

Write-up by James Penn

The weather forecast did not bode well for the 61st IOM Copiers Round The Island Yacht Race, run by the Manx Sailing & Cruising Club. UK weather websites were predicting gales for the race on Sunday, and given the forecasts some skippers decided not to sail. In the event the local Met Office, with its forecast for a bit less wind strength, proved the more accurate.

However, some boats were taking no chances, and when Race Officer Andrew Dean started the race at 5.45am only seven of the original 10 entrants made the starting gun. This resulted in four of Sea Pie's crew moving over to Tan-it only half an hour before the start, given skipper Jerry Colman's decision not to sail.

The event was summed up by one sailor as: 'a tough beat, mountainous seas, wind shifts, contrary tides, all boats taking lots of water, and cold crews.'

The race began with a brisk run up the coast to the Point of Ayre, with none of the boats daring to put spinnakers up at this stage.

After the Point, the boats faced the uninviting prospect of a 30 mile beat into a near gale strength headwind down the west coast. This took seven hours for the winner and considerable longer for the smaller boats.

The Chickens were predictably rough with huge seas and enough mist not to be able to see land. 'It was a case of avoiding being swamped and set onto the rocks,' said one sailor.

After rounding Langness, which was not quite as bad as might have been expected, it was spinnakers up and a three hour downwind haul to Ramsey for the fastest boats.

'We were going downwind in 20 knots of wind and all the sails collapsed at one point, so the boat must have been doing 20 knots itself at that point,' said Brian Quayle, who was crewing on Robert Floate's boat.

Floate, who notched up his first win in his newly acquired Tan-it (a Sydney 36, which incidentally only arrived on the Isle of Man three days prior to the race) claimed, 'There wasn't a face that didn't smile all the way round.'

'It's fair to say the whole crew had a laugh, even if it was a rough day. The kite run home from the south was exhilarating,' he added.

The Tan-it crew, which was now ten strong, comprised: Robert Floate himself, Brian Quayle, Danny Boyes, Juan Hendy, Keith Hardisty, Phil Hardisty, Rob Cowell, Ralph Kee, Glenda Cain and James Walker. 'All thanks to Jerry Colman for letting me borrow his crew!' said Floate.

'They really were a great crew – very experienced – and they stepped onto a yacht that was not really race ready and got her going. I could not have done it without them and I really must acknowledge their efforts in a great team performance.'

Tan-it was the first boat home, arriving at about 4.30pm, and collected four cups: Ramsey Town Cup for best IRC handicapped boat, Division I winner, winner on elapsed time, and the Golden Jubilee Trophy for overall Monohull.

AJ Wanderlust (an all girl crew with the team slogan 'Knot For Buoys') won the club's older trophy, the Coronation Cup for best non-handicapped boat. Master Frank won the Endeavour Trophy, and best overall squadron was Douglas Yacht Club.

Of the seven starters, only four finished: Robert Floate's Tan-it, Kuba Szymanski's Polished Manx II, Grant Kinsman's Thalia (one of two non-Manx boats which competed), and Charlene Howard's AJ Wanderlust.

Of the others, Joe Pennington's Master Frank, a 12 ton Gaff Cutter which has just celebrated its 121st year, returned to Ramsey, Steve Morely's Pride of Mann turned in at Peel, and Milly Brown retired at Douglas.

Thanks to Mark Corrin of IOM Copiers for sponsoring the event. Also to everyone involved in preparing the pre-sail barbecue on Saturday night, and a Regatta tea on the Sunday. For more pictures please go to our Facebook page.