Aberdeen Boat Club on Friday, the 6th of February, with over 200 participants of the race, family and friends, enjoying a magnificent occasion, put on by the ABC's jovial general manager, Philippe de Manny, and his staff.

One of the prizes presented was the *Fragrant Harbour Spirit* of the Race Award. Always a tough one to decide on, this year it went to the crew of *Samara* who, on hearing they couldn't secure race insurance in time, immediately offered their services as support staff.



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Continued from page 21 — Mark Russell, group GM of Simpson Marine, shared the celebration with the racers and presented the Beneteau Awards to the 1st Beneteau winners of Division A *Tipsy Easy* (Beneteau First 50) and *Banter* (Beneteau First 31.7) from Division B. “It was exciting to watch the start with so many sailing yachts racing under such bracing conditions. It was a great event, and the camaraderie carried over to the prizegiving,” said Russell. “Simpson Marine will be here with our its team in 2016. That’s a promise.”

“It’s the best race in Hong Kong. Really. It is an event that, by rights, should be attracting adventure racers from all over Asia, every year,” said Olivier Decamps, skipper of *Ramrod*. “I have done it 10 times now, and it is totally addictive.”

Whiskey Jack won the IRC Division A1, while *Ramrod* won HKPN Division A2. *Darling* was first on corrected time in HKPN Division A2 and *Javelin (J/80)* won HKPN Division B. The best performance by a Beneteau yacht was by *Banter*, a Beneteau First 31.7, with a 4th place finish in HKPN Division B.

Full race results are available at: http://www.abclubhk.com/Four_Peaks_Race_2015.aspx



Yat Fung on Cheung Sha Beach (top) and pushing off the beach in Turtle Cove, Lamma (above)