

UKOBA

Including the Southern Speed Trophy and the Putney/Calais

Championship

If you think you've got troubles take a look at the recent life-style of Mr Peter Bloomfield and his quest for offshore honours in his Class III Stapley catamaran, Pobjoy Mint Two.

This tale of human endeavour begins with the Southern Speed Trophy in the Solent, when our magnificent summer reached a new low and many would-be competitors turned back before they had even reached the start line of what nowadays we take for granted . . . a shortened course.

Our Peter remained firm in his resolve, like any hero of a story, and out into the torrid waters he ploughed, ready to do battle against fellow competitors and blasted elements. It was cold and wet, but soon for Bloomfield it was to be considerably colder and definitely wetter — he flipped his boat on the second lap passed Beaulieu. Peter himself will take up the tale:

'The conditions were incredible. The water was calm enough to go really fast, but there was a Force 5 under the tunnel.

'We were going about 90 mph, and I'm not a one to talk in telephone numbers. It was the fastest that I have ever been in a boat.

'The troughs were quite deep and there was phenomenal torque, and either through the battering or through lack of water-cooling the leg went. When you lose the drive on the prop the back of the boat sits down and the wind takes hold.

'The boat went upwards to a vertical position and, although I instantly throttled off, the right hand engine was still running. The boat pirouetted 360 degrees and came down on the left hand side. As soon as we hit the water I pushed myself out and amazingly Jim Baker and I came out unscathed.

'The rescue was incredible. Within minutes three competitors were there along with three rescue craft. Tom and Vera Wilmott, who were 62 and 63 years old rescued us and it couldn't have been by nicer people.

'But the left hand side of Pobjoy Mint Two was smashed about 10 feet down and we had holed the petrol tank and I had lost my back cushion.

'With the Toleman Putney-Calais the next weekend there wasn't any time to lose and we took the boat back to Ray Stapley's yard and he began work on it the next day.

'We had one or two dramas during the week. On the Tuesday while Jim was repairing the fuel tank it blew up. It flew 22

feet in the air and landed flat. As we couldn't buy another one for three weeks we got some steel and welded a brand new one.

'We worked non-stop and I spent three nights sleeping on a sofa, but somehow we made it to Putney.'

Fine, you might think. They've made it. True British grit has won through. Or did it?

'We got the boat into the water, but in the rush we had put the propellers in the wrong boxes and instead of going forward — we went backwards. As the tide was rushing out we swapped the props on the way down to the start at Tower Bridge.

'In fact, Jim re-upholstered the seat on the way there, too, but we had four minutes to spare before the start. I think it was amazing that the boat went at all, but we were down on power on the right engine



Peter Bloomfield right and Jim Baker had more than their fair share of problems.

and had numerous electrical problems. 'Although we were slow down the River we managed to get into 2nd IIIId slot by Ramsgate and then off we went to France. By Calais we had the leaders, Miss Avia Watches in sight and we managed to draw level with Jus Gus about two miles off South Goodwin.

'Then bad luck struck again and we broke a prop shaft. Jus Gus spun a prop at the same time and we sat within a mile of one another.

'Anyway we set about removing nuts from the casing and the tie bars and after one and a half hours we sort of fixed one engine, which we trimmed to horizontal. We jammed the throttle wide open and when I sat on the front we managed after 10 minutes to get on the plane. Going at the fantastic speed of 35 mph we got to Ramsgate.

'We thought that we may as well finish (everyone else thought we were mad) and we managed to do 95 miles back to Tower Bridge. About 15 miles from Tower Bridge

we went passed Brian Nash being towed in, so it was worth it. Now we are leading the UKOBA Class III Championships!'

The dramas and catastrophes were not left exclusively to our determined IIIId warrior, Bloomfield, in fact the Toleman Putney-Calais turned out to be as eventful as all the other years.

For the first time the race was opened up to Class I and II boats and Derek and Adrian Pobjoy certainly had a hay-day in these classes taking the honours in style.

Jan Birnie who has made an impact in IIIId this season in Miss Avia Watches won all the three stages, arriving first in Ramsgate then in Calais and back to Ramsgate again.

Gravesend is quite an appropriate name for the catastrophe that happened on Birnie's run back to Tower Bridge. Here a battery fault put him out of the running after leading the pack for so long.

The consistent driving of Barry Drinkwater and his navigator Mike Mantle gave them the overall victory. This was more than a feat as this was the first time that this Phantom, sponsored by Bentley's Oyster Bar, and raced and the intrepid team had worked until five minutes before scrutineering preparing their new outfit.

The Putney-Calais has always been a race, like any marathon event, where good navigation and careful driving coupled with engines that never miss a beat wins the day.

First to the chequered flag was, in fact, Robert Cook in Aquaglide but he had to be content with second overall, 30.91 minutes behind the Drinkwater/Mantle combo on elapsed time.

The Toleman twins seem to bring publicity or drama to every Toleman-sponsored race. This time the portion of the nation who watches the news will have seen their dramatic air-sea rescue about ten miles off France, after their boat had gone through a wave rather than over it. Rumour has it that Ted Toleman is working on an intercom system between boats so that he can keep his watchful eye over the twins!

The intrepid team of Bill Matcham and Terry Hedges took Class III B and sixth overall and the Cruiser class was won by the enthusiastic competitor, David Graham-Smith in Splash Down.

For the record Peter Bloomfield and Jim Baker finished an amazing seventh overall which shows along with the jubilant winners Barry Drinkwater and Mike Mantle what a little tenacity, a lot of teamwork and masses of effort can achieve.

Results:

Southern Speed Trophy

Class I — Derek Pobjoy, Uno Mint Jewellery; Class II — John Craxford, Romans Sabre (45.12 knots); Class IIIId — Paul Sinclair, Gus It; Class IIIC — Geoff Stuart, Marshan Warrior; Cruiser Class C — Stewart Mardigras.

Toleman Putney-Calais-Putney

Class I — Derek Pobjoy, Uno Pobjoy Mint, average speed 56.29; Class II — Adrian Pobjoy, Pobjoy Mint, 37.57; Class IIIId — Barry Drinkwater/Mike Mantle, Bentley's Oyster Bar 45.51,1; Robert Cook/Joe Donohoo, Aquaglide 40.61,2; Class IIIC (waiting confirmation) — Peter Ash/N Murnig, Panache Two 37.95,1; Geoff Stuart/N Murray Marshan Warrior 35.71,2; Class IIIB — Bill Matcham/Terry Hedges Intrepid 32.41,1; Cruiser Class — D Graham Smith/P Warner Splash Down 33.00,1.

The winning duo of Barry Drinkwater and Mike Mantle.

