



# 31½

## THE WILSONIAN SAILING CLUB MAGAZINE

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WILSONIAN SAILING CLUB  
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A fleet of Mirage 26s at Astros - the beginning of a sailing holiday in the Greek islands. An account of the cruise appears on page 4. (Photos by Debbie Gregson.)

The magazine of the Wilsonian Sailing Club is called "31½" because the clubhouse, the barge WILSONIAN, is moored approximately halfway between navigation buoys 31 and 32. "31½" is published four times a year.

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Copy for next issue  
to reach editor by:  
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The opinions expressed in this magazine are not necessarily those of the Editor or the Club Committee.

## BITS AND PIECES

The Grand Buffet Dance and Prizegiving, held on November 10th, was well supported by approximately 170 members and guests, proving that this type of event is more popular than the more formal dinner-dances have been in recent years. The prizegiving culminated in the presentation of the rose-bowl for the Commodore's Trophy, won for the second successive year by Mark Goodchild and Ron Jordan in Fireball, "Goldie Fender". Music was provided by The Manor, and the number of people dancing was an indication of the group's popularity. Thanks to Pat Scott for organizing everything; fortunately she has offered to do so again next year.

There is an inevitable time-lapse between the stated copy date for "31½" and the point at which the magazine is actually received by members: once contributions are received (often a lengthy process in itself!), it can take several weeks to prepare the copy and some weeks again to print it. Because of this delay, much of the material in "31½" has been out of date before it can be read. In order to combat this, a new format for "31½" has been devised.

Stories and articles of lasting interest will continue to be printed in the main magazine. In addition, there will be a supplement which will contain the more ephemeral material (class news, race reports, last minute information, etc.), the sort of thing that quickly becomes irrelevant. The idea will be to prepare the main magazine well in advance of the final copy dates

for the supplements; these copy dates will coincide approximately with the ends of the points series. The copy for the supplement can then be prepared immediately (the cooperation of Class Captains will be appreciated!), reproduced quickly and sent out promptly with the magazine while it is still of interest.

This issue sees the inclusion of our second supplement. The Secretary used the first to publish essential information which could not afford to wait for the next magazine. Number 2 mostly consists of class news and racing reports and is in the format which will probably be used in future. The only difference is that, whereas in future the magazine and supplement will be prepared in two stages, this time the sailing reports were typed during the same period as the magazine articles, with the result that the racing "news" is, as usual, rather old! Well, tomorrow is another day....

Mrs. Elizabeth Copper of the Cabin Yacht Stores, Lower Upnor, would like to thank Club members for their help and support during the past months, since she has been trying to cope with the business alone.

Finally, don't forget the Snowflake Party on January 26th: applications to Pat Scott; details in last issue; map on page 7. Judging from last year, it will be well worth finding one's way to Trottscliffe through whatever weather the winter may bring.

## SAILING SECRETARY'S *Notes*

### BOARDSAILING

It looks as if 1979 will prove to have been the year in which boardsailing took off in the U.K., although there's a long way to go before numbers reach anything like the 70,000 that there are now in France, and also before our boardsailors are anything like a match for their continental counterparts.

A few boards appeared at the Club during the summer, mostly, as it turned out, Dufour Wings; and a number of us had a lot of fun with them on the river and on holiday - I can strongly recommend taking a 'board to the south of France! For the most part, it has to be said that the 'boards were not very expertly handled, but may be that's because everyone seems to want to try one where they'd probably think twice before asking to borrow a Fireball or a Laser. Perhaps inevitably, this gave rise to a certain amount of comment and a consequential note in "31½".

Both General Committee and Sailing Committee have since discussed the question of members using sailboards at the Club and have come to the conclusion that, while there is no intention of opening the Club to boardsailing membership as such, a total prohibition of this form of sailing would be both a pity and unwarranted. They felt that given a responsible attitude by those concerned there was no reason why the use of sailboards need cause inconvenience or annoyance to other members and that Club Byelaws make adequate provision to regulate this activity.

The basic conditions under which sailboards may be brought down to and used from the Club were outlined in a notice published on the race box board during the summer: restated and amplified they are:-

1. Members must obtain the Sailing Secretary's permission before sailboards are brought onto Club premises (Byelaw 8); it goes without saying that such permission may be withdrawn if it is abused.

2. Dinghy park spaces will not be allocated to sailboards and 'boards must not be left even temporarily in positions where they obstruct gangways or boat spaces.

3. Boardsailors must comply with any directions on the use of their 'boards given to them by the Chief Duty Officer, Race Officer or other officers of the Club.

4. Members are wholly responsible for their own safety and for that of their craft, and for ensuring that they are adequately insured against third party liability. Remember it is only sensible to wear a life jacket at all times.

5. Sailboards may not be launched or used between the Club slipways and the barge, and must keep clear of the scow and of dinghies approaching or leaving the beach. The rule about keeping clear applies generally on the river and elsewhere and is in accordance with the recent I.Y.R.U. resolution that sailboards shall give way at all times to both sailing and power vessels.

6. It is suggested that as far as possible novice boardsailors should confine themselves to practising in Hoo Bay during slack water and that they should avoid the main channel and sailing between yachts moored on the trots. If possible, learn how to stay on a 'board on a pond before you go out on the river.

7. All boardsailors should be familiar with self-rescue techniques and beware the effects of fatigue and hypothermia. The RYA has recently published a booklet giving the syllabus for the boardsailing certificate, and anyone using a sailboard on the river unaccompanied should aim to have reached this standard.

Sailboarders! It's in your interest to see that these conditions are observed. Boardsailing is fun and exhilarating: contrary to what a lot of people may think at the moment, it is possible to stay on a 'board for longer than you are off it, and there is no reason why in experienced hands it should not be as safe and manoeuvrable as any dinghy. It's certainly as fast.

# Salty Tales of Yesteryear

BY SHELLBACK

## 1. "THE LOST BARREL"

The day's sailing being over, the stalwarts remained aboard "Wilsonian" to finish the day with a few pints of ale. Among them was the old chap whose sun-tanned face and twinkling blue eyes were almost as permanent a fixture on the river as was Buoy 31. How long he had been a member of the Club was unknown to everyone, himself included, but during those times when he remembered things past he was known to mutter about boats with names such as "Erica" and "Vixen".

The usually bright blue eyes showed just the faintest sign of impatience as the duty barman ceased dispensing beer to connect up a fresh barrel. This being accomplished, the light brown fluid was poured into the old chap's glass ready for the journey to the parched and waiting throat. The foaming glass was lifted and eyed with joyful anticipation; the old mouth drew close to the awaited elixir; the blue eyes closed; the lips touched the edge of the glass and he took a long pull

It was then that the dramatic change took place in those benevolent sun-tanned features - the eyes flashed open, the glass was quickly removed from the lips and the mouth twisted into a grimace. From the throat came a sound which all who heard it interpreted as: "By golly, you found it! Oi didn't think you ever would, but you 'ave!" All there remained silent except the bewildered barman who spluttered: "Found what?"

Having recovered his composure, the old chap answered, as only he could: "That damned barrel what went over the side in September o' sixty-one, when this 'ere vessel was moored 'ere. You must 'ave 'eerd about it." Then, with a slightly contemptuous glance at the young fellow still standing behind the bar with his mouth agape, he continued: "On second thinking, I don't suppose you 'ave, so I shall 'ave to inform you." So he began.

"Bertie Bourner (the Club's benefactor), 'aving provided, and furnished, this 'ere barge, thought that, in the interests and furtherance of sailing, 'e oughter victual 'is Club. So, 'aving 'ad a look around, 'e chances upon a firm who has been doin' such a service to 'er Majesty's Navy since the time we fought them Frenchies in the Napoleonic Wars, and straight way 'e asks them to do the same for 'im. That is, victual 'is Club, not fight them Frenchies.

"Well, on the day this 'ere stuff is delivered (and I can tell you an' no mistakin', there was crates and crates of the stuff, and one solit'ry beer barrel) a motley collection o' part-time amercher sailors 'as arrived to view, but more likely to sample, the proceedings. But try as they might they can't get that there motor-boat agoin', assuming o' course that they was trying to start it at the right end. Whatever it was they was adoin', they can't get the faintest little whisper from 'er, so they 'as ter use that little ol' pullin' dinghy we 'ad at one time. Anyway, one of the retinue, 'oo it turns out is employed by the benefactor, is ordered as 'ow 'e is agoin' to offer 'is services as ferryman to bring 'em all acrorss to "Wilsonian" one by one. 'Avin' done that, 'e then 'as ter act as an 'oy boat and ferry all that there licquor, and the barrel o' beer, acrorss ter "Wilsonian" as best 'e can.

"This paid 'and 'oo, it comes ter mind, 'ad a name sim'lar to one o' them saints what wrote the 'oly Gospels, is feelin' faint and somewhat wore out, and thinks as 'ow 'e'd sooner be pushin' a pen in 'is office than pullin' on a set o' oars. But the voice of authority, what pays 'is money, insists that 'e must complete 'is work and bring that there barrel from the shore and stow it aboard, and such a wish is not a command to ignore lightly. So this young 'un in 'is best city attire, and feelin' very much outer place in a small pullin' boat on the Medway, with a barrel o' beer as a passenger, sets to it.

"All goes well until this 'ere barrel is bein' 'oisted aboard. The paid 'and 'aving, as 'e said, got rid o' the paddles, is standin' up in the boat an' steadyin' the barrel before the 'ands o' them what's already aboard takes it. 'Owever, as always what 'appens when a ship is full o' captins and short on cabin-boys, a mix-up 'appens. The arms of the city-gent-cum-paid-'and-cum-ferryman is not in the 'abit of such 'eavy work, and at the first opportunity, real or thought, they withdraws their labour. The result is astonishin'.

"The barrel falls and there is a splinterin' crash as it goes through the bottom boards o' the dinghy, straight in the water, quickly followed by the city-gent-cum-paid-'and-cum-ferryman! 'Im they recovered, very wet 'e was, 'avin' been in the 'eggia, and vowin' voice o' authority or no voice o' authority, messin' about in boats was not for 'im and 'e'd stick to summat else for the future.

"The barrel o' beer? Ah! That's a different tale. Many 'ad a go at gettin' it back but none o' 'em 'ad any luck, an' all thought it gorn for ever, as I meself did - leastways, I did until you tipped that there stuff inter me mug." The embarrassed barman offered the old chap a free drink as a consolation. "Very kind o' you young man", murmured the old chap. "Most kind, I'll 'ave a scotch, ta!" Then, as an afterthought he added, slyly: "Make it a double, will yer!"

# YCA Saronic Gulf Cruise

Chris Gregson

DATE: 3rd-17th October, 1979

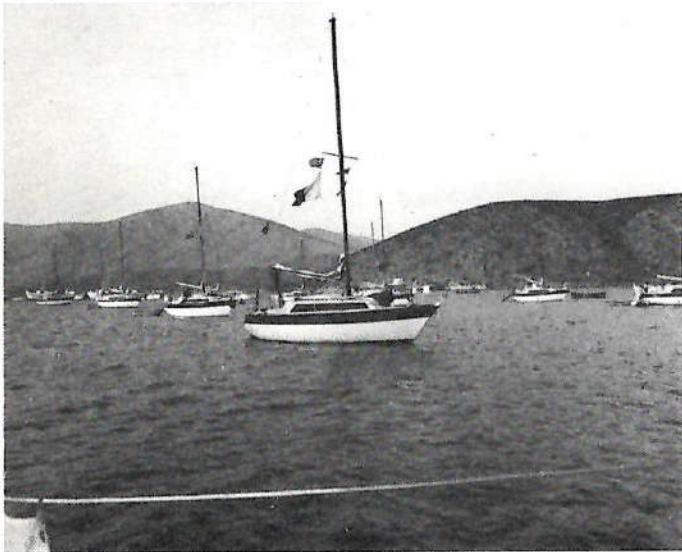
BOAT: Mirage 26

CREW: Chris and Deb Gregson plus two non-sailing friends

DAY 1 - Delayed six hours at Heathrow. Arrived in Astros at 12:00pm. Boats looked superb even at this time. Collapsed into bunks.

DAY 2 - Awoke to a bright Greek morning. Quick swim before breakfast. First briefing at 10:00am in the local taverna. The skipper was an Australian 18-foot skiff sailor. Very windy (Force 7-8) for the first day's sail so we stayed in harbour.

DAY 3 - Early morning taxi ride through citrus groves to Mycenae. Able to view ruins before the American tourist coaches arrived. Sailing at last, wind very light for the first three miles across the Argolic Gulf (plenty of time for trying the Retsina!) In afternoon, wind filled in from the south and allowed an exhilarating reach across to Koilas. Dined on Red Mullet and danced with the locals.



Anchorage at Koilas

DAY 4 - Another scorching morning. Explored abandoned 10,000 ton merchant ship; captain's bed was still made. Sailed for Spetsai with a lunch stop at Karakonisia. On arrival at Balza Creek in Spetsai discovered all the "don'ts" about anchoring! Excellent meal at Yani's taverna; terrific goat yogurt starters.

DAY 5 - Sailed to Plaka, on a plotted course no less! Flotilla of Snapdragons joined us in the evening. A severe storm and a badly designed harbour reduced orders for breakfast drastically. Another early morning taxi trip, this time to a monastery hanging on the side of a mountain.

DAY 6 - Returned via Spetsai Poulon (owned by Niarcos) to a beautiful anchorage in Porto Heli. Though overcast sailing was good. Found a terrific local taverna; meal for four came to £3.00.

DAY 7 - Fast sail to Trikerei for lunch; collected wood for barbeque. Returned to Balza Creek, more food at Yani's.

DAY 8 - Very hot. Explored very old and traditional boat yard. Quick windsurfer race around the creek. Assembled on Kinitza (inhabited) for an excellent barbeque. Returned to the wrong boat in the wrong tender.

DAY 9 - Awoke in the right boat with no tender at all. Motor sailed to Iydra. Beautiful town, though the harbour was a bit dirty.

DAY 10 - Explored Iydra and then sailed for Monastery Bay, Poros. Explored orange and olive groves. Dined at Lucas's taverna, terrific Souvlaki.

DAY 11 - Quiet day windsurfing and water skiing in Monastery Bay.

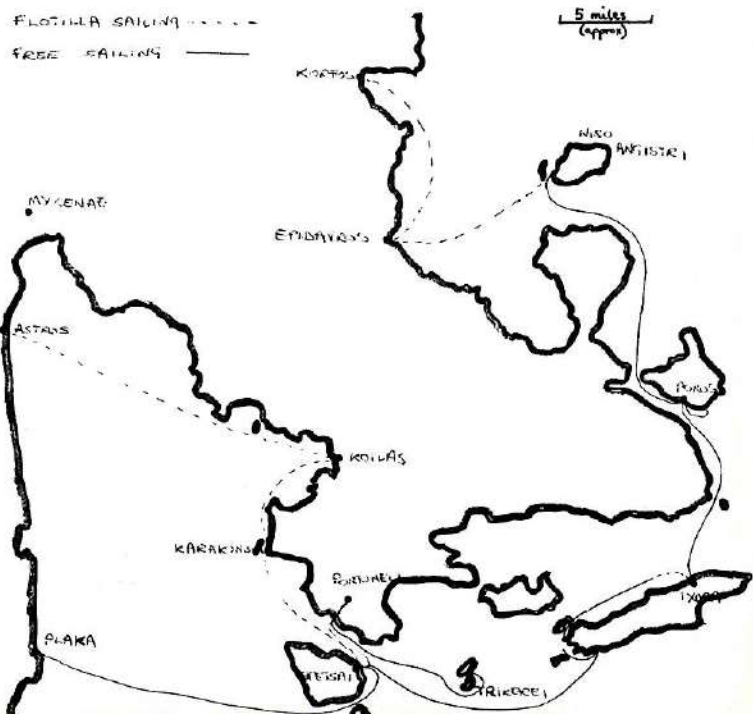
DAY 12 - Regatta day. After an indifferent start we eventually finished 4th out of 12 boats. Pumping the Genoa is very effective.

DAY 13 - Sailed to Epidavros via Niso Angistri. More windsurfing and water polo during the lunch stop.

DAY 14 - Taxi trip up to the theatre at Epidavros. Later in the day sailed for Korfos. Stopped en route for a rowing race; Debbie won the ladies' race. Arrived in Korfos and helped with the boat laying-up. Superb taverna party in the evening.

DAY 15 - Coach to Athens. Three hours visiting the Acropolis and then on to the airport for the trip home.

Comments - We have already booked for next year.



# FASTNET '79

There is a considerable difference between sailing on the Medway and taking part in an ocean race of the type of the Fastnet race. But sailing is sailing whatever the kind of boat and there can be few members of the Wilsonian Sailing Club who did not listen with anxiety to the news bulletins when this year's Fastnet race was hit by an unprecedented storm. Individual accounts of the race have been published: one has been expanded into a book. There have been allegations of yachts being ill-prepared or ill-equipped for a passage to the South coast of Ireland and back and the enquiry being conducted by the Royal Yachting Association is not yet complete. It may be some time before the full story is known. In the meantime, "31½" is privileged to present a factual first hand account of the experience of the crew of the yacht MOSIKA ALMA, a half ton "Shamrock", one of the smaller boats in the race. MOSIKA ALMA was the official entry for the Civil Service Sailing Association. Of her crew of five, three were qualified skippers and one was a professional seaman so experience was not in short supply. The benefit of that experience is well demonstrated in the article which follows, for which we are indebted to the editor of "Civil Service Sailing".

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*Before you read on this vivid story it is helpful if you bear in mind the time scale of events:*

Race started Cowes 13.30 hrs. Sat. 11th Aug.  
Passed Lands End 11.00 13th  
Dead level after 44 hours racing  
Weather forecast – Midnight of 13th  
'Gale force 7 to 9 with possible storms approaching'  
Storm force 10 struck 03.00 hrs. 14th  
First knockdown 06.00  
Second knockdown 14.40  
Storm moderated 20.00  
Set course for Lands End dawn 15th  
Sailing off Lands End 13.00 hrs.  
Arrived Falmouth 00.30 hrs. 16th  
Also realise that 194 other boats retired from the race,  
18 were abandoned and 5 sunk with the loss of 15 lives.

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*Now read on:*

After an exciting start at Cowes, with some 300 boats of all sizes and nationalities filling the Solent, the passage along the south coast of England was rather miserable due to light head winds, thick fog and rain. We made the right decision to stay away from Portland Bill, and apart from a close encounter with a large ship in thick fog off Start Point, made an uneventful passage to Lands End. As we cleared Lands End we were side by side with the Dutch boat 'Marina', which had the same handicap as ours i.e. we were dead level after forty four hours racing.

All of the other boats around were much bigger than ours and we subsequently learnt that competitors were still clearing Lands End in the late evening. Only six had lower handicaps than 'Marina' and 'Mosika Alma', so our private dual had obviously driven us well to the fore on handicap overall at that stage.

We sailed away from England across the deep Atlantic swell on course for Ireland and the Fastnet Rock some 170 miles to the north west. There was nothing particularly worrying about the weather forecast. In any case, the boat had proven itself in earlier races and we were quite prepared to drive her through a Force 8 gale if necessary. (Whilst strongly preferring a balmy Force 4).

By midnight Monday we were down to our smallest foresail, with the mainsail and boom lashed down to the deck, surfing at an indicated fifteen knots on the wave crest. Theoretically she can only reach seven knots but with modern designs the boat can lift out of the water (3 tons of lead keel and all) just like a speedboat, if there is sufficient wind – and there was!

Wind and waves were building rapidly and it was no surprise that the midnight forecast gave 'Force 7 to 9' but then adding 'possible Storm Force 10' (60 mph winds) gave a cold shock and sense of disbelief. Just as well we didn't know that this would be the worst summer storm for over fifty years with hurricane strength winds exceeding Force 10 at times.

We were then some sixty miles out and could only keep on going, away from the dangerous Cornish cliffs and hope that the forecaster was playing safe and frightening us without due cause.

From John Younghusbands' account (supplemented by the official Log) At 0035 Tuesday 14.8.79 we sighted a red distress flare on our port side directly to windward. We started our engine (although we realised it could jeopardise our chance of a place in the race). The sea by now was extremely rough and we had great difficulty dropping and stowing the sails. By 0135 we were at the position of the red flare, so with all hands on deck we each searched a particular sector. The seas at this time matched the official description of Force 9 i.e. seas covered in white foam, visibility reduced by spray. Apart from particles of boiling white foam being driven down the wave faces, it was pitch black.

We set off a white flare – there was no response. After 15 minutes, still motoring to windward in very heavy seas, we set off another white flare. Almost immediately a red flare appeared very close by, bearing 055°. We opened the throttle and motored towards the flare. In the heavy seas the stern of the boat was out of the water for long periods and consequently the engine was not getting sufficient cooling water and suddenly stopped. We could see the lights of other boats in the dark and we saw them set off white flares in response to the red. We tried in vain to restart the engine but to no avail. So we could only lie a-hull (i.e. lie side onto the seas, with the helm lashed and no sail set) hoping to be near the distressed yacht when conditions improved, presuming the other yachts had not effected a rescue.

John and Colin stayed on watch in the cockpit, wearing lifejackets and safety harnesses. The wind was still increasing and we were taking a lot of water in the cockpit. By 0300 hrs. the wind was a full force 10 and there was a real danger of the crew being swept out of the cockpit by the huge seas which had built up. Julian ordered the watch to go below, and with the hatch battened down a watch was kept from the cabin windows with an occasional look from the hatch. We knew the main dangers were either collision with another boat or to be rolled over. We lay in our bunks dozing, and although the boat was heeled well over to starboard, the motion below was not uncomfortable.



**MOSIKA ALMA**

**Julian Forrester — Skipper**  
**Mike Brighty — Mate**  
**Colin Dobner**  
**Vernon Rodda**  
**John Young-Husband**

and

At 0600 hrs. just as dawn was breaking we had our first knockdown. With a tremendous bang the boat was thrown violently over to starboard and then over to 180°. Vernon and Mike who were in the port side, were catapulted from their bunks and thrown across the cabin. As Mike was in mid-air he caught his nose on the skylight handle, deeply gashing his nose and face which bled profusely. We suspected his nose was also broken (and now know he will need an operation to correct the damage sustained). Vernon also suffered facial injuries as he was thrown head first into a bulkhead and then on to the cabin roof, which at that time was the floor! The cooker, which consisted of a Calor gas two ring grill unit with oven below, mounted in gimbals on the port side, was lifted from its mounting, thrown across the cabin and disintegrated severing the pipe in the process. The main gas tap at the Calor gas bottle had been left permanently open whilst we were working watches, and gas leaked into the cabin through the severed pipe — this only became apparent to the crew when the gas alarm (which fortunately still worked) sounded.

Julian had been kneeling on the roof of the quarter berth where he had been injured by the main anchor (from under his bunk) and was later found to have broken ribs. Fortunately the battery, which had been suspended over his head, remained secure and did not leak acid.

The violence of the knockdown is difficult to describe, but to give some idea — every cupboard and locker inside the cabin burst open and the contents were thrown about the cabin. A bottle of coffee stowed in one of the port side lockers, must have travelled with great velocity as pieces of the glass were later found embedded in the teak woodwork inside the cabin. Whilst upside down we shipped a large quantity of water which saturated the crew, sleeping bags, cushions, clothing and the electronic navigation gear.

The boat righted herself and we surveyed the mess. The entire cabin floor was covered with tins of food, bread, broken eggs, breakfast cereal, personal gear, broken glass and cushions, all afloat in about 6 inches of water. Egg yolk and cereals were sticking to the cabin walls and roof and blood from Mike and Vernon's injuries was everywhere:

We all felt rather shocked and as we gathered our senses we became aware of a heavy thumping noise against the outside of the hull. Colin slid back the cabin hatch to investigate and saw that the anchor, normally stowed in a well on the foredeck, was over the side, swinging on its chain and thumping the hull with the wind and wave motion. This created a serious problem as the anchor would undoubtedly damage the hull if left swinging. All the loose gear left in the cockpit had gone overboard, including the helmsman's seat, some spinnaker sheets and also, we noticed with dismay, one of the horseshoe lifebelts bearing the boat's name. We hoped we would be safely back on land before that was picked up.

Colin donned his safety harness and ventured out to retrieve the anchor. As he removed the top washboard in the hatch to make his exit, a gust of wind, estimated to be about 70 mph whipped the board out of his hand and over the side.

His mission accomplished and the anchor re-stowed and securely lashed down, Colin returned to the relative comfort of the cabin, where the rest of the crew were pondering the latest problem, how to block the 2 ft. x 1 ft. hole left by the missing washboard as without it, another knockdown would surely sink us.

At this time the swell LOOKED about 40 to 50 feet high, with a 10 foot cross sea running at an angle and forming vertical pyramidal crests at irregular intervals. (All grey and spiralling, they were both awesome and breathtakingly beautiful — I can see them now as I write J.F.) Presumably some exceptional combination of wave and swell had produced a massive wave form that had just rolled us up into itself on passing. With the wind screaming and the shock of the knockdown, it was impossible to think except in slow motion.

It seemed obvious that a liferaft would not survive (anyway our training was to stay with the boat) but it was unsafe to remain lying ahull and equally unsafe to run off before the waves with a washboard missing. The crew in a state of injury and shock with the danger of having to be exposed in the open cockpit. Also the danger loomed ahead of being on a lee shore in four or five hours time. So the first thing to do was to make a new washboard.

We searched the boat for a suitable piece of wood, large enough and strong enough to do the job, and finally settled for one of the plywood boards forming the base of the bunk in the forward cabin. This we quickly removed and held against the hole in the hatch, marking with pencil

lines the shape of the holes on the board. The only saw on board was a hacksaw and we had three sides of the board to cut. Julian, Vernon and John each cut one side. This was an extremely difficult task with the wild motion of the boat. Also we could only cut down the board for about 3 inches when the frame of the hacksaw would halt any further progress and then had to make another cut at right angles to remove a 3 inch square piece of wood, before continuing down the marked line. It took some considerable time to cut the board to shape — probably well over an hour, during which time we could have been knocked over and sunk at any time by the mountainous seas. The board was finally finished and we tried it in the hatch — it fitted perfectly. With a great sense of relief we relaxed again, finished tidying up the cabin and returned to our bunks. We were all still soaked to the skin and feeling the cold but found some comfort resting in our boots and oilskins inside polythene 'survival bags'.

Having lain a-hull successfully for an hour after the knockdown and since everyone was fairly exhausted (it had proved impossible to avoid being sick while cutting the replacement washboard) it now seemed sensible to continue lying ahull. The storm had been blowing for some six hours and surely couldn't keep blowing for much longer.

But at 1440 hrs. with the wind still screaming and the seas massive, we had our second knockdown! Again a terrific bang and the crew all tumbling about the cabin. Again the locker doors burst open and spewed their contents into the cabin; the cooker (earlier reassembled) flew off its gimbals and fell to pieces once again. The boat righted herself more slowly than the first time and she had taken in a lot more water. Again we had the terrible feeling of shock, but fortunately no further physical injuries were suffered. We looked through the skylight to see if the mast was still there — it was, but the radar reflector, which had been hoisted on a signal halyard, was wrapped around the mast like a piece of tin, due to the impact of the wave. Also, the masthead fittings were all hanging at a crazy angle.

We had been lying ahull for over 12 hours now and had suffered two knockdowns, the thought of a third was unbearable so Julian decided to change tactics and try running before the storm. Mike and Colin climbed out into the cockpit, unlashed the helm and paid her off stern on to the waves. We streamed every warp and sheet that we could lay hands on, over the stern, and steered to keep her stern on to the weather. We did short watches on the helm, securely lashed in our safety harnesses, the off watch below sorting out the mess in the cabin. The cooker was now beyond repair so we couldn't make a hot drink or prepare any hot food, besides which the "sniffer alarm" was still indicating gas in the bilge, so striking a match in the cabin was out of the question. All the bread, biscuits etc. were soaked in sea water, but we opened a tin of corned beef and found a packet of dehydrated orange juice still intact, with which we made a drink. We still had plenty of chocolate bars and Kendal Mint cake etc., so we wouldn't starve.

By 16.00 hrs. we could detect a moderation in the wind strength. This was confirmed in the 17.50 weather forecast and although the seas were still huge, we dared to think that we might have seen through the worst.

By 2000 hrs. the wind had moderated sufficiently for us to set the storm jib. Throughout the storm Julian had tried to keep track of our course and speed and had a pretty good idea of our Dead Reckoning position. The race by this time had been well and truly abandoned by us and our first concern was to get medical attention for Mike and Vernon. We all needed to dry our clothes and sleeping bags, and we could all do with a hot meal.

Being a fin and skeg designed boat we needed a deep water harbour, preferably with a marina as we had no dinghy on board. We consulted the chart and we had two choices — Milford Haven or Penzance, with Falmouth not much further on if the lock gates were shut. We settled for Penzance as we eventually had to get the boat back to her base in Poole.

We reached across the waves all through the night under a storm jib. At 04.15 we sighted a red distress flare bearing 005° and altered course to see if we could be of any assistance, arriving on the scene just as dawn was breaking but a lifeboat was already there with a fishing boat and a yacht in tow. We checked our position with the coxwain of the lifeboat and he took the name of our vessel. We then set course 180° for Lands End. The wind by now was force 5 - 6 and we set a treble reefed main and reefed No. 3 genoa. We hoped the lifeboat had reported seeing us as we knew our relations at home would be concerned for our safety.

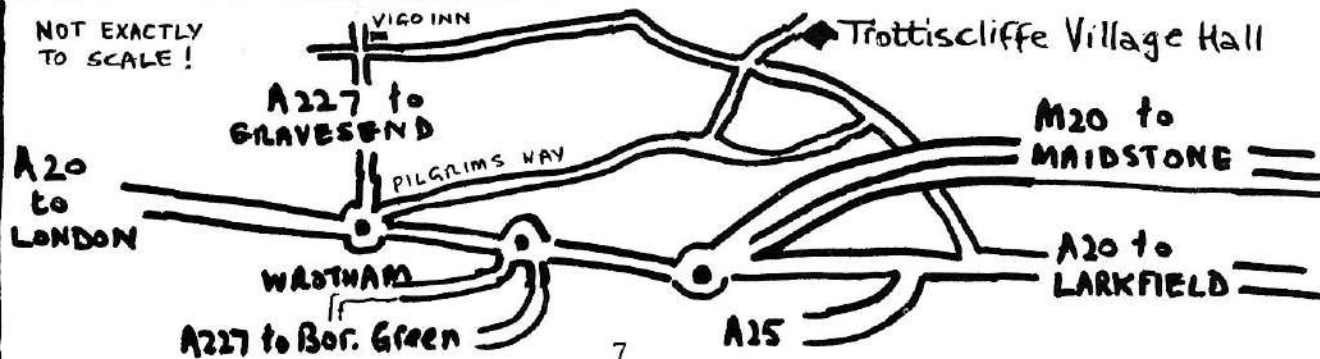
At approximately 1100 hrs. a Royal Navy helicopter hovered above our masthead and we indicated that we were O.K. About an hour later an R.A.F. helicopter came to look at us and we realised that there was a full scale search going on. We also knew we would have been reported as our sail number was clearly visible on the mainsail.

The wind was lessening all the time by now and the sun came out so we spread all the clothing and sleeping bags we could on deck in an attempt to dry them out and made the happy discovery of an intact bottle of whisky in the bilge.

We rounded Lands End at 13.00 hrs and knowing we had missed the lock gate at Penzance, set a course round the Lizard for Falmouth, arriving in the harbour in good order at 00.30 hrs in the morning of the 16th; relieved at being able to telephone home, at least to say 'all was well!' — Our families and friends had, if anything, a worse time than we did. Donald Bent, Mosika's owner, had done a magnificent job in keeping them advised of the little information that was available.

Roy and Joan Coote gave unstinting hospitality at Falmouth to five bedraggled strangers and on slipping the boat for inspection at Myler creek, we were greeted by Brian and Linda Benson and family (CSSA members) who promptly took charge of our comfort. Mosika was found to have her rudder stock (¾ steel) bent 20° to Starboard and her engine transmission wrecked but otherwise relatively unscathed.

**SNOWFLAKE  
PARTY 26 JAN.  
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