

Founder



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# Bobcat & Catalac Cruising Association



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## May & June 2004

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**Dear Friends**

*I am sorry that I did not have the time to telephone all of you, especially as your friendship has meant so much to the family over the years. I trust you will understand and forgive me.*

*It is with great regret that, on behalf of my brothers and their wives, I have to inform you that our dear Father, Tom, passed away in the early hours of Sunday 25<sup>th</sup> April.*

*Father's quality of life has slowly deteriorated over the years since Mary's death, and in some respects I believe he was rather lost without his dear wife. Father has struggled with diabetes and prostate cancer, but in the end it was a combination of pneumonia, failing kidneys and a weak heart rhythm that took him away.*

*Father lost consciousness on a glorious Saturday afternoon, sat upstairs in his sunroom, overlooking the beauty and tranquility of his beloved Mudeford Harbour, comfortable in his own home and surrounded by so many wonderful memories. There are Catalacs in the garden and on the moorings, dinghies sailing in the harbour, and pictures of Mary and the boys on the walls.*

*He was genuinely at peace with the world, and who could ask for more ?*

*Father was conscious in hospital when the nearest family members went to visit.*

*They said he was lucid, but 'distracted' (probably trying to decide which of the nurses to chat-up next) and said goodbye to them all. My Father never missed a trick in his life and I suspect he knew they were his last goodbyes.*

*Father was conscious in hospital when the nearest family members went to visit.*

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*What a brave and wonderful man.*

*We will be holding the usual service at Mudeford Church at the appropriate time.  
In accordance with his wishes, his ashes will be scattered in Christchurch Bay, with those of his  
Dear wife, so they will be together again.*

*Those wishing to attend the Service, please notify me by e-mail or to my mobile phone number.  
The family have agreed that, rather than flowers, we would be happy to receive any donations  
for the Mudeford RNLI Lifeboat as a fitting way to mark the end of this mariner's eventful life.*

*Once again, a thousand thanks for all you have done to support our family, and for making  
Tom's and our lives so rich with your friendship.*

*On behalf of the Lack family,*

*Bruce*

The BCCA members wish to convey their deepest sympathies to the Lack Family

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## **Tom Lack**

30<sup>th</sup>. August 1925 - 25<sup>th</sup>. April 2004

An innovator, a party animal, a risk taker and a fun lover. Tom Lack was the centre of attention at most 'get togethers' and wherever he went he made people smile. Referred to as a 'proper handfull' Tom enjoyed his life.

Born to Stewart and Joan Lack at Weston Super Mare, Tom was less than five years old when he was carted halfway round the world so that his father could help set up a telegraph communication network from Hong Kong to China.

School years found Tom returning to England's South coast at Dregham Castle, Hordle and Claysmore before graduating to Stowe at the onset of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World war. Tom, upon his own admission, excelled at 'rugger' and cricket, rather than in the classroom! He later captained the fleet Air Arm rugby team, having joined up in the latter years of the war.

At the beginning of his working life, Tom gained experience of farming in the apple and hop orchards in Herefordshire, where he was aided by Italian POWs. After a short spell in the Palestine Police Force, 1946-48, where he dreamed of cultivating the deserts, Tom returned to England's green and pleasant land, and bought a horticultural nursery in Winkfield Row, Berkshire, where he conceived the idea of cleaning, preparing and prepacking vegetables. The Lacpac was born (possibly 30 years too early for the English Market). Self-service and mobile shops were soon to follow, and during this heyday he met and married Daphne Mary Holman, with whom he fathered five sons, John, Peter, William, Bruce and Tony.

By 1960 Tom sought a new challenge having moved back to his childhood home on the South Coast. With a colleague from Hawker Sidley he formed Bill O'Brien Ltd. A company that designed, built and sold one of the first 'live aboard' cruising catamarans in the world. Bobcats were soon sailing globally.

He often took his family on a sailing holiday to ensure they lived up to their name as family boats.

The advent of glass reinforced plastic (fiberglass) meant that designs had to move on, and in 1969 a new era in Tom's life saw the first 9 meter Catalac extracted from it's mould.

Tom Lack catamarans was born.

During the following decade Tom Lack Catamarans was a leading light in the United Kingdom boat building industry and won several awards for export and innovation. He even set up Tom Lack Yacht Services, a marine engineering company, to ensure all those who bought the Catalac had full after sales service.

Sadly Tom suffered a near fatal road accident in his home town of Christchurch, in December 1983, and his energies were never quite the same again. He elected to retire early and Tom Lack Catamarans' boatyard soon made way for a riverside housing complex.

Tom was also an avid photographer and as a consequence his life is well documented in excellent pictures to ensure he will not be forgotten. Still adorning walls of local estate agents, banks and the London Embassy are Tom's excellent depictions of scenes local and foreign.

However, possibly Tom's lasting legacy is in his infectious smile and bonhomie that touched the many lives who met him, especially his five sons, their wives and partners and the twelve grandchildren, who survive him.

Just a couple of years after the loss of his wife Mary, Tom passed away in Bournemouth Hospital. But not before giving his customary smile, 'thumbs up' and a hearty cheerio to those at his bedside.

We will miss him.

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*'Tom and Mary' in mind we look back to 1966 the first Bobcat Rally written by Roy Powell.*

### **Two Bobcats to Brittany === (or no problem at all)**

As we first read "Two Bobcats to Brittany" we thought- what fun! But as we thought about it again we realized here was an account of an achievement that marks 1966 as a year that should be remembered in yachting history. To get the full significance of the achievement you must go back a bit.

"gallia in tres partes divisa est" wrote Caesar--- or so we learnt in the fourth form—but at that age it was just an unpleasant chore to be "swotted up" or get the cane from the Latin master. It made little sense to be told that France, when Caesar conquered it, just over 2000 years ago (in B.C. 48). Was inhabited by three different races and the fact that the "Romans" held on to France for 500 years seems all so long ago that it is difficult to get into focus.

During their stay in France, the Romans were so impressed by Mont Saint Michel, Mount Jove they called it then, that they built a temple there.

But there was constant guerilla warfare by the Frankish barbarians from A.D. 250 and local skirmishes until the Franks, Goths and Romans united to defeat Attila, King of the invading Huns in A.D.451. By A.D. 486, Clovis, King of the Franks, had defeated the Romans at Soissons and soon acquired the Kingdom of Burgundy, united the Frankish tribes and completed the conquest of Gaul by the French. Charlemange was King of the united France from A.D. 768—814, but on his death Norsemen invaded by the sea and took large areas. Charles 111, of France, put an end to the invasions, but ceded Normandy to Duke Rollo in A.D. 911. During this time Mont Saint Michel was used as a sanctuary by Christian hermits, but in the 8<sup>th</sup> century Bishop Aubert, of Avranches, had a vision in which he was commanded by St. Michel to build a church on the formidable rock. In A.D. 966, Abbot Hildebert started to design the present buiding, and in that year some three dozen Benadictine Monks came from Monte Cassino in Italy to found the monastery and build the Abbey which was started in A.D. 1020.

For 500 years succeeding generations of monks continued the building and it is for this reason that the architectural styles seem to grow from round arched Romanesque at the base to the most inspired and flamboyant Gothic as it rises to a final eagle-crested spire. The Mount has resisted many sieges and disasters. In 1203, the people of Brittany set fire to the town below and the Abbey was also burned. English invaders attacked and were repulsed in a bloody battle and two cannons captured at the time from the British are still on show.

Huguenots attacked in 1591, but were beaten off. The history of this famous Abbey has understandably been the subject of many books, but one thing must be understood to appreciate how impregnable it is. As you can see from the chart there is an area 30 square miles that is dry at low tide, yet when the tide is high it rises over 50ft. in depth. To witness this tidal invasion, which takes place at breath taking speed, is to understand why neither archer of long ago, nor ordinary boat even today, could reach the Mount and survive for long. It is appropriate then that in 1956 the 1000 year celebration were commenced by the return of a group of Benadictine Monks, and on 29<sup>th</sup> September, St. Michel's feast day was celebrated with special ceremony. During this millennium celebration year, the usual 500,000 visitors increased to nearly a million, but it took Powell's formidable task force, under the command of Tom Lack to achieve what no other "invader" has ever before achieved.

Anyone who has dreamt since boyhood of owning a boat would regard this holiday as an achievement of a lifelong ambition.

During the Bobcat Association Meeting at the 1966 Boat show, we had discussed the possibility of a rally for Bobcats in the summer holidays, and after much organization, five 8 meters assembled in Christchurch harbour on Saturday, 28<sup>th</sup> July, for the crossing to Cherbourg. My boat, Seamew of Christchurch, was crewed by my daughter Dawn, and friend Brian, and we were to be very thankful on many occasions to have our complement reinforced by Mary Lack and one of the boys, usually Bruce, aged 12, Mary's knowledge of the capabilities of an 8 meter Bobcat and all aspects of seamanship was wonderful in anyone - let alone a woman of no great stature. One of her credentials was to have produced five tough boys, each of which was an efficient crew member for any Boat. We had arranged that, after the rally we should spend the rest of August in company with "Ginger Tom 11", owned by Tom and Mary. "Ginger Tom 11" was crewed by four of their five young sons and Vi Deane, a great friend of the family.

### **Take plenty of butter**

I had been soundly advised by several Bobcat owners as to the choice of food to take to France, and Dawn and Brian had thoroughly provisioned Seamew and stowed away vast Quantities of food, so that we were never short throughout the holiday. Butter is very dear in France, so many pounds were laid down on the water tanks to keep cool. Long life milk, packed by Express Dairies, is a great discovery.

An unfavorable weather forecast held us up for 24hours to the delight of William Lack who had prayed for this, so he could watch England v Germany in final of the World football Cup on television. So after all William's prayer was answered—a good omen for the holiday.

The weather report from Hurn Airport was force 5-6 N.W. so we decided to make an early start on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> at 06.15 hours, having reefed the main, we set off, but soon found light airs, so shook out the reefs. It was interesting to note, as we sailed across the Channel, where the shipping lanes lay—there was one at 17 miles out, another 25 miles. The visibility was exceptional and we could see the Isle of Wight until we logged 31 miles, just about half way across. We kept contact hourly with Ginger Tom on the walkie-talkie which, apart from being very useful, provided a lot of fun. Another shipping lane was crossed when we logged 42 miles and I thought how useful this information might prove if we were caught in fog on any future trip to Cherbourg.

### **France sighted**

At last, France sighted at log reading 44. total distance traveled 66 miles in 11 hours.

Our engine failed to start as we entered Cherbourg Harbour, but Mary sailed us beautifully into the Petite Rade, where we dropped anchor near the beach alongside the entrance to the Bassin du Commerce where the yacht moorings are situated.

Next evening the Vice-President of the Cherbourg Yacht Club was entertained aboard 'Gemini and Octopussy' and this provided an excellent opportunity for the crews of the other Bobcats, 'Le chat Qui Rit and Lulubelle', the latter having joined us after sailing direct from Yarmouth, to foregather. It was gratifying that plans made so long before resulted in 28 of us assembling on two Bobcats, to celebrate our first continental rally. On Tuesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> August we sailed to Braye Harbour, Alderney, which we made at 14.00 hours, a 4-5 hour sail.

During our enforced stay, owing to adverse weather conditions, we had some quite strenuous walks around this island which is ringed with forts a veritable Gibraltar of the Channel. Each day we climbed to a vantage point to inspect conditions in the Swinge, by which channel we thought we might leave, but decided that, with winds force 6, the prospect did not look at all inviting. We decided to make a passage through the Alderney race instead - under the lee of the island. We had intended to make St. Peter Port, Guernsey our next port of call, but the westerly wind favoured Jersey. Leaving at 13.00 hours we made St. Hellier 39.3 miles by 19.00 hours. We met some heavy seas on this passage, especially over the Rigdon Bank off Cap Grossnez, where 'Ginger Tom' narrowly missed losing her dinghy overboard. We had no mishap apart from carrying away three jib piston hanks. Considering the seas we were glad to average 6.5 knots. At St. Hellier we moored alongside a French yacht from Granville in the outer harbour, but later moved into the yacht basin which dries out. The range of tide here is 40ft. The bottom consists of mud with many large stones and we had a few moments anxiety when taking the ground, with the attendant sound of grinding of hulls, but no damage ensued.

We left on Sunday, 8<sup>th</sup> August, an hour after high water, having reefed down three turns - wind force 4-5, thus reefed we found our reduced speed compensated for 'Ginger Tom's' heavier load. Course 215 heading for N.W. Minqueiers have an awesome ring. Being the scene of countless wrecks. The rocks occupy an area larger than Jersey and only about a dozen of them remain uncovered - they are British Sovereign Territory! We rounded the bouy after 2 hours sailing log 14.8 and an hour later passed the S.W. Minqueiers bouy, log 21.5 averaging 7 knots under reefed main, which was quite satisfying.

Cap Frehel abeam after 4.5 hours, sailing course 145.

We are now approaching St. Malo and between Ile Cezembre and Grand Jardin lighthouse the wind dropped and the engine failed to start. As we had a 3knot cross tide we signaled 'Ginger Tom' on the walkie-talkie, having waved a white pullover to attract their attention. As we were on the same wavelength we heard the French coastguard communicating on radio to the effect that the yacht off Ile Cezembre was signaling and might be in trouble. It was reassuring to note their vigilance. Meanwhile a change of plugs resulted in the engine starting up - what a relief. We picked up moorings outside the lock at St. Malo after 6.5 hours sailing - log 41, and shortly afterwards we entered the lock and proceeded to the basin.

It was a pleasant to arrive here, especially as my wife, Muriel, and small son, Andrew, were waiting to greet us. We found that the Portland weather forecasts were not accurate enough for us in this area, so we used French M.T.O. (pronounced May Tay Oh) also Jersey Radio. Here we met up with 'Octopussy' once again and learnt with interest of their trip to Guernsey.

Next day we lowered our masts preparatory to journeying up the River Rance to Dinan, there being a 12ft. bridge at Le Chatelier. We missed some good sailing above the Barrage.

On 10<sup>th</sup> August we locked out of St Malo and in an hour we locked in at the Barrage, which has been built across the Estuary to harness the tides to produce electricity. We were thrilled to meet yet another Bobcat 'Katiki', owned by the Traffords from Topsham, the three of us motored up in convoy to Dinan. On going through Le Chatelier, Tom's French proved to be most effective as we had omitted to obtain a "Permis du Circulation" which is a necessary document for using the inland waterways of France. He appeared to convince the lock keeper that the one permis produced by the Traffords was for the three boats! On the way up we were enchanted by the views on both sides of this beautiful estuary and we were quite sorry when our 3.5 hour trip was over.

I have a friend living in the Chateau de la Motte Olivet nearby, and the twelve of us were invited to visit him. The boys were able to stretch their legs in the grounds and explore the chateau and to savour the delicious French patisseries charmingly served by Natalie, my friend's 18 year old daughter. As our host was explaining the history of his beautiful home we were amused at the boys' reactions. When they were told that they were sitting on Louis XIV chairs they immediately stood up, when they realized the glasses containing their cordial were 200 years old - they promptly put them down. It was quite a relief for them to escape to the spacious grounds and run off their energy.

Next day we moved up with one of the boats as far as the next lock at Lahon, where we visited a ruined abbey of great beauty - then back to Dinan, where all twelve of us lunched together in the cockpit of 'Ginger Tom' absorbing French wine and the Breton sunshine. During our stay, we visited the ancient fortress city of Dinan, which has great medieval charm and where we laid in a stock of wine which we purchased from an old family retainer of my friend at La Motte, each litre bottle cost 2frs.55 including 35 centimes for the bottles! (15 pence English). On the 12<sup>th</sup>, my friend, Monsieur M. du Halgouet, came aboard and we made the return journey down the Rance. He was enthralled by this trip on an English catamaran down his own River Rance - A trip he had never done before although brought up almost on it's banks. We enjoyed swimming and taking photographs on the way. Once through the Barrage, we had to wait for the lock at St. Malo, so we went up by motor to within 100yds. of the beach at Dinard and spent a few hours swimming. What a wonderful thing it is to be able to drop anchor and swim in so many delightful spots only accessible to shallow draft craft and incidentally to see what an interest is taken everywhere in our Bobcats.

13<sup>th</sup> August we left St. Malo under sail for Concale, where we anchored just off the fishing harbour, having carefully avoided extensive oyster beds, the only evidence of which are withies sticking out of the water in an irregular pattern. We found it rather bumpy alongside 'Ginger Tom' in the night so we moved outside the Mole in the morning and dried out on a stony muddy bottom. Muriel joined us here for the next part of our journey so we were twelve. As we approached the beach at Cancale, we saw gaily coloured red and yellow squares on the beach, which turned out to be table cloths from the cafes which were laid out to dry, pinned down by stones at the corners. Oyster storage tanks lined the beach, presided over by vast Mesdames with caps on heads and huge yellow oilskin aprons surrounding their ample persons. All had wrinkled, friendly, weather beaten faces. Further up the beach, an interesting contrast was supplied by the lace makers, using the time between selling their wares, for crocheting replacements at incredible speed. They wore long red dresses with black fringed shawls and had tall cylindrical lace head dresses atop their elegant coiffures. All this local colour, as you can imagine, provided endless scope for our amateur camera men. The oysters some liked them some did not but how painless at 50p. per dozen it's quite painless to find out. If you liked them, washed down with Muscadet - Oh Boy!! Oh Boy!!

14<sup>th</sup> August. You may be wondering why I headed this story, no problem no problem at all \_\_ so now I will tell you. Tom, our intrepid commodore, used this expression when anything looked most difficult, if not impossible, to me, and this was to be one of those occasions. We were to sail to Mont St. Michel and I had read Adlard Coles' account of a trip there, reputed to have been made by a Jersey Yachtsman some time in the past, which referred to quicksands that could suck a yacht down, never to be seen again, and other gruesome possibilities. I had told a Concale fisherman that we were about to sail there and he

said "It's impossible, the tides are so strong and the waves so great it would be too dangerous—nobody ever goes there". Obviously there were problems, even for Tom, but it was nice to have his reassurance that nothing is insuperable. On this journey Bruce aged 12, decided to spend a couple of hours in the galley cleaning and polishing, ending up by completely taking the oven to pieces and cleaning every part, what a boy!

### **First Yacht ever!**

17.20 hours, we altered course to sail between Tombelaine and Mont St. Michel until we picked up some black bouys. The tide goes out six miles in this area and we anxiously watching the echo sounder which in places often dropped below 2ft. As the transducer is placed a foot below the water level it meant we were in 3ft. of water with still 2 miles to go. We inched over the sand and dropped anchor 25 yds. From the car park at Mont St. Michel. To meet us came Monsieur Picherelle, a member of the lifeboat crew, who seeing us approach, had donned his peaked cap, to see the first, according to him, he had ever seen at Mont St. Michel. He pointed to a white bouy which he said had been put down by a St. Malo yachtsman years ago, but it had never been used, inviting us to pick it up, which I did Tom dropping anchor close at hand. Monsieur Picherelle said how appropriate it was that two British yachtsman had visited Mont St. Michel during the millenary celebrations of the foundation of the abbey.

### **First time in one thousand years---two Bobcats sail to Mont St. Michel.**

Both crews excitedly explored this historic islet and much shopping was done in the narrow streets. Tom generously entertained Monsieur Picherelle on board and plied him with cans of English canned beer and cigarettes. We planned to leave at high water the following morning and turned in peacefully, feeling that something had been achieved that day.

15<sup>th</sup> August, 05.00 hours—the tide is coming in at a fantastic rate, my kedge is badly placed and I am almost beam on to the incoming tide. It is no exaggeration that the tide comes in at a rate of galloping horses - what a noise of rushing water against the hulls. In half an hour to my relief, the force of the flood eased and the tide is full, but where is 'Ginger Tom' and where is Mont St. Michel? Perhaps our journey was all a dream—then I hear the eerie sound of a foghorn in the distance. We are due away by 07.00 hours at the latest, now we will have to wait for the evening tide as we are fogbound- the boys will have another day exploring. Mud, Mud, Mud- sticky glutinous stuff, every time a dinghy goes ashore everything is covered with it, and yet here come the four Lack boys, Peter, William, Bruce and Tony all immaculately turned out with their dinghy looking spotless—come to collect Andrew and take him ashore—feel ashamed of my muddy dinghy, we must send Andrew on a course to that family!

had to arrange for Muriel to get back to Parame with Andrew before we sailed, so Monsieur Picherelle offered to take her to catch the bus at 17.45. I put the dinghy on a very long line made fast to 'Seamew' and alerted them both to embark, as I could see the tidal bore approaching half a mile away. By the time they were in the dinghy ready to go ashore with Brian rowing the tide was upon them and Brian strong as he is, could not make it.

I had an anxious time watching my wife and boy swing back in the dinghy at the end of the painter, the dinghy having a great bow wave as though it was traveling at great speed. I could only hope and wait that my knots in the line would hold. Eventually I was able to pull them in, fit the Seagull and get them ashore. I now picked up my faithful crew, Mary Lack and Peter, and we sailed for Granville at 18.30 high water. Monsieur Picherelle and his colleague bought the lifeboat out ostensibly to see us through the narrow channel, but in fact to try out the new engine for the Zodiac inflatable lifeboat. As it happened, we were through the bouys first and their engine broke down and we offered the lifeboat a suit of sails.

Monsieur Picherelle said over the walkie-talkie that all Bobcat owners arriving at Mont ST. Michel would be given a great reception and hoped to see many, now that the trail had been blazed.

The problem now was whether the Avant Port at Granville would have dried out before our arrival. The wind had dropped so we started our engine which only gave us 3 knots. 'Ginger Tom' could make much better speed—I must get a Penta like him for next season. The outer harbour dries out 16—20 ft. and I was getting anxious, as Allard Coles states that the approaches dry out from 2—9 ft. as far west as Le Coup Tower and buoy.

22.30 hours (4 after high water) we dropped our hooks in the Avant Port. Fifteen minutes later the harbour was completely dry! What a relief. We had come in the dark, straining to see Tom's stern light against the myriads of lights in the town. At one time Mary shouted as a red light went across the bows—"Don't run him down" and I put her hard a starboard just in time to miss a large fishing boat.

22.30 hours glorious sleep, Dawn, said several times during the night "don't snore" and I replied "He is not snoring" thinking she was talking to Brian—not realizing that I was the culprit. 05.00 hours. Awoke to hear rubbing alongside—promptly on deck to find a large fishing boat "Brigitte" lying alongside me - adjusted the fenders to prevent damage. It is amusing to reflect that we do all this at these unearthly hours for pleasure! Yet there is an indefinable sense of satisfaction and achievement on arriving at a strange foreign port, which more than compensates for all anxiety. Which is soon forgotten. 06.45. locked into the harbour, inside the yacht harbour at Granville it is very pleasant, with modern pontoons and hoses for water just where it is needed. Two young ladies came aboard unfortunately whilst I was ashore, and asked if we were the catamarans they had seen at Mont St. Michel the previous day. "Yes we were " said Dawn. "well we live there, but have never seen yachts there before and were very excited to see you coming in".

We had a very special dinner that night as Tom's guests, with fruits de la mer Langoustines, sea snails, shrimps, followed by Sole Meuniere and grilled Steaks, with of course Muscadet. Vi and I ordered fruits de la mer and shared our two large portions between the four of us. This is one of the pleasant things one can do in France, thus being able to sample some of their delicious dishes without having to commit oneself to a whole course.

17<sup>th</sup> August, every port on the west coast of Normandy dries and should not be visited except in offshore winds and Allard Coles rightly describes this as an inhospitable coast. However, although pleased to be warned, we had some delightful surprises.

At this stage of the holiday I had ruled out rushing home, so had decided to leave "Seamew" in France and to call back for her at a convenient time. 'Ginger Tom' had a further week's holiday, so we decided to make for Gorey in Jersey as the next stage. These August days were beautiful with calm seas and hot sun, Dawn and Brian enjoyed themselves sunbathing and reading. Peter Lack caught our first mackerel on the passage to Gorey at a speed of 3 knots. We never seem to catch any fish over this speed. Logged 20.9 miles to Gorey where the range of tide at this time is 37ft. We dried out on the beach five minutes after arrival, one boat's length from the rocks. To avoid coming down on the rocks one crew member stands on the cabin top and gives directions, sometimes very firmly. It is still quite a shock to see them so close by when the water is gone. The fact that we never landed on any showed the efficiency of my crew! At this stage we scrubbed the hulls and had a glorious swim. Ices all round after the swim were very welcome. Our sailing directions indicate the lighthouse at the end of the pier as the leading mark, but we discovered that the Gorey lighthouse had fallen into the sea some 18 months earlier.

18<sup>th</sup> August, 06.15 hours (H.W. minus 2.5) left Gorey, course 040 under sail and engine with a very light North wind. Skirted the S.E. Ecrehous bouy and by 08.00 hours changed course to North arriving at Dielette at 11.05 hours, log 17.7 miles. We were delighted to find a very pleasant beach in this small



seaside resort which even boasts a yacht club! Both crews dined at the Hotel du Commerce where we were regaled with a degustation of Praires Farcie, Coquilles St. Jacques, Gigot d'Agneau and Muscadet. Returning to the boats for a well earned sleep, Tom fell overboard to our consternation. Somehow knowing Tom, we did not feel as anxious as we should have—someone noticed that he had removed his glasses, watch and wallet before falling in!

August 19<sup>th</sup>, left Dielette under sail and engine an hour after high water, bound for Cherbourg via the Aldernay Race. Sailed straight across Les Huguets de Joburg and were glad that the wind was light, as we could imagine the state of the sea under different conditions. Even under these peaceful conditions there were light overfalls and disturbed water. We rushed through the race pushed by a 7knot tide, and without any wind, the distance made in the first 2 hours was 14 miles. However once passed Omonville we had to contend with a strong reverse eddy which reduced our effective speed to a little over 1 knot. We went along the beach at Cherbourg for lunch before entering the yacht basin.

Thus ended for us, an unforgettable holiday.

One wonders what are the ingredients for a perfect holiday such as this, and, in retrospect the first must be one's shipmates and, in this case they could not have been bettered. Next comes one's boat, and in several weeks sailing we experienced almost every condition of weather and no owner could have been more thrilled seeing his ship standing up to high seas and yet remaining absolutely dry, sailing under light winds at 6-7 knots and still having in harbour a comfortable ship in which to relax.

These are most important ingredients and much more was added to them to make the holiday of a lifetime.

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### **The Voyage of Four Paws – Catalac 9.163,**

from Poole in Dorset to Antigua in the West Indies.

Brian and Kay Littlewood

We sailed from Poole at midday on bank holiday Monday 27 August 1979. We had light winds, mostly from ahead, and mist and fog all the way to Vigo in Northern Spain, with one twelve hour force 7-8 blow from the NE just as we were leaving the Bay of Biscay.

We finally felt our way into Vigo on a directional radio beacon in thick fog, after ten days at sea and 722 miles logged.

After a stay of ten days in Vigo, we set out once more and drifted down the coast of Portugal in the now familiar mist and fog, calling at Bayona and Leixon, arriving at Lisbon on the 23 September with the first decent following breeze of the trip, up our tail.

The radio DF Beacons were excellent in Spain but almost non-existent in Portugal.

Departed from Lisbon bound for Madeira on 1 October. After three days of light headwinds we had a further three days of strong headwinds with foul weather and nasty seas – nil progress. Eventually we gave up and sailed due South. After some twenty hours, conditions started to improve and we were able to lay the Canary Islands on a close reach, with fine weather and moderate winds, so who wanted to go to Madeira anyway?

During the last twenty four hours the wind gradually headed up and we had to motor the last 20 miles dead upwind to reach Las Palmas, Gran Canaria after twelve days at sea with 936 miles on the log.

The city of Las Palmas is large and busy, excellent for provisioning Four Paws, but the harbour is very commercial and oily. After a week we were glad to set sail again for the island of Palma.

This leg was 145 miles and it took us a mere 30 hours; the wind was free the whole way, although the weather deteriorated as we approached the island. The harbour was extremely difficult to spot between heavy rain squalls, but we just got in at dusk. Which was just as well, as the harbour lights appear to be ineffective.

The harbour and town of Santa Cruz are very pleasant, Four Paws rested there amongst a dozen or so other yachts while we put on the final fresh stores and had a look at the very pretty island. We had not intended to sail until 15 November, but as we watched the other yachts slip away one by one after the first of the month, we decided there was little point in hanging around any longer, or as Kay put it 'If we don't sail soon I am going to fly back to England'.

On 5 November, we sailed, soon finding a good NE breeze to send us on our way. The following notes were written in the log after twelve days at sea; I think they give some idea of our daily life during the crossing:

**Half way there?** I am not exactly sure when we will reach the halfway mark, as our course has been somewhat erratic, we may well have sailed more miles than I have marked on the chart. Anyway I don't know how straight the course will be from here.

Kay and I are going to have our 'halfway dinner' tonight: steak pie with chocolate semolina for afters, and we are going to open one of our secret parcels from Cousin Jonathan, especially for 'Halfway Day' This proved to be a copy of 'The Voyage of the Beagle', very acceptable as it is a thick book and Kay was very rapidly going through her store of books!

We both need a bit of a lift as our spirits were low yesterday and the day before. We should not really complain but the trouble was a little too much wind and sea. It's the continuous noise and motion that gets to you after a time. (The noise: The sound of big following seas rushing up with the odd one every few minutes breaking just behind our stern, combined with the sound of the seas on the hull and the rushing wind) The motion: Is never predictable, the seas roll along from astern or one or other quarter for a time, then suddenly the odd one rushes in from abeam, picking Four Paws up and shooting her forwards and sideways leaving her wallowing until 'George' our self-steering, straightens her out again.

From the first hour out of Santa Cruz de Palma, we have had the wind from the East or North East, between force 4 and 7, mainly 5 and 6, stronger in the last two days. On the first night out we were properly pooped. As we cleared the leeward end of the island the wind and sea built up giving us our first experience of 'off the clock' surfing for several hours during the afternoon. After this excitement with the conditions showing no sign of ease, we decided on a quiet night, so Four Paws ran on into the darkness under storm jib alone. During this passage we have kept the saloon berth made up; at night the Off Watch person sleeps across it while whoever is On rests at the after end, standing up every 20 mins. to scan the horizon and check the instruments. At about 2 a.m. there was a mighty roar and a sea broke into the cockpit filling it and sending a large dollop into the saloon. Our cockpit dodger was ripped in several places, but we suffered no other damage. The wind had dropped a little and we were travelling too slowly under our reduced sail, allowing the seas to catch up and break around the boat.

As for today, 'Halfway Day' it is 1300 GMT and I am sitting in the sun with the wind keeping me pleasantly cool. The temperature below decks is 82oF. The sky now is clear blue with a couple of little puffy clouds away on the horizon; we started the day with a lot of cloud and a few spots of rain but it cleared by 10 a.m. We have been keeping GMT until now, I think we should change to Zone Time now as there is 2 hours difference. It should be 11.00 am Local Time.

The wind is ENE 22-25 kn and we are just carrying the No 2 jib boomed on the whisker pole. An old genoa is hanked on the other forestay and to the spinnaker pole, ready to hoist when the wind drops below 20 kn. This sail has proved very useful as it has the same hoist as the No 2 Jib but is longer on the foot, so can be set on the spinnaker boom. The difference in area does not appear to unbalance her.

Four Paws is surfing along at a steady 5 kn. We could travel faster but the motion would become a lot more lively. I just stood up for a look around; seems a bit pointless, as we have not seen a ship for nine days. Kay is lounging on the saloon berth reading as usual, she has nearly finished all the books we swapped in Palma, when she runs out I do not know what she will do, probably start on the List of Lights, Instruction Manuals and Cereal Packets!!!!

The generator is running on the after deck, I've rigged a little cover over it to keep off the spray. 'George'

our Hydrovane is steering and has been since Palma; he copes magnificently with even the biggest seas, keeping us on or very near our course. Today, as the wind is lighter, we are steering a course slightly across the seas towards 'Point B' ocean passages and consequently we sometimes shoot off sideways. Four Paws has behaved very well, I am surprised how little sail is needed to keep us going at a steady 5-6 kn. If we were sailing her hard with a full crew, I think we should be almost in Antigua by now. As with most sailors, I am not happy unless I have something to worry about. Currently, it is hurricanes and whales. We are not supposed to get hurricanes after 15 November but that was only yesterday and the barometer seems to be falling again. I saw a small killer whale in our wake two days ago, yesterday our log spinner was bitten off, so if he's the culprit and he's got a touch of indigestion, I hope he doesn't get cross with us!

The navigation seems to be no problem, as I got over most of the elementary mistakes on the passage to the Canary Islands and our progress across the chart seems reasonable. We have been off our food for the last 2 days. The smoked ham we bought in Las Palmas, is very good. We have plenty of eggs, being untreated, we just turn the boxes every few days. Sliced bread went mouldy after 5 days but 2 small loaves in the fridge lasted until yesterday. Kay will start baking now, using packets of very handy bread mix. Pastry is popular. Pies and pasties never last the day out, let alone the night! We put 8 hard avocado pears aboard and ate the last yesterday. We have a few oranges, apples and pears left. So I think I'll get a cool beer from the fridge, take the noon sight and see what progress we have made. Our small scale Atlantic chart is folded in such a way that I will not be able to turn over to see Antigua for a couple of days yet, when I do, then we will really be getting somewhere.

We arrived in English Harbour, Antigua at 1300 hours on 29 November, after 24 ½ days at sea. We logged 2662 miles on the crossing. After talking to the crews of several other boats, we came to the conclusion that we had sailed at the right time and followed the best course, giving us good winds and fine weather most of the way.

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## **The Rescue**

**By**

**Peter Denning, Redouble CL.9.I44**

So far it had been a normal weekend. From Christchurch to Studland and then into Poole Harbour on Saturday to spend the night at Shipstal Point. The day had been very pleasant with South Westerly force 3 winds as forecast

Sunday morning came along too quickly and with it time to leave Poole Harbour and head home. Again the wind was force 3 from the south west though the forecast had mentioned local force 5 around exposed headlands which would mean that we could possibly get these winds near Hengistbury Head. As we approached Hengistbury Head under full main and semi furled genoa the wind picked up and the seas became bigger. On the helm was a 12 year old boy, the son of an old school friend.

Suddenly he shouted that he had seen a flare up ahead and to the left. He described what he had seen and it seemed correct so we altered course to where he thought that it came from. After a few minutes we could see a shape low in the water to the south west of Hengistbury Head. My immediate thought was a jet ski in distress which then led to salvage and ownership of my own jet ski! I don't mind them, but .....

As we got closer we saw that it was 3 people sitting on top of something and waving their arms. By the time we were within 50 yards we could see that they were sitting on the upturned hull of a 20 foot dinghy, 2 adults and 1 child.

I now had the problem of what to do' so the engine was started and the sails very quickly and untidily furled. We then motored back. By now the wind was F6 with the seas building up. As the main VHF radio is in the fore part of the main cabin I grabbed the hand held to issue a May-Day. After a couple of attempts I got no reply so gave up and got preparations under way to effect a rescue with myself, along with another 2 adults and 2 children down for a weekend sail – their third time on a boat in 3 years.

We managed to get close enough to throw a rope that was caught by the mother and child. With them grabbing the rope they went into the water and we pulled them towards our stern by the boarding ladder. By now the engine was in neutral with the boat lying to the wind; in our case the stern to. This meant that the boarding ladder was up and down all the time with the worry that it may come down on the people in the water. The mother pushed her son towards the ladder which he started to climb. I grabbed hold of the

buoyancy aid and pulled. Child and buoyancy stayed together and both landed in the cockpit ! Mothers turn next though being heavier she did not fly so far ! Even though the air and water temperature was mild / warm (for the UK) both were shivering quite a lot. By now we had drifted quite a distance from the dinghy so had to motor back. It took 3 attempts at throwing the line before the father on the dinghy could grab it. All this time I was trying to hold the boat in position by motoring astern into a short steep sea. The father, having watched his wife and son being dragged on board decided that it was easier to climb himself which suited me !

Rather than try to use the VHF I called the coastguard using my mobile phone and explained what had happened, and that a dinghy was upside down. They replied that the lifeboat would not launch as there was no life in danger. The family now feeling safe, wanted to try and save their dinghy. I made the comment that the dinghy was a hazard to navigation and if hit by another boat or even us, they would be launching the lifeboat to rescue people; if us, we were now numbered 8 on board. I had thought of donning wetsuit etc. and getting into the water and connecting a towline but thought better of it with the lack of inexperienced crew on board.

After a few minutes Portland coast Guard rang me back to say that Mudeford inshore lifeboat was going launch to try and collect the dinghy and would I stay nearby to make it easier to locate; this I was more than happy to do. After 15 minutes a bright orange 'blob' was seen heading towards us at speed. As it got closer it took the shape of the lifeboat. As they came near us they asked whether everyone who was rescued were ok. As this was a 'yes' they carried on the few yards to the dinghy.

Once we had seen them get the dinghy upright we headed towards Christchurch harbour only to have the lifeboat with dinghy on tow overtaking us a short while later. They came nearby and said that the dinghy would be at the lifeboat house which suited the rescued as they had launched from the same area that morning. One of the rescued main concerns was that they lived locally and knew some of the lifeboat crew and were now getting worried about the rib taking they would have to endure. This though was only a minor item !

After dropping them off at Mudeford Quay with one of our towels and some clothing we carried on up to our mooring, cleared up and went home.

Next weekend when I got down, in the steering position was a bag containing new towels, clothing and a letter thanking us as well as apologising for the loss of a towel but hoping that the replacements would make up for it.

Another weekend and my original towel reappeared having been located in the lifeboat house.

Would I do the rescue any different if it happens again? I don't know, only time will tell and as it has been the only rescue that I have been involved with in 35 years I possibly (and hopefully) won't get a chance to find out.  
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***It's tasty snack time  
>>>"Elma McRae"<<<  
Sailing Dish for the month is.***

Ham & egg muffin.

Slices of ham.  
Eggs  
Cream  
Salt & pepper.

Place the ham slices into a muffin tin, crack in an egg, add a spoonful of cream and salt & pepper. Bake for about 20 minutes in a hot oven.

To be followed by

## Caramelised yoghurt

Yoghurt  
Soft brown sugar

Sprinkle the sugar over the yoghurt and leave overnight or for at least 4 hours.

## FOR SALE AND WANTED

**FOR SALE** 12meter **Must See in Miami Fl** Contact [ouat41@hotmail.com](mailto:ouat41@hotmail.com)

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**WANTED**.....hi peter this is my first go at e-mail so i hope it works,  
could you put a add in the news letter for **A sonic leg for a 9meter catalac**  
tel 01934631925 many thanks ray badman [kiskadee]

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**WANTED**..... by partially sited but experienced sailor...8 or 9 meter Catalac basically sound but  
reasonable price, anything considered preferable U.K. but would travel for right boat.  
Contact Alan wills [alanip24@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:alanip24@yahoo.co.uk)

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**Free to good home!** Hi Peter. I have a VDO sumlog head unit. 4"face, fits 86mm hole. 395miles. as new. Free to  
good home, just pay P&P.

Terry Secretan. Norma Ann 01206 734727

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## WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS

**Mr. Evans.**  
**CL 9.237 Soul Twins (Faro Portugal)**  
**13 Oaks cl. East Cowes, I.O.W.**  
**PO32 6EH**  
**E.mail** [evmars@bopenworld.co.uk](mailto:evmars@bopenworld.co.uk)

**Andy & Linda Carr**  
**Thialfx 30 (Chichester Hants.)**  
**No.3 Steyne Hall,**

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## This month's

### 'RALLY AT BEMBRIDGE'

**Spring Bank Holiday from Saturday 29 – Monday 31 May 2004**

Extract of letter sent by Jeremy Bretherton to Bembridge Harbour Management confirming details of intended rally:

Further to our telephone conversation this afternoon, I am confirming the wish of the Bobcat and Catalac Cruising Association to hold a Rally in your harbour over the Spring Bank Holiday weekend from Saturday, 29 May to Monday, 31 May. As mentioned, I anticipate that the majority of boats will wish to moor on the beach where it is proposed to have a bar-b-que on the Saturday evening – rubbish will be cleared away.

| <b>TIDES</b> | <b>Sat 29 May</b>    | <b>Sun 30 May</b> | <b>Mon 31 May</b>         |
|--------------|----------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>HW</b>    | 07.23(3.8)20.15(4.1) | 08.29:21.10       | 09.28(4.2) and 22.01(4.5) |
| <b>LW</b>    | 13.14(1.6)           | 01.53:14.15       | 02.48(1.3) and 15.07(1.1) |

#### **ENTRANCE**

Check the tide level with the tide gauge north west of St Helens Fort. Course from there to the start of the buoyed channel is approximately 2400. Entrance can be gained by Catalacs from -3 hours to +3 hours of high water.

#### **BERTHING**

The Harbour Master is Chris Turvey, tel: 01983872828 or **VHF Ch 80** call sign '**Bembridge Harbour**'. There is another rally coming that weekend so the majority of our members are expected to berth on the beach at **£6.00** a night. Duver pontoons cost **£16.00** a night.

#### **EVENTS**

Brading Haven Sailing Club is expecting members to eat there on Saturday night at 8.30 pm. As they have to order by the previous Thursday, it is essential that those wishing to eat there notify Peter Gimson by Thursday, 27 May. It is suggested that we gather on the beach for a bbque on Sunday. Members are honorary members of the Sailing Club for the weekend and can use their shower and washing facilities and their bar during the weekend.

#### **RALLY ORGANISER**

Jeremy Bretherton (Allez Cat 8/184) tel: 01462 768240 – email [Jeremy.bretherton@ic24.net](mailto:Jeremy.bretherton@ic24.net) who will be manning his yellow tinker dinghy from about 17.30 hrs onwards. Rally Co-ordinator Peter Gimson tel:01202 773749 – email [PeterGimson@bccafsworld.co.uk](mailto:PeterGimson@bccafsworld.co.uk).

#### Disclaimer

Neither the BCCA nor Committee will accept any liability for personal injury arising out of participating in any event, rally or race organized by or through the BCCA whether sustained by members, guests, or visitors, or caused by the said members, guests or visitors whether or not such damage or injury could have been attributed to or was occasioned by the neglect, default or negligence of any of the officers, committees or servants of the BCCA.

#### Boat Owners Third Party Insurance

It is the responsibility of all boat owners to have adequate third party insurance in respect of him/herself, vessel, his/her crew for the time being & his/her visitors.

