

3 Rivers Race 2019 – 50 Miles, 3 Bridges, 24Hours

In a moment of madness last year, I agreed with John Clementson to enter what is badged as 'Europe's Toughest Inland Sailing Race'. The 3 Rivers Race, organised by Horning Sailing Club was to be the challenge, encompassing a number of rivers across the Broads network which is a mecca for numerous sailors. I decided not to use my Mark IV (Ultimate Fiasco) but to enter in my MKII (Compleat Fiasco) as I thought the passage under the bridges, the 106 other entrants, plus all the other Broads water users could result in some unwanted battle scars on the Mark IV.

We rigged the boat on Friday, made some modifications to my adaptations for raising and lowering the mast and sails to get under the various bridges we had to tackle, and then set off to Little Hoveton Broad for a practice sail, which went surprisingly well, so back to the boat park. Whilst de-rigging I "got talking" (as always) to the competition in Wayfarer 8669 'Black Magic' owned by John Parker. It soon became apparent that this weekend's crew were extremely competent sailors in Georgina Povell and Flora Stewart (both hope to feature in Tokyo in 2020), so no pressure there then!

On Saturday morning we left Horning Sailing Club with John on the helm and were greeted by nearly an hour long postponement due to lack of wind. We eventually got underway leading the 10 Wayfarers out of Horning.



There had been lots of thought and discussion on the best route, but we agreed that we would take the turning mark at Ludham Bridge first. This was obviously a popular idea, and the throng of other competitors, plus the traffic of the motor cruisers made the River Ant particularly tricky, however we escaped unscathed. We then ducked down to South Walsham then onto the first mast drop at Acle Bridge. Black Magic had passed us but was still in sight. The mast came down without a hitch, however a couple of snagged ropes on the way back up meant we lost a little time on Black Magic, but we certainly weren't finished yet.



The next leg was a long beat with a strong tide under us to a turning buoy near to The Stracey Arms, which both Wayfarers rounded within minutes of each other. It was then a spinnaker run all the way back to the Acle Bridge, a much more successful mast lowering and raising which allowed us to head off towards Potter Heigham in the lead,

popping under both bridges and sailing away to Hickling.

By the time we returned through Potter Heigham both ourselves and Black Magic were taking turns in the lead, an astonishing feat considering we'd now been on the water for between nine and ten hours.



Sailing on the Rivers and Broads at night is a very strange sensation. The glare from other competitors' navigation lights doesn't help, and in the gloom of those lights we had our first (and last) collision of the weekend. Fortunately, it was only a rather low lying tree that decided to trade blows with us.



The wind started to drop at about 10pm making for a very slow journey back to Horning Sailing Club in the dark. We finally saw the lights of the clubhouse at approximately 1:20am, which was a welcome sight and we were very pleased to beat Black Magic by approximately 15 minutes (not much after 13 hours on the water) to finish 5th overall in our first 3 Rivers Race.

I would like to say thank you to John for keeping his cool under pressure, as well as all the members of Horning Sailing Club, especially to those cooking the fried breakfast which was very welcome at 2:30am.

Thank you to Georgina and Flora who kept us on our toes and we wish them every success in their sailing careers (the 3 Rivers Race will be our claim to fame when hopefully Georgina and Flora are up on the podium).

The Wayfarer appears to very well suited to this event and hopefully we have inspired others to enter next year, the 60th Anniversary. Maybe see you there!

Full details of the event can be found on <http://www.3rr.uk/>

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