

Log Auckland to Gisborne – 2015

One of the earlier races of my SOL career was Round White Island November two years ago. It was my first exposure ever to the waters of the Hauraki Gulf and the Bay of Plenty, parts of the World that in the meantime have become very familiar, at least in a virtual sense. Will I ever get to see them in real life? One wonders and wanders.



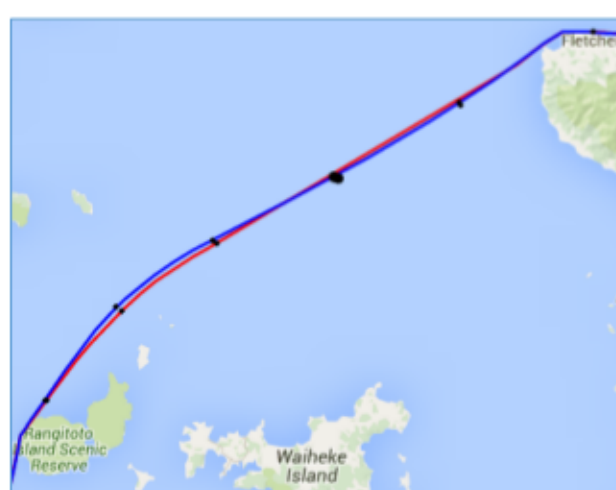
White Island is kinda what the Fastnet is to Cowes, for New Zealand; a solitary rock about 200nm from that country's own yachting mecca of Auckland. A day or less of hard racing and you can be there and, if the winds are favourable, back 'ome 'n 'osed a day later.

Also organised by the Royal Arkana Yacht Club, The White Island would appear to be a biennial, again just like The Fastnet, and this year it wasn't on, so (I am guessing here!), instead of a race there 'n back, Royal Arkana put on a race there 'n on: to Gisborne. A bit like racing to the Fastnet and then on to Sligo. What to do in Sligo? At least it's mostly sunny in Gisborne.

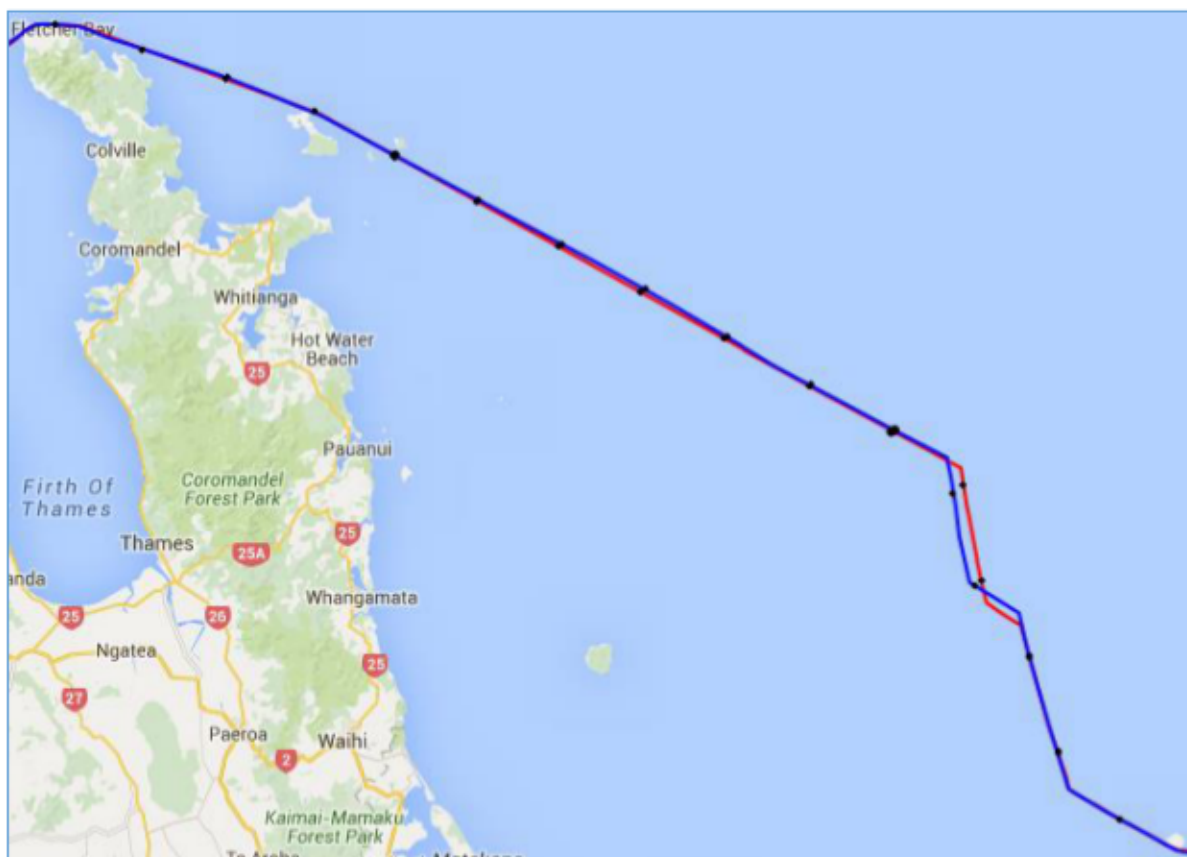
I dwell on this because by the time we got to White Island, our race was already as good as run, well at least for the SOL fleet, and a beat back North and round Channel Island or Cape Colville home to Auckland would probably have been more exciting. I'm not complaining, just making excuses for not writing more about the last section of this race in four acts, other than that from East Head to Gisborne the wind was stronger out to sea from abaft of abeam and freeing slowly, creating a very level playing field, or sailing sea, particularly given the smooth tranquil slope of the First44.7s in winds of around 15kn TWS. Nothing happened.

The other three acts.

I had a first look at this race an hour or two before the gun and came to the router-assisted conclusion that on this occasion it was going to pay to exit the Gulf the long way round via a route N of Rangitoto. kenza and rumskib agreed, but many others did not, I suspect because the routing with the previous WX will have told them to sail direct. k (blue track) and r held that bit further N than I (red track) did and in consequence got to Cape Colville a half a server jump ahead.

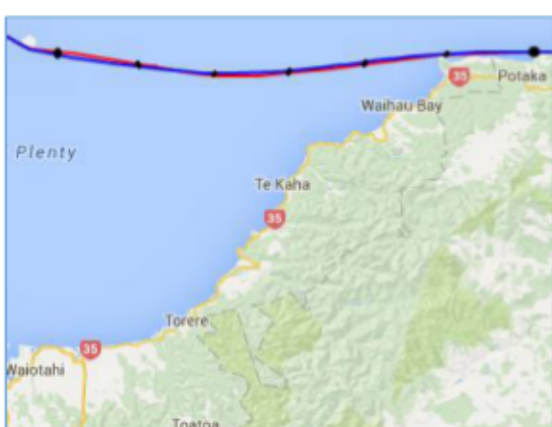


Act 2 now beckoned, a run down to White Island, with a bunch of islands in the way en-route, including a rather large one called Great Mercury. After clearing a couple of the northerly capes of the Coromandel peninsula, you could lay White Island on a clean rhumb line keeping you well W of Mercury and the various other archipelagic hazards, but that was not the thing to do. Instead, I set a course to just clear Mercury on its eastern side and went to bed for a short two hours, as nearing the island and the next WX were going to coincide. Don't know what happened to rumskib, but he sailed



right into it, which misfortune gave me P2.

The gap to kenza at Great Mercury remained very small, but so had my lead on the likes of Kipper1258, longreach and bmd. As already alluded to the downwind polar for the First44.7 in a sailing breeze is quite forgiving and VMG varies little over a range of several degrees either side of optimum. Moreover, it was clear strongest pressure was going to be found down the 177th meridian E, so we all gybed slightly before crossing it and in such a way that we would hold that stronger breeze as long as possible, gybing back onto a lay for the island on a hot angle late.



At the start of Act 3, which was going to be a reach to the headlands of Raukumara across a patch of lighter wind, I was still that half or possibly now whole server jump behind kenza. How to catch him? Many SOLers just set a course straight across, but if you held more S you'd enjoy a tad more breeze once midway. However, initially a northern track would give you a bit more breeze. I decided, now or never, and went for a double dip, keeping a

bit more N initially and then bearing off to still pick up the stronger breeze mid-crossing.

It didn't work and kenza went a second server jump ahead, which is how things stayed more or less. Close racing. Congrats kenza and his cat.

And well done the TP52 V5 who beat us there IRL by 8 hours.