

NEWS OF THE CCRC WORLD

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The Judge Loses His Erection or Come Home Mr. Stumpy

"I'm most impressed with the strength of your rigging," said Hugh Caldwell, "it's even thicker than that I have on Mons Meg."

It was about 10.30 on a beautiful Sunday morning in Ouistreham marina, and The Advocate was rafted alongside the immaculately restored Con-tessa. Hugh and I were discussing the qualities of our respective rigs and the location of the nearest telephone as I recall. A few hours later I was to recall his words with bitter irony.

The Bank Holiday weekend at the end of May was for many CCRC members the beginning of what was to be a successful and enjoyable cruise in company. For The Advocate, Fohn Wind, Red Cloud and Sareema it was a brief opportunity to grab some duty free and some genuine French cuisine, as we were due to return to base after an all too short visit.

We were due to lock out of Ouistreham at the earliest opportunity and at about 12.30 the lock was filled with the CCRC straining at the leash. As the gates opened and we surged forward I think many of us may have had second thoughts and wished we had stayed inside. We were met by about twenty five to thirty knots of wind right on the nose whistling up the entrance, whipping up the incoming tide into a short sharp sea which had us all tacking back and forth and up and down in a mad frenzy.

The majority of the fleet were heading East to Dauville, and quickly settled down on the port tack, Brown Bomber, Gunshot, Mons Meg, Backchat, Ard Righ and Lynx to mention but a few. One of my crew was watching Lynx with particular in-

terest and trepidation as Freddy hoisted both main and foresail. Pat Morrell, a Lynx regular had cadged a lift as he had to return to work, but on Lynx the previous day the base of the mast had begun to crumble and was in urgent need of repair.

Before we sailed I had a planning conference with Dennis and Simon Coates on Fohn Wind. "The tide will be taking us East, so I suggest we make as much Easting as possible with the tide, then we can probably make one long fetch to Chi." I suggested.

"Good idea," said Simon.

"You will probably be glad of company," commented Dennis; "with your radio out of action."

"Yes," I said, "with four of us heading back together we'll be well covered."

According to plan we settled onto port tack heading in the general direction of Le Harve. "Anyone spotted Fohn Wind in this fleet?" asked Claire Cartlidge who had come to sample the low life in order to better appreciate the size and splendour of Penrose III when she gets to see it for the first time. There, I understand, the guided tour takes pains to highlight the difference between the microwave, the washing machine, the tumble dryer, the television and the radar set. Stuart Hunt, who had already sampled the new Penrose, explained that Bill was seen anxiously trying to dial Howards Way into the radar, and Den had complained of too much starch in the spaghetti causing it to end up like crispy noodles after a turn in the tumble dryer.

After a few minutes scanning the fleet "Uncle" John, who was also on release from normal Penrose duty, spotted Fohn Wind, Red Cloud and Sareema several miles away on starboard tack and heading off to the west! Already well separated from the other three returning to the U.K. we stuck with the main fleet for a few more miles before also turning to the north west.

At 15.30 Pat Morrell took the helm while the rest of us huddled on the weather rail taking the odd wave in the force seven. At 16.00 I went below to do the log. As I sat on the starboard bunk bracing myself against the galley in order to remain seated with the boat crashing along on its ear I contemplated the water sloshing above the floor boards where it had been gathered by the heel of the boat.

Suddenly it stopped. The boat was bolt upright. "Ah, that's better," I thought, "now I can get on with the chart work."

"Oh, ****!!", said Pat, "The mast has come down." "That's alright," I said, "we'll put it back up again."

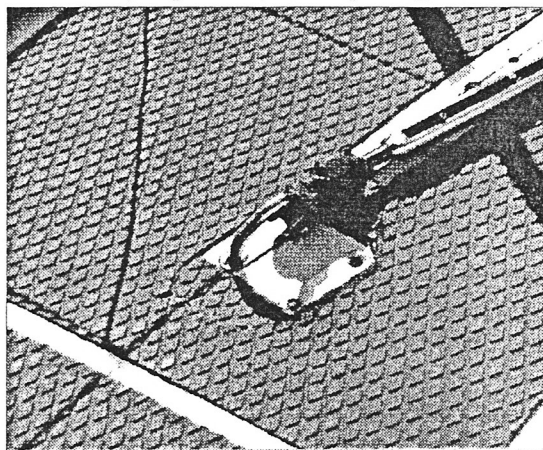
It's funny now, but it took a few seconds to sink in what had happened. Up on deck we surveyed the damage. The mast was hanging over the port side having broken clean off about eighteen inches above the cabin. It was still attached by the electrical cables inside the mast, but was grinding back and forth with the motion of the boat in the heavy sea.



It was still attached by the electric cables.

"That's the culprit," said Pat, pointing to the 'U' bolt on the starboard inner shroud chainplate, or rather, pointing to where it should have been. The bolt had shorn off clean at the deck level.

We tried to lift the mast to see if it would be possible to salvage it, but it was soon obvious this was not only impossible, it was putting the boat in



"That's the culprit," said Pat.

jeopardy as there was a very real danger that the loose end could punch through the hull as we rolled in the waves.

I don't know how many boats carry heavy duty wire cutters, they were mandatory when I was at Brighton Marina Yacht Club. I resented the 40 they cost at the time, but not now. They cut through the remaining shrouds like a knife through butter and we quickly severed our remaining ties with the mast and mainsail.

After about half an hour we were under way again motoring for Le Harve. Although we were still relatively close to Ouistreham I had not noticed any yard facilities and so felt Le Harve would be a better bet for repairs. Secondly, I didn't fancy the wind over ebb-tide getting back into the estuary.

The run across the bay was most uncomfortable, and I for one did not realise how much a yacht would roll without the stabilising effect of the mast. With waves coming right on the port bow we were wet, dispirited and feeling various degrees of "mal de mer". However, as the evening began to draw in

and we approached Le Harve, the wind dropped and with it the seas so that by the time we reached the marina I had already begun to think of motor-ing back over the channel.

The thought of abandoning the boat to the mer-cies of a French yard, and all the potential prob-lems with insurance covering the to and froing to supervise repairs etc. made me more and more determined to get her back.

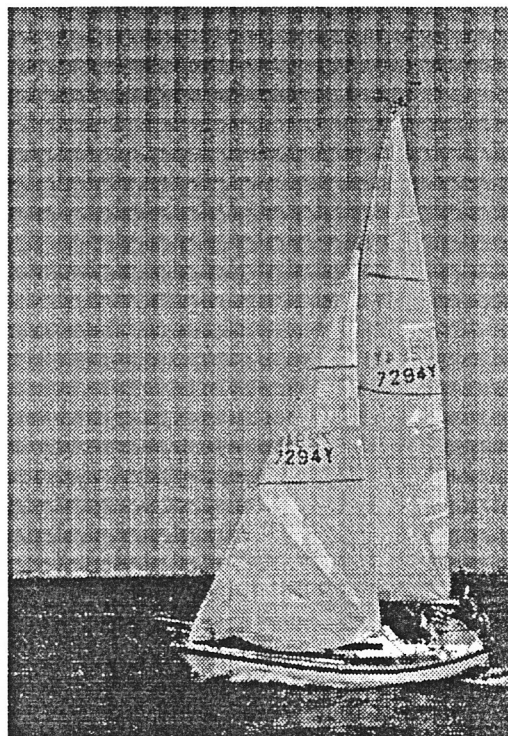
On arrival in a berth at Le Harve we were grabbed



Our wash seemed to go on for ever.

by the crew of Midnight Bleu, over from The Hamble in the Dauville race, and given warming drinks. Claire was very wet and cold but accepted the offer of a ride home on Midnight Bleu - it had a heater on board! Stu not at all enthusiastic about the return trip and decided to catch the ferry. So that left Pat, Uncle John, myself and "Albert". our autopilot to bring her home.

The long motor home was as quiet as could be, and as the sun showed its first rays over the horizon it found us some twenty five miles out motor-ing at six and a half knots in the flattest sea I have ever been on. Our wash seemed to go on for ever, the only waves visible anywhere. We felt a little like the ancient mariner with no wind, no other boats and just the occasional seagull for company.



No More Mr Stumpy

I am sure you will understand the disappointment I have had at missing the best summer for many a year, but my thanks go to Peter and Di for the trip Round The Island, well three quarters round, on Gunshot, and especially to Dennis and Judith Coates for so generously loaning me Fohn Wind on two oc-casions.

Now, thanks to the attentive ministrations of Frank and Paddy of Harbour View Rigging Loft (Sparkes Boatyard) and Mike Mountifield (Mountifield Sails) The Judge is back and straining at the leash to get back into action so I look forward to seeing you on the water.

Brian Dandridge