



Predicted Log Challenge – Report.

The stream was running hard now. More than 10 million cubic feet of water pent up in Millbrook Lake, the Hamoze and St John's Lake, with the rain swollen Rivers' Tamar and Lynher adding to the pressure, had begun to flow out through the Bridge passage into Plymouth Sound. It was an Equinox Spring Tide at about half ebb, probably the largest tidal range of the year, flowing at 2.5 knots through the Bridge that greeted the competitors on a glorious sunny Saturday October morning for the Predicted Log Challenge.

As each competitor left NW Drake buoy to port and turned towards the Bridge passage, they had to compensate for the tidal stream which required a 'course to steer' 50 degrees offset from the direct bearing taken from the chart. Those who under estimated this were swept towards Drake Island shallows and had to cover significant extra distance and lost time to regain the entrance to the Bridge.

This then was the flavour of a much enjoyed Predicted Log Challenge which saw four yachts & motor boat competitors, 15 crews including four onboard Observers, take part in late October 2015. At the club lunch that followed pretty much everyone believed they had won and indeed the results were very close. Each competitor knew their own 'Error' in seconds but not the other competitors. It was a test of navigational skill, chart reading, tidal stream calculations and knowledge of actual boat performance under engine, without the help of chart plotter or GPS or any timepieces. Sea state and wind were also last minute factors to program in. One competitor even made allowance for the turning time at each mark!

This is how it worked. The course and time of the event were posted a month earlier. Each competitor using whatever method they cared to, calculated the time to complete the course at a fixed engine RPM. No change of RPM was allowed nor any significant deviation from a direct course over the ground between the race marks. This 'Predicted Time' was entered to the Organiser. On the day of the Challenge an Observer was allocated to each boat which then motored around the course without changing RPM. The Observer took start and finish times, ensured the course was correctly followed without any 'violations'. The winner had the smallest error as a percentage of their Predicted Time. The course was 7.5 miles, all within the shelter of the breakwater and took about 1 hour 20 minutes to complete.

Après Sail Comments:-

- My enjoyment was enhanced by the excellent waitress service on Prima!
- 'Malibu' had one violation – insufficient booze onboard!
- The food onboard 'Shakura' was amazing.
- I was very surprised at the variation in boat speed at fixed rpm uptide v downtide.
- I would have won but for the lifeboat crossing my route!
- This was a completely new experience for me and I enjoyed it immensely. I am sure we have all at some time had to reach a point at some fixed time, lock gates, tidal sills, the start of the Channel du Four, but rarely with such precision, there is usually the option to back pedal or accelerate.
- I really hope the event will be repeated next year, either in the same format or a modified version to fit in with some other club event.

The Results:

Position	Boat	Skipper	Observer	% Error of Predicted Time	Seconds
1 st	'Shakura'	Bill Joce	Jennie King	1.93% Slow	109
2 nd	'Malibu'	Paul Farren	Liz Lehmann	3.31% Fast	159
3 rd	'Olympus of St Mawes'	Chris Bean	Maureen Bean	5.83% Slow	345
4 th	'Prima'	Charlie Thomson	Tony Loosemore	5.94% Slow	302