

# CRUISING YARNS

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## Holidays in the sun

by Alec Farmer

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To those Mirror folk who are also campers or caravanners, a holiday by the lakeside in South West France could be the answer to the problem of where to spend the summer break. Situated in a State Forest 36 miles North West of Bordeaux is the Base Departementale de Sports et de Loisirs de Bombannes. Only large scale maps will show Bombannes as, apart from the Base, it only consists of one or two foresters' cottages. The nearest village is Maubuisson and that is on the extreme Southern point of Lake Carcans-Hourtin, the largest lake in France.

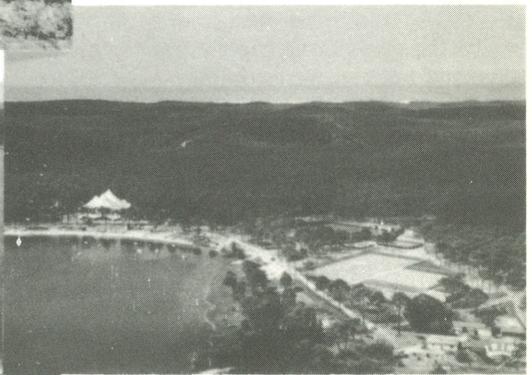
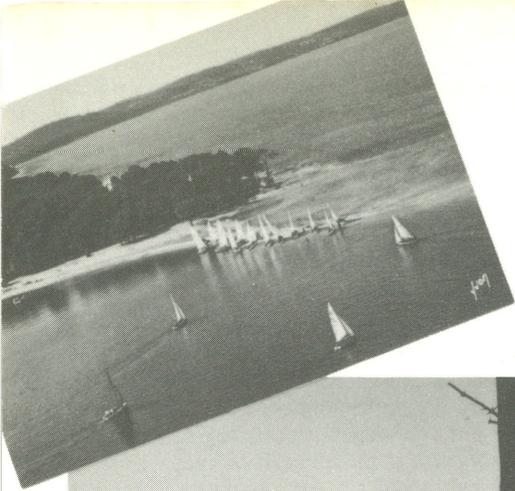
The lake itself is 12 miles long and 2 miles wide and has a fine sandy beach. The bottom of the lake is also sandy and, apart from shallow waters on the Eastern side of the lake, there are no obstructions to worry the sailor. Boats can be easily moored or drawn up on the beach and launching trolleys are not necessary.

Only 2 miles away from Bombannes is the small seaside village of Carcans-Plage which has the typical silver sand and the dunes of the Cote d'Argent. The Atlantic breakers pound along the shore and, whilst the Mirror is safe on Lake Hourtin, it is the surf-board that reigns supreme at Carcans-Plage. At the beach the Municipality rent out *chalets de vacances* for the months of July or August, or by the week during other months. The chalets are fully equipped to sleep six people. Back inland at Maubuisson there are two main hotels right by the lakeside, and information about them or the *chalets de vacances* can be obtained from La Mairie, Carcans 33, Gironde, France, enclosing an International Reply Coupon.

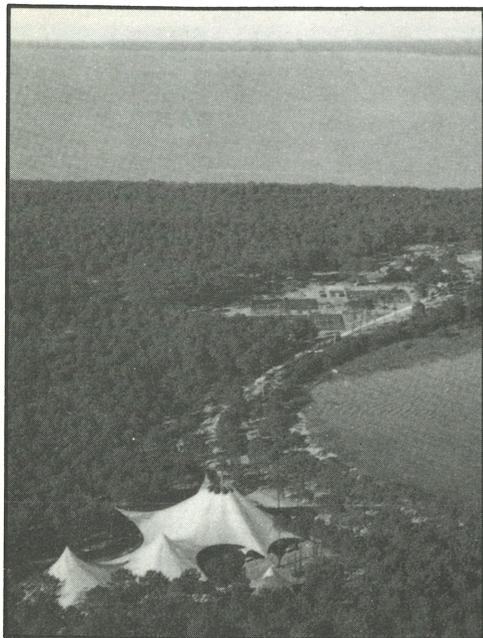
But the camper-caravanner will want to experience the pleasure of the unique Base de Bombannes. The Base was first opened in 1971 and is a joint venture of a group of architects, the French State Forestry Commission and the Local Government of Gironde. The whole Base comprises some 200 hectares and in 1975 a series of delightful holiday flatlets was built to nestle around one of the large sand dunes. Each has its own balcony, kitchen, bedroom, sitting room, bath and loo. The Base also has an area for 110 caravans each equipped with 220 volt power connections and waste water disposal outlets. In addition, there are two camping areas taking some 250 or more tents. On the tenting grounds cars are not allowed, apart from unloading or loading equipment, and this makes for peace and quiet and a dust free atmosphere. However, bicycles can be hired by the day from the camp offices and there are many enjoyable cycle tracks and walks through the forest. Camping is under the Maritime Pines on moss covered sandy soil and there is plenty of room between tents. Toilets are 'typically French' and there are enough of them to cope with campers in the peak months. Hot showers are available and there are also water points and washing up points, whilst at the camp office there is an electric iron and a washing machine that can be hired. Electric razor and hair dryer sockets are at each group of wash places. A camp shop is open every morning but while this is useful for bread and milk, there is a greater variety of produce at more competitive prices at the nearby shops of Maubuisson.

As its name implies, the Base caters for sports and leisure activities and these are very wide reaching. There are 10 new hard tennis courts, with a charge of 10 Francs per hour, and by the side is a free practice wall.





Nearby is an Olympic size swimming pool with subsidiary learner pool and kiddies splash pool for which an entrance fee of 3 Francs is paid. The tennis and swimming are close to the cultural centre and all three border the lakeside. The cultural centre is housed in a gigantic ultra modern tent and consists of several groups of diamond and triangular shaped rooms. The use of all



the facilities in the cultural centre is free and this is of particular value to Mums and Dads who can safely leave the children for a morning or an afternoon in the care of trained staff. In different rooms they can play with toys, play table tennis or paint, whilst the boys have a fully equipped workshop and the girls have a kitchen. The young ones have beds and the tiny tots have their cots and high chairs. In yet another room is a large library. From the cultural centre games and walks are organised and parents are included in these.

But what is happening to the Mirror dinghy all this time? On a lake where the French National Sailing Championships were held she is probably disporting herself sneaking in and out of the wind eddies, beaching on a distant spit of sand where her skipper wades ashore through the reeds

and flings himself down to sunbathe on the deserted beach. Or perhaps she has gone across the lake to take the skipper's wife shopping, to post a letter back home and to have a coup de vin at the bar before returning, on not too zig zag a course, across the lake.

Adjacent to the caravanning and camping sites, and on the shore of the lake is the U.C.P.A. sailing school which takes day as well as resident members. Here we can see Optimists, Jets, Torches and 420's at work. If there are any members of the family who have not yet been bitten by the sailing bug — here is their chance. Provided they can swim, they can enrol as day members. For a very reasonable fee all equipment is provided (including life jackets) for a carefully thought out course of instruction spread over a week. This culminates in the award of a brevet and a 'passing out' regatta.

When sailing is finished for the day it is pleasant to have a relaxing swim in the warm water of the lake, where the temperature in the water averages 22°C in August. A huge appetite is usually the result at the end of a day and this either means that Mum has to provide a large meal or better still, that Dad drives them in the car the 5 minute journey to one of the several restaurants in Maubuisson. Even then the night is not over because on returning to the Base there is likely to be a musical entertainment at the Greek-style open air theatre or a film show at the cultural centre. So bedtime could be 11 p.m. or later if the skipper and crew are so minded.

All this must sound like a rich man's paradise, but it is not the case. For the caravanner only pays high season charge of about 20 Francs per day for his complete unit, and the camper about 15 Francs per day. These prices include all members of the family and the car. For those wishing to make sure of a reservation, a line to the Base at 33 Carcans France will suffice, but I should add that caravan space in school holidays will need booking well in advance. Should any Mirrorman wish to have further information he can write to me c/o The Mirror Class Association and I will do my best to help. Who knows — perhaps there may be more than one set of red sails on the lake in future.

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# A fishy story

by Ginger Moore

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Mirrors have more uses than one. For instance, the sailing variety can show up the character of one's friends much more clearly than the reflecting kind.

One Autumn, just after the Scottish Championships, I was at an old haunt of mine, fishing a 'spate' river in the Western Highlands with some friends. We were having perfect tourist weather and the clear far Cuillins were far from 'putting love on us.' Rain was our want and we had none. In the river, salmon and seatrout sulked in the gin clear near-isolated pools and hid from the sun wherever any overhanging branches on the bank offered shade and protection. Any movement on the bank, or the suggestion of a strange shadow, sent the fish sweeping in circles as if in imitation of the insect-hunting martins.

So, river fishing apparently a waste of time, we turned towards the sea and our Mirror to try for some lobsters.

Those of you familiar with lobster pots will know how unwieldy they can be, so our aim was rather an ambitious one — three men in a Mirror with three lobster pots plus mackerel lines. It is as well there was no wind. Had there been, one of the party would surely have called for mast and sails.

The outboard was shipped and we were off to our favourite lobster ground perilously near the edge of a tide rip, 12 knots at Springs which, as we grow older, we treat with ever growing concern and respect, having been caught in it on a previous trip a few years ago, but that is another story.

A large shoal of fish had been cruising the bay for several days waiting for a spate and enough water to enter the river, and we discussed the remote possibility of hooking a sea trout. Our self appointed Master Salmon Fisher firmly rejected the idea that any self respecting sea-trout would take a lowly mackerel fly. Despite the near approach of the cruising shoal we had connected with nothing more noble than a couple of mackerel and three saithe as we closed our

lobster ground, and the theory advanced appeared to have some grounds.

Our Pilot assured us he knew every rock in the place and enacted the old joke as the propeller skeg suddenly grated on the bottom where there should have been 5 fathoms. "And that," he said, "is the first." What had happened was that he had counted on the point of rock sticking up twenty yards inshore of us as being the most seaward point of a long reef running out from the shore. In fact it was the second from seaward. We were at the peak of high water extraordinary springs and had run on a rock which was normally uncovered at high water. To add to the confusion the propeller took a sideways blow, the shearing pin carried away and the engine roared, and at the same time a fish snatched at one of the fishing lines. Confusion was worse confounded when the fish ran out the slack line inboard through the nerveless fingers of our fishing member and jerked the frame, on which the line was coiled, right out of the boat.

Paddle and centreboard were the order of the day when composure had been re-established. Designed to float, the frame actually floated, and we could see it turning over slowly in the water as it payed out more line and steamed away from us. Paddling furiously we recovered the line, and playing the fish by hand as well as may be, eventually scrambled into the boat a four and a half pound sea-trout, hooked, thank goodness, well into its mouth.

And so, having laid our pots, we proceeded to the nearest stretch of convenient beach and foot slogged it back to our cottage and a wee half.

The only non-convivial member was our Master Fisherman, who mirrored his attitude to the whole affair when he wrote up the fishing log for the river that evening.

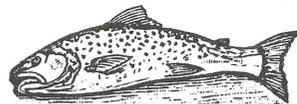
Included in his entries for the catch were the following:

Conditions — 'Bright'

Where Caught — 'Seaward of estuary'

Fly — 'Large. Hen feather'

Remarks — 'A very stupid fish.'



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# Pembrokeshire

or 'There's some Arthur Ransome in all of us!' by Donald M. Forbes

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Those of us who enjoy cruising with our Mirrors and like to have an object in view for a holiday, might do worse than spend a fortnight on the Daucleddau in Pembrokeshire.

Our family of six (counting the dog) established a base camp near Black Tar Point, close to a good slipway with access at all states of the tide.

We found this a beautiful estuary. The currents, though strong at springs, were interesting rather than dangerous. There were, we later discovered, many back eddies to help the unfortunate sailor beset by foul tides. The many bends added variety to each day's cruise. The upper waters were comparatively well protected from high winds and this suited our children.

After the Medway, our home water, we appreciated the quietness. We found the bird life very much more varied and abundant and the waters teemed with fish.

The two older children took with them an outline map of the estuary around the camp, enlarged from the lin. Ordnance Survey map, and as they discovered each castle, harbour and creek, gave it a name and entered it on the chart. All our cruises were plotted and the original now hangs in James' bedroom. Clare keeps the ship's log. (You can trace the influence of Arthur Ransome in most children if they are allowed on the water).

Our cruises developed as the holiday progressed. There was a lively yacht station at 'Chandler's Quay' only two or three miles away which we frequently visited. When the wind was favourable, we could ignore the tide, but one Sunday when the gas ran out we just had to have a re-fill or starve and it took us two hours to beat back against both wind and tide. The banks were steep and well wooded; if we kept into the side to avoid the current we lost the wind; if we tacked across we lost fifty yards a tack, but we made it in the end. An extra hazard was a floating pipe-layer laying a 24in. pipe

across 'Dredger's Reach.'

One sunny day all six of us rowed up to 'Castleton' for stores. We just touched the bottom as we reached the town, but a careful lookout in the bows enabled us to tie up dry shod below the weir. Although we had come up on the tide it was only a neap tide and we soon learnt of the wide differences between springs and neaps here (between twelve and sixteen feet) compared with the Medway, a mere three or four feet. A more unpleasant hazard was the raw sewage outfall about a mile below the town! Another family rowing expedition took us down past 'Chandler's Quay' and 'Witches Rock,' and up the 'Carew' to 'Carew Castle,' but we ran out of water and did not wait for the incoming tide so as to save a hard pull up from Chandlers.

One very good sail was down to 'Docktown' where we landed just below the new bridge which collapsed so tragically some years ago. We hauled the boat up the beach, tied the painter to a rock and walked over to 'Castlehaven.' This castle is open and in a remarkably good state of repair. The dungeon, a natural cave in the rock foundation, with its floor just above high water springs, is very impressive. Sailing back on the flood the wind died away as we approached 'Chandlers' so there was nothing for it, but to set the 'wooden tops'ls' again.

Another day we sailed up the eastern arm past 'Sly Castle,' as far up as 'Watergate Castle;' (there are by the way at least half a dozen castles on the estuary, but they are not all open to the public.) There we met an enormous shoal of whitebait coming down the river and from bank to bank the water was white with seagulls fishing. Elsewhere we watched bass drive whitebait into the shallows and saw the water boil as they snapped them up.

In the evenings we would sometimes go trolling for mackerel on the incoming tide, or take a couple of rods and fish for bass. Perhaps the times I enjoyed most were the early mornings, ghosting along single handed in the gentlest of breezes, by the edge of the mud flats, watching the waders feeding.

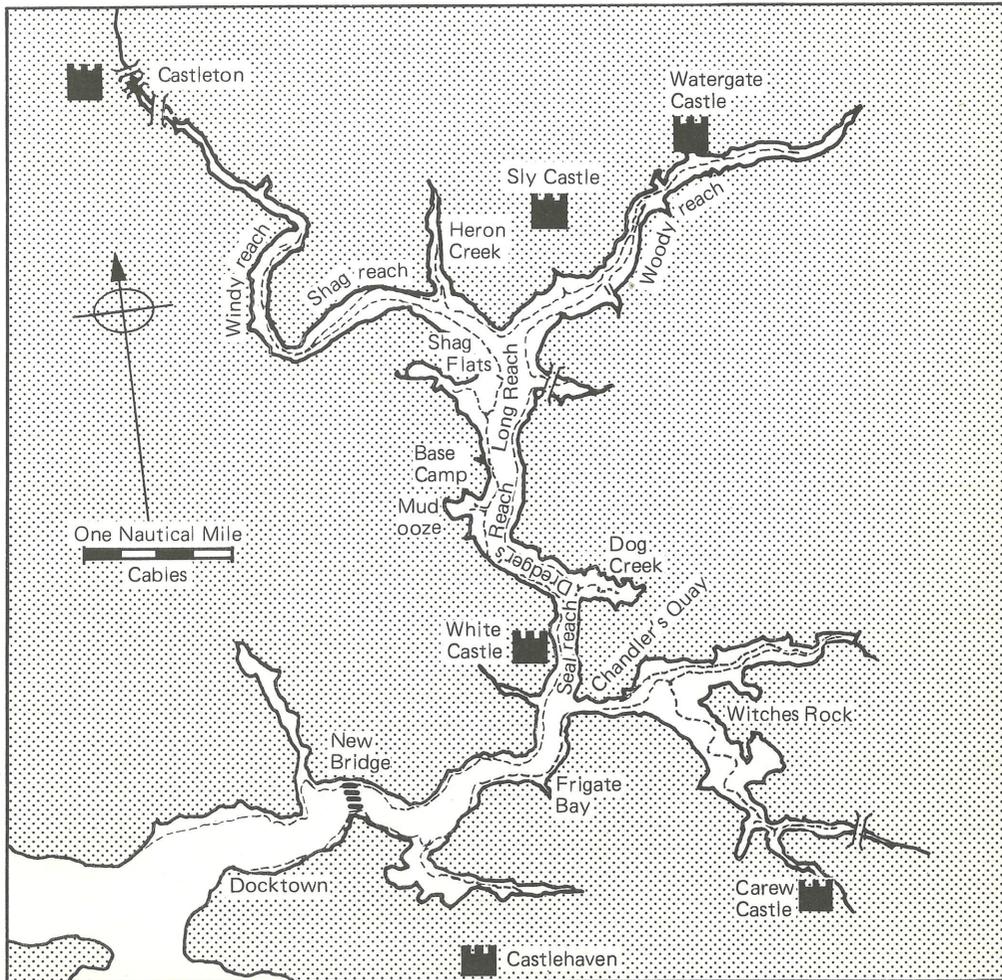
Between cruises we found time for days at the beach without the boat, and went for walks along the coast path. One trip combined a pony trek for the girls with a visit to the Prescelly mountains to collect spotted



dolomite, so that we could make our own Stonehenge.

One day at Marloes a very unofficial looking notice declared that a suspected unexploded mine had been found and warned people to keep away from a large part of the beach. We took this as a practical joke until the next day when a Royal Navy helicopter arrived, dropped two bomb disposal men, and cleared off while they exposed what turned out to be just the top half of a real mine.

There are many small quays and harbours still left to explore and next year we will make some new landfalls, fill in some more gaps on the chart and even perhaps sail right down to Dale, where I understand



there is a strong Mirror fleet. This, however, will be a major expedition needing some land based support, for we shall not get there and back in one day.

One word of advice to newcomers; buy a set of local tide tables and work your tides, You will take a long time to get back if you don't.

## SEQUEL

It was actually two years before we returned to Black Tar Point and everything was still the same, except us (clearly no-one had read my piece). The children were all bigger and we had exchanged our Mirror for a Pacer. We did explore lots more creaks and harbours with the bigger boat, the natural successor to the Mirror, and we did sail down to Dale on the lowest ebb tide for 100 years. This was an interesting 17 mile voyage.

Starting at 0630 hours in gentle mists, we drifted down stream on the first of the ebb, past 'Dog Creek,' 'White Castle,' 'Chandler's Quay,' past Jenkins Point, Whalecombe, past the warships in moth balls, past the towing targets in Millbay, and then things began to get interesting. A gentle breeze sprang up and as we passed Cosheston Point we felt the tide begin to get a grip of our keel. At 0800 hours we were being swept under the nearly completed Neyland Bridge by a 8 knot tide, with

just enough breeze to give us steerage way. Deep whirlpools would form by the piers of the bridge and sweep downstream alongside us. James and I had no idea what would happen if we got caught in one, so we didn't. The estuary broadened, the whirlpools flattened out, but the tide bore us steadily westward. We just cleared the ferry quay closehauled and collected some advice from the shore to the effect that we would never get back. Then, off Milford Haven, the breeze settled down to a steady NNW force 3 and, still closehauled, we passed rows of enormous tankers moored at jetties on either shore. We hugged the south shore to get the best of the wind, and across the mouth of Angle Bay, it freshened to a force 4, enabling us to sit out and sing our heads off. With Stack Rock well abeam, we flipped over to port (after 7 miles closehauled on starboard!) and made for South Hook Point on the north shore, taking a good look at the Martello Tower on the Rock as we passed. Back on to starboard, as Great Castle Head came abeam behind us and we fetched Dale Beach in one more board at 1045 hours. Here we were met by the rest of the family and spent a happy day prawning on parts of the seabed that are never normally exposed, and catching several octopuses. The voyage was complete when we met our old M25094 on the water.



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# The Mahogany Tiller

by Ginger Moore

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“Man’s inhumanity to man makes countless thousands mourn.” So said Burns. And so say I.

Sudden and swift, unexpected values can leap out on us, not as an ordinary hazard in the fabric of our everyday life, but like a wildcat from the heather on an unwary approach to its litter.

Just such an incident was that of the Mahogany Tiller. Out of the blue, a thunderbolt, out of sea, a kraken.

In September, as usual, our happy band of sailor fishermen had assembled in the far north west of Scotland. Water in the river was sadly lacking so salmon and sea-trout were off the menu, and besides that, there was no wind for our Mirror and Albacore. Thus, driven to sea by the deadly fish-protein deficiency we call in the outboards to our assistance.

Amongst our assorted fishing gear we have a fifty fathom, fifty hook, bottom line. By professional standards a laughable instrument, but one which we found to be deadly, at least against dogfish.

Thus with buoy ropes, straylines and baited hooks carefully laid out in the container so that the fishing line could be shot without hitch or snarl, we set off. On arrival at the centre of the bay we prepared to shoot the line and found the first required item missing. No signs of our two marker buoys. Close by, when appealed to, the Albacore gave us a dusty answer. No. No buoys.

Incautiously, and insultingly, the Albacore came close alongside to see for themselves. As though we might overlook the presence of two petrol cans in a Mirror! — Must have been left on the beach.

Now ‘Doc,’ whose Albacore it was, had recently acquired a new tiller. It was lying in the stern sheets. There it was with rich mahogany glowing behind three coats of best varnish, too long and too stout in my estimation for an Albacore, but a very fine

marker buoy in a flat calm. Very grudgingly Doc handed it across and sped off, probably in case I asked for more of his fittings.

The buoyrope and first strayline were attached to the sinker, a very heavy piece of steel we had found in the barn next to our cottage. Then the sinker was lowered into the depths by the buoyrope. The latter was made of codline so that lowering the weight was a matter of some difficulty due to the heaviness of the sinker and the thinness of the line. As the sinker went down the strayline was payed out. At fifteen fathoms the sinker came to rest with only a fathom or so of the buoyrope to spare and not much more on the strayline. Then we bent on the fishing line to the strayline and going ahead at a highly efficient speed, shot our fifty hooks without a hitch. On went the second strayline, on went the sinker, a touch ahead to stretch the bottom line well taut and over with the second sinker. And that was that.

We joined the Albacore in a search for mackerel but they proved quite unco-operative. We towed our flies in wide sweeps across the bay but made no contact and could see no shoals breaking surface. Perhaps the seagulls had a laugh, certainly they never left the water except to get out of our way.

After a couple of hours with our productivity rating marked at zero we returned to our tiller buoy to discover what our bottom hooks had provided. A small impediment interrupted the programme at this point. Where was the tiller, where was the buoy?

Sitting right over the spot where the sinker went down we could see no trace of the marker. It had been laid at high water, so the level had dropped four or five feet and there was no appreciable tidal stream in the centre of the bay. The field of knots, bends and hitches had been included in our professional stamping ground, so an inadvertent ‘cow hitch’ could not explain the missing tiller. Where had it gone? Here indeed was a pretty kettle of no fish.

Doc is a person who appears to view errant behaviour with a benign calm and whose unruffled acceptance of the joke of inauspicious starts is that of the true stoic. Perhaps it was a planet in the shape of Mars which came into ascendency. As a retired naval Surgeon Captain he appeared to

forget the inflexible injunction of Queens Regulations and Admiralty Instructions that 'provocative language is forbidden' (blasphemous language is only 'to be discouraged').

The presumptive loss of his brand new tiller blew his normal code to the four winds. Here indeed was an unexpected value. 'Provocative' would be a flattery of the language that followed, and my faltering apologies were drowned and the bones picked clean.

However, there is more to life at sea than recrimination and the next item on the agenda was to try to recover the gear. The grapnel is the traditional implement for recovering lines from the sea bed and luckily I use a grapnel as an anchor for the Mirror.

In twenty minutes we had a bight of the fishing line on the surface and in half an hour the complete gear in the boat including the offending tiller. But no fish. No mackerel, nor haddock nor flatie blessed our supper table, where Doc still appeared to view me as Public Enemy No. 1.

A week passed before we were on reasonable terms and then Doc said that the reason for his behaviour was my lack of adequate apology. Apology? Further apology after that verbal onslaught! But I know better. It was the shock of the apparent loss of his beautiful new mahogany tiller that ailed him. That tiller was the apple of his eye and he valued it more than he cared to admit.

And the reason for the disappearing tiller? In retrospect, the answer seems clear enough and one we should have foreseen. The undue weight of the first sinker would have caused the codline to stretch almost to its limit and so, as the lay of the rope straightened out, the sinker would revolve twining the strayline around the codline all the way up from the depth below. As we have very little slack when bending on the tiller it is probable our first hook was suspended at mid depth and when we hauled the whole fishing line taut we pulled the tiller well under water and there it remained until the recovery operation.

Next time we shot the line we made no mistakes. We streamed the buoy (a decent one) away to leeward to its full scope, dropped sufficient coils of strayline clear for running into the water and then dropped our sinker over the side. Perfect. Except

perhaps for the catch: one flounder, twenty three dogfish. (Rock salmon to you Sassenachs).

Doc is now Commodore of a Club in South Wales. Some of you may recognise him, but if you approach him on this subject, do so with care.

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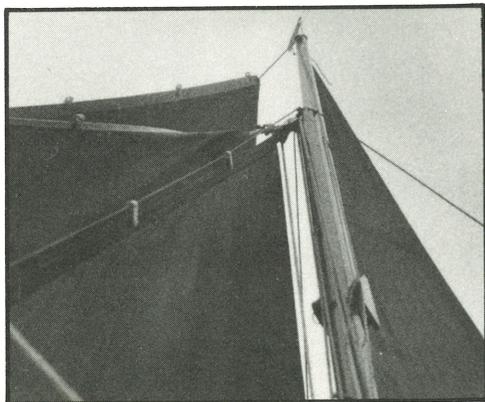
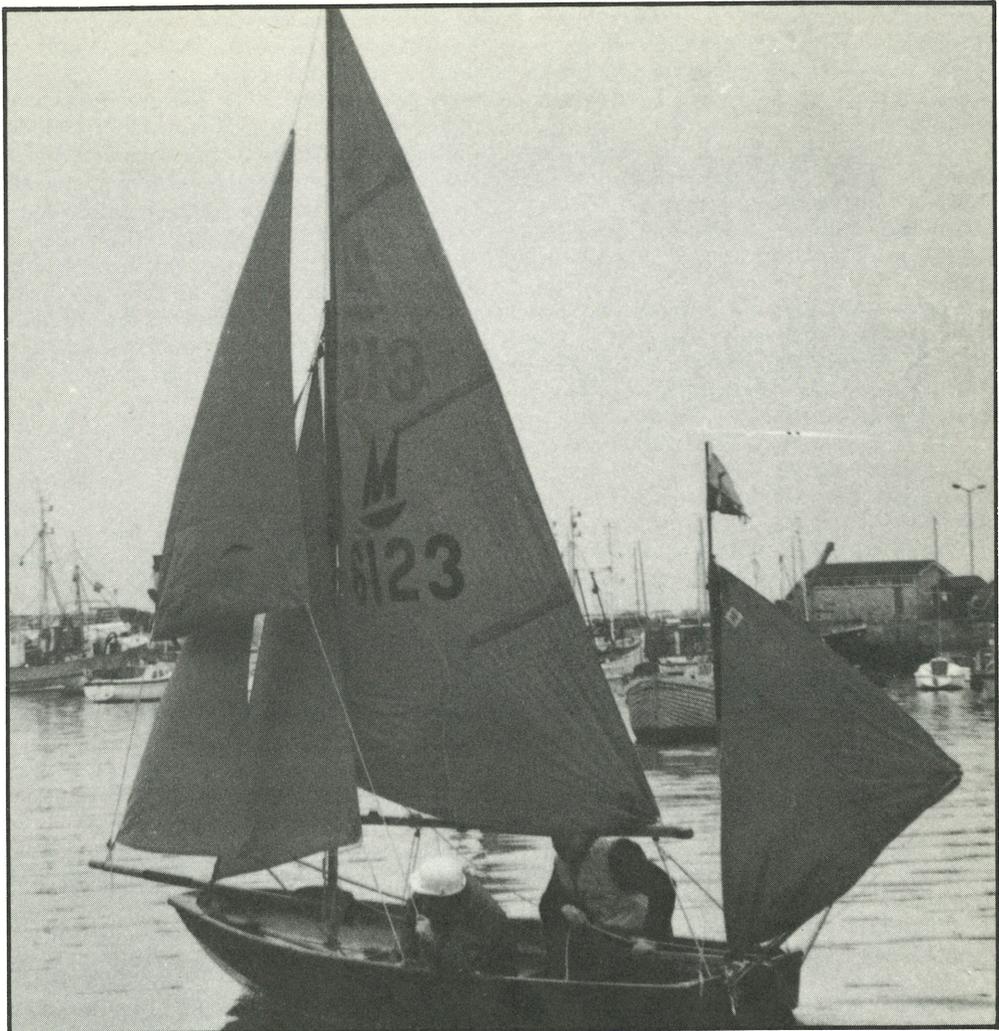
## A seamanlike rig - for a Mirror?

by Sally Karlake

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It was just a quiet Saturday afternoon in Dun Laoghaire Harbour . . . end of the season scene. Keel boats being emptied and drawn up on slips. Last minute boy-scouts rowing trips. Dinghy enthusiasts enjoying the last cruise before winter session overhauling the boats in garages and back kitchens around Dublin . . . and Dalkey. Or getting in practice before the Frostbite series set in. A Mirror Dinghy cruising under full sail - (mainsail, flying jib, staysail, foresail and mizzen) - A 26 foot fibreglass keel boat ablaze from stem to stern. A rat loping along the wharf. A gentleman in full wedding regalia directing rescue operations - complete with carnation in his button hole. A normal end of season scene.

The Mirror Dinghy, owned by one Theo Harris, founder Chairman of the Irish Mirror Class Association, and rigged in completely seamanlike fashion by the Master and Norman Long (one time Chairman of the Irish Mirror Class Association) - A spare boom, clamped to the transom with a firm lashing to the skeg and stays passed through the drainage holes in the transom, was stepped as mizzen. The helmsman handled an upside down Mirror standard jib, lashed to a spinnaker pole boom, and sheeted through the drainage holes . . . A spare 'as supplied' paddle lashed to the mast and protruding over the 'sharp end' formed a bowsprit. Double blocks hauled to the mast head permitted the rigging of the normal foresail as well as a staysail attached on the bowsprit. A spare halyard from the peak of the gaff ensured adequate setting of the flying jib, midway between the gaff peak and the bowsprit . . . Mast



stepped forward allowed clearance for the normal mainsail, complete with boom.

The crew was kept pleasantly occupied with the flying jib sheet lead via a spinnaker eye well aft on the inner gunwale . . . the staysail sheets passed through the aft shroud blocks . . . and the foresail 'as plan.'

A superb sight . . . and only standard Mirror Dinghy gear used. The picture was completed with the addition of a large well-worn Dun Laoghaire Yacht Club burgee from the mizzen mast and the well-known white crash helmet on the head of the crew.

At this point a certain Class Secretary happened on the scene . . . not strictly

true . . . I had been an enthusiastic onlooker throughout the rigging of the boat and was even allowed to help at strategic moments – fetching the brew composed from waters of the Liffey.

Theo and Norman set sail and I took photos from all directions as they manoeuvred. Slow and somewhat ponderous was their tacking – rapid their progress to leeward and impressive their speed on the wind.

They picked me up and we set out to tack from the Coal Harbour, through Hell's Gates, and off to desport ourselves in full view of the elite . . . the Royal Irish, the Royal St. George, and the National Yacht Clubs.

A sharp luff to allow clearance of that Dragon and 'she handles well, and sails fast' comments the Commodore of the Irish Cruising Club as we slip under his stern. We bow politely. Various other comments are received and treated on their merits. We can't always be polite.

Click – 'that is that film finished' sighs the passenger. We sailed to the public slip to put a member ashore in search of film – 'Fire!' 'Ship ablaze on the port beam' – rapid hardening on to the wind and we set off to investigate. There, in the mouth of the harbour, a keel boat bellows forth flames and black smoke. Fired from stem to stern, with flames shooting high into the sky to dissipate in thick black smog which curled upwards and lay out across the atmosphere, fouling the last fine day of the sailing season.

For those who have never seen a ship ablaze it is not a pleasant sight. But, inevitably, we were drawn towards her. The Life Boat, hoses gushing far out over the water, steamed towards the blazing vessel which a local boat contrived to tow inside the harbour. Placing herself between the watching fleet and the fire, the Life Boat awaited the explosion of the gas cylinders known to be on board. They went off – straight into the air – Lucky for some. Onlookers were suddenly treated to the sight of smoke belching from the masthead until the stays failed and the mast collapsed into the water. The conflagration racked the unhappy ship – superstructure all gone – she still rode high in the water, but flames were licking out around the transom.

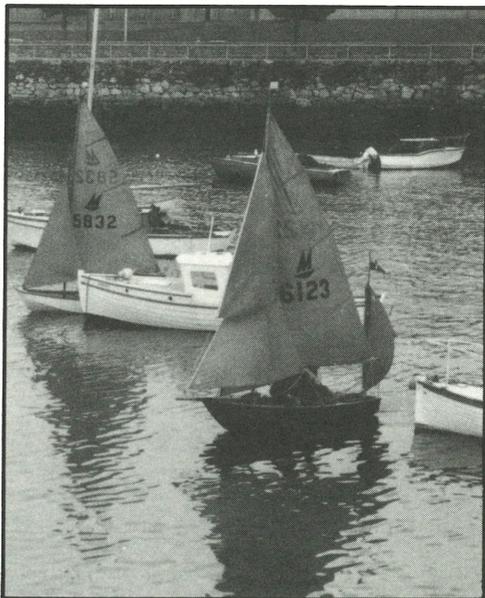
Under control at last and a gallant member

of the Life Boat crew put aboard, the vessel was towed into the Coal Harbour. Unable to proceed into the shallow water, the Life Boat passed the towing line to a boat load of boy scouts – nobly captained by a member of the regular Life Boat crew summoned from a wedding – white carnation gleaming in the lapel of his smart blue double breasted suit.

We followed at a discreet distance – returning to our mooring. Fires in fibreglass may be damped but before they are finally extinguished . . . a sheet of flames from the bowels of the wreck and only a pole to beat them out with in the hands of the salvage crew.

"We have a bucket" shouts Theo, "paddles out . . ." work for the Class Secretary. We came alongside and while the Life Boatman handled the bucket, Norman proved there were still other uses for the white crash helmet as he stood on the 'Full Rigged Mirror' and threw water into the filthy mess of soot, charred resin and melted fibreglass which had once sailed so proudly, and now looked like wet burnt toast.

Really out at last . . . but darkness approacheth and time to de-rig and find the families. It was whilst walking up the slipway that the rat passed across our bows. "Pity you couldn't have come in the summer" said the hosts. "There's a lot going on then."



# We don't have this trouble on our gravel pit

by Peter Thomas

The sky was blue, the streets were crowded, and the full size replica of the 'Golden Hind' had just sailed into Brixham under sagging sails and a surreptitious diesel engine. It's welcome had evaporated when some enthusiast on board had fired a one-gun salute. Every startled seagull in Torbay had taken off with a shriek and let fly. We stood there, a small bespattered group on the breakwater slipway, in a town of similarly christened tourists. Typically, in otherwise perfect conditions, it had come down into a flat calm. "It was different here last year" someone said. It was too.

Then the sky had been slate grey, the sea-gulls were all grounded, and we had the place almost to ourselves. The wind had got up awkwardly between an exciting blow, and the state where you can decline to venture forth without fear of ridicule. A local expert had materialised unasked, and was telling us how safe Torbay really was. It appeared that he actually knew a bloke who was directly related to the coxswain of the life-boat, which of course was comforting. What is more to the point we had already paid 30p launch fee.

"What would Drake have done?" I mused out loud. "Who's he play for?" enquired my eldest with sudden interest. (Parenthood is vastly overrated.) "I'll come with you" said Brian, out of the blue. Come with me! I was still assessing my survival chances. "I'll take some photos" said Barbara, grabbing the eldest, and setting off down the long breakwater. The matter in some mysterious means seemed to have been settled.

The Mirror was bouncing on the slipway with a hollow banging noise. I recalled all those diagrams in books showing smiling individuals up to their 'Y'-fronts in the drink holding craft off, no-one seemed to be doing that. It probably explains why it's always diagrams, never pictures, that you

see of this manoeuvre. The boat seemed more eager than us to be off, we had no sooner started pulling our various bits of string, than it leapt onto the plane and bombed off down the harbour. We passed a startled Barbara on a screaming beam reach, smiling weakly. The sea looking rougher with every foot, we shot toward the harbour mouth. Before I had mentally prepared for it, we were in it in more ways than one.

The boat surfed clean off the crest of one wave and landed in the trough beyond, with a crash that shook my fillings. The mast shook, and inexplicably Brian was standing up. I stared at him, what the hell was he doing? He looked as surprised as me and made a conscious effort to sit down. Helpfully the boat made a determined effort to come up with the next wave. Brian and the boat reconnected firmly. I swear a tear came to his eye, but it might have been just spray. At this rate we would make Cherbourg by tea time unless we could get the thing turned round. Straight ahead a dead steady trawler was making for the harbour. "I'll tack in the lee of that, I yelled. We closed the trawler rapidly, someone on board, clearly not relishing the idea of being rammed by 125lbs of ferocious plywood, blew the hooter hopefully. "You've got him worried!" shouted Brian happily.

I can't claim we put in a tack to be proud of, but it sufficed, and Barbara reached the end of the breakwater just in time to see us surge back into the harbour. "You're back then?" said the local, unnecessarily. I turned to answer and fell over my own trailer. But that was last year, this year we gave it up as a bad job, and went over to Dartmouth.

In Dartmouth it was different. The sky was blue, the streets were crowded, the Golden Hind had yet to show up, and the seagulls were observing a cease-fire. The Flying Scotsman was deluged under happy photographing train lovers, Brian among them, and a breath of air was coming up the estuary. We slipped the Mirrors into the Dart and by the time we had reached mid-river, it came down into the calm again. We settled comfortably, Joyce the missus, searching aimlessly for sun-tan oil in the stowage compartments. She was rewarded by a pair of forgotten smelly plimsols in one side,

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# Cruise around Fife

by Russell Gordon, Jock Blair and  
Nick Lindsay

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and a broken shackle in the other. We searched lazily for the 'Charlotte Rhodes' moored downstream. What had this Onedid bloke got anyway? I should grow bushy side-boards? Perhaps I should replace what's fallen out on top first. I gave up squinting against the sun on the water, I really should have worn my glasses, but being given to extravagant gestures, and what with the high cost of dredging, sailing is dear enough without replacing any more pairs of specs.

Time passed without effort by anyone, this was more like it, away from the crowds. A klaxony sound punctured the calm, a large blurred shape had appeared. "What's that?" I asked Joyce, "Over there." "It's a ship" she announced brightly "Coming towards us with two anchor chains. Power gives way to sail" she added. How could it come towards us with two anchors down I wondered, unless . . . "It's the bloody chain ferry!" I shouted, "That can't give way to anything! We've drifted down onto it!"

I tore at the aero-elastics lashing down the oars. "It's not like you to panic" said Joyce. The thing was coming into focus now, the loading ramp just slicing the tops off the ripples. I began to row for all I was worth, the other Mirror watched helpless 100 feet upstream. The side of the ferry appeared beside us, the paddle wheels not 8 feet away. I redoubled my efforts to counter the suction of it's hull. "Hey" said Joyce "There's someone taking our picture!" I looked up, a sadist stood at the rail panning over the gruesome scene. Charming! As we swept around the stern of the ferry, I ripped the board up just as we passed over the cables on their way down into the river bed.

"Oh my God!" said Joyce suddenly losing her cool, and clutching her Tee shirt where she thinks her heart might be, "Oh my God." "It's too late for that now" I said, "far too late." And it was.

Next holiday we're trying Falmouth. I understand there is no breakwater, no chain ferries, the Golden Hind will be elsewhere, and the seagulls all fly upside down. The sky being blue, and the streets being crowded we can put up with.

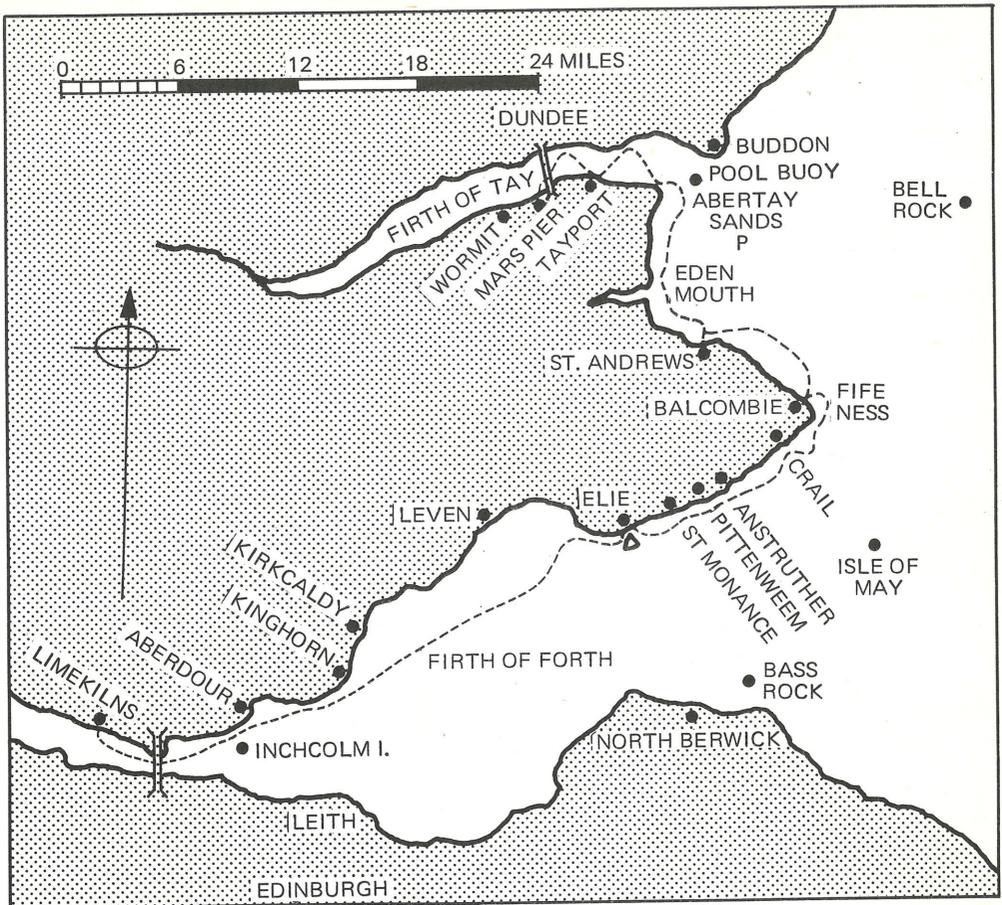
Take a Peninsula like the Kingdom of Fife, its main arteries, the old railway bridges, and their modern partners, the road bridges, add some sailing dinghy enthusiasts, three Mirror kits. Allow time for fermentation and you can be sure some scheme will come out of it to prove what these little craft can do. Sure enough the creators of '52 and '55 thought of it, why not circumnavigate Fife, if possible taking in all four bridges in one weekend!

If possible — that was the key, so '52 and '55 got to work, checking tides, approximate mileages, etc., and found it was possible on one weekend during the summer, tides would be right — as always, however, the only unknown factor was the weather, the most important factor of all!

The first attempt was made in June '73 and ended with the two partners screaming into Lower Largo in the teeth of a force 7 gale, to be towed back to Wormit Boating Club by trailer, even more determined to try again. One lesson was learned, however, that two in one boat, plus gear, was too much.

1974 and '52 and '55 are again plotting this year's attempt. Organisation is more or less complete, and they are discussing the possibility of sailing single handed, in the local, when joined by '76, who has done 90% of his Mirror sailing single handed in most weathers, and confirms their own experience that the Mirror is an easy and pleasant craft to handle solo. So it is settled Mirrors will go solo, but three this year, and it's all go on the 7th, weather providing.

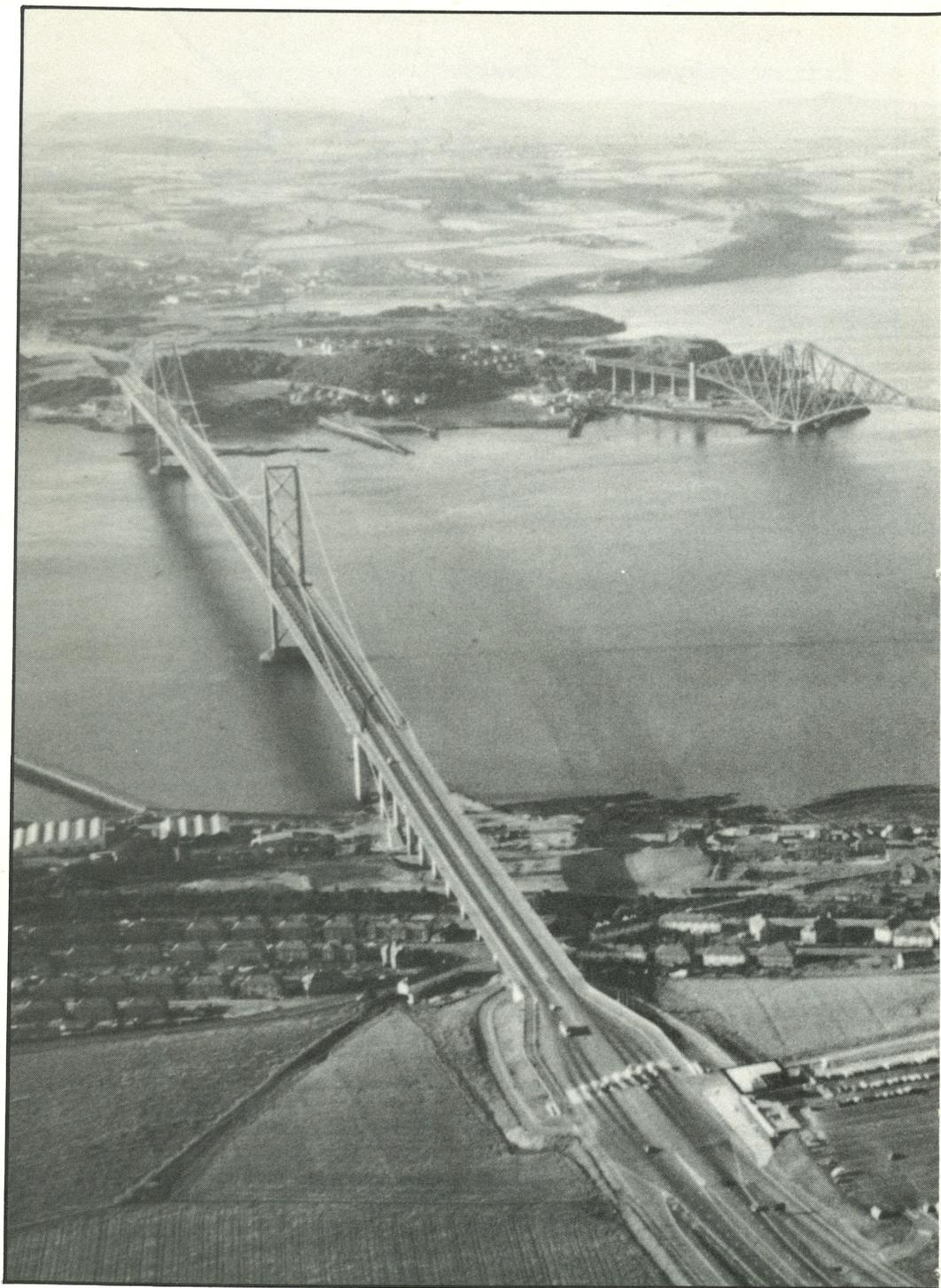
17.00 hrs. 7th June and Mirrors are being rigged at Limekilns on the Forth. The lucky mascots — a West Highland Terrier and a Scottie, procured from bottles of Black and White whisky, were attached to the masthead of M12476, but the force 3 to 4 wind diminishing, was in fact, force 5. Everything was now at stake, a squall was coming up and the wind increasing steadily. To go or not to go, that is the question, a member of the local sailing club advised us to cross

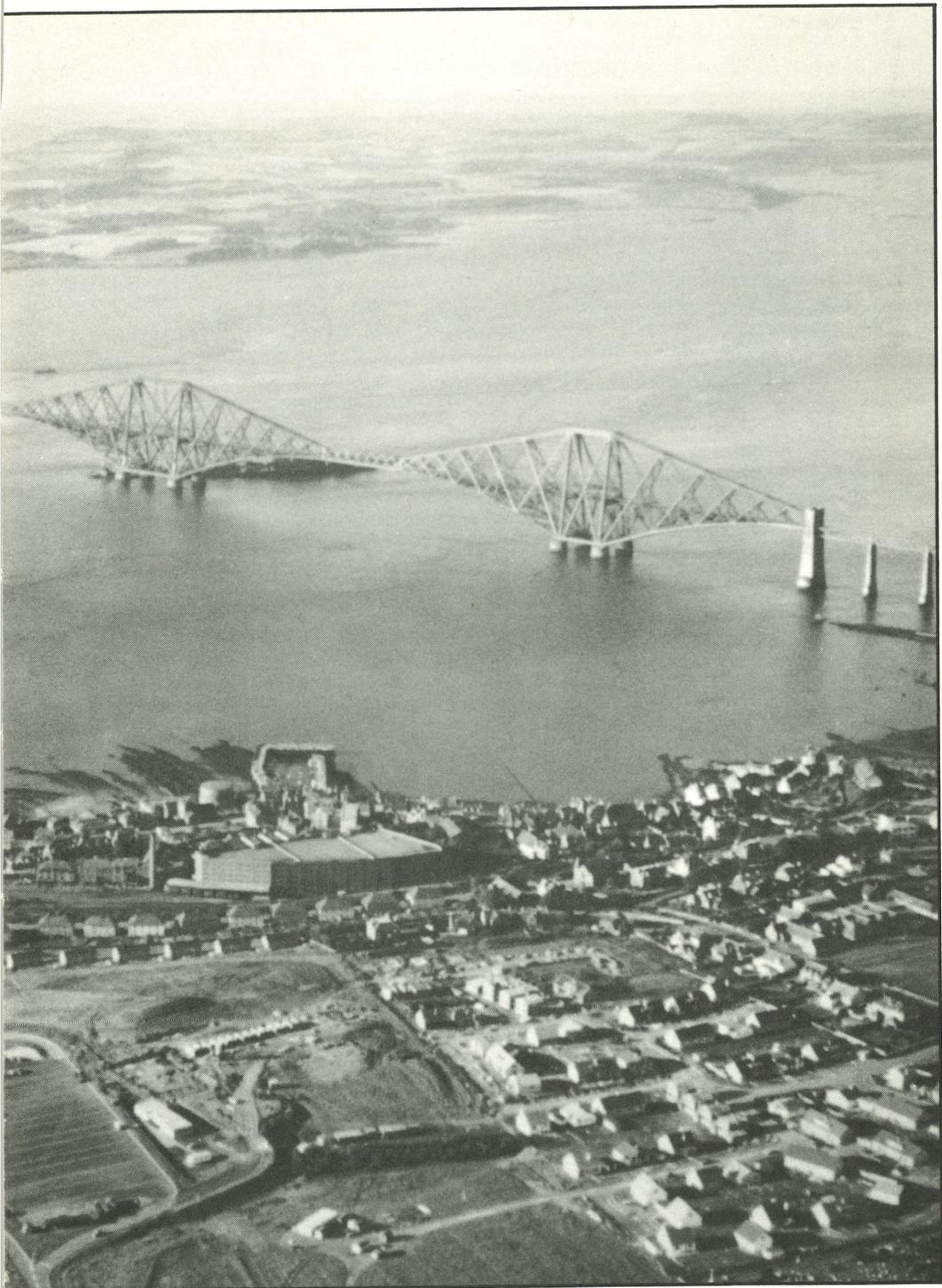


the harbour on oars, from beach to end of quay, and hoist sails there, making a dash from the end of the quay past the end of the reef running out beyond the quay end. Due to force of wind, mainsails were stowed, and wet suits donned at 18.00 hrs., '55 and '52 rowed across to quay wall, '76 last to leave was caught in squall and after considerable difficulty, made the end of the quay. Squall passed and wind dropped to about force 5. Jibs were hoisted and left loose, '55 was first off, and with short sharp strokes of the oars he was clear of the reef into the Forth, followed by '52 and '76. Once clear of the reef, oars were stowed and jib sheets tightened. Mirrors pushed forward slapping into waves as the wind bit.

Once far enough out to be clear of the Naval Base at Rosyth, Mirrors started to run before wind, which gradually fell away to

force 3, allowing helmsmen to relax on the bottom of the boats, feet up on thwarts, a comfortable position not possible with crew aboard. This position was rudely disturbed as Mirrors passed first milestone, the Forth Road Bridge, at 19.55 hrs, by the wake of a container ship ploughing along with full cargo. Coming to second milestone the railway bridge, it was decided to land below it at a small slip below the North Pier, and rig the mainsails. This was done, landing at 20.05 and departing at 20.15 hrs. Mirrors set off at a good pace, running before wind through Mortimers Deep, past Inchcolm Abbey 21.00 hrs., Aberdour Sailing Club, Pettycur, Black Rock 21.30, Kinghorn 21.50 hrs. At this point the wind was brisk, probably force 4, and Mirrors had their skirts up, going like the wind. It was decided at a rendezvous to carry on to Elie, '76 knowing





Elie harbour had no qualms on entering at night. (Actually the pubs were shut so there was no point in going ashore at Kinghorn as planned.)

Mirrors set off in line abreast, planing along, each taking it in turn to surge ahead of the others, on the wave crests. Easily the most memorable part of the trip, the Mirrors resembled a school of porpoises frolicking in a ship's bowwave, now heading towards Sauchar Point Light at Elie. Kirkaldy, Dysart, West and East Wemyss fall astern rapidly, but coming up to Leven it was noticed that one landmark was staying in place, meaning, despite speed through water, speed over ground had ceased. It was now after midnight and it was decided to head for Lower Largo. Trio started sloping into shore, soon all were behind Ruddons Point, and speed over ground increased sufficiently to encourage everyone to try again for Elie. By 01.00 hrs. on the 8th all were sufficiently round Kincaig to pick up May Island Light ahead, and Findra

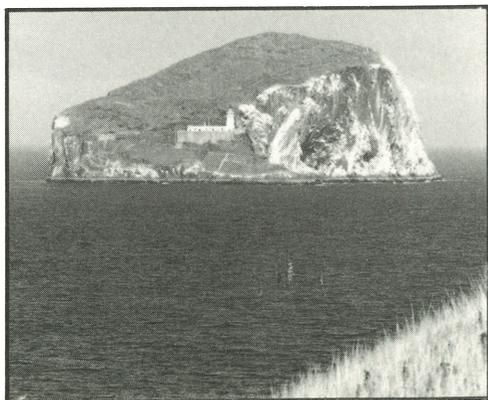
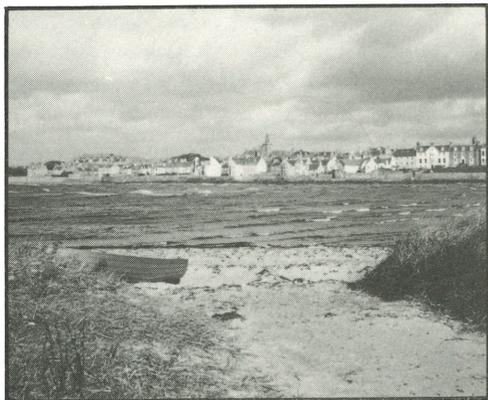
Light on the starboard beam. Sauchar Light flashing behind Chapel Ness made it appear at first like a reef running out from the headland and there were some anxious moments peering through the rain squall (no radar) which had enveloped the boats as we approached the headland, till it cleared and the silhouette of the buildings on Chapel Ness could be seen.

Fortunately at this time of the year with clear nights, daylight never really leaves the skies, and we were able to distinguish rocks which though clear of the course, gave comfort that we were able to see them.

Clear of Chapel Ness and its reefs, '52 and '76 lined up on the last light (Eastmost) on the road skirting the harbour. This took them well to port of the old building on the harbour wall, the quay stretches well into the harbour from this building. So much concentration was spent on this by '52 and '76 that they did not notice at first that '55 had fallen behind. Signals were



immediately flashed back to guide the wanderer in, but these were unfortunately missed! A lesson here, no use always signalling with a mass of lights behind you, shine the light up the sail, more chance of the tired eyes seeing you. M'55 continued to head for the beach at the west end of the town. In the lights from the street it looked a lovely beach to land on but at the state of the tide we were making, landfall was in fact guarded by rocks resembling the dragon's teeth of the Siegfried Line. Fortunately '55's ears picked up the sound of water gently lapping on something other than sand, and he veered away in time, eventually beaching in proper place twenty minutes after '52 and '76 who beached at 02.00 hrs. 8/6/74. By 02.30 hrs. all boats had been lifted above high water mark and after a hot drink and a bite to eat, trio cocooned themselves in boat-covers and groundsheet, on the grass at the edge of the harbour, and tried to snatch a few hours sleep.



05.30 in the morning saw all helmsmen awake, after a fitful 2½ hours sleep, hot soup by courtesy of '55, plus the brilliant morning sunshine chased the chill from the bones and sent the blood surging through aching limbs. (Mother Earth makes a hard mattress). Mirrors crept out of Elie on the gentlest of zephyrs after listening to the 06.30 hrs. weather forecast, force 3 westerly for our area. As we drifted on the tide we wished it was force 3. Once the trio had drifted past Sauchar Point it was feet up on the transom and a gentle 40 winks in the warm sunshine waiting for the breeze.

Boats drifted past Newark Castle, St. Monance, the salt can, Path Head, till off Pittenweem Pool a southerly breeze sprang up and boats started sailing again. '76 who had relatives in Pittenweem, gave three blasts on air horn, but town remained sleepy looking, with no movement visible, at 08.30 hrs. 09.00 hrs. wind changed to easterly off Anstruther and Mirrors started tacking to Crail. It was a temptation to take in the May Island in one big tack, but this was resisted and Crail was abeam by 10.30 hrs. Leaving Crail and a boatful of sea anglers pulling in cod and pollock it looked as if Fifeness would be reached in minutes, but wind died and again it was a drifting match, this time in heavy rain, till off Fifeness at noon sun returned with gentle breeze, sufficient to counteract the tide, now turning, and boats in line astern glided through the crystal clear water, '52 leading, followed by '55 and '76, helmsmen standing upright, peering down at the panorama of rocks, red waur tangles and sand slipping past beneath the keel as a course was threaded between the reefs, till finally with rising breeze, the three boats skated onto Balcomie beach, beneath a very active golf course, and had a blow, lunch and liquid refreshment.

Yet another rain squall hastened the launching of the boats and beach was cleared at 13.00 hrs., after a stay of 45 minutes. '52 again took the lead, followed by '55 and '76, all threading their way through the Tullybothy Craigs without accident, though '55 and '52 had to take sudden avoiding action to clear rocks just below the surface. Once clear of the Craigs, boats moved along in a gentle breeze towards Babbet Ness, sun

once more making helmsmen drowsy. Rounding Babbet Ness the wind rose in strength and life once again surged through the Mirrors and the crews as they climbed back onto the gunwales and began to sail properly.

The wind was especially welcome to '76, the old lady of the trio. The original privately owned Mirror in the Wormit Boating Club, she had suffered the indignity of having been left out in the open for a year and denied a much needed paint strip, and overhaul, due to circumstances beyond the control of the owner, with the result that she was heavy and sluggish in light winds. The two youngsters of the trio skipping well ahead of her in light breezes, however, in the stronger winds she picked up her skirts and chased after the youngsters so that the last miles to St. Andrews were completed line abreast, boats surging onto beach by club launching slip within seconds of each other at 15.45 hrs.

Boats were covered up, and helmsmen set off for some liquid refreshment and a meal. Passing the St. Andrew's Sailing Club, an official invited the trio to use the club facilities, showers, and bar, an offer which under normal circumstances would have been gladly accepted, but time was limited, and the very kind offer had to be declined with thanks. After a quick glass of beer at the local, following the host's advice, a chip shop was located at the far end of a park. '76 purchased a fish supper and strolled out into the sunshine, leaving '55 and '52 to await the cooking of their more exotic fare, chopped steak. '76 having finished his fare, lay down on a grassy bank in the sunshine, clutching his chip bag (no litter bins) and was soon in the arms of Morpheus. '55 and '52 joined '76 in Morpheus's arms after finishing their luxury fare. Now what the people of St. Andrews thought when walking through the park on that hot summer's evening, they came across three figures clad in wetsuits (almost a mile from the sea) sound asleep clutching chip bags, one of whom was making a fair imitation of the local saw mills, can only be left to the imagination. The ripsaws eventually brought '76 back to the surface, noting time was 19.00 hrs., roused others, and three weary figures made their way back to the boats, '55 dutifully depositing the chip bags in a 22 carat gold litterbin

finally located on way back to beach.

Boats hit the water at 19.30 hrs. and soon Mirrors were skimming over water to Tentsmuir. Wind dropped slightly and '76 again dragged her heels, '55 and '52 taking proper course, arrived off Eden point at 20.05 hrs. '76 said a prayer that tide would not drop too quickly, and wind would stay, and took direct course over sand banks to pool. Fortune was with him as wind freshened slightly, and he just made it, threading his way between white capped wavelets indicating top of banks, with inches under keel, slid over sand banks joining others in pool.

Mirrors were greatly assisted in following channel out of pool by buoys set by Tay research, and they almost had it made out of pool when wind dropped, '55 and '52 immediately swung onto the beach, '76 in the middle of the tide rip, about eight feet from smooth water, was in difficulty. Seeing only a few inches of water under keel he promptly jumped over side straight into a hole. Finding himself unable to touch bottom he clambered back into the boat and rowed ashore between '55 and '52 where a gust of wind blew the boat over, utter disaster being averted by prompt action of '52 in grabbing gunwale of '76. Sails were lowered and last few yards out of pool were waded, boats being pulled above waterline by 22.15 hrs. 23.00 hrs. saw helmsmen in cocoons in lee of boats. Sand, however, proved an uncomfortable mattress, and sleep was pretty fitful till strong wind had helmsmen up and about at 02.00 hrs. on the 9th.

Wind was all of force 5 gusting approximately 7 from the west, meaning a beat upriver. It was decided that despite bright moonlight and partial daylight, it was safer to await daylight before setting off, as it was essential that all members of party should be able to see each other clearly, in such conditions, in case of capsizing.

Mirrors took to water at 03.15 hrs. after a breakfast of hot soup, cooked in kettle, concentrate being diluted with milk, that and beer being the only two liquids available, apart from salt water. In trying to estimate wind speed, party had been led astray by the fact that water did not seem very rough. Once afloat the reason became apparent, the river was covered in a huge oil slick, diesel or gas oil by the smell.

The sail upriver was hairy, but most enjoyable, sailing at its best, rigging and daggerboards singing. Tayport abeam at 03.45 hrs. Tay Road Bridge passed 04.25 hrs. and here the wind direction shifted, causing Mirrors to tack much more often. Strength also increased, making it foolhardy to attempt the railway bridge at this stage, so Mirrors landed at Woodhaven at 05.00 hrs. After a celebration toast, helmsmen made weary way home. Their wetsuits, worn steadily for 36 hours, were cast into backyards to 'pong' to the elements, and after a hot bath, helmsmen crawled gratefully between the

sheets.

The final objective of the expedition was achieved when railway bridge over Tay was passed at 16.00 hrs. on the 9th in brilliant sunshine and gentle breeze, final landfall at Woodhaven at 18.00 hrs.

In conclusion, all who took part in the expedition had not only an enjoyable sail, but felt they had achieved something, not just circumnavigating Fife, but proving that Mirrors are not just toys for boys, but used sensibly, are sturdy craft, that can take owners a lot further afield than across the local pond.

Helmsmen: M17552	Jock Blair, W.B.C.
M38955	Nick Lindsay, W.B.C.
M12476	Russell Gordon, W.B.C.

Log Extracts:

7/6/74

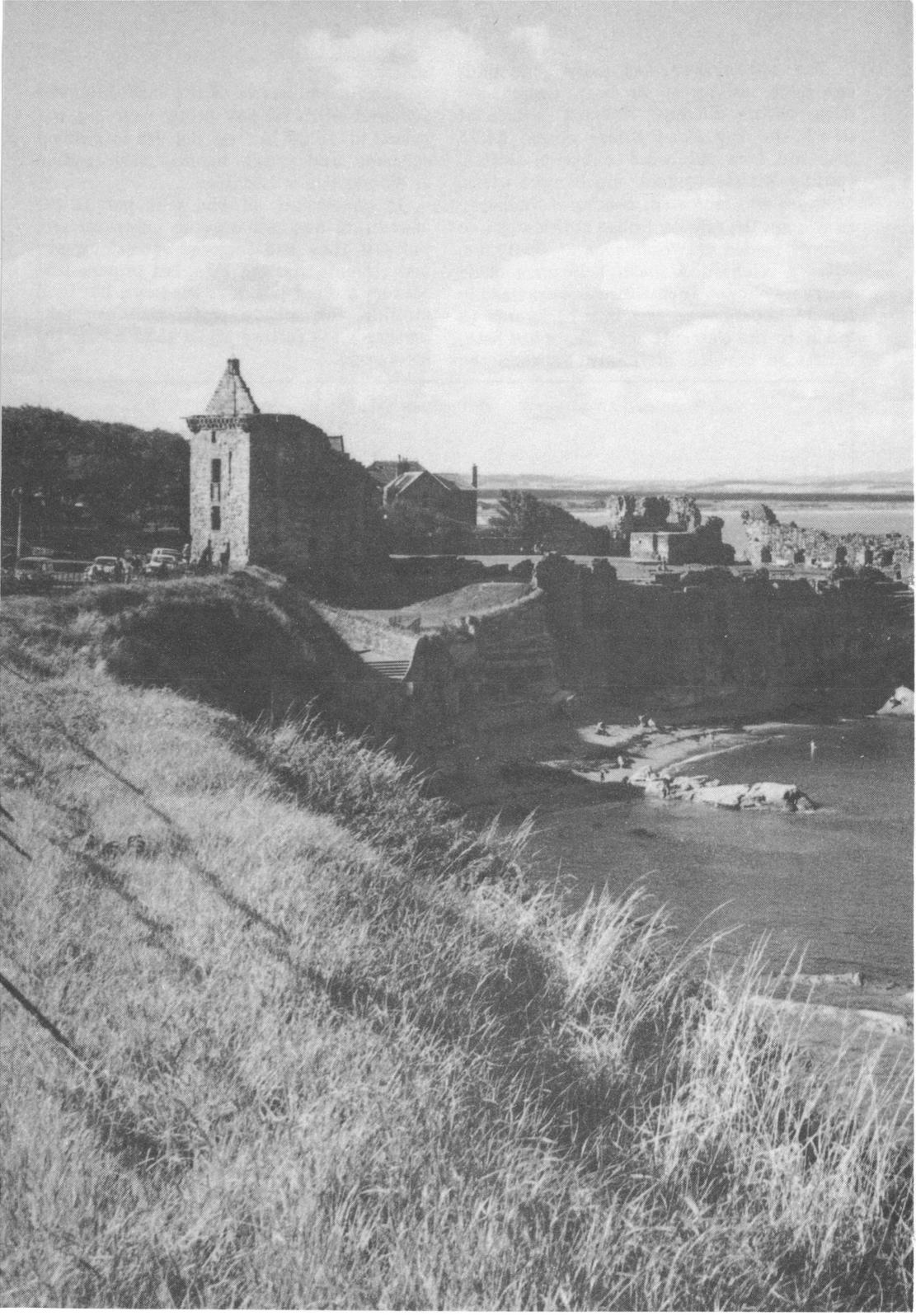
19.00 hrs.	Depart Limekilns, jib only	Force 5-8 Westerly
19.55 hrs.	Forth Road Bridge, jib only	Force 3
20.05 hrs.	Ashore under North Pier, Forth Railway Bridge	
20.15 hrs.	Departed Railway Bridge, full sail	Force 3
21.00 hrs.	Inchcolm Abbey	Force 3
21.30 hrs.	Black Rock	
21.50 hrs.	Kinghorn	Force 4-5

8/6/74

01.00 hrs.	Ruddons Point	Force 2-3
01.30 hrs.	Chappel Ness	Force 2
02.00 hrs.	Ashore Elie	
06.30 hrs.	Depart Elie	Force 1
08.00 hrs.	St. Monance	Force 1-2
08.30 hrs.	Pittenweem	Force 3 Southerly
09.00 hrs.	Anstruther	Force 3 Easterly
10.30 hrs.	Crail	Force 3 Easterly
12.00 hrs.	Fifeness	Force 1
12.15 hrs.	Landed Balcomie Beach	
13.00 hrs.	Departed	Force 2 South West
15.45 hrs.	Landed St. Andrews	Force 3-4 South West
19.30 hrs.	Departed	Force 3 South West
20.05 hrs.	Off Eden Point	Force 2-3 South West
22.15 hrs.	Ashore Tentsmuir at exit from Pool	

9/6/74

02.00 hrs.	Awake brewing up	Force 5-7 Westerly
03.15 hrs.	Departed Pool	Force 5-7 Westerly
03.45 hrs.	Tayport	Force 5-7 Westerly
04.25 hrs.	Tay Road Bridge	Force 5-7 Westerly
05.00 hrs.	Woodhaven	Force 6 Westerly
15.00 hrs.	Depart Woodhaven	Force 2 Easterly
16.00 hrs.	Pass Tay Road Bridge	Force 2 Easterly
18.00 hrs.	Land Woodhaven (W.B.C.)	Force 1 Easterly





# The Boy

by John Hayward

The year is 1949. A Royal Naval Frigate named 'Alert' is slicing through the seas off Malacca.

At the wheel of 'Alert' is a 17 year old Boy Seaman, watching the Gyro compass and reacting to it's movements with deft, practiced hands. The Boy has been trained at H.M.S. Ganges. He is justly proud of the fact and loves putting his training into practice.

As he steers the 1,700 ton warship on her course, the Boy thinks of the day when he will be Skipper. He will model himself on his hero; Lord Nelson! England will indeed have another Naval hero!

"BOY!" The First Lieutenant's voice rasps into the Boy's brain, bringing him from his daydream. "BOY, as an ex-Ganges Boy you must be able to SAIL a boat. Go to the boat deck and help load the whaler with supplies, you know what's required."

The Boy hands over the helm-watch to his 'relief' and hurries to the starboard whaler where he finds four other men beginning to load the boat with food.

A Naval whaler is a beast! It has two 'sharp' ends, a mains'l, a fores'l and a mizzen. The Boy has never really mastered the thing but honour is at stake now.

The plan is to sail from a point off Malacca to Malaya. The crew consists of the First Lieutenant, the Buffer (Chief Bosun's Mate), a Sub-Inspector of the Singapore Police, an Able Seaman and finally, the Boy.

Thus it is with so distinguished a crew, the Boy steps aboard the whaler, grabs the tiller with both hands (it is too fat for his small fist) and casts off from 'Alert.'

As the Frigate disappears over the horizon, the Boy feels lonely despite the presence of his crew. It is as if his home, his safe stable home, is going forever. Soon they are quite alone. Just four men, one Boy and a boat, alone in the enormous expanse of terrifying sea. A sea that is to teach them that she is ALWAYS Mistress and men sail upon her at HER pleasure. The Boy is about to become

a man.

The morning starts off fairly quiet. A 'comfortable' wind, small seas and cheerful chatter amongst the crew.

The Policeman gives a superb demonstration of small arms skill. He throws empty water cans up in the air and shoots holes in them with the revolver! The cans are about the size of small beer cans - he's good! Each of the crew in turn tries their luck at playing 'Billy the Kid' with some small measure of success. When the Boy's turn comes, he can't keep the heavy revolver steady. Everyone dives for cover as he blasts away - MISSED!

A change of course is indicated. The Boy must now give his superiors some orders.

"Stand by to ware!" he roars.

"Aft fore - check Main!"

The fores'l is hauled aft-wards whilst the mains'l is slackened. He pulls the tiller up and as the boat comes round - "Brail up!" The mains'l 'folds up,' the boat is round now.

"Ease fores'l - adjust main!" he calls. They settle on to their new course with all sails filled, including the mizzen which is set and controlled by the helmsman.

Time for lunch! Sandwiches, biscuits, cake and - water? As they eat, someone remarks that the wind seems to be rising. Come to that, the waves look a little higher.

"Rubbish" says the First Lieutenant.

"Anyway, the sun's still out and shining bright" says the Buffer unnecessarily.

"Streuth! What the hell is that!"

A cry from the bow causes heads to turn in that direction.

A Manta Ray! A beautiful Ray flies across their bow before dropping back into the sea. "It can't believe its eyes, here it comes again!" The beautiful and graceful creature glides near the surface for a last look at the man things before returning to the depths of his domain.

Mid-afternoon. The wind is getting up. For safety sake the Boy dispenses with the mizzen. No-one knows why but who argues with the Skipper!

"Sharks!"

"Oh Lord, so there are!"

"What do we do now?" Why is everyone looking at the Boy?

The Policeman acts. Before anyone can stop him he draws his revolver and fires — twice. The sea turns a reddish brown. Then — white foam as shark turns on shark, incensed by the smell of blood.

“You idiotic fool!” shouts the Buffer. “You’ll have the bloody lot round here now!”

The sea is kicked up by threshing sharks as the boat makes it’s escape, but they have not reckoned with the sea herself.

Anger — no — Fury at the murder of one of her own, the sea fights back at those who violate her.

The sky darkens, the wind screams abuse at them and the sea lashes out in unfettered fury. The mains’l parts and collapses before they have time to get it down safely, whilst the boat itself takes on board an unhealthy amount of water. Only the fores’l stays up.

The Boy can no longer handle the tiller so the First Lieutenant takes over. The sea is now terrifying; the wind relentless. They have killed, now for the repayment. For the rest of the afternoon and well into the evening the battle for life continues. They are cold, sick and so very tired, yet the Officer appears unaffected as he steadily keeps control of boat and men. The Boy’s admiration for Officers shoots to an all time high! There beside him stands a man like Nelson himself.

At last! At long last, the sea relents and the wind abates, both quietening to mourn. By some miracle they have survived. By an even greater miracle, unexplained to this day, they are in sight of land. The beach will be most welcome!

On shore now. Everyone lays on the beach resting aching limbs, removing salt water from mouths and stomachs.

The First Lieutenant (always the Officer) orders a great fire to be built. This will act as a beacon, as this part of the Island is uninhabited. Their ship will be carrying out a search.

The flames leap upwards towards the black tropical night as tired sailors rest bruised bodies and eat fruit collected on an earlier forage. The boy keeps a seaward watch for his ship. Three hours and his vigil is rewarded by a flashing twinkling light out at sea. “Morse Code!” he cries knowingly.

“Good!” replies the Officer. “Can you read it?”

There is that embarrassed silence that tells all!

“Oh Bloody hell! Oh B - - - - hell!”

The Officer moves slowly towards the fire. His steps are heavy, his head shaking from side to side. Painfully he stoops and picks up a burning branch from the fire. With a sigh, he starts to signal ‘Alert.’

“Sir,” it was the Boy. “I didn’t learn Morse at Ganges.”

“Boy, when we get back on board, I’m going to buy everyone here a bottle of beer. Then you are going to have a short course in signalling followed by a test!”

He did! I did! — I failed!

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## Son of Jaws

by Peter Thomas

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“Out there” I panted, dripping in my soggy shorts and revolting sailing shoes, one arm pointing vaguely at Plymouth Sound like that famous painting of the boyhood of Raleigh, (or some other player like that) “Out there is a BLOODY GREAT SHARK!”

The old fisherman digested this vital information impassively whilst grinding another 10 thou off the stem of his pipe. At length he remarked, with just a tinge of concern, “I ’ope yew din frighten ’im.” At this point I recall going into orbit. “Frighten ’IM” I yelled, “it scared ME right out of my ‘Y’ fronts.” The fisherman was unimpressed, “’cos if yew dew” he continued, “he’ll flick his tail an’ smash a fair old ’ole in that silly little boat of yourn.” “Anyway” he concluded, “’tis a well known fact that they do only eat plankton — see.” and after this extended conversation, he disappeared into the “Hound and Whippet” to rejuvenate his tonsils, leaving me feeling a sight more foolish than usual.

We’d been about a mile off the breakwater, me alone in the family Mirror 17360, and Martin and Brian, ex-Mirormen of note, ensconced in this venerable Merlin Rocket. What appeared to be amphibious blackbirds were diving under water and re-appearing some time later a distance away in an interesting, but non-productive display. An informed source has since told me these

beasts could have been cormorants, they could equally well have been bald-headed eagles for all I know. Any road, two of these creatures seemed to be rather slim style versions and were holding station about 5 ft. apart with their heads under water.

I was just considering how they could possibly hold their breath that long when the pair of them suddenly accelerated between our boats and shot off towards the breakwater. As they passed I noticed two things. The first was that these birds were a funny triangular shape, and the second was that my bottom came in over the gunwale all of it's own accord, rather smartly. Realisation dawned. "SHARK!" I screamed at the other boat. Brian and Martin looked at one another, and then at me with that familiar 'humour Thomas, he's off again' expression on their faces. "Who?" inquired Brian cautiously. "That was a shark," I shouted, pointing. Heavy breathing could be heard, then, as loyal sons of Albion, bred from centuries of sea-going heroes, we beat it for the shore.

I should perhaps remark that the Mirror is a rebuilt one and a shade on the heavy side. You see it was an insurance write-off retained by the Company as a suitable subject for a series of 'Mend your Mirror in three easy stages' type of picture strip, issued to policy holders as a help to D.I.Y. repair artists. However, about the same time that I was raising a hue and cry about getting another Mirror, a further example came to light on which a beach hut had collapsed. This presented more of a challenge to the insurers' ingenuity, so 17360 came vacant so to speak. The word was that it had fallen off this roof-rack, so I bought it sight unseen. When I collected it from the well-known Karlake Hauliers Inc representative at Crystal Palace, it became clear that the one question I should have asked was how fast the roof-rack had been travelling at the time!

Anyway, some time, and five sheets of almost ¼in. BS1088 ply (metric innitchief) later, and using most of the original opened out on the garage floor like a dress pattern, a new hull emerged that will leave sizeable dents in unwary Fireballs. As it was intended basically for the Missus and kids, and all the hard work had by now been done, wife Joyce decided to have a hand in the naming

of this craft. Swift rejection came for . . . 'Arkansaw Chugabug', 'Missus Marques' and even 'Pheasant Plucker.' Regretfully, 'Ferret Wrestler of Norton Malreward' met a similar fate due mainly to the high cost of stick-on letters. Instead divine inspiration and feminine intuition combined to produce 'REJOYCE!' as summing up the situation exactly. The only trouble is, whenever it appears on the gravel pit certain individuals feel constrained to break into hymns, out loud.

The Merlin, on the other hand, was almost sold the same evening. We were in this bar somewhat after hours (We do still have double Summer Time round here young sir) with these two tidy looking blokes who were showing exceptional interest in the boat. When asked why this particular Merlin should excite them, they explained it was all to do with the sail number. "O.K." we said, "it's 999, what about it?" "Well" said one of them, "we could change it's name to 'Evening all!' because we're in the C.I.D." Several respected patrons went a very funny colour at this revelation, and as the barmaid fainted behind the bar, he added, "but we're on holiday just like you, have we time for one more?" We had actually, several more, for the medicinal content you see, although my wife says this is as weak an excuse as buying Playboy for the Gardening hints.

The next day we got up very gently, feeling about as sharp as a beachball, and looked at the day. It was a touch humid, in plain fact it was - - - ing down, so we got all bundled up and went for a slow walk around the headland in a vain endeavour to re-orientate with critical inputs, like which way was 'up' and suchlike. Perched on the end of the landmass was a coastguard station, complete with solitary officer. Memories flooded back of rowing drunkenly around a mist-shrouded Broads anchorage, bumping into cruisers, loudly inquiring "Be you the Revenue cutter?" and getting an interesting series of answers, until one boat declined to reply, and turned out to be our own.

The bored looking coastguard seemed glad to see us, laughed about our shark, apparently a basking variety, and let us play with all his gadgets, binoculars, watch his radar scanner, and listen to the Roscoff ferry reporting her position, and ETA. Brian was busy reading the log, "Just think, every-

thing that happens is noted down here" he marvelled. "Not quite everything" said the coastguard smiling, "Sometimes we get these phonecalls . . ." Our interest came alight. "What sort of phonecalls?" we asked. "Well, I had one late on t'other night, lady said she could see these lights in the sky." "Where's these lights to then madam?" he'd asked. "Out to sea look, that's why I rung you." "Which way would you be facing then madam?" "Well I'm stood by our bedroom window

with nothing on look." "What's your husband make of all this then?" "Oh, he's on nights, he is." "We'd better just have your address then, just for the record." "Yes, well I got all that, madam, but it's a sight too far across Plymouth to come this time of night, but if we're ever in the area . . ." And if you're ever in the area, try the sailing, it's great, only these cormorants, bald-headed eagles, or whatever, do have these dirty great teeth . . . look.

## Love swells like the Solway but ebbs like its tide

by Ean McDonald

(Scott – Ballad of Lochinvar)

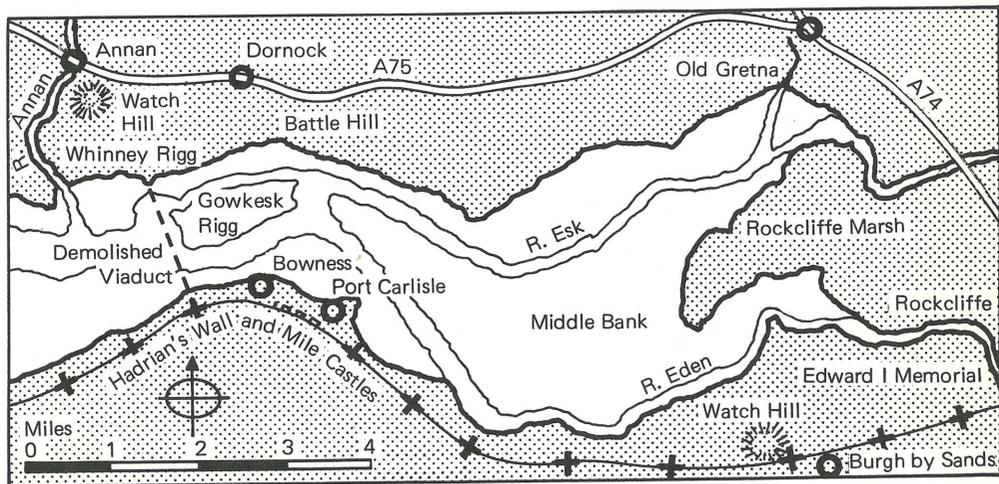
Sir Walter was no stranger to the Solway as his novels 'Guy Mannering' and 'Redgauntlet' indicate. But perhaps only a Solway-sider born and bred can savour to the full the romance of the upper firth. The scene alters constantly as season, wind and weather dictate, and with every rise and fall of tide, and changing light and shade on water, sand and pastoral shore.

Part of the frontier from prehistory between a succession of tribes, then between two nations rarely in happier relationship than

armed neutrality: and even after their so called union, the happy thoroughfare for generations of smugglers, it has acquired a wealth of local history and tradition. Of legitimate traffic – fifty odd gaff rigged craft which at the beginning of the century 'whammed' for salmon or trawled for flat fish and shrimp out of Annan Waterfoot alone, all have gone. Indeed the only craft that float today below the points where Esk, Eden, Annan and Nith reach the sands, are a few duck punts.

Nor are craft likely to return unless the mooted Solway barrage brings to the area not only a welcome accretion to the country's energy resources but a new haunt for amateur sailors.

I have lain under Solway's spell ever since as a lad in my early 'teens I built my first boat, a crazy thing of canvas and battens, and launched it into a Solway flood and paddled off up the Esk channel, so cautiously hugging the shore that more than once I





entangled myself in the maze of a salmon stake net set. But soon my fortunes took me elsewhere, to mess about in boats in three continents for the next sixty years, with the usual marine misadventures and some exotic experiences such as clawing off a tiger infested shore in the dark, and fending off floating mines in a night passage of the Baltic Sound.

At the end of the season some years ago I decided that it was time that I packed it up and devoted my attention to my garden. It was then that I had the crazy idea to make one last trip up Solway, for auld lang syne. It was 15th October. Next day gave a 28 foot spring, H.W. 1258 at Annan Waterfoot. The only trouble was a craft. Luckily 'Le Mirage' my Mirror, had not been laid up, nor relegated to the humble role of garden tool rack. I heaved her up on the top of my ancient Bedford truck and at 10.00 hrs., the seven o'clock forecast fine with a light southeasterly breeze, was waiting at Whinnyrigg, the only place within miles, where I could both get my transport to the shore and find sand hard enough to trolley 'Le Mirage' out to the Esk channel at the first sign of the flood making. And here occurred the first slight contretemps. As I was dismantling my trolley — wooden for lightness — by the water's edge the flood arrived as Solway springs do, with a little bore and I was chasing half a dozen pieces of floating wood and a half rigged boat, setting off for Carlisle on their own along six separate paths.

Order having been restored and everything stowed I got underweigh, having remembered to chalk my intended 'flight path' and E.T.A. on return, on the seat of my van. I intended a slight variant from my first passage so long ago. I would cross to the English shore and see how far up The Eden I could manage and still get back to my starting point on one tide. This involved the navigation of a tricky swatchway round the eastern end of the Gowkesk Rigg between Esk and Eden. It did not matter very much eastward bound on a rising tide. Coming back on a falling one was another matter. I took the precaution of plotting its present run before the tide covered it and noted leading marks of sorts on both Scottish and English side.

There was something slightly ridiculous but also exhilarating about a Mirror being pushed by the stream into the wind so that she pointed as high as an Eight Metre, bucking the overfalls like the good little seaboat that she is, and as was apparent when she closed the Cumberland shore, making about four times her theoretical waterline speed over the ground.

As I reached across toward Port Carlisle the bell of Bowness on Solway Parish Church, booty from a sixteenth century raid on that of Dornock, tolled briefly to starboard. Now properly into Eden close inshore with long and short tacks alternately, cud chewing cows stared incuriously from a bank where once Roman sentinels stood. Sooty shags wading on the mid firth shallows seemed swollen to twice their proper size by some mirage. There was no other sign of life. Off Burgh by Sands the snarl of traffic on the A74 came down the breeze muted to a murmur by the miles of Rockcliffe Marsh. Otherwise it was as quiet as it must have been on that day when Edward Longshanks lay dying within sight of the Solway (ford) which he was never to cross again, to hammer the Scots.

I made Rockcliffe, 13 miles up Eden, with just a trace of flood still running. I was tempted to sail on round the next bend or so, just to log that I had at least seen Carlisle, but the temptation of the Rockcliffe pub was stronger, even though I allege that they don't make such good strong ale south of the Border. There was time for a pint only. By the time I had got back to the little creek where I had moored 'Le Mirage' the ebb in the Eden was well established. Solway springs waste no time. They cannot afford to with a 20 square mile basin to fill to 15 feet above the level of Annan Waterfoot — datum 13 feet —, in about three hours and to empty again in the same time. Apparently back to low water, riverain conditions, the very last of the tide water runs out with a drop of 3 inches a minute.

Above their confluence, off shore in a welter of soft banks just East of Annan, Eden and Esk hug the English and Scottish shores respectively, the widening Middle Bank separating them and drying at low water. For as long as there has been any record there has been a single swatchway running diagonally across near the tail of the

Bank where the outward curve of the Cumberland coast deflects part of the Eden fresh across to Esk. Its name, the Gowkesk (foolesk), suggests long dead fishermen, or contrabandists, feeling their way up Esk on a foggy night and straying without hope of retreat into hostile territory. Its exact run changes continuously so perhaps the name merely reflects the irritation among the poke and half net salmon fishermen on the Scots and English side, one or other party of which loses valuable net ground with every change. I had already plotted it before I sailed. The conventional indication of submarine contours and shading on Ordnance Survey maps may or may not bear some resemblance to reality when the map was produced, but are really only there because our map makers cannot bear to see blank areas on their beautiful productions (apparently they are becoming less sensitive.) Needless to say the Admiralty (sorry - Ministry of Defence, Navy) have for obvious reasons never bothered to chart the upper firth.

As the breeze dropped on my homeward passage the visibility decreased. It was going to be a close call to get back across to Esk. Almost before I had established the ebb set to port and my correct heading to meet it, my English leading marks and soon all England disappeared. Of Scotland, only a mile away there was of course, no trace. There was still just enough water to mask the actual line of the swatchway but not enough on either side of it to float even a Mirror. A few of Davies of 'The Riddle of the Sands' famous 'booms' would have been very useful. I hailed with relief my landfall on the Dumfriesshire shore, two white huts appearing suddenly out of the haze a bare two cables ahead. I had no mind to be disclosed by returning visibility, the latest gowk stranded on the Middle Bank or on the Gowkesk Rigg (island bank) and perhaps triggering off an unwanted and unnecessary rescue. However laborious the amphibious completion of my passage would have been I was prepared for it, with my stowed collapsible trolley and nine hours to make it.

The appearance from nowhere of a little sailing boat, red from headboard to water line, where sail of any kind had hardly, if ever, been seen since the shrimpers took to power forty years ago, provoked a shout

from two men by the white huts. They must have been reduced to silent amazement when its sole occupant suddenly appeared to abandon his craft and go splashing about in lunatic circles. Almost into Esk I was about to ground at the last bend of the cross channel. No time to poke about overside sounding with a jib stick. It was a case of out with a kedge and after a cautious prod to make sure that this was a hard sand, not a soft or even a quicksand, to quest about on foot to establish the fall of the bank. I made the Esk channel with about 2 inches and a minute to spare.

If I may add a word of caution to anyone who, having read of this caper, is encouraged to put a craft afloat on Solway, east of the line from Southernness to Skinburness. It is no place for uninstructed amateur boatmen. any more than it is for hikers tempted to essay its dubious fords from one of which, the Solway (mud way), it takes its name. As kids we locals were taught to respect, even to fear, the Solway, the lessons reinforced by frequent skelpings by parents and fisherfolk. Naturally in conformity with the parent-child relations of my young days, reasons were rarely offered or demanded. But there are many newcomers to the area these days whose cars line the shores every fine weekend throughout the summer. Every year Solway drowns too many duck shooters without having their numbers added to from the ranks of smallboat people.

In no way differing from other estuaries with high strong running tides, Solway can without apparently any warning lead into dire trouble those who, afloat or afoot, are accustomed only to the more deliberate coastal tides which give ample notice of their intention to change direction in the vertical or the horizontal plane. Almost before the first flecks of foam borne on the young flood have passed upstream of an observer on the low-water shore line, the water is rising sometimes as much as a foot in five minutes. Meanwhile it may be sneaking into hollows behind the watcher at the same rate. And what a few minutes before afforded a smooth passage for a loaded dinghy from an island bank about to cover, to the shore, can even in a light breeze develop vicious little seas when the hard running flood becomes weather going.

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# Excusez-moi, est ce que c'est Sangatte?

by Norman Barron

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It had taken us five hours two minutes from the beach in Dover Harbour to the beach at Sangatte, 5km. southwest of Calais. That was the easy bit. Many hours more than that relatively short trip had been spent in planning and organisation. What had started it all was an off-the-cuff remark to my friend and fellow Mirror owner, Lindsay Walker, that crossing the Channel would make a good cruise. But that was two seasons before. We had read in our club newsletter (Seasalter Sailing Club) of a Mirror, (not from Seasalter,) crossing singlehanded in a force 7, but that sounded rather foolhardy to us and we were determined that if our plan got off the ground, or rather, on the water – safety would be the watchword.

In the summer of '74 we had asked around our friends and acquaintances at Seasalter to see if there was anyone else interested in accompanying us. Only one person came forward, headmaster Peter Holiday. He was as enthusiastic as we were and wanted to take his twelve year old son, Angus, as crew. Well, the '74 season finished and we hadn't even got as far as looking at a chart. (We did have a cruise circumnavigating the Isle of Sheppey, though.) Things bucked up early in the '75 season and we had the first of our meetings to discuss possible dates, route, equipment and so on. June 21st seemed a good bet. It was a Saturday, the longest hours of daylight possible, tides were suitable and it was convenient for all of us. It was agreed that we would gauge the reaction of the coastguards at St. Margarets, Dover. They are responsible for that part of the Channel we intended to cross, and in fact, co-ordinate rescue services in conjunction with their counterparts on the French side at Cap Gris Nez (15km. from Calais.) Lindsay and I made a visit to the station where we were made very welcome and given a guided tour. We asked what they

thought of our venture and their reply was cautious but encouraging. "Are you experienced?" "Is your boat safe?" "Is your equipment in good order?" "Can you navigate?" "Would you carry flares?" We could confidently answer "Yes" to all of these.

Fears we had amongst ourselves were weather, i.e. too much wind, no wind at all, fog, failure of rigging, etc. We had already decided that if the forecast was not right – i.e. more than force 5, less than 1-2 or any possibility of poor visibility we would not attempt to cross at all. I think our greatest fear was poor visibility; this we knew could be very frightening and dangerous.

At our second meeting Peter, Lindsay and I pored over the charts of the Straits of Dover, and Lindsay plotted two possible courses. One of these would be used if visibility was not too good and we would be 'buoy hopping,' the other was one straight line from Dover to just outside Calais, (allowing for the tidal drift of course).



It seemed a sensible idea to do a 'recce' before the big day, so Lindsay and I towed my Mirror (27205) to Dover the weekend before the 21st. We set a course for the Varne Lightship (7 knots SSE of Dover). The light is just beyond the 'down lane' of the Dover Strait so we had our first taste of crossing a major sea lane. This in fact is the most difficult part of the crossing in my view, for the lanes can be busy with what seems a continuous stream of large, sometimes very large, commercial shipping. Make no mistake

about it, some of these tankers seen from a level of three feet as in a Mirror Dinghy, appear frightening. There comes the moment when one has to decide – “Can I get safely between these brutes?” The hardest thing is judging their speed and distance, for of course one does not want to be in the position of having to go about or into irons to let it pass. You are very vulnerable in a small boat in mid-channel! Even if one of these monsters has seen you – and it’s entirely possible he hasn’t – he is not going to alter course for you!

As it happens we found a convenient gap to cross at right angles to the lane in safety. A little farther on we circumnavigated the Varne Lightship with a quick wave to one of the men on board and retraced our course in the direction of Dover Harbour. Exciting, rather uneventful but valuable experience in that we calculated our speed over a known distance, got some valuable practice navigating with the chart and compass and saw what it was like ‘out there,’ and we had a timely reminder nearing the harbour entrance of how strong the current is in the Strait.

At our final meeting we pored over the charts yet again, consulted the tide tables, checked each pack of flares, (one for each boat) and agreed the equipment we would take. This consisted of one small light tent, a sleeping bag each, first aid kit for each boat, spare jibs, one spare main, spare shackles, sheets etc., oars, anchors, torch, camera, extra clothing, binoculars, radio, passports, currency, food and drink.

We agreed that no matter how warm it was on the day, we would all wear wetsuits, and of course buoyancy. Coast Guard forms were completed and posted and a system of communication devised for our nearest and dearest to ascertain our arrival (or otherwise) in La Belle France. Long range weather forecast confirmed as good. All set for the off – roll on Saturday.

Peter and Angus breakfasted at home at 4.30 a.m. and then car-topped their Mirror 29063 on their faithful A35 to Dover. Lindsay and I towed his Mirror 13920 to Dover on Friday night and parked along the cliffs overlooking the Channel.

We were awakened by sunlight at 5.30 a.m. to the most marvellous view over the water – even making out super-tankers on

the ‘up lane’ nearest France – visibility couldn’t be better. A quick but substantial breakfast and then a five minute drive to the harbour in beautiful sunshine where we found that Peter and Angus were already there and well on the way with their rigging. Two hours and twenty minutes later we were ready to launch. This is a long time to rig a Mirror by normal standards, but this wasn’t an ordinary journey. Everything was patiently packed for best balance and convenience of fit, and everything, rigging especially, was double and treble checked. Each boat had, of course, been given a thorough going over days before to seek out any possible defects. After parking the cars



and taking some photographs we were off. Time 08.20 precisely.

Wind strength force 4, northerly direction, giving us a very broad reach to a run, just the wind direction we didn't want; however it was steady. Ten minutes later we crossed the bar at the southern harbour entrance. A gentle swell, warm sunshine, a Hovercraft departing, a cruiser on a similar course to us at our stern, various cross-channel ferries going about their business, and nothing else except a lot of water. It seemed no time at all before we'd crossed the 'down' lane then caught sight of the Varne lightship on our starboard bow. Here we took time to check our speed from distance covered – results

showed 4½ knots. Peter and Angus were only 30 yards away and they'd just acquired a non-paying passenger in the form of one young lark atop the mast. He quickly disembarked in favour of us, and as the poor thing was exhausted I fed him some of Lindsay's fruit cake. After a pause to gather his strength he took off again and we often wonder if he ever reached his destination.

We approached the 'up' lane correctly at right angles, and observed a freighter on our starboard quarter. Taking into consideration our relative speeds and other factors such as course direction and wind strength, a quick decision had to be made whether to 'stay on' or 'go about' and let him pass. We decided to 'stay on' and crossed in front of him with sufficient margin of safety.

Shortly after this there was a quick change of weather, becoming overcast, cooler and with an increase of wind, but at the same time we could make out the French coast-line – which at that distance was a line, monotone and grey but gradually taking on some shape. I made a hasty check with the chart to see if any marks were identifiable but we were too far away. Then Peter informed us in no uncertain terms that we were too far down the coast from Calais. There were a few muttered oaths and we made a quick change of course to port which put us on a close reach. With the wind strengthening and a greater swell we were taking water over the side. By now I was frantically bailing, attempting to lean out and pathetically trying to see the coast through binoculars. The latter was a complete waste of time, as on such a small boat the swell is moving it up and down through such an angle that it is difficult to focus on the horizon at all. So I repacked the binoculars and continued bailing, keeping a constant check on Peter's position while Lindsay pointed us up the coast towards Calais. I'm not usually seasick in a Mirror but I couldn't hold back any longer, and having some respect for Mr. Walker's boat I used the hand bailer! About fifteen minutes more on this course brought us close enough to the coast to identify shapes of cliffs and what looked like a radio beacon. The chart showed a corresponding picture so we had an accurate idea where we were, approximately 3 miles or, more appropriately 5km, from the village



of Sangatte, which has plenty of sandy beach.

As we neared the shore the church spire was visible and gradually buildings became more distinct and even a few people could be seen on the beach. I suggested that we should land at Sangatte, slightly further from Calais than we originally intended, and gave arm-waving signals to Peter to inform him of this.

The waves breaking on the shore made it impossible to land without being swamped, but seconds later we were over the side on terra firma and Peter landed a few yards away directly after us. Congratulations all round, especially to young Angus who had been a magnificent crew far in excess of his years, then I offered to go up the beach to confirm our location. In my truly awful French I asked the first person I met whether this was Sangatte. I was alarmed to hear the reply come back in a Belgian accent! But no, Mr. Walker's navigation was spot on and the gentleman was, like us, visiting Sangatte. The next ten minutes were spent carrying the boats up the beach and hanging the sleeping bags, clothing, etc. up to dry between the Mirrors. (Useful little boats).

Peter and Angus had done the sensible thing and had eaten on the journey. We hadn't and were starving, so voraciously tucked into salt-water flavoured sandwiches, channel flavoured cake, salted chocolate and peanuts marinated in brine. At least the beer was uncontaminated, thank God.

After eating, an attempt to rig the tent on the beach without much success. Decided to have a go later but in the meantime called the coastguard at Cap Gris Nez to inform him of our safe arrival. We all wanted to go to Calais but by what method? Bus, of course, except that, contrary to what the locals told us, the last one went an hour before, so up went the thumbs of four foreigners in a motley collection of garb. The third car to pass us came to an abrupt halt and ten minutes later we were in a Calais bar enjoying a welcome drink and writing the obligatory postcards. A friend had recommended a restaurant whose speciality was, of course, seafood. The meal, eaten at a leisurely pace and washed down with a carafe of vin ordinaire gave us an opportunity to converse on a variety of topics, not least the possibility

of worsening weather the next day. (It was now pouring outside).

After sleeping on hay in an open barn (the tent didn't stay up), we awoke the next morning to find our worst fears realised – rain lashing down and thunderous grey seas. An early call to Cap Gris Nez told us that there was a force 7-8 and the probability of worsening on the following day. Over breakfast in the local bar we all came to the only sensible conclusion, i.e. return with the boats by ferry. So we commandeered the telephone to organize transport for the boats to Calais.

Just before noon we were in the docks at Calais only to discover that we hadn't quite enough currency for the fare for us and the boats. (The ferry companies reckoned that each Mirror should be charged on the equivalent car length). Unfortunately neither the AA, Sealink or Townsend were any help on that score – no money, no tickets. In no way were they prepared to help or make any kind of constructive suggestions. While Peter and I were trying to get some sense out of these obstreperous (French) representatives, Lindsay and Angus found the English owners of two Enterprises who, surprise, surprise, had also sailed the channel the day before. With unhesitating generosity they offered to loan us the extra cash we needed for the fare and then we helped each other to carry the boats from one end of the docks to the other ready for embarkation.

After all the TIR lorries and cars had been loaded we were allowed to run down into the hold with the boats.

Our Enterprise friends had seen us leave Dover harbour on the Saturday, but they had sailed into Calais harbour in less than four hours. Like us they had come to the same reluctant decision and decided to return by ferry. Swopping respective stories on the voyage, Lindsay's absence was noticed. It turned out that he had been to see the captian who had very kindly arranged to have our boats taken off by fork-lift truck at Dover. The homeward journey was rather quicker than the outward (and more expensive) but a lot less exciting, plus we had to take the ribbing of the ferry's crew for not sailing back.

However, next time we hope to manage it both ways.

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# Crystal Palace or bust

by Peter Thomas

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I always think that there's more to sailing than just doing it. The curate of our local church bears this out, too embarrassed to tell his new bride he was to lecture the Women's Institute on sex, he told her the topic was sailing. A week later his wife met the Chairwoman of the W.I. out shopping, and asked how the lecture had gone. "Well," said the lady, "he was nervous at first, but soon regained his composure." "I'm not surprised" confided the wife, "between you and me, he's only tried it twice — the first time he was sick, and the second time he nearly blew his hat off!" But I digress. The next best thing to fiddling with your boat is seeing how other people have fiddled with theirs, so Martin, Brian and I planned a trip to the Big City to take in the Crystal Palace Show.

Like all good plans, it was modified extensively. First the wives found out that the Ideal Home Exhibition was on at the same time at Olympia, and that's on the way, isn't it? So the entourage was enlarged to two cars. Sally was kindly bringing a battered Mirror to C.P. for us to collect, and a boat trailer was added on. Fond grandparents blissfully awaiting Mother's Day cards were shaken to have off-spring dumped on them instead. ("A special treat Mum — must dash!")

The M4 was crawling with the fuzz, all trying to snap up week-end speeders. Jaguars, M.G.s and even Transits were going up and down the slip roads like jam-buttery Yo-Yo's. More annoying were the prices in the Service Area Cafeteria. I can see why the cutlery is largely plastic; anyone having to pay 56p for two coffees, a small pie and a slice of cake would feel justified in nicking real stuff in retaliation. We were clearly approaching the Big City and a smart look-out for streakers began.

At Olympia, everybody and his dog were queueing to get in the place. We circled to find somewhere to dump Brian's Escort, but couldn't find anywhere. All we could find

were yellow lines, police no-parking signs, police, coaches and 'car park full' notices, and police. We simple West Country folk are just not geared into this scene at all. Selecting a likely corner liberally sprinkled with a fair selection of the aforementioned impedimenta, we parked, whipped the trailer off the back, and removed one of it's wheels.

A car park attendant descended on us. "Wassamattergotbovveravyuh" he intoned. Martin and I looked at one another, a communication gap had opened up — was this native suggesting we were in some kind of distress? We pointed to the innocent, fully inflated tyre lying in the road and glared at him. "Punchureinitchief!" he said brightly, and departed. We looked grave and fiddled about for about 15 minutes with spanners, nuts, grease and spare wheels, while the fuzz tried to work out what our game was. Brian reappeared, having apparently joined some residents association unasked, and parked in a side street. In one minute the wheel, now polished and greaseless, was on, and we, dirty and greased up, were in the car and off. Meanwhile, the girls had discovered that you can get into Olympia via the Tube Station, without having to queue out in the cold, and only get searched for bombs once, although I gather the bloke doing the searching was so efficient, they were tempted to go round again.

Serious navigation now began, only to be foiled by a solid looking copper who was adamant we could not go where we wanted, we must go where he said. The first likely looking road going south appeared . . . and we dived into it. Now we have street markets down our way in such centres of population as Chipping Sodbury, but we don't stuff them down little side streets like they do in London. People carrying all manner of things dodged around the car, and, turning to regale us with centuries-old London street cries, collected the trailer. We escaped in the direction of Wandsworth Bridge. Now at Keynes Park S.C. we are but a couple of miles from the source of the Thames at Cirencester. There you can take pictures of your young'uns standing astride a sparkling clear brook. We looked down to the turgid mass of grey soup. "They've let the whole thing get out of control" said Brian sadly.

Martin, a man who can boast a cupboard full of trophies awarded for prowess at rally navigation and advanced needlework, announced that the duel carriageway we had just joined did not exist, as it was not marked on his A-to-Z of London. As it was priced 2/6d, and exhorted the reader to buy Bonds for Victory it was hardly surprising. We crawled the last mile to Crystal Palace, being repeatedly passed by the same pedestrian, who infuriated us by doing his shopping and starting back just when we thought we were gaining on him.

At the National Sports Centre, the Car Park attendant was harbouring this quaint idea that we should pay him to park about a mile from the exhibition. Clearly the communication gap had yawned again. Repeated pointing at the trailer and making boat shape gestures in the air saw us wound up in the Exhibitors' Car Park parked beside Sally's Viva, complete with sorry looking Mirror on the roof-rack. Brian stuck a yellow thing on the windscreen "All the other cars have one" he explained. "I just found one for us." Walking into the Crystal Palace after 6 hours of various endeavour seemed a massive anticlimax.

We began to marvel, wonder and listen as we circulated around. At the International 14 Stand we were thrilled to hear that Jeremy was going to be at Burnham next week with Adrian and Nigel. Clearly this was all very 'in'. We hoped to be at Nempnett Thrubwell next week for the ferret wrestling, but this event did not hold the same significance. We escaped to the sanity of the Mirror stand, only to be downcast at the glossy finish on the boat 'Leo'. David Whittock obviously doesn't sail on a gravel pit; I can just imagine the reply we'd get to a request to the crew to jump out into waist deep 'oggin to save the paint! But what a fantastic job he's made of that boat! Talking of fantastic work brings us to our Star exhibit stand, the Hornet Class. Their Association offers not only the mundane ties, cuff-links and 'T' shirts, but also ladies bikini panties decorated with lace and the Hornet insignia! What about it, Sally! Mirror knickers for the masses! Just the thing for an emergency protest flag, or to summon the lifeboat in a hurry.

After watching depressingly expert kids cavorting on the fibre-glass spring boards of

the pool, and a pair of films, during which the projectionist received more applause when he belatedly got the film in focus than when it finished, and munching the cooked cardboard fare available, it was time to start back to Bristol.

Our overall impression was very favourable, how nice to see well varnished wooden boats, sensibly equipped, without having to fight through a welter of motors, gin palaces, and potted palms. How great to talk to people who know their subject, and have genuine enthusiasm. One moan only. Who really has more than a passing interest in the Club stands unless you live nearby? If the Yachting Press can sell their wares, why not allow a couple of good chandlers to set up shop, and filter off a percentage of their take for BOYA or similar good cause? I know it cuts across the spirit of the event, but you could then buy the goodies to copy that good idea on another class boat while the thing is still fresh in the mind. We'll come again, even though London is so bewildering to us simple country folk.



# Three days in Poole Harbour

by Patrick Beatt and Mark Hayter

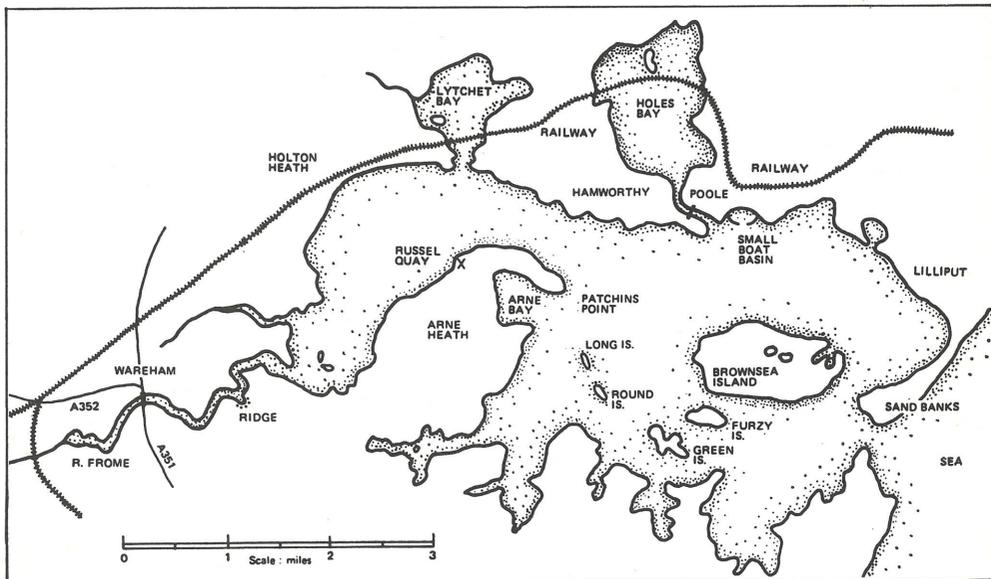
On 7th August, after weeks of thought and preparation, an idea, born in April, was finally put into practice. After three seasons of sailing *Mirror* 38264, daycruising and racing in Weymouth Bay, we decided it was time to try something more ambitious, such as a few days cruising and camping at nearby Poole Harbour.

Poole Harbour is the huge estuary of the River Frome in Dorset. It has over 100 miles of coastline. To the north and east are the towns of Poole, with a commercial port, Lilliput and Sandbanks. To the south and west the shores are mainly wild heath land with isolated farms. A phenomenon of this area is that, due to the shape of the Isle of Wight, there are four high tides in each day. We found this very useful.

We had plenty of experience in sailing but this was to be something quite different. We are both sixteen and have a little knowledge of camping but had never been on our own before. Our chart was a one inch

map of the area. We used the radio weather forecast before going but were not too worried about high winds or rain, being in sheltered water, close to land. We carried a polythene wrapped tent a two gallon water container, a wetsuit and oilskins lashed in the cockpit. These were arranged so the crew could lie over them comfortably, while the helmsman had a clear space aft. Two sleeping bags, wrapped in polythene were carried on the foredeck, lashed to the mast. The remaining equipment such as a gaz stove and food was carried in the storage compartments, peanuts and chocolate were kept available while sailing, and had the weather been colder we would have had a flask of coffee as well. We took a large variety of vegetables including half cooked potatoes for frying. Fresh fruit was taken in preference to tinned, we drank coffee with each meal. We used about two gallons of water, in an evening and morning, for washing and drinking. Our container was filled at a public tap in Poole each time we called there.

On Thursday 7th August we arrived at Ridge Yacht Marina on the River Frome where we unloaded, rigged and packed the boat in preparation for launching. At 16.00 hours we launched and set sail down the river. The tide had begun to ebb and so we made a fast passage down the 1½



miles of river. The river is about 30 feet wide and closed in by high reed banks which cut off most of the wind. When we sailed out into the harbour the mud flats were exposed on each side of the channel and we could make better progress. We followed the channel markers for about two miles before heading into a campsite which had been recommended to us. Russel Quay which is, in fact, just a curving beach, is a solitary spot on the edge of the heath, the only connection with the civilisation being a rough stone track, used occasionally by fishermen.

We set up camp above a sandy beach on some grass at the foot of a high, steep bank covered in ferns and heather. This was to be our home for three nights. After spending some time exploring, we cooked supper and went for a short row in the dusk. On returning we pulled the boat up on the beach and tied her with a long warp to a large boulder at the top of the beach.

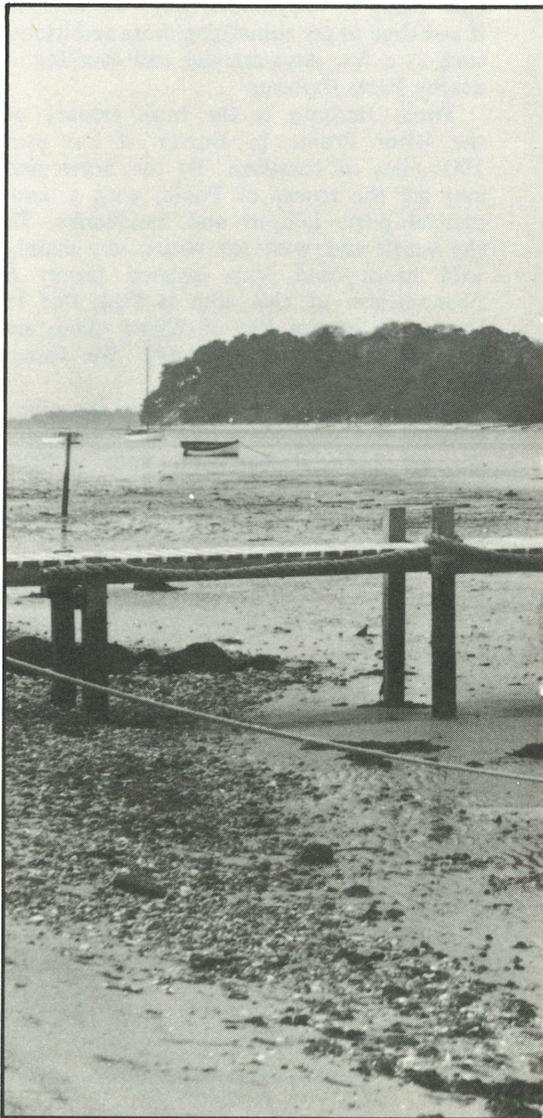
The following morning we were up at 6.30 hours and sailed at 9.00 hours, we sailed along the coast to Arne Bay which we explored for a short time before circumnavigating Long Island and Round Island. On the way the centre board struck a rock under water, stopping us violently and cutting out a small lump of wood from the leading corner. Fortunately this was not very serious and we were soon on our way. We laid a course for Poole commercial port and arrived off the small boat basin at 12.00 hours. We went in and found an empty berth near the lifeboat station where we came alongside and left the boat for three hours at no cost while we bought some food, collected water and sent postcards.

We sailed at 15.00 hours and rounded the west end of Brownsea Island with the crew helming for a change. While running past Furzy Island with the centre board up, the bow wave began to build up on each side. We realised what was happening too late as we sailed onto a submerged mud bank and came to a sudden stop! A combined effort with the oars was needed to get moving again which we soon achieved. By 16.00 hours we were sailing fast on a broad reach, first back to Arne Bay, then past Patchins Point and finally landing at Russel Quay at 16.45 hours.

The sky clouded over after supper and

after double tying the boat and supporting her with fenders we retired to the tent to watch a vivid thunder storm which lasted over an hour. It was almost directly overhead and was spectacular with heavy rain lasting most of the hour. When the storm finally ended we bailed the boat and checked the tent before going to bed.

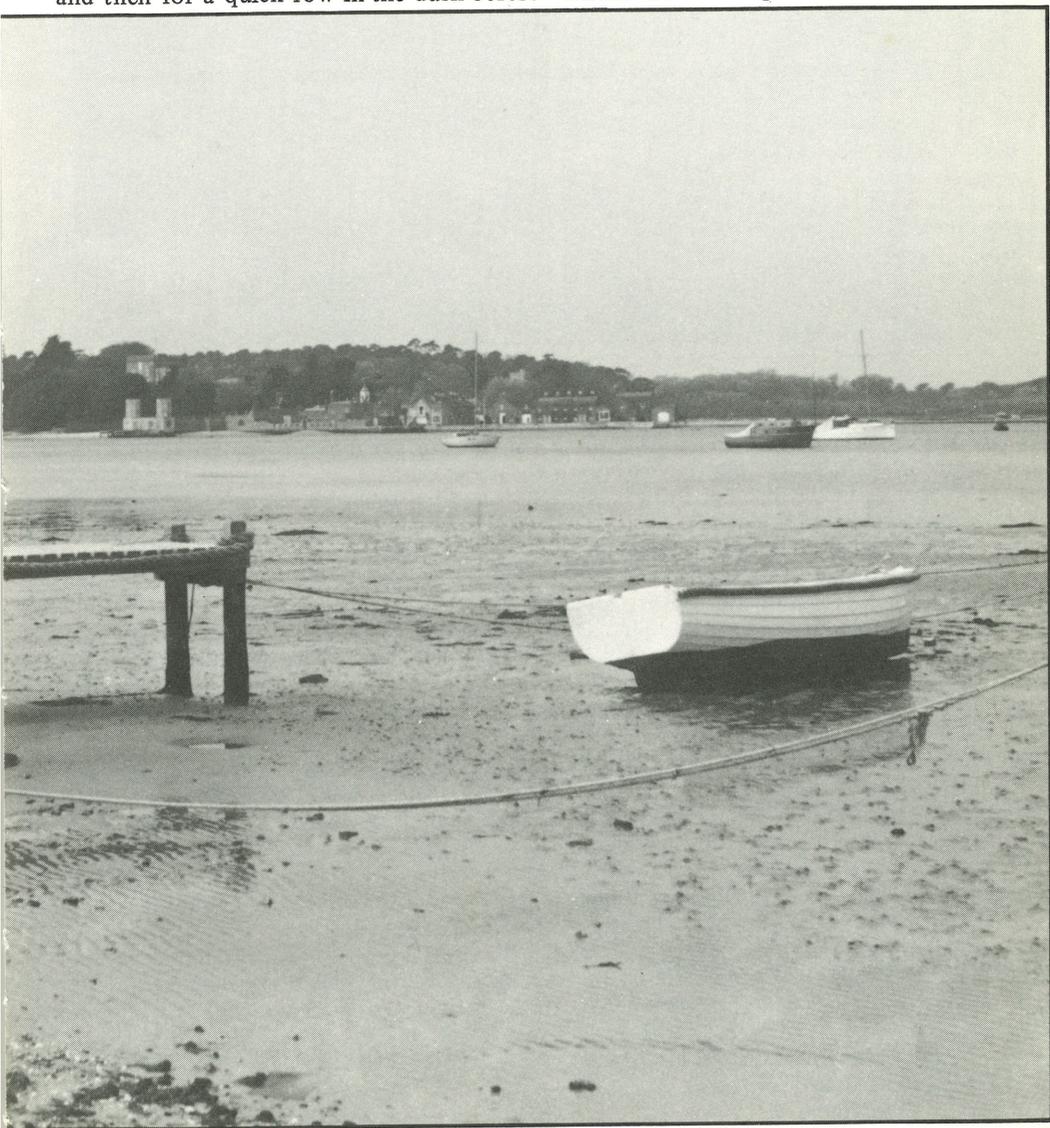
On Saturday morning we woke at 8.00 hours but managed to sail by 9.30 hours. We laid a direct course for Poole and landed to buy some food and fill the water con-



tainer. We then sailed for Sandbanks. While passing we sailed through the narrow entrance and out into the open sea for a few minutes before returning and heading east along the south coast at Brownsea Island where we stopped for lunch at a pier. During the afternoon we sailed back into Arne Bay and finally returned to Russel Quay at 16.00 hours. We set up camp and had a good swim in the warm water before supper. After supper we went for a few miles walk on the heath and then for a quick row in the dusk before

going to bed.

We were to be picked up at Wareham at 15.00 hours on Sunday which meant an early start to use the tide up river, a journey of about five miles. We sailed at 8.45 hours. At about 9.00 hours a large silvery fish jumped, hitting Mark, who was sitting out, before falling back. I remember hearing about a similar fish jumping over a friend's canoe in Poole Harbour, perhaps there is some connection! We had to tack, which meant we went aground on the mud at the





end of most tacks until we reached the actual river where it was easier sailing. We were passed by a few other boats using the tide. After passing Ridge Marina we saw another Mirror and exchanged greetings with her all female crew!

At 11.00 hours we arrived at Wareham, a popular little town with a busy quay, a restaurant beside the water and a graceful three arched bridge. We were quite pleased with the time of our passage in unfamiliar water. As there was no room alongside the quay we lowered the sails and mast before rowing under the bridge to explore up the river which is little used and winds through water meadows. We ate our lunch here before returning through the bridge where we rehoisted the mast and sails to spend an hour sailing up and down a quiet reach between reed beds. On returning we found a place at the quay and removed the sails, spars and emptied the boat, piling up the equipment at the edge of the car park by the quay. The car arrived and was loaded. We then rowed under the bridge to a slipway where the boat was pulled out on her trolley and lifted onto the roofrack. We left Wareham at 15.00 hours.

We found that during the holiday we had travelled about forty miles by water and had learnt a lot about a new type of sailing. We very quickly learnt to take advantage of the tides, not to fight against them, and to take immediate action on running aground. We calculated that the overall cost of the holiday came to about £4.00 including launching fees and petrol used in travelling.

To anyone planning a similar trip I would strongly recommend taking some long warps, a good anchor, fenders, oilskins and possibly wetsuits. On running aground, as you undoubtedly will, do not hesitate to grab oars or a jib boom and push hard using the jib to pull her head round and if necessary even jumping in to push off. The mud will only be a few feet deep with stones underneath. Also very important, get some tide tables and some sort of chart which should be used as often as possible.

Finally our thanks are due to our respective parents, without whom nothing could have been done and to various friends who gave advice and recommendations. We both enjoyed the holiday immensely and if this is of any use to anyone planning a similar holiday we will have achieved even more.