

Ocean Race to Port Underwood and Back

Distance, 100 miles



BANG! went the gun at 2 p.m. on Saturday, the 4th March, and away squered the six competitors in the Ocean Race to Port Underwood. The starters with their time allowances were as follows; White Heather (scr.), Siren (2hrs.), Windward (3hrs.), Iolanthe (3hrs.), Ngaira (4½hrs.), Viking (5hrs.) A fresh southerly was blowing necessitating a tuck in the Iolanthe and Windward, the other boats carrying their full canvas. The Windward and

White Heather kept together on the lead to Halswell. The Iolanthe, Viking and Syren were a little astern, with the Ngaira in the rear. Up the entrance the breeze was fairly solid and the White Heather put down a single in her main at Seatoun and the Windward put in another tuck to make things snug for outside. It certainly looked as if it was going to be fairly heavy outside, but as it turned out there was not a great deal of wind.

The White Heather and Viking made through Chaffer's Passage in one leg, but the Windward, which was fairly close up on the White, had to make a short hitch to clear the Western Ledge, as did the other boats.

Once clear of the Heads the boats soon split tack, the Viking, Siren, Iolanthe, and Ngaira made well up to windward before shaping their course for Port Underwood.

The White Heather and Windward kept closer down on Sinclair Head, and set their course for the other side. The Iolanthe, Viking, and Siren had an interesting run across, being all in a bunch right up until dark. The White Heather soon shook off the Windward, and the rest of the fleet were hull down after a few hour's sailing. A fine breeze hustled the boats through the Straits, and the bit of a sea and rip that was encountered was just sufficient to add a little spice to the trip.

This scribe was fortunate enough to have secured a berth in the White Heather, and I can honestly say that the sail over was one of the most enjoyable stunts I have ever had the good luck to experience.

With her single tuck down, she was very snug, and reeled off her knots as regularly as an ocean-going steamer. I have always been prejudiced in favour of the smaller boats, but the White Heather will suit me for outside work.

Being in the scratch boat prevented us from seeing the race amongst the rest of the fleet, and therefore this account is not as full as I should have desired it to be.

The Vikings report that the two smallest boats, Windward and Iolanthe, are lovely little sea boats. Mr. Freyberg, sailing master of the Viking, in describing the Iolanthe, said that at the time they were accompanied by a shoal of porpoise, and first of all one of these inhabitants of the sea would gracefully leap out of the water, and the little Iolanthe would do her level best to follow suit. In the rip they had, on several occasions, a good view of the whole underbody of the Iolanthe as she was lifted bodily up by a wave.

To return once more to the White Heather, as we neared the South Island we could pick out the hills up from Wellington Head but round Port Underwood the coastline was obscured in a mist. We kept on our course as darkness set in without being able to distinguish our destination. After shutting out the Brothers light we had another six miles to run before we reached the Port, or rather the shore where we reckoned it should be. It was very dark as we neared the shore and a dirty sea was breaking with an occasional knock down puff.

As none of us had been to Port Underwood before it was a difficult matter to make the entrance, but, fortunately, our compass landed us almost at the entrance and after a good deal of eye straining we picked up Robinson's point and ran in, a light in Ocean bay being a good landmark.

We decided to anchor after rounding Mt. Jackson at 8.53 p.m. and wait until the other boats arrived, and, if all were agreeable, the times of arrival would be taken and the boats to start again on the Sunday morning.

At 10.30 p.m. the Viking came in after making an excellent passage, and they decided to stay the night.

Outside the Iolanthe and Siren lost the Viking as she ran in and they decided to return to Wellington rather than tackle the entrance in the dark. They had a good passage back and Siren arrived at Boat Harbour at 4.45 a.m. Sunday with Iolanthe three-quarters of an hour later.

The Ngaira did not like to tackle Port Underwood that night, and so they stood off hove to all night in the Straits. They made Underwood next morning about 7 o'clock, and were very surprised to find that the White Heather and Viking had been snugly anchored all night in calm water. Mr. Lancaster, of the Ngaira, although he anchored and stayed until nearly 12 o'clock, refused to fall in with the suggestion that times should be taken and all start together. He said that the race finished at Wellington, and was ready to make sail right away.

He left hurriedly a little before 12 o'clock, closely followed by Viking ten minutes later, and the White Heather left 15 minutes after the Viking.

The beat out was slow, as a big lump of a sea was running, and not much wind. The White Heather threw out her single, and very soon took the lead, with the Viking right in her tracks astern, and the Ngaira away to leeward.

A New Launch

The trip back was an easy close haul and very enjoyable, although there was a fair sea running nothing much came aboard. In the rip the wind was fresh, and it looked for awhile as if it was going to be dirty, but I am told that it always breezes up there.

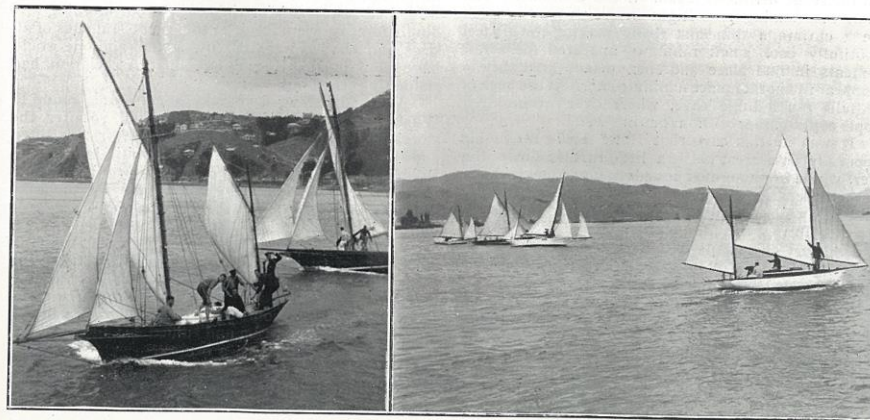
The Ngaira stood away down, and it was astonishing the way she came up and passed the Viking, as we reckoned the latter boat was well ahead when we last saw them.

Off Island Bay the sea moderated to a marked degree, in fact the wind eased up and we wondered if we were going to be left with a light air, but we were fortunate enough to carry the breeze to the finishing line, which we crossed at 7.21 p.m. The Ngaira finished at 9.9 p.m. and the Viking at 9.11 p.m.

The race resulted as follows: 1st, Viking (Messrs. Headland and Elton), 2nd, Ngaira (Messrs. Lancaster and party), 3rd, White Heather (Denne, Hoggard and Gray). The Viking wins the handsome silver cup; the Ngaira secures a trophy valued at £2 2s., presented by Mr. Jackson, and the White Heather secures a trophy valued £1 1s. as well as the trophy 'Helmsman' for being first boat to finish.

The Windward ran for Tory Channel and returned to Wellington some days later and no details are available as to her trip.

The race has been a great success and will be a permanent annual fixture in the club's programme. It will be arranged differently next time as the experience gained in this race has been very helpful.



Viking, (winner) and Start of 100 Mile Race Wellington to Port Underwood and back. Iolanthe, Siren, Ngaira, Windward