

Conditions were mild at first. Nineteen boats assembled in Tai Tam Bay under grey skies, with puffs of wind ruffling the water here and there. It was cold, with crews wrapped up and huddled together on the 19 boats (2017 : 21). It was Saturday, the 3rd of February, and it was the start of the Beneteau Four Peaks Race 2018.

The Four Peaks Race is more a challenge than a race.

most is one of the enduring charms of this annual event, organised by the Aberdeen Boat Club and, this year, supported by Simpson Marine, Fuegy, Peroni, Northeast Wines and various sports publications.

The course for the 12 faster boats (IRC A and HKPN A) took in Lantau Peak, Mt Stenhouse (on Lamma Island), Violet Hill (above Repulse Bay) and Ma On Shan (above Sai Kung) with a finish at Round Island (at the entrance to Repulse Bay).

The course for the seven slower boats (HKPN B) was Lantau Peak, Mt Stenhouse, Violet Hill, Tung Lung Chau and on to a Round Island finish.

For the boys and girls at the sharp end, they had 100 nautical miles of sailing, four mountains, one sleepless night, time pressure and fickle weather, to look forward to. Why do they do it, you ask? Why not, they reply?



Minnie the Moocher tacks to the windward mark

But, of course, it's the excitement and the challenge, the camaraderie and the rivalry, and, most important, the sense of achievement. All these together keep

done all four peaks in one race! But being a runner, doesn't necessarily mean you're a sailor: during the colonial days, some Ghurka soldiers who had no trouble

scaling vertical rock faces had

enormous difficulties with rolling decks, particularly in the swells off the Ninepins.

competitors coming back, year after year.

Modelled on Britain's Three Peaks Race, our very own Four Peaks Race is the work of Stephen Davies (former FH cruising writer) and skipper of participant *Tolo* for the past few years. The event is now unique in Asia, although there were similar events in Japan and Tasmania (the last being in 2013).

In Hong Kong, boats sail to drop zones around the various peaks. Two runners paddle ashore in kayaks and ascend the peaks, both in daylight and the dead of night. Some runners have

are not allowed to the top of Ma On Shan as it is damaging to the paths and rocks and grass and lizards and . . . )



Coming ashore at Cheung Sha Beach

Another wonderful thing about the Four Peaks is that there are stories, lots of 'em. Runners get lost on Lamma, sailors find uncharted rocks, feral cattle get in the way, snakes appear on paths. Some have been known to pop into pubs along the way. Others get in taxis and go home.

All, of course, look forward to the Aberdeen Boat Club's famed breakfast on Sunday morning, so there is always an incentive to finish earlier rather than later!

But back to 2018. Alex Johnston had the IRC A and HKPN A fleets away at 1030. The breeze piped up and the faster boats were soon passing Cape d'Aguilar.

For sponsor, Beneteau, it was a

pleasing moment as there were three of its models among the forerunners — a Sense 46, a Sense 50, and a First 50.

Regular campaigner, *Sea Monkey*, had Beneteau's man in Hong Kong (David Walder) aboard, calling the shots.

*Red Kite II* knows this race well. It won last year and was determined to do the same again. Trained by other strong contenders in IRC Division

A, like *Andiamo*, *Minnie the Moocher*, *Arcturus* and *Avant Garde*, the end came quickly but not before *Minnie* had finished at 07:11:23 on Sunday. The *Red Kites* finished at 07:35:03 and, on handicap, won IRC A. Great work, Philippe Delorme, and his slick team.

In HKPN B, once again Four Peaks stalwart, Tim Ridley and team of *Scintilla*, came home at 09:58:07 to win on handicap, although



deserved line honours in this division went to Cynthia Wong and *Daydream* (a Dehler 42).

Leon Chan, a

tireless supporter of the Four Peaks, steered *Tipsy Easy* across the line at 12:12:25 to come 7th in IRC A

In HKPN Division B, finish times were, on the whole, similar to the faster boats, despite their course being shorter. However,

this makes life a lot easier for the organiser and those manning the check points as there are fewer stragglers.

Interestingly, and despite persistent criticisms that yachting is elitist and dominated by *gweilos*, the skippers' names of the Beneteau Four Peaks Race 2018 suggest otherwise. Out of 19 boats, 10 were entered by Chinese.

A prize-giving was held at the Aberdeen

Boat Club on Friday, the 9th of February 2018. David Walder presented awards on behalf of Simpson Marine, and at the same time celebrated as one of the crew aboard the Sense 50, *Sea Monkey*, 2nd in HKPN A.

For the full results, including hill times, and the many, many prizes presented, visit <http://www.abclubhk.com/>



Daydream (middle) and happy crew on Tardis