



Elektra crashes through the chop off Lamma Island

their genoa poled out and gusts of up to 38 knots, they set a record of 14.3 knots with the Bavaria 47 even briefly surfing. "The good old girl held up well," said Ferguson. Short-handed but with their principal objective of arriving safely accomplished, they needed the lay-day to recover.

It was a frustrating experience for Keith Mowser and crew when, shortly after the start, they lost their rudder. Commendably,

Marcel Liedts on *Elektra* had no hesitation in going to the assistance of the Young 8.4, *Gambit*, and stood-by until a tow could be arranged.



Now in its 48th year, the Cruiser Owners Association's (COA) annual Chinese New Year Macau Race 2015 was title-sponsored by China Pacific Marine and their Jeanneau brand and held from Thursday the 19th to Saturday the 21st of February 2015. Although an enjoyable affair, for some yacht owners it was a nightmare whilst at the same time being a sailmakers dream!

A number of yachts including *Thea*, *Cuchulain*, *La Folia* and *Ramrod* were moored on the pontoons at Aberdeen Boat Club (ABC) where their crews gathered and final preparations were undertaken for their annual Chinese New Year (CNY) jaunt to Macau and back. There FH met the race officer and chairman of the COA, Malcolm Brocklebank, and headed out to the start area, in the vicinity of Yuen Kok light on the southeast corner of Lamma Island. The ABC's venerable Cheoy Lee served as committee boat.



After starting *Ramrod*, skippered by Anthony Root, the RO headed back to shore to catch his scheduled ferry to Macau whilst FH stayed with the ABC boat and assisted with *Gambit's* tow back to ABC. It took longer than expected but it was a sensible decision to take the calmer route by traversing up the west coast of Lamma before crossing the channel to Aberdeen. Meanwhile, Keith Mowser onboard *Gambit* was rocking and rolling more than he had done since the 1950s!

Having delivered the RO ashore, the RIB returned and fortunately was carrying a dragon boat paddle. When handed to *Gambit*, it was jury-rigged as a rudder and at least provided some steerage. Realising they also had a back-up rudder back in Aberdeen, Gideon Mowser went ahead in the RIB and, in a commendable performance, replaced the broken rudder and, within 20 minutes of arrival ashore, *Gambit* was heading back out to join the fleet in Macau.

All credit must go to the ABC marine staff who aided the recovery, despite CNY commitments for family gatherings and dim sums.

This year, instead of using Clube Náutico De Macau in the inner harbour, the berthing facilities at Fisherman's Wharf were



A pursuit race format had been adopted with the first boat *La Folia* scheduled to start at 1000 out of a total of 28, of which 25 actually started (2014: 26)

With the breeze gusting 25 knots and 1.5 to 2-metre seas it was interesting having time to watch the various start tactics adopted by skippers with varying levels of sailing skills. Surprisingly, several boats, including *La Folia*, four minutes before its scheduled start, called in to check the course number, despite the No.2 flag being clearly displayed.

JC Broyelle's Beneteau 34.7, *Lady Butterfly*, was one of the early victims when, encouraged by his crew to push the limits and fly his spinnaker, he broached, tearing the kite and landing chest high in water. Fortunately they recovered. *Wonderwall* tore its main but carried on under head sail.

Cameron Ferguson on *Sirocco*, with only his wife and two children onboard, were late for the start, having encountered difficulties clearing their mooring in Deep Water Bay, and nearly missed the cut off. However, with



Gambit under tow, rudder repaired (middle) and Fisherman's Wharf marina (above)

made available by Fisherman's Wharf and Starship Yachts. It was not all smooth sailing for some as the approach into the marina proved challenging but, the convenience of the facilities and being near the ferries, were appreciated by all.



Demonstrating that Arthur Ho had done a good job with the handicapping, most of the boats arrived within a 45-minute time-stretch, but once again immigration procedures proved tedious. *Sirocco* found, for example, that all the Thai food at the welcoming dockside party had been consumed when they arrived! But, at least beer was still available. A subsequent gift of chocolates from the COA partly compensated for this issue.

In addition to the sailing, the lay day in Macau is traditionally one of the more enjoyable aspects of this race, with activities to suit all tastes. These can include just chilling out or enjoying the sights, sounds and culinary delights of Macau. The lion and dragon dances in the central Senado Square are amongst the most colourful you'll ever see, along with the fireworks displays. As always, many crews headed on their annual (or in some cases bi-annual) pilgrimage to Fernando's Restaurant on Coloane, despite the long queues and frustrations of trying to be served even a Super Bock beer.

Fortunately, as FH subsequently discovered, the secret to their service is to befriend a local.

The new venue at Fisherman's Wharf, from most accounts, proved successful. There were initial concerns over wake from high speed ferries but, with the traffic much reduced during the night, there were only a few comments about disturbances by those sleeping aboard. In future, this should be overcome once the proposed sea wall has been completed.

It proved an ominous start for the return journey when, on Saturday, the 21st of February 2015, there was hardly a zephyr as the marina at Fisherman's Wharf slowly came alive.

The Macau Immigration Department must have set a record by being in situ at the appointed hour of 0730 . . . the only problem there were no crews to process. Too early, it seems. This was shortly rectified as word went out and a queue formed.

With immigration procedures complete, the fleet headed out to the start area where the Lagoon 44 catamaran, *Freewind*, was on station as the start boat with the RO on board.

In a breeze of barely 5 knots, the RO got the HKPN B fleet away but, as the HKPN A fleet hit the line, the wind totally died. Few, if any, made it across and, if they did, they soon found themselves, along with several of the B fleet, going backwards.

On *Sirocco*, which FH had the pleasure of joining, it was a matter of dropping the anchor to maintain position until the breeze returned.

It was suggested that the RO abandon race and try a restart if conditions improved. After a 45-minute wait, the race was indeed abandoned, with some skippers questioning the RO whether their entry fees would be refunded!

Perhaps an alternative course of action, as applies in Malaysia's Raja Muda Regatta, would have been for the RO to request the fleet to follow him up the course and, if conditions improved, then to initiate a restart. By then, of course, several boats had retired and switched on their engines, headed for their assorted Hong Kong watering holes. Apparently *Tipsy Easy* at least had compensation in spotting a pod of 30 dolphins off the coast of Lantau.

It was an unfortunate conclusion to what otherwise had been an enjoyable excursion.

Only the outbound race results thus counted, and awards were presented to *La Folia* (HKPN B), *Amarante* (HKPN A) and *Elektra* (IRC) at a prizegiving on the 27th of February 2015 at the ABC.

Make a note of this — a return trip to Macau is scheduled for the 21st and 22nd of June 2015.



MACAU RACE



Lion dance in Senado Square (top right), fireworks (above) and Ding Dong starts (below)

