



## STRAYCAT (Bob 8.64)

## ONE DAY AT A TIME

By Ray Astle

The name STRAYCAT is quite apt I found her abandoned on a beach with children jumping and playing on her. She had lain there for quite some time and was in dire need of love and affection so after many hours of hard work she will be our roaming home. I have always been a roamer but marriage raising a family, earning a living etc. narrowed my horizons until retirement was approaching then wanderlust returned and plans began to be dreamed. The reality has to be tempered by age.

Hence the title. It is easier to sail a long way “port hopping”, especially if time is not a problem.

**Advantages** of short legs are that you visit many more interesting places and meet more people. You don't arrive clapped out, as you may do after 30-50 hours at sea. Weather forecasting is more reliable. The tide can often be used for most of the trip. The mooring practice is better than R.Y.A. Competent Crew Course, But more important if trouble does occur you are probably fresh enough to deal with it. This may not be so after a long stint in adverse seas and weather.

**Disadvantages** more harbour dues (but the grapevine on passage will advise about cheap or free mooring places) Strong arms from all the mooring & anchoring.

**The Passage plan..** South from Pwellheli through St. Georges channel. East up the Bristol channel until it can be crossed in one day. Round Lands End and a similar approach to the English channel. Enter French river/canal system. Minimum width of locks 5 m. (Straycat beam 4.3m) *E.T.A. Mediterranean coast of France-this year or next.* More detailed plan would be required for R.Y.A.Coastal Skipper Qualification. We did of course do our tidal sums en route. Before leaving bought Derrick Bowskills “Channel to the Mediterranean Sea” plus general chart of the French waterways (Imray).

Thursday 20<sup>th</sup>. June. Left Pwellheli at 13.30 in flat calm that became a fair wind to Abergstwyth.( a good first day that was to set the pattern for the next four days) Fishguard, Ramsey Sound, Solva, Jack Sound, then up Milford Haven for 2 nights a Neyland. It cant last and true enough here we met our first “*Prophet of Doom*” re. River Seine to Paris & canal system in general.

This is worth mentioning because Bowskill & “Navicarte” stress the potential difficulties. They had been the subject of discussion for several weeks – *almost a mutiny!*

We moved to Dale for the night so we could make a dawn start across the Channel to Padstow. This was our longest passage, with several miles of tidal set E & W Lundy Isle was a reassuring sight in the middle of the passage, reducing time out of sight of land. We had 13 hrs. good sailing with dolphins for company into the Camel estuary where we waited overnight to lock into Padstow inner harbour in daylight.

Padstow is a delightful place, we planned to stay 4-5 days. Here we met John and his dog on “Sheldee” an old steel boat about 28’ long. John was sailing round Britain on very little money. We also met a fleet from Swansea Y.C. on a cruise to the Scilly Isles. The wind was SW to W f 5 so we enjoyed a very social 9 days in the sheltered and sunny harbour with local bands and choirs performing 3 to 4 times a week. S.Y.C. arranged a cycle ride to Bodmin and the moor.

5 July. With good forecast all the yachts heading W or S departed as soon as tide permitted almost emptying the harbour within an hour. We joined some of the others and stopped in St Ives for the night before setting off past Long Ship Light round the corner into Mousehole. A very nice little drying harbour.

Round the Lizard was a bit bumpy I think I found the wrong way round the overfalls we carried on past the Manacles and anchored in Helford River, ( D. Demauria Frenchmans Creek) We then traveled the 5 miles to finishing in front of R.C.Y.C. Falmouth for 2 days accompanied by “Sheldee”.

The run to Poole stopping at Newton Ferrers, Brixham, Lyme Regis & Weymouth was smooth.

We picked up fuel at the floating jetty in Poole Harbour & rafted up on Town Quay it was 13.00 Saturday 13 July. We stayed for a few days entertaining friends, visiting relatives, shopping for extra fenders, long lock warps and “Navicarte La Seine Aval”.

*This bought the mutiny to a conclusion when my cousin a YM. Instructor, Pointed out “you’ve done Ramsey and jack Sounds, The Bristol Channel Lands End- the River Seine should be a piece ok cake.*

19 July .Early start for the 12 hour passage to Cherbourg. Stayed on the waiting pontoon then on to St Vaast, Ouistreham and Honfleur, on the west side of the Seine estuary. Incidentally at all the these places we stayed and went ashore for at least one evening.

25 July

.Entered Honfleur by a new and very easy lock through the lift bridge into “Vieux Bassin” situated in the centre of this beautiful old town.

Rafted up against some very expensive boats in a very small space.



On “Cardones” we were given good advice about our run up to Rouen and the solution to our B.T. charge card problem – just prime the system with a French phone card. We wandered round Honfleur for two days the weather was very hot – no more foulies this year!

Our plan to go upstream on the 28<sup>th</sup>., so consider some details. Navicarte guides to the waterways are book maps as detailed as British O.S. Outdoor Leisure series with navigation information Scale 1cm.\_50m. Commercial traffic has priority in all situations. Pilotage suggests no stops during a 12 hr. passage to Rouen. Masts have to be lowered here. The tides are very good.

Left Honfleur at 06.30 1 hr. after LW, set GPS to show speed over ground and motored under the Pont de Normandie at 5kn.

This was the beginning of a glorious run through marvelous scenery, chalk cliffs, wooded hillsides, and a broad river with plenty of room to avoid the dreaded commercial giants. We saw two only that day. Ate breakfast and lunch on the way in warm sunshine boat speed up to 9 kn. SOG. The Rouen harbour police met us in Basin St. Gervais at 4.30 just 8 hours after leaving Honfleur. *Who wrote the BOOK?* After this friendly visit by the police we returned 5kn. Through the industrial area to “Darse des Docks” to have the



mast lowered on Monday. The job was done easily with the aid of a vintage crane, rusty pontoon and Jean and I as labourers. Mast trestles were constructed from one used many times before and scraps found lying about the dock.



In Darse we met Joel and Annick on a catamaran Jeannolick, having the mast lowered. We were invited to travel in company with them and followed them into Halte Plaisance de Rouen.

Dues duly paid to V.N.E. for our licence to travel the inland waterways. You pay for the days when the boat moves, i.e. a 30 day ticket covers the distance to the Med. Being in France we signed our own sailing days!

A coffee on Jeannolick and a walk round Rouen, we arranged to leave with the tide it changed very precisely from 2kn ebb to 2kn flow within 5 minutes. We were Joined by Skitawick an old circa 1938 motor cruiser crewed by two couples from Hampshire. The run into the Amfreville Ecluse lock was easy but there was nobody to take our lines. Joel was half way up the ladder when we realized one of us would have to take our lines hook them over the bollards and return to the boat as we were lifted to river level. Ships papers were examined by a very laid-back inspector at the top of a very high tower. On leaving the lock we find a well wooded and peaceful R.Seine & proceeded up to Le Mesnil Poses and stayed 99km to Paris.

Our convoy progressed steadily stopping each day after 2 or 3 locks, to enjoy any village we were near. To Vernon when Joel and Annick left us their holiday over. They have been good company and a big help we will miss them. Two more stops to Paris Merlon and Chaton scenery still wooded and gardens running down to the river.



Straycat & Skitawick rafted at Mevlon



I cant think where this is!!!

August 4<sup>th</sup>. Straycat and Skitawick sail into Paris, past the Eiffel Tower, Notre Dame and under all the bridges into the Canal St. Martin where we lock into a marina just 10 min walk from Notre Dame, close to a metro station and Place de la Bastille, in a garden with all the usual facilities.

We stayed four nights, shopping, sight seeing, chatting and researching the route ahead, Made a sun shade, drank coffee, wine, and pastiche then arranged to met our son Chris and his wife Elin for a week.

Left Paris using the Navicarte La Seine Amont and made our way around the forest of Fontainebleau to St Mammes. By now the locks were a simple routine large peniches were infrequent. Sent a fax to Cris. showing our location and awaited their arrival on 15<sup>th</sup>. August we said goodbye to Skitawick on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

We left the Seine for the river Yonne. had the engine serviced by Evans marine in Sens. The l'Yonne has six unique locks with sloping sides.



Had our only near miss with a Peniche in one of them. The water is cleaner, there are more herons we indulged ourselves with lunchtime swims and life is very pleasant on the Yonne, with a larger crew. 18<sup>th</sup>. August

We left the Yonne and entered the canal Bourgogne at Migeunes, where we stayed the night.

The Bourgogne is a true canal with more locks and more open scenery, Hotel boats and hire boats are the main traffic. The waterway is narrower, shallower and the banks are broken in many places. Care had to be taken when in the range of hotel boats.

Cris and Elin left us at Tonnerre where it rained- a tropical type storm for an hour. This is our tenth week away from home and life is very pleasant. Locks are often in chains with long stretches between each chain. Our longest day with two chains totaling 32 locks, this is a far cry from the Seine when 3 was considered a good day.

August 28<sup>th</sup>.

This is our last uphill day 14 locks in the rain to Pouilly en Auxois at 1230 ft above sea level. Stayed the night at Pouilly ready to go down hill no worries except perhaps the 3.3km tunnel, 5 mtrs wide and no tow path. Made arrangements with la Capitane to enter the tunnel at 14.40. *After safety equipment check of side lights, headlamp, la handheld torch, life jackets, even the bucket was checked and approved before we were allowed to continue!!!*



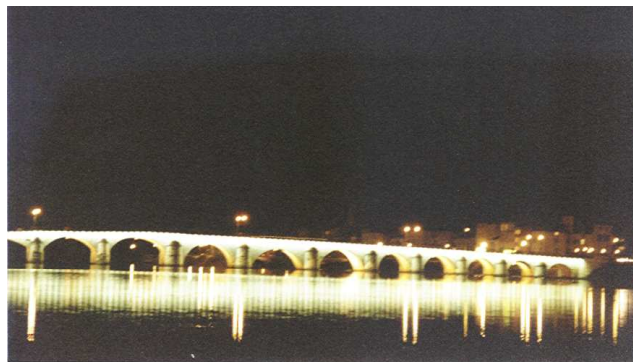
The trip through the tunnel at low speed was simple but concentration cannot be relaxed. Jean took some flash photos before coming out into the large wooded basin. The next run down to Plombieres near Dijon was easy and warm. We met Efemel again and went aboard a peniche that is being converted into a floating hostel by a bearded Canadian from Vancouver. We drank the local drink Kir (white wine & crème de cassis).. Todd off Efemel had been onboard this boat 12 years ago.

Jean and I went into Dijon by bus but could not find a way of paying for the fare. Later Todd and Elsie explained the ticket system over tea and biscuits on Straycat.

September 4<sup>th</sup>.

Leave Plombieres heading for St. Jean de Losne and the H2o marina at the end of the canals. Two days later we enter the river Saone with the Saone Navicarte by our side and useful advice from a Belgian couple. Sailing down the Saone with glimpses of the Alps the weather felt cooler our ports of call were Seurre, Chalon and Macon.





With only six very big automatic locks to Lyon we traveled quickly aided by current and Mistral wind on our backs. Stayed at Trevoux then straight through Lyon into the mighty Rhone with Locks to match. At Tournon we were chased off our mooring before breakfast by a Rhone waterbus at least 150ft long!!! **We all like early starts!!**



Passing Epervier, near Valence locked in to the marine liked it so decided to stop for the night. The following afternoon we enquired about wintering in the closed compound the price fair we decide to leave the boat.

It is just 210km to the med a weeks run.

September 18<sup>th</sup>. Straycat was lifted out closed and sheeted over by the 22<sup>nd</sup>. When we caught the Euroline coach to London, National Express to Bangor, where David had left our car.

Home in 27 hours our only overnight passage.

Total Straycat distance 1320nm and 232 Locks.



## ONE DAY AT A TIME

By Ray Astle (BOB 8.64)

We trusted the Micra again and on 16th May travelled south by way of Portsmouth and ferry "Pride of Bilbao" to Bilbao, across Spain, mainly on the motorway, which has excessive tolls, but light traffic. Stayed overnight in Lleida, arrived Barcelona at noon. (*We got lost leaving Bilbao and entering Barcelona*).



Barcelona viewed from the pontoon

This allowed an afternoon and evening to find old friends in the Marina and have a meal before catching the overnight Transmed Ferry to Mahon where we disembarked at 0800 on 20th May. This was an easy trip as we shared the driving and much of the time was a mini cruise on the two ferries.

**Straycat had wintered well in Puerto Addaya,  
Far more fortunate than the two pictured in nearby Pollenca see  
February B.C.C.A. newsletter & now Yachting Monthly May 2002**



The friendly little marina that has become like a home port to us. Launching was by old tractor and trolley with extension planks, all handled with finesse by Tolo, the marina manager.

During June and July day sailed on *Straycat* or friends boats, often on "*Andiamos Jacquilene*" with Les, or took our tender, a Bombard AX3000 round to the next Cala (Macaret) for a coffee or ice cream and a swim. The car has made shopping easy, especially visits to the supermarket (SYPS) and Mahon where most streets are narrow. The views over the harbour, historic buildings the Plasas, cafe Bars, climate are all marvellous.

We had a problem with our log that was cured by express post to and from the U.K. I devised a very simple transom mounting for our tender. It was to be a trial prior to making davits - It has been so satisfactory that we were still using it in September.

On 26 July we sailed in company with "*AT*" round the north coast of Menorca, stayed overnight in Cala AJgayevers en route to Pollensa., We had a very good sail across the straits, forging ahead of "*AJ*" but losing leeway. We arrived at the anchorage in Puerto Pollensa at the same time. During 10 days here, the wind rose to f 7, with hail, thunder and rain. We were swung right round on our anchor 3 times in 30 hours. The anchor held fast and the weather changed back to its usual good to very good. Jean did some good hill walking with a group led by a girl from an American boat that was also on anchor!

We met SKYCAT again and ZEFIER, a Dutch owned BOB 8. We did some short sails around the bay, plenty of swimming and deck lounging. On 8 August, our cruise moved onto Puerto Colom. This was a motor-sailing day and back to basic navigation, due to a GPS set up fault! *When passing a large bay, the headland bearings that I had taken, and the coast line I saw, did not match what I expected to see by reference to the pilot book - that was very worrying. The isolated little harbour was not to be seen! I had an inspiration - look at "Rough Guide to the Balearics" and there was the answer. This little Puerto has recently been extended by miles of hotels and apartments!*

We dropped anchor in a quiet comer of Cala Colom in the late afternoon and watched a regatta of small traditional boats. We were visited by the Harbour Master's launch and asked to present our ship's papers and



passports at the Harbour Office at 11.00 prompt! We complied, paid a small fee and found very good free showers available to visiting yachts. That was a much better result than we expected, bearing in mind the tone of the original visit.

We stayed a couple of days then carried on south and round the corner to Puerto Campos and just past Pta Plana before meandering back to Puerto Pinos ready for a dawn start on 15 May, back to Mahon. We passed between Isla del Aire and mainland Menorca before anchoring in the popular Cala Teulera, where we have stayed several times. Teulera is a sheltered anchorage within the main Cala Mahon.

It is 10 - 20 min. by tender from the shops and Mahon.

There were two Australian crews in the Cala, so as you may expect, they organised a BBQ on the beach. It was a lively multi national affair during which we heard news of our friend off "Tabby" - they are now settled in S. Spain. We finally returned to Addaya on 20th August.

The rest of the summer was spent day sailing on our boat and others. With Les, we organised a "pirate raid" to amuse five children and twelve adult pirates. *Straycat* looks very smart flying a large Skull and Crossbones!



**Would you buy a boat  
From this fine  
upstanding Gentleman**



**Straycat at anchor in Pollenca**



**Happy days  
Downhill sailing.**

Large functions always centre round catamarans. It was not a very sober afternoon! Two of the pirates have recently bought a Bobcat 8m. We sailed when the weather was just right and used the car when it was not. We are getting soft!

Way back in Aigues Mortes (June 97) when I had the brief ulcer problem, I was persuaded to put *Straycat* up for sale. Some fifteen months later John Goodman visited and sailed with us. John was not ready to retire and I had lost the urge to sell (*it was never strong*). So we agreed to review the position next year. life goes on! Still in the sun! *Straycat* was lifted out and winterized before we left for home by Ro Ro Ferry on 15 September. We were home in N. Wales after a smooth trip on 19th September .

May 1999 This way of life is becoming an easy routine. Not quite! This year our bit of excitement was forgetting passports! We were able to talk our way onto the ferry, *Pride of Bilbao* again, but we were warned that we may have to return on the same boat. This detracted from the enjoyment of the crossing somewhat. At Bilbao we were directed to wait by the security office. After a worrying half hour, followed by a few questions from the Passport Officer, and a consultation with his superior, they let us into Spain. .

We used the Volvo this time, so the whole drive south was effortless.

An epoxy/glassjob on *Straycat* was completed quickly with Les' help and by 28 May we were rigged, equipment tested, and ready for launching. We had already had our first swim and found the Volvo hopeless around Mahon. The parking spaces are too short and the streets too narrow!

During the summer we had friends and family from the UK to visit. We have made friends ashore, sailed into all our favourite bays and some others new to us. We have not travelled many miles yet, in terms of "days of pleasure" we had had a wonderful journey and come a very long way.

In Adday on 13 September,

John and Anne Goodman took complete command of BOB 8.64.

I know they will enjoy sailing her and continue to improve this lovely old boat.

January.....My family keep showing me the "Small Ads" **in Practical Boat Owner!**

June 1999 – The advert started **"Bobcat Catamaran for Sale"**

We had been casually looking for our first boat and, rapidly approaching the wrong end of 50, were of missing out on this pastime, unless we did something about it **SOON**. We both fancied a catamaran and here was one we could afford now.

But what on earth was a **Bobcat?**

A quick phone call to the owner and we arranged to see it that weekend despite the long journey from Crewe in Cheshire to Lowestoft on the East coast where the boat was moored.

The weather was bad and we could not go for a sail, but it was obvious that the owner had put a lot of time and money into the boat, although, as nearly always happens, there was still some work that needed to be done. After much discussion with Judith, who is both No.1 wife and Management, we put in an offer which was accepted. 8m Bobcat No.45 was ours, our very first boat, **wow!**

We arranged to take over the existing mooring at Lowestoft, one of our better decisions as it turned out later, the boatyard mooring proving safe and very reasonably priced and the boatyard owner, competent and extremely helpful.

For our first sail a couple of weekends later, we decided to play it safe and take the boat on to the Norfolk Broads, as our mooring is only a half-mile downstream from Oulton Broad.

First, a few notes about *Catmandu*, as the boat is called:

One of the things that the previous owner had proudly shown us was the Yamaha 9.9 hp 4-stroke outboard engine which drives the boat. This he had fitted into a lockable box in line with the stern lockers, halfway between the hulls. He had done this, he said, because a previous outboard engine had been stolen. The whole engine could be lowered into or raised out of the water by an elaborate series of pulleys, rope and sliders – very impressive – until you come to realise, as we did on our first trip, that the engine is fixed and does not steer and, being the middle, does not offer the benefit of prop wash against the rudders. In addition, the friendly boatyard owner had taken me on one side and told me that it was a good boat and it sailed well but low speed manoeuvring was a problem because of its high windage and I would get the best low speed steering with the rudders up, when they would act like barn doors. That is not what he meant but what he said!

*So, like lambs to the slaughter, off we set.*

For those who do not know the area, between our mooring and Oulton Broad is first a swing railway bridge, then a lifting roadbridge and then a lock into Oulton Broad – all with a specific opening time arranged by VHF with the lockkeeper. Our VHF was not working so I had arranged for the 11.00 am. Opening by mobile phone.

We reversed out into mid channel from our mooring, started towards the railway bridge. "*By Jove*" or words to that effect, I said to No.1. This steering is a bit vague, as we slowly zigzagged our way up the channel. On full lock the boat would slowly start to turn, as we reached the require direction, I centred the rudders, it still kept turning. Full opposite lock, it still kept turning, then the turn slowed, it finally started to go the other way and we went through the whole process again.

The railway bridge duly swung away from us as we approached. Having passed through, we made for the roadbridge. The roadbridge was still closed as we approached, so we had to stop – *oh dear!* The barrier came down, stopped the traffic, the bridge started to lift and *Catmandu* started to drift cross channel. The more I shunted her backwards and forwards, the more cross channel she became. I just could not get her lined up for the bridge. All the time, the traffic was building up on the road. A chap from a live-aboard shouted "the bridge is trying to contact you on VHF". "Mine does not work", I shouted back. I looked up to see the bridgekeeper outside his hut, staring at me with his hands on his hips. I could read his thoughts at 70 paces! Traffic was stopped on the road as far as the eye could see. Eventually the bridge had to close.

I threw a mooring line to someone on the bank and they pulled me to the side. "*Why have you got your rudders up?*" they asked.

Two weeks later, we made it onto the Broads. I am not sure that the hordes of Broads' yachts, racing dinghies appreciated our presence on Oulton Broad but we made it across without incident, we even saw a seal that evening, close to the riverbank where we moored for the night. The weekend passed uneventfully

apart from a bit of excitement going into Oulton Broad lock, on the way back, with a strong tail wind and sharing the lock with a Heavenly Twins cat, several other boats and having our mooring ropes and fenders ready on wrong side!

Another two weeks passed by and we were ready for the **BIG ONE – we were GOING TO SEA.**

As a background to the event, it has to be said that whilst I have a good working knowledge of land based engines, what makes them tick, so to speak, I have never been within a mile of outboard motors. So for this momentous occasion, everything was checked – spark plug OK. Fuel tank filled to the brim and secured. Water cooling flow etc. To get to sea from our mooring we have to negotiate a lifting roadbridge, again at certain times and arranged by VHF (now working)

We left the mooring and headed into a stiff breeze towards the bridge. We arrived about 5 minutes early and joined several other yachts, circulating, waiting for the bridge to open. The road barriers came down and, as the bridge started to open, we put on full throttle as they don't like to be kept waiting. 20 metres to go the engine stops dead.... *Ugh.* I frantically turn the key several times and there's absolutely nothing, zilch, zero, it is totally dead. All the other boats go through, we start drifting back into the stiff breeze. Judith throws out the anchor and the bridge calls us up on VHF to find out what is happening. I'm trying to sort the problem, I reply. A quick check on the battery terminals – they are OK. I've got full fuel tanks, so its not that, apart from which the starter motor is not working. I pull the engine up out of the water and take off the cover. The traffic is really building up back on the approach roads, the centre of Lowestoft must be at a standstill! Check the fuses for any loose wires – nothing, The bridge closes again. A chap in a powerful RIB offers to tow us back to our mooring. We gratefully accept and, on arrival, some of our alcohol ration jumped ship.

With the aid of the engine handbook, I start to trace the wiring system, following the wiring diagram I come across a device called (oh, no!) A gearbox neutral safety switch! Like a veil lifting from my eyes, all is revealed. Full fuel tanks and vent left closed, stopped the engine with fuel starvation and it would not start because it was in gear. *Damn!*

The next weekend, we finally got to sea. Outside the harbour entrance it was blowing a f.5 against a strong tide. *Catmandu* was nodding like a rocking horse and the engine prop was clearing the water on each nod. As we got further away from the harbour entrance, we got the foresail up. Things quietened a bit, but not before I had given the fish a good feed of my breakfast!

We had a fantastic sail, even though there was a lot of slamming from the bridgedeck. On return, the tide was running out, It was at this stage that Judith went below to find her bag of clothes and camera and mobile phone under 18" of water in the bow section of the port hull – **PANIC!** We are sinking!!! Don't worry we won't sink – just yet we're aground on the mud 30 yards from our mooring. On examination, a split had opened up between the bridgedeck and port hull and we had been taking in water with the slamming. On getting onto our mooring, I raised the rudders and found that one had snapped between the pintles – we had come back in with only one rudder and taking in water! We couldn't wait to see what happened next!

With more mishaps to come we join [PETER & JUDITH BOARDMAN](#) next month on their two week Holiday ED.

With more mishaps to come we now join

[PETER & JUDITH BOARDMAN](#)

[The Two Week Holiday](#)

This event had been eagerly anticipated, the plan was simple, turn right out of Lowestoft harbour, head south, exploring every river system on the way until it was time to return.

We still had not fixed the windspeed indicator or the depth sounder, which had not worked since we bought the boat, but we had managed to get the distance and speed log working, if somewhat erratically.

The boatyard had done a good job repairing the split in the bridgedeck and replacing the rudder, so it was all systems go – **what else could possibly go wrong?**

We set sail Saturday afternoon, with a fair easterly wind and the tide going south, towards our first port of call, Southwold, in the river Blyth about 15 miles away.

After about 45 minutes we noticed huge thunderclouds piling up over the land but we were not too worried, as we were upwind of them. Soon we were being treated to an exceptional display of lightning as the storm raged overland and, to our dismay, was re realised that it was heading our way despite the wind direction.

We rapidly turned tail and with full sail and engine struggled back towards Lowestoft against the tide. Half an hour from the harbour entrance it hit us. Deluges of rain, squally wind, thunder and lightning, the lot. Lowestoft disappeared off the face of the earth!

The previous owner had rigged the VHF inside the saloon so it was protected and the mike could be accessed through the bulkhead window by the steering wheel – handy. I called up harbour control for permission to enter. This was refused as a freighter was about to leave, so we cruised around for 15 mins.in the torrential rain, when we finally got in we had missed our bridge opening and had to tie up to a fishing boat until the 9 pm opening. In the meantime, I discovered that water had trickled down the microphone lead and into the radio, changing the set into a *receiver only model!*

We got up early Sunday morning to beat the low tide on our mooring and spent a couple of hours on a deep water mooring before cruising down to catch the 0730 bridge opening. Several other yachts were circulating also waiting for the bridge.

The warning klaxons sounded on the bridge and the traffic barriers came down. We all surged forward. One bridge span partly lifted, the other stayed closed, and then the first one closed and partly lifted again. The VHF crackled into life "*Sorry chaps, the bridge has broken. Try again later*". We finally got away just before lunch.

The approach to Southwold proved interesting for first-timers like ourselves with a strong cross tide at the river entrance and a strong flood tide up the river, reducing what little manoeuvrability *Catmandu* has to an alarming level. On top of that, the moorings were pretty full on a fairly narrow river, with a strong flood tide pushing us towards a bridge we could not fit under! Somehow we managed to do a six-point turn without hitting anything and now we were stemming the flood, much better. A very helpful harbour master helped us to raft up on the outside of two other yachts and we were safe!

The next morning we visited a Chandler to buy a copy of the latest survey of the entrance to the river Ore, our next river system to the south. Apparently the entrance moves each year due to the changing sand and shingle banks, so an up to date survey is essential. On the way back to the boat we called in the harbour master's office to pay our mooring fee.

"How long is your boat?" he asked. 8 metres I replied. "Then that will be just £10" When asked if that was for the mooring he replied in the affirmative. "Well" I said, "there were four of us rafted together, so it will be £2.50 each, right?" "Wrong" he said, "nice try".

We set off with a fair tide, westerly wind f.5. Had a good run down. When we arrived the entrance to the river was not at all clear and several apparent entrances presented themselves, but I know only one was OK. Try as I could, the position of the marker buoys did not make sense with the latest survey. I think the buoys have moved, so Judith had a look. "Let's see, yes, no wonder you are having trouble. This is a survey for the entrance to the river Deben!"

We somehow blundered our way into the right entrance and picked up a mooring for the night, above the village of Orford. In the morning, we decided to land at Orford Quay to pick up petrol, water & provisions. The quay is a high stone construction with metal ladders to reach the top. Waiting limit is 2 hours.

After fetching the petrol, I made the boat ready to slip whilst Judith went off for some groceries. I knew it was not going to be easy to get off – no steerage from the engine of course, strong ebb tide running with us facing upstream and a strong wind blowing us on to the quay. I came up with the textbook system to impress the many locals and bystanders on top of the quay.



Bow and stern line were rigged for slip, as was a spring from the stern to a bollard forwards on the quay. The plan was then to slip bow and stern lines and motor astern with the tide assisting against the wind, then slip the spring as we motored ahead – easy, peasy.

Judith still had not returned from the shopping so I put the kettle on. When she returned I explained the system for getting off over a coffee. Engine on, bow line slipped, stern line slipped, engine in reverse, bow swings out as the spring tightens, engine in forward, the spring goes slack as we start to motor out, “*Slip the spring*” I shout to Judith “*It won’t come*” she yells back. Looking up at the bollard I see that a young girl has tied a large dog to it, locking my slip in the process. Wind and tide took over. “**Ouch!**” said Catmandu as she hit the quay. *Well we really impressed the locals.*

About a mile upstream of Orford the river changes its name to the Alde and about 9 miles from the sea makes a sharp left-hand turn. At this point it is only some 100 metres from the sea. One day I suppose it will save itself some mileage! Our destination for the day was Snape Maltings, an old brewery turned into a tourist attraction and, as far upriver as we could go without resorting to the dinghy, due to the low bridge there. The flood tide was just starting as we reached a large, shallow area called Long Reach. Ahead of us was a motor launch. The channel winds about through this reach and I noticed the motor launch had stopped.

I bet he has gone aground, I said.

Moments later – so had we!

After 15 mins, we floated off again and were the first boat to arrive at Snape. It was at least an hour before the next yacht arrived.

The next day saw us going back downriver to anchor overnight below Orford. In the morning, the wind forecast was not good, f.6 on the nose, but as our next river system, the Deben, was only another 5 miles down the coast, we decided to go. We soon realised that we had a slight problem. In order to go with the south flowing tide to the entrance to the Deben, we were having to suffer a 5-mile battle with the strong flood tide coming up the river Ore. We made it, of course, but we lost a lot of time. When we cleared the entrance to the river Ore, the wind was definitely f.6 and we were making very slow progress tacking down the coast with lots of bridgedeck slamming in the wind over tide conditions. The wind was f.7. We were not making any forward progress and things were looking a bit iffy, so it was down with the sails and on with the engine, head straight into wind. After a half-hour or so we realised that we still were making no forward progress, so it was up with the sails again and, finally, with reefed sails and full engine, we slowly tacked upwind toward the entrance to the Deben. The approach is not good at the best of times but nothing was going to stop us getting into calm waters! We motored about 3 miles upstream and picked up a mooring at Longshott, where there was a pub!

Just prior to our holiday, I had bought a small second-hand Honda outboard engine for our inflatable but only had it running in a dustbin of water to check that it worked. I had found it difficult to start but, once running, seemed OK. I had been impressed with that outboard safety feature - the lanyard, showed Judith how you put it round your wrist and, if you fell overboard, it released the stop button. We were moored about 50 metres out from the shore and about 200-m downstream from the pub, so for our evening trip ashore to the pub, to walk the dog, we launched the inflatable – the engine would not start. This coincided with a visit by the harbour master to collect his £1, yes, £1 mooring fee. He lent me a plug spanner and we got started. 2 pints and a dog walk later, we were ready to go back. Now it was dark, there was an onshore wind and 3 knots of ebb tide. Do you think the engine would start – not a chance. I pulled the starting cord until I was red in the face, then some. We’ll have to row. Now, I have not rowed anything for ages but there seemed little choice if we were going to get back to the boat. We were going in the right direction but I was getting out of breath fast. Judith grabbed hold of another boat’s mooring line while I rested. Catmandu was about 50m downstream and another 20m out. I know that we had only one chance to get to the boat, if we missed it, we should be set downstream. I rowed like a madman and we hit Catmandu amidships. Judith grabbed a cleat and we were home, exhausted, I climbed on board and secured the dinghy. As I turned to enter the cabin, I put my hand in my pocket and froze; a low groan escaped my lips. “*What is the matter*”, Judith asked. I slowly brought my hand from my pocket to reveal the engine-kill

lanyard, which I had put there when we went to the pub! The B... engine starts every time now when it is connected.

The next day saw us motorsailing up to Woodbridge, where we managed to pick up a free mooring buoy close to a landing jetty and a pleasant few hours were spent ashore exploring the town, which has a tide mill, the pool of which has been converted into a marina.

The following day we set off back downriver, finally anchoring up near Felixstowe Ferry, just inside the entrance to the Deben.

Over the next few days we went up the river Orwell, past Felixstowe, picked up a mooring at Pin Mill, went ashore in the dingy for fuel and found out they did not do any so went upstream as far as the Orwell bridge then decided not to go to Ipswich, back down to Harwich and up the river Stour, where we took the tide to Mistley Quay and walked along the river to Manningtree. In the morning we had to walk over 2 miles to find petrol but we were lucky to get a lift back in the car of a local sailing club secretary, as we had brought our main 5 gal. Tank – we were that short of fuel!

After the Stour we spent a night at anchor in Walton Backwaters – a very sheltered location, and then around to the river Colne, past Brightlingsea and up Alresford Creek, where we moored and walked to Alresford village where we bought some groceries and a spare can of petrol. When we got back to the boat we were nearly aground and just got away with inches to spare. A night was spent at anchor in the Pyefleet channel opposite Brightlingsea.

Next it was the turn of the river Blackwater. We motorsailed round and up it until we were about a half mile from Osea Island and picked up a mooring, as the light was fading. I say picked up, what I mean was picked up, dropped and lost the boathook and re-picked it up with the second boathook. It was now time to make our way back towards Lowestoft. We planned to make an early start and anchor for the night in Walton Backwaters. When we got up it was quite foggy and no wind, but we set off optimistically under engine. However, as the river Blackwater widened towards its junction with the sea, the fog increased, blotting out the land. *Not to worry*, I said, as I switched on the GPS.

Now some of you may remember there was a problem with certain Garmin GPS towards the end of August 1999. Well, we are one of the lucky ones, ours was one of them and would not acquire satellites. *So, we can’t see the land, our GPS doesn’t work, neither does the depth log. The distance and speed log is unreliable, the radio only receives and I am beginning to suspect the compass! That leaves the mobile phone and the wind direction indicator for navigation – and, of course, we would be near the shipping lanes for Harwich and Felixstowe – no worries!*

We needed to locate the Pye End fairway buoy for the approach to Walton Backwaters. Not easy coming from the south, even in good visibility. In the end we located the next buoy in and cruised in and moored up safely.

In the morning we had bright blue sky, a 5-6 tailwind and fair tide, which took us for a cracking sail all the way back to Lowestoft. A fitting end to our two-week adventure.

*‘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. Charlemagne 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 building, 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 Aldernay 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. Coarse 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. Minquiers bouy, log 21.5 averaging 7 knots under reefed main, which was quite satisfying.

Cap Frehel abeam after 4.5 hours, sailing course 145.

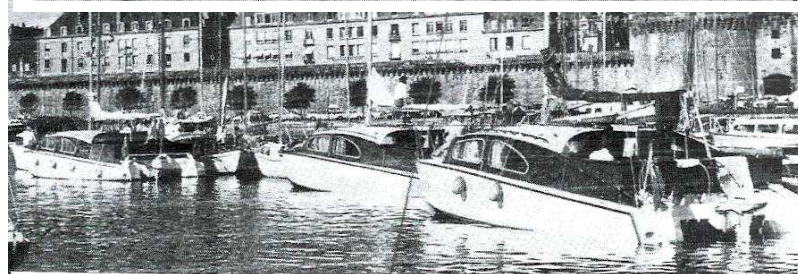
We are now approaching St. Malo and between Ile Cezembre and Grand Jardin lighthouse the wind dropped and the engine failed to start. As we had a 3knot cross tide we signaled 'Ginger Tom' on the walkie-talkie, having waved a white pullover to attract their attention. As we were on the same wavelength 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.

### **We made fast to the Mouillage Plaisance Wall in Dinan.**

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 Cancalle, 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!

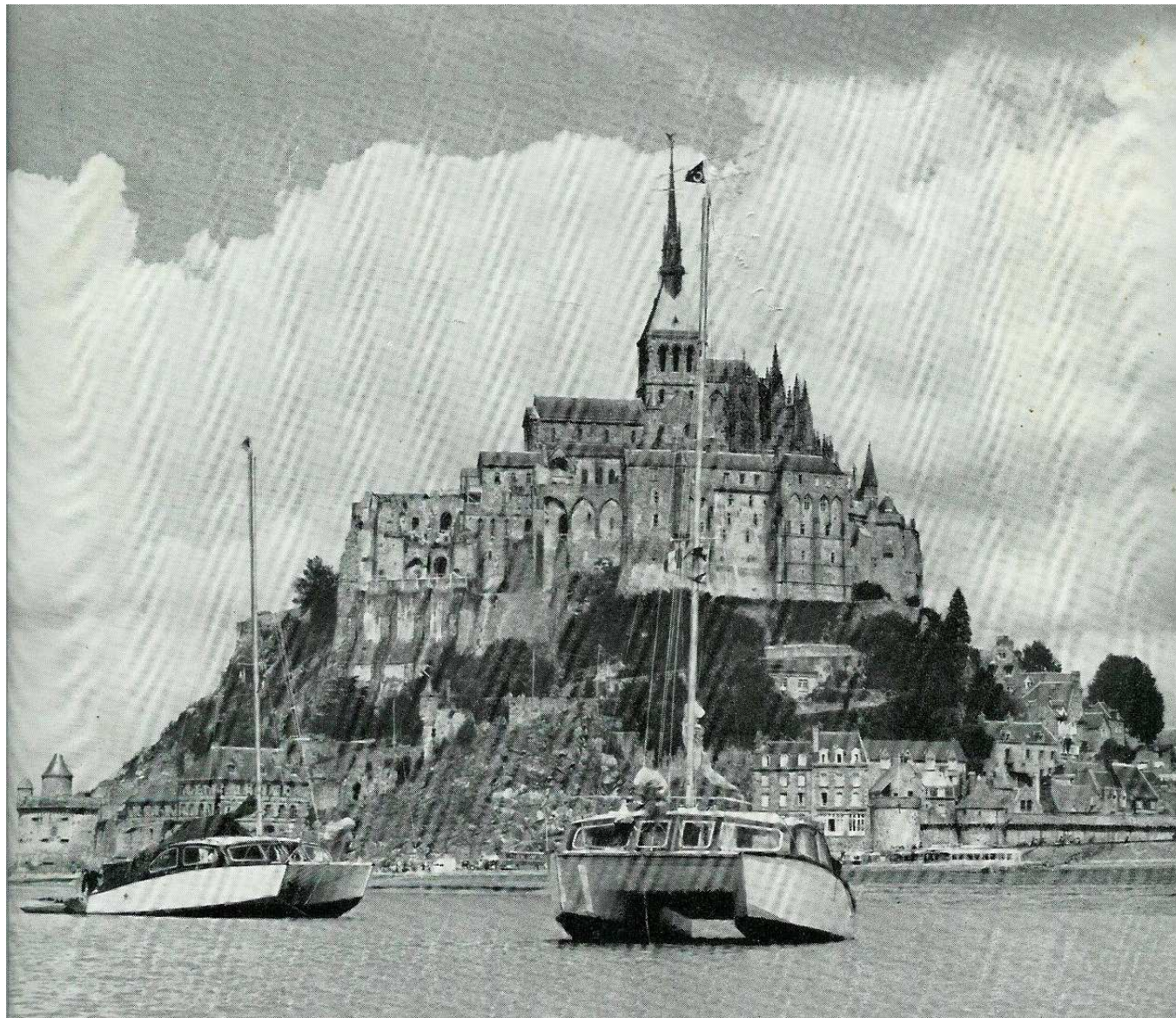
### **First Yacht ever!**

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. 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.

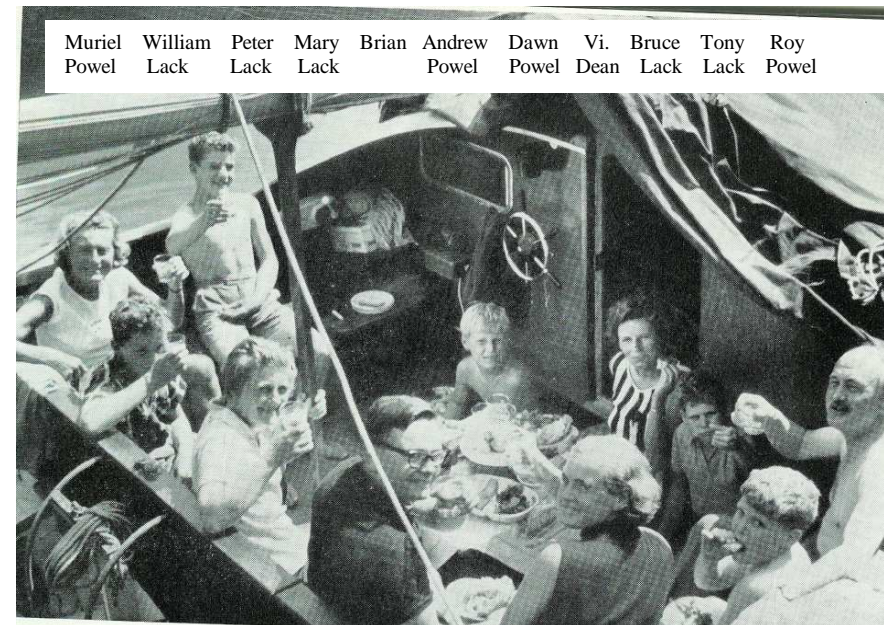


First time in one thousand years—two Bobcats sail to Mont St. Michel

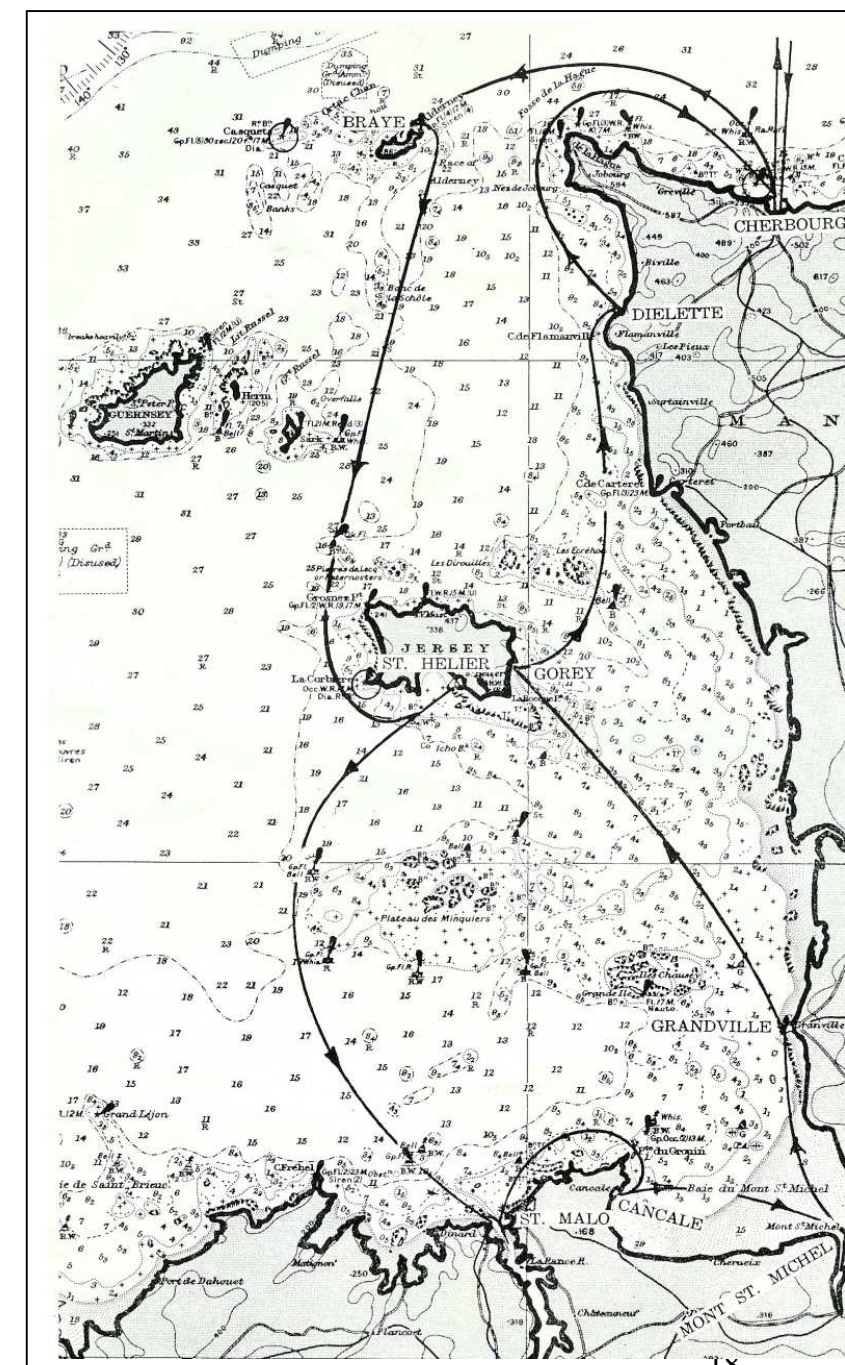
Mud, Mud, Mud- sticky glutinous stuff, every time a dinghy goes ashore everything is covered with it, and yet here come the four Lack boys, Peter, William, Bruce and Tony all immaculately turned out with their dinghy looking spotless—come to collect Andrew and take him ashore—feel ashamed of my muddy dinghy, we must send Andrew on a course to that family!

I 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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