

**P**ulau Langkawi is the island of legends and the 12th Royal Langkawi International Regatta was indeed legendary. Held from the 13th to the 18th of January 2014, the event kicked off Tourism Malaysia's latest 'Visit Malaysia' campaign. Since the first campaign in 1990, tourism arrival figures have grown from just under five million in 1989 to over 18 million in the nine months to September 2013. Employing over 16% of the workforce, tourism ranks as Malaysia's second largest foreign exchange earner.

Fortunately for the regatta organisers, Langkawi is one of the key target areas to attract tourists and the Ministry of Tourism & Culture, through Tourism Malaysia, has been supporters of the event since its inception in 2003. Over this period some 3,600 sailors have participated.

## Day 1 Tuesday 14.Jan.14

Bright sunlight, clear skies and fair winds meant conditions were ideal for the first of five days of racing, this year without the usual lay-day.

Forty-four boats (2013: 41) entered of which 40 took to the water. Unfortunately, despite Neil Pryde's *Hi Fi* being moored at the Royal Langkawi Yacht Club (RLYC), he and his team did not return to defend the Prime Minister's Challenge Trophy! However, six IRC Racing Class yachts did take part, including three time winner of the Trophy (2003-5) Peter Ahern on the TP52, *Oi!* (ex-Team Premier). Perennial supporter Frank Pong with his Reichel-Pugh 75, *Jelik*, two dk47s of the Malaysian Armed



taking three bullets on corrected, with the Malaysian Navy's Mohamed Razali Mansor's *Uranus* three 2nd places. In the second race, *LeRo-3*, approaching the leeward mark, dropped its kite in the water, which became entangled around its keel. Mansor retired

Forces, *Uranus* and *Utarid*, Ben Copley's RP45, *Katsu*, and Alexy Tokhovski's Farr 400, *LeRo-3*, completed the fleet.

After a while, a 12- to 15-knot northeasterly settled in allowing the race officer Simon James to set three windward/leewards for the IRC fleets and two for the cruisers.

Right from the outset, *Oi!* showed it meant business

to effect repairs. Although completing the second race, *Jelik* had problems with the headboard of its relatively new main and likewise missed the last race and reverted to its old main for the rest of the regatta.

Competition was equally keen among the IRC 1 Class where Bill Bremner's Mills-King 40, *Foxy Lady VI* (ex-*Blondie iv*) held off strong challenges from Anthony Root's A35, *Red Kite II*, and Peter Sorensen's Beneteau 44.7, *Fujin* (ex-*Ichiban*) to win by seconds and finish with three handicap bullets for the day.

Last year's IRC 1 champion, the X-yacht, *Phoenix*, was this year assigned to IRC 2 but seemingly continued where it left off last year, scoring three bullets. John Kara's Dehler 34, *Skybird*, took three 2nd places and Brian Porter's Team Orion Pacific from Okinawa on the Sail in Asia Farr 1104 charter, *Farrgo Express*, finished with a 4th place and two 3rds.

Last year's Club Cruiser Class winner Fuda Yasuto on *Fortissimo 9* returned this

year with his Yamaha, *Fortissimo X*, to earn two 3rds and a 5th in IRC 2.

Likewise competition remained strong among the one-design fleet of six Platus. The Royal Queensland Yacht Squadron once again returned along with the Phuket Youth Sailing Club of Thailand to provide international competition to the four local teams — the Malaysian Navy ATM 1, the Malaysian Yachting Association's MYA, the Royal Selangor Yacht Club's (Setia West) team and the Putrajaya's Sailing Club's Team Siput. Surprisingly absent were Singapore Management University (SMU) who have been regulars over the years. MYA took the 1st race but ATM 1 struck back to take the next two. The Royal Queensland Yacht Squadron had to make repairs and missed the third race.

Two races for the Multihulls saw the Stealth 12.6, *Afterburner*, pick up two bullets followed by Grenville Fordham's Andaman Cabriolet, *Nina*.

In Club Cruising, the Farr 53, *Sababa*, from New Zealand, with crew recruited from the Langkawi-based Kedah Training Centre,

despite an OCS, finished with two 2nd places whilst Vaycheslav Somov's *Elena* earned two bullets.

Just 28 seconds separated Henning Lenz's Roberts 34, *My Toy*, from the 103-year-old, Shanghai-built, Bristol Pilot Cutter, *Eveline*, in their one race for the day.

Charles and Suzie Hay returned this year joining the White Sail Class with John and Caroline Charnley, owners of Discovery Yachts, Southampton, onboard their Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 45DS, *Symystery*. A fine start saw them

finish with two bullets, despite close racing with Bob McIntyre's Bavaria, *Jelita*, of Langkawi and Adale's Oyster 55, *Chantique*.

At the opening party and prize presentation that evening the charismatic and apparently politically ambitious Minister of Youth & Sport, YB Khairy Jamaluddin presented the prizes. A dinghy sailor himself

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in his youth, he likewise committed to supporting the regatta and sailing in Malaysia.

## Day 2 Wednesday 15.Jan.14

Wednesday, the 15th of January 2014, the RO opted for the coastal courses, commencing with a windward/leeward for the racing fleets and a longer geometric course for the rest.

Somewhat surprisingly, it was the second of the Navy boats *Utarid* that took the Racing honours in the first race. Their second race sent them off following the cruisers, which allowed *Jelik* to stretch its legs and finish with both line and handicap honours.

The battle continued between *Foxy Lady VI* and *Red Kite II* with, again, just seconds separating the two in *Foxy Lady VI*'s favour in both races in IRC 1.

Vincent Chan's *BMW Yachtsport Mata Hari* with Gerhard Pils, President and CEO of BMW Group Malaysia onboard, who were back sponsoring the event, finished 3rd in their first race.

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*Continued from previous page* — It was a close race to the line in the first of two races for the White Sail Class between *Smystery* and *Chantique*. *Smystery* rounded the final mark with *Chantique* hot on its heels and steadily closing the gap. It inched ahead at the line to win by 1 second and take handicap honours convincingly. *Smystery* made amends in the second race, a short windward /leeward.

The prize-giving that evening was held in the grounds of the Bella Vista Hotel where the chairman of the International Jury and Langkawi resident, Bryan Willis, showed a video of the America's Cup.

### Day 3 **Thursday** 16.Jan.14

The wind seemed relatively light as crews assembled at the RLYC to depart for the start line for the around island race. The term 'around island' is a bit of misnomer since the race does not go around Langkawi but rather Pulau Tuba, Pulau Dayang Bunting and Pulau Singa Besar, a distance of 24nm on the long course for Racing and IRC 1 classes. The others sailed a 19nm course, short-cutting through the Tyson Straits between Singa Besa and Dayang Bunting.

As usual for the around island race, the RO opened the line early, allowing four of the classes (Monohulls, Ocean Rover, Club and White Sail) to start early in their own time between 0745 and 0845, otherwise they would start in sequence with the other classes at 0930.

Originally, Bob Mott on the Mumby 48 catamaran, *Oasis*, planned to leave the marina at 0800 but, because of the light conditions, went for the later start. When he got there, the northeasterly had picked up to 8 knots and the RO opted to leave the gate open for the tail-enders of those allowed to start early to also set sail.

In theory, with a downwind start and an open line, you should be able to hoist your spinnaker and head for the line. The spinnaker of *Oasis*, inexplicably, became wrapped around the forestay and some dignity was lost but regained later with a re-hoist. 'Murphy', however, had other ideas and, in the gybe, the kite again became entangled and unfortunately torn. It was necessary to turn on the engine to regain control but no benefit ensued other than the safety of the boat and crew. With the jib



hoisted, that was the last Mott, FH and crew saw of the spinnaker. It was plain sailing thereafter with the wind building to 16 knots.

After overtaking *Eveline*, *Oasis* was itself overtaken by *Jelik* which was relishing the conditions. Pong and crew finished the long course in 2:14:53, setting a new course record, close to a half hour quicker than the previous best. Not only did *Jelik* break the record but it hung on to take handicap honours in Racing by two minutes over *Oi!* After over three hours of racing, just three minutes separated the last four boats in the class, with *Katsu* making the podium in 3rd.

The multihull, *Nina*, was the first to finish the short course and, much to the satisfaction of Fordham, had the pleasure of pipping *Afterburner* on handicap, despite its elapsed time of just 1:58:51.

Frustratingly again for Root and crew on *Red Kite II*, just 56 seconds on handicap separated the A35 from *Foxy Lady VI* after over three hours of racing. *Fujin* again finished 3rd.

Perhaps more familiar with the conditions, Team MYA took the honours in Sportsboats with the Phuket Youth Sailing Club of Thailand making an impressive improvement to finish 4th.

Likewise, having competed previously, *Rascal* and *Rusalka* took the first two places in Club Class whilst Dato' Alex Nah's Hunter 49, *Virgo*, and Reinhard Haiber's Meridian 47 with just three up took 1st and 2nd places in White Sail.

In Ocean Rover, *Eveline* again seized the honours over *My Toy*, which at one stage, to preserve its main, was only under headsail.

The evening was free without formalities of a prize-giving and hence the local seafood restaurants proved a popular attraction.

### Day 4 **Friday** 17.Jan.14

FH had the pleasure of joining long-term supporter of the regatta, Ayahudin Abdul

Rahman, onboard his Oyster 55 (Hull No.41) *Chantique* with his son, Adale, and skipper and naval architect, Hakim A Klunker.

The start for Day 4's racing returned to Bass Harbour but, somewhat unusually at the far end of the harbour, this opened up a number of new course possibilities for the RO. After setting a windward/leeward course for the racing fleets, he opted instead to send the cruisers on the West Coast Course 24 towards Telaga Harbour. And what a fantastic sail it was . . . except for Grant Wickman's Farr 53, *Sababa*.

It was a good downwind start in 12 knots from 70 degrees with *Smystery* leading the fleet across the line. *Sababa*, with its experienced owner and young local crew onboard, gybed in towards *Chantique* and then bore away. But were they in full control? Sure enough, some 10 or so minutes later, *Sababa* broached, hit a reef and snapped its boom. Two crew members had to be evacuated for medical treatment but fortunately their injuries were minor.

There were some relatively calm patches in the lee of Pulau Tepor but *Chantique's* strategy of staying further offshore paid dividends as it caught and overtook *Smystery*. It's lead was not to last as, after clearing Pulau Rebak Besar, despite *Chantique* making 8.5 knots, *Smystery* regained the lead in the 15-knot breeze and led around the Telaga mark with the hills and outcrops of Gulung Mat Chinchang towering 700m in the background. Similarly, the Oceanis 45, *Liannet*, squeezed in ahead at the mark followed by the HR 53, *Rascal*, just before the next offset mark where *Chantique* was being cautious before rounding and heading back to Bass Harbour still in a building breeze.

*Smystery*, although retaining its lead over *Chantique*, failed to get away, later explained by the tear in a rear panel of its main. In the end, *Pytheas Aura* took handicap honours with *Chantique* 2nd. In Club Class, *Liannet* emerged ahead of *Elena* and *Indulgence*. *Eveline* again won Ocean Rover.

Meanwhile, the racing fleets and multihulls completed their windward/leewards before joining the cruisers on the West Coast Course. *Jelik* again relished the conditions to take line and handicap honours, with *Oi!* 2nd, in both races. *Uranus* finished 3rd in the short race and *Katsu* 3rd in the passage race.

Once again, *Foxy Lady VI* won the round the cans race but — *continued on page 102*

Continued from page 100 — *Red Kite II* finally broke their run of seven bullets to score a well deserved victory by seconds on handicap in the passage race.

*Phoenix* again remained unstoppable in IRC 1, adding a further two bullets to its tally and perfect score, after eight races.

The Sportsboats remained in the harbour and were given two windward/leewards. Team MYA took the honours in Race 7 and Team RSYC won Race 8. Team ATM 1 failed to finish the first race with a broken rudder and did not start Race 8, greatly damaging its prospects of taking the series trophy.

In the early years of the regatta it was customary for the award functions to be held at a variety of local resorts, until the silverware went missing from the Four Seasons. After this, the awards have primarily been held back at the RLYC. It made a pleasant evening, therefore, to return to the nearby Westin Resort in Kuah (formerly the Sheraton) for the awards, finger food and welcome beverages.

## Day 5 Saturday 18 Jan. 14

Again, in bright sunlight, conditions seemed light in the RLYC marina but out in the harbour the breeze was up, so much so that *Fujin* broached on the way to the start line, dumping two crew in the drink!

In the blustery conditions, gusting 30 knots, the RO had problems in setting the start line until additional anchors were obtained, courtesy Frank Pong.

Two windward/leewards followed for Racing, IRC 1 and IRC 2 with one for the Multihulls and Sportsboats. The cruisers, likewise, were given one final race around a geometric course confined within Bass Harbour.

*Jelik* added two further bullets in Race 9 and 10 but a 2nd place in Race 9 for *Oi!* gave it the Racing series and Ahern opted out of the final race. *Foxy Lady VI* returned to winning ways in the penultimate race in IRC 1 and having clinched the series and the LADA IRC Challenge Trophy, similarly missed the last race leaving *Red Kite II* to take a final bullet and 2nd place overall. Conditions over the five days

took their toll on the fleet. *Fujin*, despite recovering from its pre-race broach, retired in Race 9 with a broken backstay, missed the final race but still hung on to 3rd overall.

In IRC 2, *Phoenix* succumbed at the penultimate hurdle with a 2nd place blotting its otherwise perfect score, falling to Team Orion Pacific on *Farrago Express*. The Okinawans were thrilled with their win and 3rd place overall and, celebrating in the bar later, recounted their misadventures earlier in the regatta stemming mostly from issues with their charter boat.

*Skybird* took 2nd overall, while *Delite*, finishing with a 2nd in the final race, took 4th overall.

Team Siput won the one and only race for Sportsboats with MYA taking the Langkawi Sportsclass Trophy with Team ATM 1 2nd overall tied on points with RSYC.

Similarly the week's racing had taken its toll on the Multihulls. Despite heading out to the start line, *Oasis* chose discretion over valour and returned to the marina licking its wounds rather than face further damage. With *Afterburner* retiring, *Nina* and the Lagoon 410, *Fleur d'Epice*, were left to pick up 1st and 2nd places respectively. *Afterburner* had, however, done enough to win the series and the Malaysia Multihull Challenge Cup.

Meanwhile, FH joined Bernard di Tullio's Amel 64, *Indulgence*, competing in the White Sail Class. *Indulgence* had a terrific start and, apart from being overtaken by *Liannet* of Club Class at the windward mark, all went smoothly until approaching the up-wind mark for the second time. Suddenly there was a large bang and the tinkling of metal hitting the deck. The track for the main on the boom had disintegrated leaving the main flogging uselessly in the wind. But *Indulgence* continued and raced to the finish powered only by its headsail. A 5th could well have been a 2nd had it not been for the mishap.

Unfortunately, despite repairing its main, *Smystery* did not appear for the final race having been hit on the bow the

previous evening by *Virgo* as it returned to its mooring. The damage was sufficient for the owner, Charles Hay, to seek redress.

Having been relatively under-occupied this gave the International Jury an interesting case to get their teeth into. A fundamental question in the case was whether moored in the marina met the criteria of 'anchored'. Since the term 'anchored' i.e. a person anchored to the ground or a person anchored to their spouse, does not physically mean there must be an anchor, it was resolved that 'moored in the marina' stood the test of being anchored and redress was granted. Surprisingly, based on a 4-1 majority decision, instead of offering average points over all races, Hay had started with two 1st places and one 2nd, these were ignored and only the average of the last three races was granted. In the end, he still hung on to take overall in the White Sail Class ahead of *Chantique* and *Virgo*.

*Liannet* again took the honours in Club Class to finish 2nd overall behind overall champion *Elena* with *Rusalka* 3rd.

The closing function was, as always, an elaborate affair with former Prime Minister Mahathir and his wife in attendance

to present the Prime Minister's Challenge Trophy for the 4th time to Peter Ahern and this year's Racing Class winner, *Oi!*

The Tunku Abdullah Sportsmanship Award was then presented to *Fleur d'Epice*.

Commenting on the organiser's goal of making the event the premier yachting regatta in ASEAN, RO Simon James indicated to FH, "As long as you are the best at what you do, you don't need to be the biggest."

Also commenting on the event Princess Soraya, daughter of Tunku Abdullah and Regatta Chairperson, quoted a fellow sailor, "In sailing, the last one is not a loser you're all still winners."

Given the excellent conditions, the best that FH can recall over the event's 12 years, the excellent race management, the hospitality and recognition of the contribution of the media, the organisation of the 12th Royal Langkawi International Regatta was indeed amongst the best in Asia, and a legend in itself. Next year's dates — 12th to 17th of January 2015.

