

Around the world in eleven months

by Ross Drummond

My childhood and teenage years were spent in Dunbar, where my father was a creel fisherman. As a result, the sea has always held a fascination for me.

It was no surprise then that in my early adult life, while working down in London, I jumped at the chance to do some sailing on the Solent with the work's Sailing Club. I had only ever sailed before on my dad's old yacht without any real form of teaching, and this seemed like an opportunity to gain some more skills and knowledge while enjoying myself socially at the same time. The club came about when two yacht owners working in the company wanted to enter the T&N industry sailing challenge, which is made up of teams from different companies. They advertised for crew members from within the company, and then trained up the volunteers. This had the added benefit for them of having trained, trusted crew they could call on for entering races themselves on their own yachts.

The industry sailing challenge consisted of match racing (identical yachts, therefore no handicap system required) twice around the Isle of Wight. We entered this event three years in a row, reaching the final once so, what with all the practicing we were doing and the private racing on the owners' yachts, I got a reasonable amount of sailing in and a good grounding in "round the cans (buoys)" racing in the Solent over those three years.

In 1994 I was out racing on the Solent when some of the Whitbread round the world fleet returned to Britain. The sight of these magnificent fully crewed global racers being followed by a vast throng of spectator boats really struck a chord with me and it was then that I think I had my first inspiration, of thinking it would be a great idea to sail around the world.

On leaving my job in London in 1996 and moving to the North-East I unwittingly severed my ties with sailing and never really thought any more about it until I came across an article in the press for sailing around the world for the millennium. This re-triggered the idea and I wrote for an application form for the "Times-Clipper 2000".

This was a fully crewed, amateur, circumnavigation yacht race, where teams made up of the paying public race around the world on identical yachts skippered by a professional paid skipper. This race is held every 2-3 years, run

by a company called Clipper-Ventures. The particular race I applied for starting in 2000 was being sponsored by The Times newspaper and hence was called the "Times-Clipper 2000" (TC2000). For anyone who has heard of this form of event the most famous one was the BT Global Challenge (BT), initially called the British Steel Challenge, run by the Challenge Company. The main two differences between the two events were the BT route went into the Southern Ocean (further south than 40° S latitude) and was "west about" – against the prevailing winds, whereas the TC2000 transited the Panama Canal, negating the need to venture into the Southern Ocean and it was an "east about" route, therefore predominantly with the prevailing winds.

I wasn't aware of this distinction when I applied and I actually wrote to both companies. However the BT was starting in 1999 and finishing in 2000, whereas the TC2000 was starting in 2000 and finishing in 2001. This meant I was too late to obtain a place on the BT as it was already full, but the TC2000 was still taking on crew. The first step in the selection process was an interview at the companies HQ. Being a bit naïve I assumed it was a chance for the company to select the best people and discard the ones deemed unsuitable or less able, but this was not the case. In hindsight what they were trying to do was make sure everyone was fully aware of what they were letting themselves in for, in short trying to scare people off.

From their point of view they didn't want to be taking on anyone who was expecting a private cabin or their meals served to them and the dishes cleared and washed up by the staff. They were impressing on the applicants that they would be expected to sleep in a cramped, normally damp, hot & humid, communal area possibly even "hot-bedding" (sharing your bed with somebody on the other watch, so called because when you came off watch and crawled into your bunk it would still be warm from them leaving it). They also made sure you were aware that you would be expected to take a fair-share of the domestic duties, e.g. cooking, cleaning, provisioning, washing the heads (boat-toilets), engine maintenance, sail maintenance, scrubbing the boat etc. In short they were ensuring you knew this was no pleasure cruise, and you could even be letting yourself in for a lot of hardship. In the previous Clipper races, crews had occasionally been restricted to washing only in salt water, had been put on water rations, and had even had to resort to the "bucket & chuck-it" version of toileting, which is fairly self explanatory. None of this worried me as I'd seen, or at least heard about, this sort of thing while being involved in sailing in the Solent. If anything it actually made me more eager as it was sounding more and more exciting and adventurous.

It was during this interview that the differences between the BT and TC2000 became apparent, and it did lead me to wonder about achievement and satisfaction. Would I be happy enough with my achievement of sailing round the world knowing I'd never been "round the Horn" and had done it "the easy way" with the prevailing winds? My wife also questioned this, and got no real answer. How could I tell until afterwards? Although I think her worries were more that I'd want to go on and participate in the BT at a later date to accomplish these things as well!

Shortly after the interview I received my acceptance letter, I was apparently deemed to be at the right level of insanity - mad enough to want to pay for the privilege of sailing around the world but not too mad that they had to refuse my application. The next stage was the training. All crew members would receive training assuming no previous sailing knowledge (and rightly so as numerous participants did have no previous experience). This would be done in three parts. Part A was a week's intensive sailing from Lanzerote on the Clipper 60 boats that we would be using in the race. Part B was another week's sailing but this time from Southampton, and Part C was to consist of races around the south coast of Britain, the number of which you were required to do being dependant on how many legs of the circumnavigation you were participating in. The race was split into six different "legs" and you could buy a crew position on any number of legs you required, thus each crew would have a number of circumnavigators or "round-the-worlders (six legs)", some "half-wayers (three legs)" and numerous "leggers" (one to two legs). Parts A & B of the training were to be done prior to "crew allocation", that is you would be training with randomly selected crew that most likely would be your opposition in the TC2000, whereas Part C was scheduled in the month before the start and would be on your allocated yacht with your own crew members.

The reasoning behind holding the Part A training in Lanzerote, was to allow the trainees to experience ocean conditions from the word go. As soon as the yachts left the harbour they were in the Atlantic Ocean, with ocean swells and weather. The "clipper 60" boats that we were sailing were cutter-rigged Bermudan sloops, with hanked-on foresails and running backstays. They were designed this way deliberately to be manually intensive, thus giving everybody on the watch something to do during a manoeuvre and making team work all the more necessary.

The training was very thorough, systematically going through rigging the yacht correctly, then each sail - what it did, how it should be handled and operated,

then moving onto points of sail, beating, fine-reaching, broad reaching & running. Then yacht manoeuvres, from reefing, sail changes, tacking, gybing with the white sails, all the way through to raising, gybing and dropping the spinnaker. The spinnaker is the large, colourful parachute-like sail at the front of the yacht, which is used for downwind sailing. It is the most labour-intensive sail to use, the most difficult one to control, and the sail most likely to give you trouble, anything from wrapping it around your forestay, to ripping it, or even broaching the yacht. When a yacht broaches, the power of the wind in the sail (normally a spinnaker) pulls the boat right over on its side, so the mast is in the water and the keel and rudder are out of the water, not a pleasant position to be in, and it is very difficult to move around the yacht to try and put things right when the deck is vertical instead of horizontal.

During the first few days of the Part A training, while we were all still learning the basics and getting used to working the boat, we were only sailing through the day and returning to port in the evening. However for the last few days of the week we left port and stayed out for three days and nights. This meant setting up a watch system (rota) through the night where your watch is in charge of the yacht for a period of time (in our case two hours) then you change around, or swap, watches and you get to sleep below for two hours. So for the last three days the entire crew was up during the day being drilled and taught about sailing and during the night we were continuously being woken up to sail the yacht for two hours then going back to our bunks, thus only sleeping half the night. During this period we were also put on a "water conservation" system to help conserve the water on-board. This meant that we were allowed as much drinking water as we wished, in fact encouraged to drink so as not to de-hydrate, but there was no using fresh water for washing, that included cooking utensils, crockery, as well as ourselves. We were using sea water for the washing-up and wet-wipes (or baby wipes) for personal hygiene. The one exception was brushing our teeth, where we were allowed to use a mug of fresh water. We found out later that this was completely unnecessary as the boats were equipped with water-makers; small desalination units that produce drinking water from salt water; which are obviously required for the larger ocean crossings. Also we noticed that the portions of meals we were getting were rather on the small side – although nobody complained at the time. This was all done to try and create some of the worst situations we could find ourselves in during the race, once again to make sure everyone was aware of what they were letting themselves in for.

In reality, during the race we had as much food as we wanted. I myself got a bit of a reputation for always being first to get seconds, with ample biscuits and chocolate bars to keep my energy up through the night watches. Our calorific intake must have been huge, but then just standing on a rolling yacht is supposed to burn as many calories as a brisk walk, never mind all the physical effort that went into sail changes and yacht manoeuvres. Most of the crew on the race finished lighter than when they started, quite considerably in some cases. I was no exception being over half a stone lighter at the end of the circumnavigation. However I failed to switch my eating habits back to normal on-shore levels, so quickly put all the weight (plus some) back on again when I settled into a more sedentary life style!

The one rule that was drilled into us during the training was – “The boat comes first”. While at sea the boat is not only your home and transport, but is also your life support system. If anything went wrong with it, from a torn sail, a leaking fuel hose, a broken rudder, no matter how small, it would have an effect on our lives, sometimes just making it more awkward, but it could be life-threatening. Sir Robin Knox Johnston, Clipper-Ventures chairman, would frequently back this up personally with his mantra of “ Boat, Crew, Yourself – in that order”. That way you have 14 other people looking after you before themselves.

During the Part A training, it became obvious how much of a bonding experience sailing can be. We all turned up in Lanzerote airport not knowing anyone else on the training and by the end of the strenuous week’s training we were all tired and weary but felt like we’d known each other for years and were already extending open invitations to each other, “If you’re ever up North, you must stop by for an evening!” – knowing that in reality these invites wouldn’t be taken up, but would actually be fun if they were. I think it is a combination of relying on your crew-members, the “shared experience” factor and living on top of each other that does this. While you are “offwatch” trying to get some well earned rest you are literally putting your life in your crew-members hands. This subconsciously builds trust and respect.

The Part B training followed a similar theme to the Part A. It was still randomly selected crew from the whole fleet but this time the emphasis was more on racing than just sailing. The skippers training us were the selected skippers for the TC2000 and we were sailing out of Southampton instead of Lanzerote. Once again it was a physically tiring and mentally exhausting experience, and once again we ended the week with strong bonds towards our fellow crew-members. However this time we were given a personal debriefing at the end of the week on

how we did, and how that particular skipper saw us fitting into an overall crew. I'm assuming these reports were then later used to try and even out the abilities over the eight boats racing.

At this point I was told that my training skipper expected me to be to be made a "watch leader". This is a sort of second-in-command position after the skipper - it is the watch leader who makes all decisions when the skipper is not available (normally due to sleeping, the main decision being "should the skipper be woken up?") This came as a bit of a surprise to me as I was looking as far as being a bow-man (the bow-man is the crew member in charge of all the happenings at the bow (front, or "pointy-end") of the boat. It is also the most photographed crew position as it's normally the bow-man who dangles from a harness underneath the spinnaker during some manoeuvres). That was the position I had taken up during my previous sailing experience and the place I felt most comfortable with. I hadn't bargained on the fact that my previous experience with racing yachts, albeit "around-the-cans", combined with my easy going character and tact, had put me in the forerunning for the most prestigious of crew positions in the race. The positions within my allotted crew however would be down to the skipper of the boat I was allotted to and not the training skipper at the time.

A few months later all the accepted crew-members were gathered at St Catherine's Dock in London for the official crew allocation announcement. Each yacht was being sponsored by a British city and the yachts were taking the city's name. The yachts in the race were named *Bristol Clipper*, *Glasgow Clipper*, *Jersey Clipper*, *Leeds Clipper*, *Liverpool Clipper*, *London Clipper*, *Plymouth Clipper* and *Portsmouth Clipper*. Being born and raised in Scotland I had put in a request to be allocated to *Glasgow Clipper*, the only Scottish city in the race. My request was granted and I was allocated a position onboard *Glasgow Clipper*, and duly went on to meet the rest of the boat's crew. In hindsight the crew of *Glasgow Clipper* was a slightly different make-up than that of the other boats. Glasgow City Council had found local companies willing to sponsor a number of different people for a single leg of the race and had run a competition locally to allocate these people. So, our crew had two people in each leg that had not paid directly for their place. This meant we had a greater number of local crew members, we had a greater number of people doing only one leg and we generally had a greater mix of social backgrounds. I didn't see this as any advantage or disadvantage at the time, as everyone was receiving the same training anyway, and even with hindsight, I still don't think it made much difference from the sailing point of view.

I left my home in Newcastle about a month before the start of the race, and moved down to Southampton to live on the boat and help prepare her for the circumnavigation. It was at this stage I found out that the *Glasgow Clipper* skipper that I had met at London had been relieved of his position and a new one was to be allocated to us before the start of the race. This did mean that during the build-up of boat preparations and even some of the Part C training races, that *Glasgow Clipper* would be allocated a temporary skipper. I don't think this affected us dramatically but it did mean that during the first few weeks of the race our skipper was probably not as *au fait* with the boats - how they handle, what best sails to use for certain wind conditions, etc.

As the month prior to the start continued we got to know our boat very well and found ourselves doing jobs that we would never have dreamed of before, changing the injectors on a diesel engine, dismantling and overhauling winches, changing all the running and standing rigging on the yacht and this was just the general preparation. Some of the crew were given more specific jobs as well – mechanics, who were given diesel engine courses - sail-repairers, who went on specific sail courses – victualers, who were in charge of ordering and stocking all the food on-board - first-aiders, who were given a basic grounding in the medical emergencies we could encounter. As I had previously been involved in first aid I volunteered for this. All the crew members in the fleet who had medical - related professions, had been split between the boats to try and ensure each yacht had some form of medical experience on-board. Our crew had a retired GP who had signed up to sail the first half of the race; thereafter we had no medical experience apart from the first-aid training of the professional skipper. During the medical course we were taken through the sort of normal injuries and incidents that can and do happen, ranging from dehydration and sun-burn, to “sailors-bum” (a form of rash/spots caused by the sweaty, salty, damp conditions on board - which a high percentage of us suffered from at one stage during the race) to trench-foot, all the way up to broken limbs/ribs, severed fingers, concussion and head injuries. That's not to mention all the normal stuff that people can catch/contract while travelling, from flu to typhoid. It became obvious that this was no normal first-aid course, and when we were shown how to inject people (practising on oranges) and even perform surgical stitches. I was beginning to wonder what I'd got myself into, especially when we were told that each boat would be carrying morphine and a couple of body-bags for the real worst case scenarios. It was made very clear to us however that the responsibility for administering all this would fall firstly on the allocated medical crew-member of the boat and secondly to the skipper, before we would have to step in, which did come as a large relief. As far as our boat was concerned, the worst

that we had to deal with was sea-sickness (in varying degrees), sunburn, dehydration, colds, a bruised back and one case of inadvertent overdose of sea-sickness patches. Within the whole fleet though, there was a bad head-injury (caused by contact with a swinging boom), who was airlifted off the boat during the training races, and an appendicitis who had to wait until reaching Salvador in Brazil to be rushed to hospital as soon as she was ashore.

It was during the Part C training races that we first met our full-time skipper; he was a long-haired vegetarian who lived on a housing commune in Wales. It was obvious from the start that he had an easy-going character, a great sense of humour and an almost instinctive feel for sailing. His sailing C.V. did seem a bit thin on ocean crossings and ocean racing, but at that point he was far more knowledgeable than us and we were grateful to have a full time leader. We knew we were going to get to know him and each other much more intimately than we knew a lot of our friends, over the course of the next year.

After the training races the skipper, or “Skippy” as we started calling him, pulled me aside to tell me he wanted me to be a watch-leader. I was pleased with this appointment as it was not only an indication of how he rated my sailing and people skills but it also meant I would be exempt from the “mother watch”. The watch system he was proposing was a two watch system where every day one person from each would be removed from sailing duties and placed on the mother watch. For the rest of the day these two people would be in charge of all the domestic chores on the yacht, cooking, washing up and general boat cleaning – especially the toilets (or heads) which were washed once a day. Although being on the mother watch meant you were basically a galley slave for the day it did give you time off from sailing and it also meant a full night’s sleep afterwards before re-joining your watch the next day. Not being available for mother watch did mean I would be on the watch system 24 hours a day, (four hours on-watch, four hours-off watch during the day and three hours on and three hours off during the night), with no respite.

One of the last boat preparations to happen was that of stocking the victuals onto the boat. This was to become a large part of the continuing preparation ritual in the stop-over ports but the first one (and thus largest) was a sight to behold. Although we were only taking perishables to last until Portugal we were loading up the main supplies for a third of the way round. As much packaging as possible was removed, even down to the labels around cans and the content written on the can with permanent marker. This was not done only for weight and space but also for infestation reasons. Numerous insects including

cockroaches can and do lay eggs in the cardboard trays. Also the bulk of our cans were being stored in the boat bilges where they would get damp and wet thus making the paper label very ineffective anyway. The vast pile of food for one boat alone was astounding but to see enough for eight boats with 15 people per boat, to cover a duration of three months all being delivered to the quay then slowly and systematically being taken below decks and stored away was actually quite shocking. For the short races (three to four days long) we could take enough fresh fruit, vegetables, meat, bread and dairy products to last the duration but as the boats did not have any fridge or freezer then this was just completely out of the question for the longer periods of sailing (the longest period we were at sea was 26 days - Portugal to Cuba). For these periods, when the fresh food ran out (or went off), we had to fall back on canned fruit and vegetables, powdered milk and juice, and baking our own bread.

The jobs list around the boat never seemed to get any shorter. Job priorities were juggled up and down the list, and the days rolled on towards the big day, the start of the race, which was quite an odd day full of climaxes and anti-climaxes. There was a large party the night before, in a marquee on the quay side, which although it was enjoyable, did seem to finish with most people wandering off early, whether due to nerves, or spending a last night with loved ones, or even just out of preparation for the "big day tomorrow". I still remember the morning very vividly. It was so quiet and still on the quayside with a red sun-rise, then a noise getting louder - a "clack-clack-clack". This was the sound of our skipper coming back from his morning ablutions at the toilet block using his favourite mode of transport - a skateboard; this was a bit surreal but just a taste of things to come over the next year.

Once all the final preparations were taken care of; rubbish ashore, fresh ice taken onboard, water tanks topped up and final farewells said to loved ones, the fleet one-by one cast off and locked-out of the marina. There was a large crowd in the marina all wishing us well, with each boat trying to make the biggest impact. *London Clipper* were blasting out "*Jerusalem*" from their boat stereo, but we still had an ace to play. In my earlier life before moving to England I played the bagpipes in a band. I put this to good use and soon drowned out the noise that *London Clipper* was making. Once out of the lock gates we spent some time milling about before motoring down Portsmouth Harbour in formation behind the naval ship *HMS Glasgow*. This was all very emotional and exciting as we had been preparing for months for this adventure and it was finally about to start. On reaching the Solent the yachts all broke from formation and started preparing for real; hanking on their chosen sails and removing the battle-flags, sailing up and

down the start line to try and judge the best end to start from and timing the run to the line to ensure crossing it at full pelt just seconds before the start gun. At least that was the theory. It became obvious during the build up to the gun, that there was very little wind and even less near the shore, where the start line was positioned to allow spectators a good view. When the big moment actually came there was practically no wind whatsoever and there were eight ocean-ready yachts bobbing over the line with little or no steerage. This ended in complete chaos with yachts bumping into one another and even into the committee boat as we all drifted over the line. As we headed away from the Portsmouth shore the wind filled in slightly and we were able to start sailing to the course. The course set was to take us around a few buoys (for spectator value) before heading over to Cowes and out through the West Solent.

As we headed over to Cowes we were well placed in about third or fourth position but the skipper looked worried. It wasn't long before he verbalised his concern - "the tide's turning and the wind's dropping". The tide was starting to push us westwards out of the Solent. This was the organisers' plan but because of the very light winds we, along with other boats, had not yet managed to round the last mark and we were beginning to struggle to hold the course for it. To add insult to injury we watched the first boat slip around the mark and start to drift slowly out to sea followed closely by the second boat. It became obvious that we weren't making the mark and we even tried helping the yacht by trying to drag buckets through the water, thus adding crucial fractions of a knot, but to no avail. We missed the mark. There was nothing else for it but to lower the anchor and wait.

The skipper took responsibility for this and even lengthened the anchor chain with rope to add more scope. But more disaster was to strike, as the rope/chain join was lowered over the bow roller, the expert knot tied by the skipper slipped out and the anchor and chain dropped into the Solent un-attached to us, leaving us to drift backwards. The skipper couldn't believe his eyes, and you could see him mentally slump. One of our crew members however was more motivated and determined and immediately set to retrieving the spare anchor from its stowed position - underneath all our cans of food in the bilges. To get to them he first had to move half of our sail wardrobe, (the sails we carried on-board to change for differing wind conditions). To this day I still don't know how he managed but in about five minutes he had moved the sails, lifted the floor boards, thrown the stored tins every where and retrieved the spare anchor from the bottom of the bilges. Somebody commented that he looked like a terrier going after a rabbit and the name seemed to stick. From then on he was known

as "Terrier". With the spare anchor down we had stopped drifting west and could now only wait, either for the wind to pick up or the tide to turn. We didn't know when the wind would pick-up but at least the tide would turn in six hours.

It was the tide that turned first so we lifted the anchor and drifted back east to the right side of the mark. Still not being able to sail however we couldn't make headway west against the now eastbound tide and thus had to lower the anchor again. We were literally half a mile outside Cowes, anchored up, with the sky turning red as the night fell without a breath of wind, when we were expecting to be sailing over the channel. This was not how I'd mentally pictured the first night of our big adventure. One crew member even toyed with the idea of radioing into Cowes to try and arrange someone to bring pizzas out to us. In the end we never did but it was an amusing idea. Eventually the wind started to pick up slightly during the night and one by one we and the rest of the fleet weighed anchor as silently as possible (not to alert the opposition anchored near by) and gently sailed off round the mark and glided down the West Solent to the Needles and into the English Channel. We were about 12 hours behind the two leaders who made it round the mark initially, but the race was on for third place, and at least we were off and sailing.

The first few days were a steep learning curve with everyone getting used to the watch system and interrupted sleep. The next big issue for us though was the Bay of Biscay. The reputation this body of water held was of bad storms, high winds and large Atlantic swells running into shallow water causing huge waves. This could be a major test for us, especially so early in our circumnavigation and we were all a bit nervous of what we might get dealt there. As it happened we had a relatively calm period while crossing the Bay although there were huge swells coming from the Atlantic, so much so that as one of our competing yachts was in the next wave trough to us their mast would all but disappear below our narrowing horizon. The wind however was kind to us and stayed low enough not to whip up the waves, thus we had a relatively gentle passage over the Biscay.

As the days rolled on and we headed further south down first the French then Spanish, then Portuguese coasts, the weather started becoming warmer and the crew began leaving their waterproofs below when on deck, instead opting for shorts and T-shirts during the daylight. I still remember doing a headsail change off Portugal, and being the furthest forward crew-member I was expecting to be drenched by waves as the yacht continued to race forward during the sail change. This experience, although necessary to race the yacht could be awful

and, depending on the conditions, could range from the pleasant, getting a little light spray on your face (as if someone had aimed a water vapouriser at you) to the physically demanding (more akin to holding onto a cliff face while you get bath load after bath load of icy water poured over you). This time, although the conditions were not horrendous, I knew the entire bow-team in front of the mast was going to get soaked. As the first big wave broke over the bows and crashed down on us, pinning us to the deck we were in for a pleasant surprise. Instead of the icy cold water we were used to, this stuff was actually warm, like bath water that hasn't quite gone completely cold yet, which made it pleasant enough. You still got drenched and would take all off-watch to dry-out, but at least we were no-longer freezing at the same time.

During this race we had our first "all hands on deck" moment. While sailing along with the lightweight spinnaker we heard a sudden bang from the top of the mast and the next thing we knew the spinnaker was floating down into the sea alongside us. Although not a risk to personnel, dragging the sail in the water could end up with it entangled in the keel, rudder or prop, resulting in likely sail damage as you try and retrieve it. In this case we called for all hands and set to dragging it back onboard as quickly as possible. Although this seemed like a big drama at the time, in reality we probably managed to retrieve the sail before all the crew was on deck and with hind sight there was probably no need for "all hands". Compared to some of the situations we dealt with later in our voyages this was just a blip, a standard occurrence to be dealt with, but in the dark with people's head torches flashing in and out of your eyes it got the adrenalin flowing and psychologically pumped us up when we managed to retrieve the sail without any damage. On inspection we found that the halyard (rope that holds up the sail at the top) had snapped due to constant wear. This was our first lesson on "wear and tear" during ocean racing. "Wear is the ocean racers biggest enemy", and from that point on we would keep a tighter eye on the problem, and go so far as sending a person up the mast after every spinnaker hoist to attach a second halyard as back-up.

The first race didn't go too well for us and through a combination of boat issues, route planning and sheer downright bad luck; we fell from the middle of the fleet towards the back and ended up finishing the first race in seventh place out of eight yachts. Not the glorious start we were hoping for.

The winner of the TC2000 would not be awarded on "total elapsed time" but via a points system. Being made up of 16 separate races, points were allocated for race positions and the overall winner would be the yacht with the most points.

This meant that a third place, 24 hours after the second boat finished, would count as much as a third place, 30 seconds behind the second boat. It also meant that a single disastrous race did not mean you would ruin your chances of the whole competition. As previously explained the circumnavigation was split into six “legs” at the end of which each yacht would see a change of some of its crew, and each leg was split into two to three individual races, giving a total of 16 separate races taking us round the world. The full breakdown of our circumnavigation was thus:-

Leg 1	Race 1	Portsmouth, UK to Villamora, Portugal
	Race 2	Villamora to Havana, Cuba
Leg 2	Race 3	Havana to Colon, Panama (Transit Panama Canal, Colon to Panama City)
	Race 4	Panama City to Puerto Ayora, Santa Cruz, Galapagos Is.
	Race 5	Puerto Ayora to Honolulu, Oahu, Hawaii Is.
Leg 3	Race 6	Honolulu to Yokohama, Japan
	Race 7	Yokohama to Shanghai, China
	Race 8	Shanghai to Hong Kong
Leg 4	Race 9	Hong Kong to San Fernando in the Philippines
	Race 10	San Fernando to Singapore
	Race 11	Singapore to Port Louis, Mauritius
Leg 5	Race 12	Port Louis to Cape Town, South Africa
	Race 13	Cape Town to Salvador, Brazil
Leg 6	Race 14	Salvador to New York, USA
	Race 15	New York to Jersey, Channel Is.
	Race 16	Jersey to Portsmouth, UK.

Race Two was to bring another big first as it would be everybody’s (including the skipper’s) first ocean crossing. This was the ultimate in offshore racing, and before hand we took a day trip out into the Atlantic to test our water-maker. This piece of equipment was vital to our onboard life as without it we would need to ration the water in the tanks to ensure we had enough water to last the three to four weeks we would be at sea. The water-maker we had onboard required a large amount of electric power, and to run it for enough time to fill the tanks would completely drain the batteries, therefore the only viable option was to run the generator at the same time as the water-maker. This made the generator as

crucial a piece of equipment as the water-maker itself. With both the generator and water-maker functioning properly we had an infinite supply of fresh water available.

The route from Portugal to Cuba seems to be a straight line over the Atlantic Ocean, but such a straight line takes you through the middle of the "Azores High". This is an area of high pressure that continually sits approximately over the Azores. This high and the spinning of the planet are the two main features that set up the famous Trade winds, which are consistent north-easterlies that the old trading vessels used to take advantage of for crossing the Atlantic. Therefore there was an obvious trade off. We could head south as quickly as possible to try and pick-up the Trade winds but sail a lot more miles, or head directly towards the Old Bahaman Channel and Cuba, sailing slower but with a lot less miles to sail. The option we chose was to head south into the Trades and try for a quick down-wind run across the Atlantic. Our crew mantra became "head south 'til the butter melts". This sailing was the epitome of what we all signed up for, blue skies, light fluffy clouds, warm air, and day after day of the same routine. As we sailed the fleet, who all were heading south to begin with, each started heading off west across the Atlantic. This became more and more noticeable as with almost every 12 hourly radio check, when each yacht had to give their GPS position, another yacht had headed west, until it was down to the last two yachts still heading south, us and *London Clipper*. From the radio position we knew that *London* was still to the east of us and about as far south. As I started a morning watch I was briefed that *London Clipper* had been seen on the horizon and was heading over towards us. This was the first sign that they had decided it was time to cross and had gybed their spinnaker and were now heading straight for Cuba. When they crossed in front of our sailing track they were literally 500 metres off our bow. This was the first indication of how close ocean match racing could be. We had been racing for over a week. We hadn't seen a competitor for days, yet when the boats came together there were literally only metres between them. It was also decision time for our skipper who was also chief tactical officer - do we turn now or do we continue south? As long as somebody else is doing a similar thing to you, you're probably not doing anything too stupid, but once you are on your own there's less security and doubts start setting in. As it was we continued south for at least another 36 hours on the premise that if it's going to give us an advantage we may as well make sure we're the most advantaged boat in the fleet. We started to get ribbed during the 12 hourly radio schedules and were so far apart from the most northerly boats that we couldn't even reach them on the long wave radio. Most of the ribbing was along the lines of asking us to check our ship's compass and was all good-hearted banter. We eventually

turned right to cross the Atlantic just after the Cape Verde Islands, and yes the butter was beginning to melt. Once we'd gybed the boat and were making for the Old Bahaman Channel to the North of Cuba the mid weight spinnaker was set and apart from trimming the sails (small changes to keep maximum speed) we never changed them for about two weeks solid. This was a down-wind run knocking off around 200 miles plus a day, watching the distances between us and the competitors drop with every radio schedule. Later the other crews admitted they thought we were going to do it and were much more worried about us than the boats in the north. However the trade winds failed us, the Azores High moved unusually far south and the really strong trade winds were further south than usual. We didn't come in last in that race; the boat who headed off to Cuba first got caught in the Azores High hardly moving for days on end, and we managed to reel in a couple of other boats, so we eventually finished in the middle of the fleet after a very blustery and stormy passage through the Old Bahaman Channel.

Our stop-over in Havana was a bit of an eye-opener for the crews. This was our first taste of "travelling" outside of Europe, and thus a bit of a culture shock, especially when you added the fact that it is a communist country, where there are doctors and surgeons taking second jobs as taxi-drivers, to earn tips in US dollars. This was also the end of the first leg and we would be losing some of our crew whom we'd grown to know and rely on, and gain new fresh crew that we'd have to get to know and learn all their foibles and abilities. Along with their inexperience however they also brought the benefit of fresh enthusiasm, and energy to bolster the team up. During our Havana visit the crews seemed to let their hair down more than in Portugal; whether this was due to some crew's leaving the race, a feeling of achievement after crossing the Atlantic, a relaxing in attitudes due to the culture change, or possibly a mixture of all of these, there was a definite change in the atmosphere in the ports and a realisation that although we were racing against each other we were all in it together and a real sense of camaraderie was starting to build throughout the fleet.

Race Three from Havana to Colon, Panama had a couple of memorable firsts for us. We had our first major spinnaker incident and our first man-overboard, fortunately not at the same-time. The spinnaker wrap (where the spinnaker literally gets wrapped around the forestay) happened on our first night out of Cuba. The race start went off without a hitch and we were settling back into the pace and rhythm of racing a yacht 24 hours a day non-stop. During the first evening the weather started to worsen, the sky going very black, not just dark but pitch black, and the rain started falling heavily. This was typical tropical rain

with very large raindrops, warm on your skin but still very wet. As my watch went below for their four hours' rest you could hear the rain thundering off the deck above us. At the same time that you were pitying the other watch having to sail in that weather, you were glad to get out of your own soggy "oilies", and praying for it to stop before you had to get back on deck. During that off-watch we got a call for "all hands" and as we rushed on deck the only way to describe the scene was 'weird'. The weather had changed for the worst again and we were now sailing through a thunderstorm with huge forked lightning flashing through the sky, lighting the whole boat up for a fraction of a second. The on-watch crew had sailed into an area of squalls and a gig wind shift had caught them off-guard and blown the spinnaker right around the forestay. The boat was divided into two groups, with the crew needing little prompting as to which position to take as people naturally gravitated to where they were of most use - one party on the bow trying to unwrap the spinnaker and the other in the cockpit, still sailing the yacht. I found myself on the bow trying to co-ordinate the sail rescue. We were being hampered by the blackness interspersed with moments of blinding clarity as the next lightning fork flashed overhead. Add to this the stinging rain when trying to look aloft at the problem and the wind trying to tear the sail out of your grip at any and all opportunities. We took a good half hour to realise we were getting nowhere. That's when the skipper came up with an alternative plan. He put on a climbing harness to be hoisted aloft. The plan was to get above the sail, add his meagre weight to it and lower it down the forestay. With the skipper stamping on the sail head and the bow party pulling with all their might on the deck the massive spinnaker was eventually persuaded down the forestay to the deck. This was stage one accomplished, but before we could get another foresail up the stay the spinnaker needed to be extracted from around it. It took myself and three other crew members to untangle it from the forestay, at the end of which we were surprised to find that we'd been able to remove it without ripping the sail cloth. It was stretched in a few areas and would never look pristine again, but was still adequate for sailing with. We found out during the next radio schedule that a good number of the fleet had suffered the same fate as us that night and some were not as lucky with the damage. The fleet definitely took a beating that night.

Our first man-overboard was not a high stress crew lost scenario that can happen but a deliberate jumping overboard, in a controlled environment, for the good of our team. We'd hear on the radio that a few yachts had encountered "long-lines". This is a type of fishing where the fishermen leave a long length of line floating on the surface of the water stretched out between buoys. These lines get left for a period of time, until the fishermen come back to it, collecting it on board and

hauling in their catch at the same time. If spotted in time you can change course and sail around the line. If not there is a good chance of getting them tangled on the yacht's keel and/or rudder and/or propeller.

It was our skipper who noticed the buoys first, but way too late to change course round them, so all we could do was cross our fingers and hope as we sailed between them. Initially we thought we'd passed through as nothing seemed to happen, but as we got further away from the line we started slowing down, the buoys visibly started to close together behind us, and it became obvious we were dragging the long-line along. It was slowing us down considerably. Attempts were made at trying to dislodge the line with boathooks, mops and dinghy oars, (anything we could reach down with), but to no avail. We tried tacking the boat back and forward, to dislodge it, but that was also fruitless. There was nothing else for it but for someone to go overboard and try to manually remove the line or cut us free. The skipper took me (as watch-leader) aside, and explained that he wanted either myself or him to go overboard and attempt this. He was confident that he could do it but at the same time preferred to be in charge of the yacht if anything went wrong. His exact words were "I've got more chance of getting the boat back to you than you have of getting it back to me!" He was basically sounding me out that I was OK with the proposal and happy to attempt it. I agreed with one proviso. I wanted to borrow the skipper's boogie boarding fins (flippers) to wear. This was to aid me swimming under the boat in case I had to reach the keel. So stripped down to shorts and wearing a mask, snorkel and fins I was the first person (but by no means the last) to jump overboard from our yacht during the race. As it was, the line was caught on the rudder skeg, and it was a simple operation to release it without cutting it, the main risk being if I surfaced underneath the stern's overhang, and the boat pitched downward, it could cause a head trauma injury. In the end it was not an issue, a couple of duck-dives to remove the line and the job was done. The trickiest part of the procedure was climbing back up the rope ladder to get back on board. However I made it completely un-harmed. We hoisted the fore-sail, trimmed in the main and were on our way again.

Another memorable moment from this race was approaching the finish line in The Gulf of Panama. It was a still night and we were in close quarters racing with *Leeds Clipper*. We knew we'd have to gybe the spinnaker to change course for the last run into the line, and it would be of great tactical advantage if we could do it without *Leeds* knowing.

Being a still night we could hear the voices of our opponents and knew they'd be able to hear us. All we could really see of them though was their navigation lights and the reciprocal would be true. It was customary for us during a night sail change to put the yacht's deck-lights on. Doing so now would alert our opposition to our plans. Also during a sail change there is normally a lot of shouting between the fore-deck and the cockpit to facilitate good communications over the wind noise. This would also alert the opposition. The skipper got us together and explained that we were going to perform the gybe in complete silence and without extra lighting. To do so we would all have to be fully aware of what we needed to do in our respective roles. The gybe was performed with only the occasional whispered communication along the deck of the yacht and we changed course without *Leeds* realising. Slowly the two boat's courses diverged. About 15 to 20 minutes later when *Leeds* had realised what we'd done we saw their deck lights come on and they went through the same manoeuvre as us, but by then we'd put enough distance between us for them not to be a threat anymore and we had a comfortable sail to the finish. The skipper later told us that it was during this manoeuvre when he felt we'd really come together as a team to be able to do such a clean manoeuvre in the dark and in silence.

The City of Colon was very poor, with large areas that we were advised not to enter, so most of our time was spent in the yacht club marina. The big excitement though was the forthcoming transit of the Panama Canal. For some reason, (it was rumoured to be financial) all the fleet was to transit the canal over night, but not all in the same night. The yachts were put through in two groups of three and one group of two, as three yachts fitted nicely in the width of the canal. We were due to go through the canal in the last pair alongside *Leeds Clipper*. The evening approached and we slipped out of the marina to rendezvous with the pilot. Each vessel transiting the canal has to take onboard at least one canal pilot (depending on size), who is in charge of taking the vessel safely through the canal. A small yacht like us only required one pilot, and he was a trainee not yet qualified to pilot the larger container vessels. After picking up our pilot we headed off towards the canal mouth where we came alongside *Leeds* and rafted the boats together, ensuring there were plenty of large fenders between the two yachts. There was a definite feeling of anticipation as we entered the first lock behind a large container ship, which completely dwarfed us, our masts barely reaching the same height as their decks, never mind the stacks of containers towering over them. There was a flurry of activity as the dockers threw lines down to us, for us to attach our mooring lines to, to be hauled back up to the cleats and made fast. We were now ready for the first "lift". As the lock gates

cracked open vast quantities of water came swirling and gushing into our lock. This hardly caused the large vessels to move at all but our two yachts were getting a good buffeting on our mooring lines, which we were continually taking in on our manual winches to keep up with the rise in water and not let the yachts float away from the lock side. Although this was hard work it was engrossing too, watching the waters swirl and rise and the behemoth vessels around us being lifted like corks. The large vessels are actually hauled through the locks by railway engines running the length of the lock like land-based tugs. We obviously didn't need such help and motored through the locks under our own power. The Panama Canal is not a man-made canal from one coast to the other, but a large waterway of lakes and dredged passageways in the middle of Panama connected at each end to the oceans by short sections of manmade canals. As we climbed up the locks from the Atlantic side we eventually came to the open lakes. By this time it was late evening and a full moon was rising over the rain forest canopy that surrounded us in all directions. This was a moment to savour and remember. In the periods when the tankers and container ships were far enough away from us and we got close enough to the mangrove shores you could hear the cacophony of cicada chirps over the gentle thudding of our diesel engine. Here we were, a bunch of engineers, bankers, doctors, students, housewives etc. from Britain, all thrown together by our want for adventure, slowly making our way through a rainforest lake in Panama with the still waters lit by the full moon and the waves from our wake lapping into the mangrove roots as we passed. It was all very awe inspiring. There was no way of getting lost as the route through the waterway was marked by illuminated buoys, but that never detracted from the feeling of adventure and awe of the situation. We eventually came to the canal section at the Pacific side, and started going through the same procedure again, except this time we were dropping down through the series of locks back to sea level. This end of the canal has a much longer section of man-made canal which was a stark change from the rain forest lakes we left behind. As we came to the end of the Locks the sight of the Bridge Over the Americas looming up ahead signalled the end of our transit. This bridge is where the Pan American Highway crosses from the North American continent to the South American continent, and its clearance height of 106 m is still used as a cut off height in the design of vessels (both sail and motor) today. If they are any higher than this then the only realistic way from Atlantic to Pacific and vice versa is via Cape Horn.

Our destination was the marina just the other side of the bridge, right outside Panama City. Panama City had a real split personality. The central business district was clean and pristine with sky-scrappers to rival the most opulent of

cities, but the other side was run-down, ramshackle and dirty. As we were moored in the bay as opposed to on a pontoon, this seemed to discourage trips into the city. Add to this the briefness of our stay there, and this led to few trips outside of the marina. My only one was to take a taxi into the central area to use an internet café. The destination wasn't memorable but the trip was. The taxi driver seemed intent on getting involved in some form of accident as, with what seemed a complete lack of care he would just pull out into flowing traffic without even stopping, never mind giving way. I discovered the best way to deal with this, was to try not to pay attention to what was going on outside the car and just ignore the honking horns from other vehicles.

Race 4 to the Galapagos Islands was to start offshore, out of the way of the canal entrance, so there was no official start line, no start boat and nobody watching. It was done by getting all the boats to line up abreast while motor sailing with just the main-sail up, then, on a countdown by the lead skipper on the VHF, the motors would be switched off, head sails raised and the race started. This became the normal method of starting our races when an offshore start was required. It became known within the fleet as a "Le-Mans" start. Apart from leading this race for the first couple of nights it was fairly routine, with nothing particular standing out apart from our first equator crossing. The Galapagos Islands straddle the Equator and our destination lay south of it. As we approached the Islands we were in a secure position in the race with very little chance of us catching the boat in front and very little chance of the boats behind catching us, and were therefore reasonably relaxed. None of us had crossed the Equator on a vessel so doing the Neptune routine on everyone seemed a bit over the top. Instead we opened a couple of bottles of fizz that the skipper had put aside, and we had a toast as the GPS clocked the 0° 00' .00N latitude. Also approaching the Galapagos, a noticeable change arrived in the wildlife that we were seeing; exotic frigate birds and curious blue-footed boobies would fly overhead, sightings of seals, sea-lions and turtles in the water and then, most curious of all, the penguin sightings. This just seemed wrong - we had just crossed the equator, famed as the hottest area on Earth, and we were seeing penguins swimming about. In fact it was no illusion; the Galapagos Islands are the joining point for three large oceanic currents one of which is the cold Humboldt Current that runs up the west coast of South America bringing cold water all the way from the Antarctic. The Galapagos penguins are the most Northerly colony of penguins, and they live just north of the Equator, on Isabella Island.

This array of strange wildlife was to set the scene for arguably the best stop-over of the whole circumnavigation. Once on land there was no end to the wondrous

species, the aforementioned frigate birds with their bright red balloon-like throats, the funny blue footed boobies that you could almost walk up to, marine iguanas, giant tortoises, sea turtles, pelicans diving in the bay. Then if you ventured into the surprisingly cold water scuba-diving, you could see even more fantastic species from manta-rays to hammerhead sharks. This truly was a special place that nobody wanted to leave. We also celebrated Christmas Day on the Galapagos; no egg-nog and Christmas pudding, or warming yourself by the fire, but T-shirts and sun hats with cold gin and tonics while lounging by a pool or on the beach. I think that spending Christmas like that that made me realise just how far we'd come from Britain, and also how much further we still had to go.

On leaving the Galapagos the fleet once again motor-sailed in convoy out of the bay, this time heading north-west to try and pick-up some constant breeze before starting the race with another "Le-Mans" style start. This race to Hawaii would be another long one of 24 days, so we were back to the day-in, day-out routines of racing the yacht. We also had the small tactical issue of where to cross the ITCZ, "inter tropical convergence zone". This is an area of very light (if any) wind with humid, sticky air, also known as the Doldrums. Our race up to Hawaii meant we would have to cross this zone somewhere, and as it could vary in width and the boat speed would plummet while crossing, it was a massive tactical issue about where to do it. We held on to cross it later rather than earlier, like the majority of the yachts. However the yacht that made the best progress through the ITCZ and went on to win this race crossed early more by default than decision. The ITZC lived up to its earlier name of the Doldrums as it was a very depressing area to sail through. The lack of wind, and thus propulsion, is infuriating at the best of times but combined with the hot, sticky, humid air, the blank grey skies camouflaging the horizon so it became impossible to tell the difference between sea and sky the and rolling of the boat causing the mainsail to flap from side to side with a monotonous slapping noise, it was enough to drive you mad. At times we would shout profanities at the sky, as if it was to blame for the situation, just to relieve the boredom, frustration and tension rather than actually believing it would help. These periods of drifting would be interspersed with rain showers that would break out around you. Although this sounds bad, at least with the rain we could normally find some breeze around the edges of the squall, where the cold air was dragged down with the rain and dispersed horizontally over the sea. This was about the only way we could sail the yacht out of the ITCZ. So we went from squall to squall in the damp atmosphere slowly pegging our way northwards to the more consistent trade winds. The periods of calm started to get shorter and the yacht speed during the sailing

started to increase until the grey skies started to brighten and the blue skies and fluffy clouds that marked trade winds could be seen once again.

The actual Hawaiian Islands were spotted from what seemed like hundreds of miles out, due to the height of the volcanic mountains on them. This seemed like a good thing as it marked the end of this particular voyage. However it did seem to take forever to close the distance to them, with the mountains just getting higher and higher as we did so. It was while passing north of Hawaii, "the Big Island" that we encountered our first full blown broach. I had previously been on a broached yacht during my racing in the Solent, but that was a 30 foot yacht not a 60 foot yacht. As we were sailing between the islands, the wind got funnelled through as well; the wind direction veered forward beyond what the sail could stand and the yacht broached. This broach happened when I was off watch in my bunk. The first indication was the noise from the deck above, lots of shouting and running about then the boat suddenly lurched over to one side. This was not a new experience at this point but instead of halting the lurch this time she kept rolling. Luckily I had my lee cloth on my bunk up, because as she kept rolling over I was rolled out of my bunk and into the lee cloth. This piece of material, designed to stop items (including sleeping bodies) from sliding off the bunks at sea, had gone from vertical to horizontal, and I was now face down in it using it like a hammock. At the same time there was an almighty crashing and banging coming from the galley area. Not waiting for the "all hands" call I was already out of my bunk dropping down the full width of the boat to stand on the other side. Grabbing my lifejacket on the way to the cockpit I had to climb through the door way into the galley that was now a horizontal opening instead of vertical. Walking through the saloon area using the cupboards and walls as the floor it was spectacularly obvious what all the crashing noise was from. The galley area opposite was now directly above, with all the cupboards and drawers hanging open, with their contents of cutlery, crockery (luckily plastic), mugs, pans and bowls lying in a mess beneath our feet, along with all the fresh fruit and vegetables that we kept in a hammock on the galley ceiling. These items were mingling with the books and CDs that were stored on the opposite wall (now the floor I was climbing over). As one of the first out of the bunk area, I had to deal with items still falling, not too bad when it was oranges and bananas, but the melons, knives and forks had to be avoided. This mess would have to wait, as the priority had to be the broach, helping to get the spinnaker under control and the yacht back on an even keel. As I emerged into the cockpit there were already frantic efforts going on around me, I already knew that the greatest effort would be needed forward, where the spinnaker would be being manhandled back onboard, so I clipped my lifeline onto the lifelines and made my way towards the

bow. As the spinnaker halyard was lowered and the now wet sail slowly dragged back onboard, the yacht started to slew round again and pick herself up. There was nothing else for it but to bundle the wet sail below before raising the headsail to push on as fast as possible. Once the boat was moving again we then went below to deal with the mayhem that had been caused below.

The stop over in Hawaii was a bit odd. After the basic standards and conditions found in Galapagos you could be forgiven for thinking a marina at the end of Waikiki Beach would be paradise, but you'd be wrong. Honolulu was a built up city of sky-scrapers, shopping malls and American tourists with no other want than to lie on the beach surrounded by other tourists being served cocktails by waiters scurrying out from the hotel bars. I chose to stay on the yacht for the full stop-over. This meant that not only did I manage to perform a large amount of maintenance on our yacht, but I also got the view from the marina over the river to a palm decked park, where the sun would set behind the palms and the local Hawaiian islanders would quietly stream down the river in outrigger canoes, some as single canoeists, some in tandem canoes and some as teams of up to six or eight. They would head out of the river after a day's work elsewhere returning around sundown, sweaty, tired but very probably relaxed, calm and purged of the days stresses and strains. This was the Hawaii I'd expected, not the city-like suburbs that I had to walk through to get anywhere. Another good memory from Hawaii was trying my hand at boogie boarding at Diamond Head, a renowned surf point along the coast from Waikiki Beach. Our skipper was a keen boogie boarder and he took me along with his spare board to try it out. I was shocked at how physically tiring just swimming out through the waves on the board was, just to be shocked again at how difficult it was to "catch a wave". Every time I tried I would paddle and kick as hard as I could to get momentum, only for the wave to pass harmlessly underneath me leaving me floundering in the next trough, and then I'd have to turn round and struggle my way back out again. This pattern seemed to continue indefinitely throughout the afternoon until I eventually managed to get washed along by a wave. This experience passed in an instant of white water, salt and stinging eyes, before I was overturned and dumped onto the ocean shore. But that was it, I'd done it, I'd "caught my first wave" and at Diamond Head. I tried to recreate that exhilarating few seconds but to no avail. That was my lot for the day, one wave and a long walk back to the boat carrying my borrowed board.

On leaving Hawaii, for the first time I experienced the feeling that we were getting back to normal; that the sailing was the normal way of life and the stop-overs were the break from the norm, the interruptions, the deviation from our

normal life, and once we were back at sea everything went back to normal. Our metronomic lifestyle of 4 hourly shift patterns was gladly accepted with nothing else to think about save sailing the yacht and keeping her seaworthy.

It was during Race Six to Yokohama that we had our first serious mechanical failure. From Hawaii to Yokohama we were crossing the last half of the Pacific when our generator stopped running. This wasn't an issue for electrical power as we could run our main engine in neutral and charge the batteries via the alternator. However, as previously explained, without the generator we had no way of running the water-maker on which we were reliant for fresh water. From the moment the generator would not run we were straight onto water rations. We were in the middle of the Pacific Ocean about two weeks away from land with one and a half tanks full of fresh water, and 15 people on-board. With the water we had in the tanks we could probably last a week without too much problem but much more than that and we would be really struggling. It was obvious we would either have to get the generator operating, or stop racing and divert to a water source.

Our onboard "engineer", who in real life was an instrument technician, started spending all his time in what we referred to as the engine room. In reality it was where the generator and water-maker were, and was a small room that had to be crawled into with barely enough height to sit up in. Being in this room was bad enough when in a marina but at sea, with the yacht pitching and rolling, it was like being in a washing machine. Luckily our designated engineer was technically minded so he eventually diagnosed our problem. The high pressure pump on the fuel system was broken. Unluckily this was not a part that was expected to break and none of the boats in the fleet were carrying a spare. Some spares were essential and each boat carried their own spares. Others were less essential (or likely to break) and one or two spares would be carried within the whole fleet (fleet spares being distributed between yachts to even out weight). Our skipper contacted the race office by e-mail to be told that a new pump would be waiting for us at Yokohama, which was fine but we'd be out of water by then. Eddie, our engineer was undeterred; although these pumps were designed to be replaced as a whole unit he started stripping it down with the aid of an impact screw driver, and a lot of determination, while the skipper started discussing our options with the other yachts in the fleet. At that point we were near the front of the fleet with the other yachts following behind, so the decision was made to continue for the time being trying to solve our problem on-board and in the event that we did start to run our water low then the yacht closest to us could rendezvous with us in less than 12 hours and transfer their water to us,

then refill their own tanks on the move. So we continued on, with Eddie stripping the high pressure fuel pump.

Early the next day when I was on watch with the skipper on deck as well, Eddie popped his head out from the companion way with the declaration "I know why it's broken". In his hand he held a high pressure spring about 1 cm in diameter and 5 cm long that was broken into two pieces. Apparently if we could find some form of replacement, not necessarily an exact fit, then there was a possibility that he could get the generator running. The search was now on, with everyone racking their brains trying to think where there could be a suitable spring. Every spare we carried was searched through and every item we could strip was talked over - the marine heads? the spinnaker pole? But no one could think of a suitable replacement. The broken spring was passed round for inspection and inspiration. When I got hold of it the first thing I did was to try and compress the spring but with little effect. This was a very stiff spring; all the other springs I could think of onboard were a lot softer and springier. I then had a closer inspection of the fracture in the middle of the spring. This was a clean break leaving a sharp but still stiff end on each side; when in situ the two halves were apparently screwing together, thus shortening the spring length. It was then that I noticed that the two outer ends of the spring were machined entirely flat with no gap in the circle. This was obviously done to give the spring the full circle of the piston to work against and fit solidly into place. That's when I had a blinding idea: if you place the two original flat ends of our broken spring together, you still have the same length spring with identical diameter and stiffness, the only difference being that at both ends you have a sharp pointy connection to the pump piston instead of a nice flat face, but installed in this manner the spring halves would be incapable of spiralling into each other, and thus would still give the required force. I talked this through with Eddie, who knew how the spring fitted into the pump, and he could come up with no argument why it wouldn't work. We then both went to the skipper with this plan, and it was agreed to try it. (We thought at worst the sharp end may get worn down over time, thus eventually breaking the generator again, but at least we could run the water-maker for a while and top up our tanks. The other alternative was that the spring would wear and damage the piston; again this would be over time, and the whole high pressure pump was being replaced in port, so it was worth a go.) Eddie once again set to work, this time trying to put it together. He spent hours below decks popping up for a cigarette break every now and then. In the process of stripping the pump he'd damaged another part of it, but was quietly confident he could overcome this difficulty, and every now and then would start rummaging around looking for odd items. While re-installing the pump of the generator he required a cork

(drilled) a piece of string and some bungee cord. He had rigged up a mechanism where an item that needed constant return pressure got it by tying the string to it, bringing the string out of the generator through a hole in the cork that was used to bung the exit, thus keeping most of the oil in. The string was then attached to bungee cord which was kept under tension thus pulling the original item back when required. To say this was a little bit “Heath-Robinson” was an understatement, and combined with our dodgy pump spring, our generator had been re-christened “Franken-Genny”. About four days after the generator first failed, as I was preparing to come on watch, the unmistakable high revving sound of the generator came through the bulkheads; our Franken-Genny was alive and working. Twenty minutes later at the radio schedule, *Glasgow Clipper* was confirmed as leading race Six. This was turning into a very good day.

It was a long race though and our lead was slowly eroded with us eventually finishing mid-table. Our generator stayed operable throughout race Six mainly due to Eddie showing it a lot of TLC, and we remained very careful about water usage until the end of the race, keeping the tanks as full as possible. Approaching the Japanese coast was a bit of an eye opener as well. So far when sailing the oceans other shipping had been very sparse, apart from obvious bottle-necks like the English Channel, The Old Bahaman Channel and the Panama Canal. The coastal waters around Japan however seemed to be teeming with other vessels. These weren't the huge tankers or container ships that we'd seen on the oceans; these were a smaller version but still a lot bigger than we were. Worst of all they seemed oblivious to the collision regulations (otherwise known as the “rules-of-the-road”) and were not heeding the “power gives way to sail” rule. As a small (compared to the other vessels) sailing yacht this was annoying but not something you want to risk asserting your right for. It would be like stepping onto a motorway in front of a speeding truck, because by law he would have to swerve to miss you. Instead we picked a very cautious route through the unofficial traffic lanes; this was even more stressful during the night when we were relying on spotting their navigation lights and deciphering blips on the radar. It was a tense night with a couple of close calls but we made it through to the finish line. All that remained to do now was to sail into the bay, find the marina and berth up. This was now in the middle of the Japanese winter and the night was bitterly cold. To allow more sleeping time for all, the watches were split into two, each person doing two hours. This left three crew per watch. To minimise time spent on deck I organised the three of us into a rota, whereby you would spend ten minutes on the helm sailing the yacht, then ten minutes in the cockpit acting as lookout then the third ten minutes below deck in the galley standing over the stove warming up. This seemed to help both physically and

mentally. We eventually got to the marina at day-break and as we motored into our allotted berth a watery winter's sun was rising into the cold blue cloudless sky. This really was an authentic welcome to the land of the rising sun.

Of all the places we visited I think Yokohama was the biggest shock, not in terms of different culture but in how they manage to live in vast cities, while still keeping them clean and for all the citizens to remain so polite and helpful, even to dumb tourists who cannot speak a word of their language. This was illustrated when we got into a taxi not knowing where we were, or how far it was to our destination, and the driver took us round a couple of corners, dropped us off in front of the hotel we were asking for and then refused to take payment. I can only assume he realised that we were lost and just wanted to help us. We had a shop worker leave her post to show us the way to a police station when it became obvious that she would not be able to communicate directions. The one outstanding memory I do have from Japan is that of friendly people.

When people now ask me "Did you have any scary moments?" the next voyage instantly springs to mind. Throughout the fleet it became referred to as "the Japan Storm". In reality it was probably not the worst weather we encountered; that accolade goes to the Cape of Good Hope, but it was definitely where we received the most damage. The majority of the yachts suffered in the storm but ours took the brunt of the damage.

The race started as normal. The start line was just outside the marina so we were racing south down the bay back to the Pacific. The weather forecast was for high winds building strength throughout the day. It was a fresh breeze at we beat down the bay, passing the snow capped Mt Fuji on the horizon (a sight we missed coming up the bay during the night). It was early evening by the time we reached the end of the bay and my watch came off watch. By this stage we already had two reefs in the main and the Number 2 headsail on and the wind was still slowly building. As I lay in my bunk I could hear the commotion on deck as they changed down from the Number 2 to the Number 3 headsail (the higher the number the smaller it was) and put the third reef in the mainsail. This was us now on the minimum amount of sail without going to our storm stay-sail and trysail. I managed to get some sleep but as I was woken for our next watch things had obviously not improved.

The skipper called me over to give me the low-down on the situation. The storm had continued to worsen. One of our fleet had already turned back to the port due to sail-damage and another-couple of yachts had also reported sail damage. He reckoned we were doing alright and that we should continue as we were

unless it got even worse. He said he was going to try and get some sleep (he hadn't slept since we left port) but to wake him for anything. We were plugging onward well heeled over; the boat was pitching around making it difficult to stand on deck, never mind walk. The crew change-over was following our "one-down one-up" routine that was practiced in heavy weather, letting the new crew-member settle down before the next off-coming watch member would go below. This meant only having one crew-member trying to cross the deck at any one time and also allowed the on coming watch to clip their life-lines onto anchor points before stepping on deck.

As normal I took the first turn on the helm for our watch. The helm was heavy and unresponsive, making it a physical effort to keep the yacht on course. We were so heeled over that I couldn't see over the windward side of the yacht to look for any lights in the dark; I therefore had to ask other crew members to do this periodically. It was pitch black and there was spray flying horizontally in the wind. When it hit your face it felt like somebody was throwing grit at you. Every so often a huge wave would break over the side of the vessel soaking everything, everybody and flooding the cockpit, making us were knee deep in water before draining away back in to the ocean. This continued for around twenty minutes. I was still at the helm as nobody really wanted to take over in those conditions, so I was doing a longer stint than normal. I started to realise that there was something wrong with the yacht. The steering was getting heavier and it felt as if the wheel was beginning to work loose (this had previously happened and it was no big deal to tighten it again), also the water in the cockpit was starting to take longer and longer to drain away until I was constantly standing in a pool of sea water.

The ends of our jib sheets, and staysail sheets (ropes used for trimming and controlling the sails) were untidily floating around in the cockpit pool and getting caught in my feet. I couldn't see anything down there but started shuffling around trying to get the ropes away from my feet, when I felt myself kick something metallic. This wasn't right and I had a sudden realisation of what it could be. There were two ports (one each side) into the rear section of the yacht, the one we call the "engine room" that contained the generator. The metal covers were secured with a bolt and cam system, but could be knocked open inadvertently. I tried peering down at where the porthole should be but the blackness was so deep that I couldn't see anything. I called for a torch to be passed back and on receiving it shouted at my crewmate to point it down at the porthole. When the beam of light came on my worst fears were confirmed. The porthole cover had been kicked off and the porthole was open. Whether this was

done by the ropes being whipped about or by someone's feet we'll never now know but it was immaterial, the porthole was open and all the waves breaking into the cockpit hadn't been draining back to the ocean via the deck drains but running straight into the yacht.

This compartment was always kept sealed by a watertight door when access wasn't necessary, which was just as well for us. On closer inspection the surface of the pool of water continued uninterrupted into our yacht; the entire rear compartment was flooded. Just as I had taken in what I'd seen, there was a bang and crack from up the mast when the mainsail had flapped and filled again with a powerful thump. On shining the now handy torch up at the mast, we could see a couple of the mainsail cars had snapped and the main was now flogging at the mast where it was not attached. That was the last straw for me; I was out of my depth and called for someone to wake the skipper.

To say he was unhappy was an understatement; he had gone to sleep in a storm but the yacht was fine, we were making way and in control. Now, half an hour later, the steering wheel was beginning to come loose, we'd ripped the mainsail and the yacht was sinking (we didn't know for sure all the water had flowed in through the porthole, we could have still been leaking through the hull!). The first thing the skipper did was to call for "all hands" and as the chaos of seven people trying to get dressed as quickly as possible ensued below, we started lowering our main sail to protect it from more damage. As the other watch started to appear on deck we gained more help at the mainsail and were beginning to get it under control and safe in the trickiest conditions I've ever seen on deck. The skipper singled out Eddie (our engineer) when he came on deck and immediately set him the task of tightening our steering wheel. He'd fixed it the last time and knew what was required for the job.

All of a sudden there was another bang and then thrashing came from the bow of the yacht. The working jib sheet had snapped and the jib was now flogging in the force ten winds. It's one thing to drop a sail in strong wind when it's under control but another altogether to bring a flogging sail under control with the lazy sheet whipping back and forward like a lion tamer's whip. If you got hit by the loose sheet it could cause serious injury, even knock you unconscious. In the end it took five of us to struggle the loose jib back under control by pulling in on the lazy sheet as much as we could then physically lying on the flogging rope to prevent it whipping us. In this way we were able to bring the sail under control and lower it onto the bow before securing it down.

The now knotted jib sheets were thrown below out of the way. With the mainsail and jib both down and secure we were sailing on the staysail alone. Apart from the storm staysail this was the smallest sail we had onboard. As the loose wheel was being fixed I reported back to the skipper who was below on the radio talking to the other boats and getting word back to Race HQ. I hadn't realised while I was on-deck that the full crew had not emerged during the "all hands", but it became obvious now as there were a few people still below. I didn't think much about it then but the skipper informed me later that there were a few who refused to go on deck and one who broke down crying. He set them tasks of tidying up the ropes that had been thrown down below, mainly to give them something to do, take their minds off the situation and also get them out of the way of everyone else.

Now that the sails were safe we turned our attention to the flooded compartment. We first established how badly flooded it was by cracking open the watertight door, only to find water pouring out from the top of the door; very badly flooded. This meant the generator and hence water-maker were out of action as they were submerged. Also when we cracked the door, lots of what can only be described as paper-maché came out as well. The compartment that was flooded was where we stored our stock of our toilet-paper and kitchen roll. This was floating around in the mix as well. When we started the high powered bilge pump, it instantly blocked up. We then started using the manual stirrup pumps, lowering the suction in through the porthole on the windward (higher side) however these instantly blocked as well. It became clear that all our preformed plans for pumping the water out would have to be abandoned because none of the pumps we had could handle the paper-maché mix we'd created. We then set to, trying to empty the compartment by releasing the water out from the watertight door and catching it in a basin to be handed up on deck and thrown overboard.

After about 40 minutes of this we could see no discernable change in the water level, so we came to the conclusion that either we had a leak in the compartment and it was refilling or emptying it via that means was just taking far too long, so we stopped. At this stage our skipper had noticed that the battery charge was getting low – we knew we could not charge using the submerged generator, so we tried charging via the main engine, however after starting OK the engine spluttered and died on us so we now had no propulsion apart from our small staysail, our battery charge was low with no way of charging it, our aft watertight compartment was completely flooded with no means of emptying it, and there was still a force ten storm raging outside.

We had been talking on VHF radio to the other yachts and lots of them had suffered mainsail damage and were struggling to sail and the next port we were racing to, Shanghai, was the worst place to work on and get help to sort out our yachts as we were to be moored out in the Yangtze Delta on mooring rafts in an industrial zone, rather than be in a yachting marina. Our skipper was now mulling over in his head the best course of action, should we continue racing towards Shanghai (did we have enough water to make it? , could we eventually empty our rear compartment ourselves?) or should we cut our losses, turn round and head back to Yokohama? Before he'd come to any conclusion about this quandary the race-control had contacted the fleet and ordered all yachts back to Yokohama. As we were in such a bad state we arranged to rendezvous with the nearest yacht (Jersey Clipper) in case we needed a tow and from there to head back to Yokohama as a pair.

At this stage I had been up for more than 3 consecutive watches and it was back into my official off watch period, early the next dawn. I was soaked, shattered and a bit emotionally wiped-out, the things still requiring to be done could just as well be performed by any other crew member so I told the skipper that I was heading back to my bunk to get some sleep. I had just managed to peel off my soaking oilskins, strip down to thermal underwear (it was still the Japanese winter) and get into my damp sleeping bag to lie shivering with my eyes closed trying to fall asleep, when I received a prod in my back and a message to "get-up, the skipper wants you on deck". I was furious I couldn't believe it, I was so physically and mentally drained I couldn't believe he wanted me instead of someone else who had had a lot more sleep and rest than me that night. I replied "I've just got to bed and he wants me up?", only to get "Yes - you" as the reply. I silently and resentfully dragged myself back up from my bunk, got redressed, donned my wet oilies and lifejacket then went on deck to report to the skipper. I repeated my unbelieving question to him. To get the quiet sombre reply "we're in a storm slowly getting washed towards a lee shore, we've no engine, and only the staysail up. I need to get the trysail up to allow us to make headway into the wind, and I've only got 3 able bodied crew willing to help, I need you to help".

It was not the sort of answer you could argue with, me and the other available crew-members struggled the trysail onto the track and hoisted it where the main should have been. This was not a procedure we'd ever really done before, only once during training, so each move had to be thought through carefully with tired minds. We eventually managed to hoist this orange sail up and set it. We now had our staysail as a fore-sail and the trysail set aft the mast. We could now make slow but steady progress away from the shore. I remained up on deck,

realising how much the skipper was relying on the few working crew to run the yacht. I took charge of the cockpit, sailing the yacht, while he and another crew member started tackling the engine problem. They had already deduced that the problem must be fuel orientated and quick checks showed that fuel was getting to all the cylinders in the engine. This left fuel contamination, the hypothesis was that during the storm we were heeled so far over that the vents for the fuel tanks were being submerged and sea-water had run back down them into the fuel tank.

Water in the diesel is normally not a big issue as it settles at the bottom of the tank and can be drained off. However as we were being thrown around so much the water wasn't settling and was getting pumped to the engine as fuel and causing the engine to choke and die. The fuel system was bled, and water drained from the bottom of the fuel before trying again. This time the engine continued to run allowing us to charge up the batteries and motor towards our rendezvous. By this time it was mid-morning on the next day and the storm was beginning to back off. The skipper, myself and a few other of the crew who had been up all night, had to get some rest as we were dead on our feet. We handed over to some of the crew who were waking up and went below leaving the now stabilised boat to limp on towards the rendezvous.

Although the engine was now running, we had no faith in it holding out to get us all the way back, so the plan was still to rendezvous with Jersey Clipper and head back to the marina together. It was late afternoon before we reached them and even though they knew our condition from radio conversation they were shocked to see how low in the water we were at the stern. We managed to get back to the marina under our own power but tied the two yachts together before berthing, as losing power in close quarters in a marina could cause large problems. The two skippers managed the manoeuvre expertly between them and brought our yacht to rest alongside the pontoon. At this stage night was just beginning to fall again but there was loads of work to be done to our yacht before we could rest. A large industrial bilge pump was brought in to pump out our aft section before we could go in and see the mess left behind and set-to cleaning away all the paper-mache that was now sticking to the cargo nets, the generator, the water-maker and clogging all the drainage passages in the bilges - this was a mammoth task. It was the small hours of the morning once again, around 03:00 am, before we'd worked ourselves to a standstill once again. I made a small detour up to the temporary race office and sent a quick e-mail off to my wife to let her know we were all back safely on dry land before eventually turning in for the night.

The fleet was going through a series of repairs over the next few days, concentrating on sail damage which had occurred to most of the yachts. A new departure date was set and it became obvious very quickly that our generator was not going to be operable in time, but as the next few races were short (less than 1 week duration) we knew that we had enough fresh water in the tanks to cope. We were given a small, mobile, petrol driven generator, to use in the case of emergencies, to charge up our batteries. The new race start was upon us before we knew it; the race however had been changed. Due to the lack of available time we were now racing not to Shanghai as originally planned but to Okinawa, a Japanese island on the way to Hong-Kong (our next destination). The newly repaired fleet set off with a little trepidation as we were to sail through the same waters as the previous aborted start, and the weather was beginning to pick up in an identical manner as previously. This time however we didn't encounter the same severe conditions. The winds reached gale force but not a full blown storm. The sailing was still uncomfortable and cold but we managed to sail through it and as the days rolled on the weather started to improve, the temperatures rose along with our spirits and we were once more continuing our circumnavigation.

When some people find out I've taken part in an amateur round the world yacht race, they come up with the statement "yeah but it's not really racing, is it?", as if we were on a pleasure cruise of some description. The chapter of the circumnavigation that to me showed the competitiveness and desire to win was the last 24 hrs of the race into Okinawa.

By this stage of the race the yachts had strung out into their various positions. However we found ourselves in close proximity to *London Clipper* and *Bristol Clipper*, and between the three of us we were in positions fifth, sixth and seventh. For the previous 12 hours before the radio schedule, the three yachts had been matching each other, tacking when the other tacked, staying very close. *Bristol* was controlling the radio schedule at that stage and being the middle boat of the three, appropriately broadcast the *Steelers Wheel* tune "Stuck in the middle with you" over the VHF before the radio schedule. Although very appropriate and funny, I think this highlighted the situation to everybody on board (and the rest of the fleet who were listening in) and heightened everyone's desire to prove their abilities and break away from this dead-lock, before the finish line. Interestingly it was not to be a straight drag race to the line, as we had to sail round a headland to reach it.

The first boat to break away from the three was *Bristol*. We thought they were displaying a lack of judgment in their tactics and we followed the same route as

London. As the headland approached we started a tacking duel with *London*, both of us beating to windward to try and reach the headland first. With each closing tack we were getting visibly closer and closer to our opponents, until the inevitable happened and we crossed them on starboard tack. This now meant that we were leading the bunch of three yachts, (as we were sure *Bristol* had fallen behind). We had taken two places in a matter of hours but *London* were not giving up easily and on the next tack dropped in directly behind us and were following in our wake. However the tacking duel had finished as now the next time we tacked we would be free of the head land with a straight run to the line. This was now a judgment call - tack too soon and we'd run into the shore and need another couple of tacks to take us back out again - tack too late and we'd cover more ground than necessary, allowing *London* an opportunity to gain the place back.

This call was left to the skipper to make. We reached the point he deemed far enough and threw in a final tack. Once settled we looked round to see how *London* had responded, to find out they'd tacked as soon as they saw us do it 500 yards earlier. We now just had to wait to see if they'd have enough sea to pass the headland on that tack. As we trimmed in the sails for our latest course, something slowly became apparent. While still sailing to the wind we were now managing to sail too far away from land and actually needed to bear away from the wind for the course we wanted. Under normal sailing this would be good; it would be a faster point of sail as well as smoother and more comfortable with less slamming into waves. However in this situation when *London* had tacked at the same time, the new point of sail meant they were alongside us instead of behind and now could easily make it straight to the finish line. This seemed drastically unfair after all the hard work we'd put in to pass them in the first place. It felt to me as if we'd made a bad decision on when to make the final tack.

In hind sight (while studying our track on the navigation computer) we couldn't have made any other decision. Instead of tacking through 90° we seemed to tack through 75°. The only way this was possible was due to a wind shift at the time we tacked, completely unpredictable and unlucky (for us). It was now just a straight drag race to the finish line, and to make matters worse the wind along with the shift had seemed to drop a little, and we knew our boat did not seem to be as good in light winds as some of the others. We were now struggling to keep up, never mind catch and overtake *London*. I turned in for my off-watch, already late as I'd stayed up to help during the exciting tacking

duel and I knew it would be dark before we finished and thus the small hours before we'd finally tied up in the marina.

When I came back on-deck an hour and a half later we had even worse news. *London* were still ahead of us (maybe 700 yards) but *Bristol* were now only about 700 yards behind and catching us rapidly. They had apparently played the wind shift a lot better than either us or *London* and had gone a lot closer in to shore than either of us had thought wise, and in this slightly lighter wind were now visibly reeling us in. What made this situation all the more tense was that three women in our crew had struck up romantic liaisons with three men in the *Bristol* crew, and as yet *Bristol* was the one yacht we had never managed to beat in a race, this was our best chance to so far.

I took the helm and we did our best to sail the boat as fast and straight as we could through the night. At this point I think our skipper gave up a little, he was tired after being up for a double watch and had done his best to help us stay ahead of *Bristol*. He turned to me and simply said "do your best" before going below. We sailed on trimming the sails and helming as best we could but to no avail, slowly and surely the *Bristol* crew were catching us, not only were they catching us but it was apparent that they would do it right along side our yacht; this was going to be close quarters stuff.

When the bow of their yacht started to overlap the stern of ours, we were literally only metres apart. We could make out and recognise the silhouettes on board our adversary and even hear their muffled calls to one and other over the constant noise of wind and water rushing past our boat. Worse still as it was now dark we could see their torch beams on their sails every time they checked the trim of their sails. We had become used to setting our sails and only rechecking the trim every 10 to 15 minutes, *Bristol* on the other hand appeared to be checking their sails every 2 minutes if not sooner. This was unsettling for some of our crew especially as it was obvious *Bristol* were at that point sailing faster.

As a piece of the psychological battle we started randomly shining torches onto our own sails to pretend we were trimming, and the psychological battle didn't stop there, whether as a tactic to try and upset *Bristol*, a way of relieving some tension or just as a piece of mindless banter some of our crew members started doing animal impressions at full volume. The excitement and commotion was too much for our skipper who was trying to rest. He once more came on-deck, with the cover-story that he wanted to smoke (only allowed on-deck, and downwind), but in reality to once more get involved. At this point *Bristol* were

now only half a boat's length behind and I could see their helmsman from our helm position. The skipper finished his cigarette grabbed a torch and rushed forward to check the sail trims, muttering under his breath about getting this yacht moving. He went to the bow and stood shining the torch up at the sail tell-tales. Normally when this happened he would signal back some sail adjustment, but this time after about 5 minutes he switched the torch off and sloped back to the cock-pit and said he couldn't find any fault in our sail trim, basically there was nothing he could do to help, we just had to sail on and wait for the inevitable to happen.

It really was getting neck and neck, with *Bristol* beginning to pull-up alongside. The rules of yacht racing say that the overtaking boat has to give way to the other until such point that they are obviously ahead, at this point if they are the leeward boat (which *Bristol* was in our situation) then they have the right to "luff-up", basically to turn to windward and force the windward boat to luff-up as well, pushing them off course. We were very nearly at that point, I was still on the helm and *Bristol* were now easily alongside us. Although they had no need to luff us up to get to the finish line *Bristol* were a team who were known to win-at-all-costs and we were expecting them to use this legitimately legal tactic as soon as they could, to insure their position.

They were alongside us neck-and-neck for what seemed like hours, but in reality probably wasn't more than 15 minutes, we were so close if a crew member had stood on the width extremity of each yacht then they could have held a conversation without raising their voices. I was prepared for the inevitable luff, just waiting for the moment that *Bristol* deemed themselves ahead and I would need to steer into the wind to give way to them, but it never came. As slowly and surely as they had crept up alongside us, we now seemed to be creeping forward of them. We had changed nothing – same helmsman, same sail trim, same want to win, and I'm positive that *Bristol* never changed anything (why would they, they were sailing faster), but there was no doubt about it we were now pulling ahead of them. While all this was happening *London* were still only 50 to 100 metres ahead of us, but with the ever shortening distance to the finish were now realistically out of reach.

As *Bristol* dropped completely behind us I gave up the helm as I was beginning to feel a bit fatigued. We'd normally rotate the helm every 15 minutes or so, but in the tense conditions nobody else had seemed to want to helm so now I really needed a rest and the pressure was off somewhat. We swapped helms and this allowed me to now concentrate on the navigation to the finish line, as it was

likely that it was crucial to state exactly when we crossed it. In the meantime *Bristol* were climbing to windward of us, but also dropping behind a little in doing so, this seemed like a very odd tactic, but about half a mile out from the line it became obvious what they were doing when we saw them launch their spinnaker from under their foresail. We were on a fine reach (too close to the wind to fly a spinnaker), but as they'd gone upwind of us they would have a more downwind run to the line, and they were hoping the bigger sail area would help them.

We sat and waited to see what would happen. Their spinnaker launched and, with their pole as far forward as they could get it, they were managing to sail without the spinnaker collapsing, but not for long. To keep the spinnaker up they had to sail a course that was too deep and was taking them towards the coast too quickly. As they fell to leeward of us again, still behind us, they tried to squeeze their course up to match ours but with the inevitable consequence of their spinnaker collapsing. They were forced to lower it again and be content to follow us over the finishing line. Race Seven took around a week but as we crossed the finishing line there was only two minutes separating fifth place from seventh place. This was the close intense sailing that match racing could bring, and every single person in the three crews had been trying their utmost to get that fifth place, it didn't seem to matter that we weren't racing for first place.

The Japanese Island of Okinawa was a lovely place with the people just as friendly as the mainland but communication was a lot easier as more of them could speak English, this was due to the large American air-base that has been on Okinawa since the Second World War. It also meant that their lifestyles had been somewhat Americanised with fast food and restaurant chains being much more prevalent.

Our next port of call was Hong Kong. Sailing round the North of Hong Kong, between the island and Kowloon was a bizarre feeling. Our ocean going 60ft yacht, that was now the extent of our domain, was completely dwarfed by block upon block and row upon row of high rise flats and that was just the outskirts of Hong Kong, the Central Business District was even more fascinating with glass towers and sky-scrapers all trying to outdo each other in their grandeur, and this was during the day time. At night the buildings raised the stakes once again, with their neon lighting and changing colours. It was said that Ridley Scot got his inspiration for the opening scene of "Blade Runner" from looking down at Hong Kong from Victoria Peak at night, and after visiting there one evening I could easily imagine that.

The marina we were in belonged to the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club, and we became temporary members with access to their club house, restaurants and bars. This was great luxury and opulence to us, as we we're used to the baseness that comes when 15 people live on a 60ft yacht, and it was just what you'd imagine a well to do gentleman's club to be like. This was in stark contrast to the next bay down the coast, just round the corner of marina sitting on the other side of the break water was a sampan village. Little more than a collection of floating rafts with covers over them to keep out any rain. These were people's houses, in which they lived, ate, slept, drank and more importantly, did their ablutions. As there was no great tide running through there the raw sewage from these sampans would just float around and be gently washed into one corner of their area, where it would stay accumulating until it naturally decayed (however long that takes). Therefore just below the main quay on the Hong Kong water front there was a floating cesspit from the lower echelons of their society, and over the road there was a brand spanking new "Starbuck's" coffee shop that was being patronised by people from the richer end of their society, this was a city of complete opposites.

Hong Kong was not just another stop it also marked our half-way point, the end of leg six, this was the biggest crew change-over and a major refit for the yachts. Each yacht in turn was lifted out of the water to scrub and anti-foul the hulls, we also had our generator fixed as it was still inoperable since our Japanese storm incident. To allow time for this to happen the stop over was scheduled to be the longest and quite a few of the fleet members took the opportunity to visit friends and relations around the world. The sudden immersion back into reality must have made a few of them think about what they were doing and their priorities because a number did not return at all, some without even any more contact. One of these was the Leeds Clipper skipper and a replacement had to be found, another was one of our circumnavigators, which was a bit of a shock to us, but we had to continue without him.

Hong-Kong to the Philippines was a short race, which we did along-side Hong-Kong yacht club's annual "San Fernando" race. We raced our heavy ocean-going fully stocked up yachts against some of the stripped out weekend race yachts out of Hong-Kong. Our fleet did remarkably well, a clipper didn't win the race but most of our fleet were reasonably placed taking into consideration the differences between the yachts.

San Fernando in the Philippines was a very short stop-over, only a couple of days and we were soon away again onto our next destination of Singapore. This

race was always billed as a slow one with the predicted winds being very light at that time of year. To cater for this the race management had included a number of "gates" along the route to allow them to stop the race at a particular gate and tell the yachts to motor the rest of the way to Singapore. In the end this is what happened but even earlier than the management was expecting meaning the yachts were left with inadequate fuel supplies to motor the long distance to Singapore. To aid this the fleet rendezvoused then paired up with one boat towing another, although using more fuel than one boat on its own towing uses vastly less fuel than both boats motoring under their own power. Thus, by swapping the lead boat in the pair every 12 hours to share the fuel usage, the pair could cover a lot more distance than without towing.

It also meant that the fleet was together and by this stage there were a lot of friendships, if not relationships, between the personnel on different boats. There was a lot of swimming between the yachts to see friends and even an impromptu made up game of trying to physically remove a fender from an opposition and swim it back to your own boat. This ended up with a mass rugby-cum-water polo melée in the middle of the South China sea. It also meant that during the motoring period there were a number of crew dispersed onto other yachts and also a number of guests from other yachts on ours. This period was when it dawned on me how close the friendships were, not just between our own crew but throughout the whole fleet. We were all going through this bizarre method of travelling round the world together and, although the rest of the fleet were our competition, they were also our brethren and comrades. Before finally getting to Singapore the race management had a power boat bring extra fuel to us which we transferred at sea from boat to boat in 10 gallon containers, to ensure we had adequate fuel to reach Singapore.

At Singapore we were staying at Raffles Marina which was very smart, although probably not as plush as the Royal Hong Kong Yacht Club, but it was a nice alternative to living on top of 14 other people in a floating plastic tub. The outdoor pool and Jacuzzi were well used, especially after people had indulged themselves at the bar. Singapore however will be remembered for the afternoon downpour, very regularly around 2 o'clock in the afternoon the heavens would open and unleash a deluge of large heavy warm rain normally alongside a good display of thunder and lightening. One such incident was so bad that half the yachts in our fleet were struck by lightening during it, wrecking the delicate wind instruments on the top of the masts. There was big rush on getting replacements and fitting them before we were due to start the next race. One of

the Yachts, Bristol, however had more serious issues with their main engine and it was looking doubtful that they could even take part safely in the next race.

We were always due to motor down to Sumatra before starting the race at the edge of the Indian Ocean where we would pick up steady wind. The decision was made to tow *Bristol* until that point and this would allow her crew more time to fix the problem, however on fixing the problem and starting the engine things just went from bad to worse and it became apparent that there was no way that they would be able to compete in the next leg. At the evening rendezvous that night the skippers all had a meeting onboard *Bristol* and held a ship to shore call with the race office on the satellite phone, the decision was taken for the whole fleet to sail to Christmas Island and put in there for professional help. So it was that the Clipper fleet were to land on Australian soil for the first time in their history.

Christmas Island is a small island half-way between Australia and Indonesia and, as such, does have a problem with illegal immigrants turning up on boats. The island is basically one big quarrying town which survives by regular visits of a supply ship. We arrived in the small hours of the night and were promptly told that we would have to wait until the immigration officer arrived for work at 8:00 am before we could moor in the bay outside the only town on the island, so we sailed back and forward until then. Apart from the industrial quarry and ship loading jetty the island was like a small paradise, our yachts moored in azure blue bay fringed with the deep lush green of a tropical rainforest with the sounds to match. The inhabitants were remarkably friendly too with numerous stories coming back through the fleet of crew being offered free use of motorcars to get around the island and showers in houses to wash in. Also 120 extra people on the island took its toll on their supplies and we had soon used up the islands supplies of certain items, like tea-bags, that weren't in great abundance in the first place. The professional engineers soon had *Bristol's* problem identified but it required a spare part that was not on the island. *Bristol* would have to wait until the part was flown in from Australia. This was a large dilemma for the organisers.

The next stop-over in Mauritius was a large one, not only was it the end of a leg so lots of crew changing, but it was the obvious one for friends and family of the circumnavigators to go to on holiday to meet the crews during their travels. I myself had my wife travelling there to meet me who I hadn't seen since the stop-over in the Galapagos five months earlier. If the whole fleet were to wait until *Bristol* was ready then most of the visitors coming to Mauritius would have left

again by the time the fleet arrived, or at best only see their loved ones and friends for a couple of days instead of a couple of weeks. It was decided that the rest of the fleet would race to Mauritius leaving *Bristol* Clipper behind to follow on once ready.

However there were also a lot of crew on *Bristol* who had friends and family coming to Mauritius. The other crews in the fleet voluntarily decided to “make room” for some of the *Bristol* crew members. This meant where there was a space (i.e. a boat was under-crewed, we were only insured for 15 during an ocean crossing) a *Bristol* crew member who wanted to could sail with them. We also had two crew members who by now were having a relationship with crew-members on *Bristol* and these, two volunteered to sail on *Bristol* to Mauritius thereby creating another couple of places onboard *Glasgow*. In total for the race to Mauritius we had four *Bristol* members sailing on *Glasgow*, which although a little strange was a refreshing change. Again this voluntary helping of the fleet personnel highlighted how we were all in this thing together as a fleet and not just a group of individual yachts competing against each other.

The race from Christmas Island was a straight line, down-wind, high speed blast with our heavy-weight spinnaker hoisted most of the way. Some of the boats started reporting steering gear failure and, sure enough, the next day our steering failed as well. This is not quite so dramatic as it sounds. In a car it would be disastrous as you would no doubt end up colliding with something before you can slow down, on a yacht in the middle of nowhere there’s not much to collide with, but it does mean that you have no control to stop the yacht turning up to wind-ward, and with the spinnaker up, this would normally end up in a broach. This is exactly what happened to us, the boat broached and we were lucky not to damage the heavy weight spinnaker. After we had lowered the spinnaker and secured the emergency tiller in place. The skipper went into the “engine room” to inspect the damage. It wasn’t too bad, the problem was that the cable connecting the rudder stock to the steering quadrant had severed due to strain and fatigue from the loads it was receiving in the strong downwind sailing conditions. As we carried no spares for these wires we rigged up a makeshift system using spectra rope, this was obviously not as strong as the original wire but was the best we could do, therefore when we went back to using the wheel instead of the emergency tiller, the tiller was kept on-deck at hand ready to be slotted back into position. This was only required once more when the spectra gave way. Using this jury rigged steering we made our way to the finish and the holiday island of Mauritius.

In the previous stop-overs on the run up to Mauritius I had been putting in extra time and work on the yacht to allow me to take time away in Mauritius, my wife had organised self catering accommodation in the North of the Island and I took myself up there for a break away from the sailing crowd, leaving the yacht maintenance to others in the crew.

This was a strange period although we were pleased to see each other and had a great time it almost felt like we had to get to know each other again, since we'd been apart for five months, but in doing the normal holiday activities of relaxing on a beach, scuba-diving, and hiring a scooter to see the island, we soon felt back together and from this point on I knew it was only the Brazilian stop-over where she wouldn't be coming to meet me.

Up until this point our yacht had been operating a two-watch system where you were either on-watch or off-watch but some of the boats had moved to the "Victoria System" that was being used on *Bristol Clipper* (named after the pub they were in when it was thought of) this system is a three watch system, so basically the watches are smaller (less people on deck) and, more importantly, for every one on-watch period you had two off watch periods. The big difference was when you came off-watch half your watch did stand-by duty and mother-watch duties. There by the watch pattern became: on-watch for four hours, standby for four hours, off-watch for four hours, on-watch for four hours, off-watch for eight hours, meaning everyone got a double off-watch period every 24 hours allowing extended periods of sleep.

The stand-by duty meant you had to be prepared to help in sail manoeuvres at the drop of a hat, but were allowed to sleep if you wanted to. Basically through the day you would be cooking and cleaning as the mother-watch duty and through the night you could sleep in the saloon fully clothed ready to help out sailing when required. Some of our crew had been requesting that we try this system and the decision was made to run the watches like this for the race to Cape-Town. The flip side for me was that there was no reason that the watch leaders could not do their fair share of the mother-watch duties so from Mauritius onwards I was also expected to cook and clean-up. If you've ever thrown a large dinner party for a number of people, you may know how awkward cooking for 15 can be, but add to this the problem that your cooker is swinging freely on a gimble trying to remain horizontal when the rest of the galley is rolling about. When the yacht is beating into the wind this is even harder as the bow sails off a wave peak, drops a few metres to the trough bottom and smashes into the next oncoming wave with a slamming crash, this is enough

to send the rice, potatoes sausages etc into freefall. It was common enough to hear profanities being shouted from the galley during up-wind sailing, especially if someone had left a window open for waves to crash through and land on the unsuspecting cook or, even worse, the forthcoming meals on the hob. This was a new experience that I had yet to learn to deal with, but was just another aspect of life at sea.

Not only was race 12 when we changed our watch system it also stood out as it was billed as the hardest sailing race in the circumnavigation. This is the one in which we would have to round the Cape of Good Hope where the notorious Agulhas Current runs against the prevailing gales creating very stormy conditions and huge standing waves. This was a quandary as for racing reasons you wanted to be in the current running with it down the East coast of Africa but when nearing Cape Agulhas with a Westerly gale, you needed to get out of it quickly. There was only really two option; try and stay North of it where you would be sandwiched between the coast and the current, constantly tacking back and forward ever wary of getting too close to the coast, or South of it into sea room and deep water. The Northerly route was shorter for racing but more stressful and dangerous. Our skipper opted for the Southerly route hugging the edge of the current. Right on cue as we approached Cape Agulhas area a low pressure front approached causing gale force winds, following our predetermined plan we headed South out of the current. This did give us a slightly calmer sea state but we still had gale force winds to cope with. This time, unlike Japan we were better prepared and ready for it. The main was lowered and the storm sails raised in preparation and the decision to stop racing was made. In reality this meant that we were now not trying to push the boat forward all the time, but instead the main concern was to keep the boat safe. We were still sailing but not with any great aim. The bow was kept off the wind more for a more comfortable point of sail and watches were reduced to 2 people on deck at any one time to reduce crew fatigue. This is how we sailed along for approximately 36 hours before the winds died enough to re-hoist the main and continue our passage to Cape Town. While this was going on my wife was taking a tour of the Shipwreck Coast just North of us, where she was cringing every time the guide mentioned how many ships were wrecked each year due to the regular storms in the area!

We hit one more small storm the night before we reached Cape Town, this time however we were further North out of the Agulhas Current to the West of Cape Agulhas and were able to ride the gale pushing us North to our destination. Of all the land falls in our journey I don't think any were as memorable or moving

as seeing the sun rise over Table Mountain in the distance as we reached into Cape Town in the tail end of a gale that seemed to die as quickly as the sun was rising, and by the time we were approaching port it was a glorious sunny morning with just a gentle breeze to push our yacht onward. The decision to head south round the Cape did not cost us any places in the race and saved the yacht a lot of damage. Some of the fleet that choose the Northerly shorter route reached Cape Town with substantial damage to deck gear, as they had to keep pushing their yachts to ensure they didn't get washed ashore.

Cape Town was another good stop-over and I managed to get some time away from the yachting scene to do some travelling around the area with my wife. This was short lived however when we were in the Fairview vineyard in the wine region and a bus load of people turned up, only for us to recognise each and every person who stepped of the bus as sailors or supporters from our fleet!

The race across the South Atlantic to Brazil was generally uneventful in terms of incidents and anecdotes. We pushed as hard as we could and competed as eagerly as always. The three way watch system appeared to be a hit with the crew and in general life was as normal as we could expect. By this stage of the circumnavigation sailing across oceans in a 60ft yacht, constantly on a watch system did seem to be a normal way of life for the circumnavigators. Our daily nine-five jobs that we'd left behind seemed a long way in the past now and a lot of people were now thinking about the future and a surprising number were thinking about a change of direction for their careers. Also by this stage a lot of personal factors had affected the crews. Our boat alone had three circumnavigators leave the crew for various different reasons, ranging from realising it wasn't for them to relationship reasons. This left some gaps in the crew that the company filled either with alternatives or with personnel from other yachts in the fleet. By the end of our race we had two crew members that had transferred from other yachts where they had "personality clashes" with their crew. One from a yacht in the lower half of the rankings like us but also one from a yacht that was in the leading group battling for first place, again reiterating that this adventure we were on had become a lot more than a race between individual yachts, but a large group of people helping each other to achieve the goal of sailing round the world.

Race 14 from Salvador in Brazil to New York had a few memorable points in it, we would cross our out-bound path in the Caribbean (sail over the identical spot we'd been in during Race Two), thus closing our circumnavigation route, it was the race in which we reached our top instantaneous speeds and it was the race

where we thought we were in an unbeatable position, and going to win. The first point is a technical one, it didn't really mark anything specific but was another large milestone in our progression around the globe. It psychologically marked the start of the last stretch for us, we celebrated by all signing the red ensign that we'd flown for the first half of the race and presenting it to the winner of a game of Pass-the-parcel.

The second point was more significant, we were sailing along the north coast of Brazil with a strong wind behind us, the large 20 ft waves were pushing us in the direction we wanted to go and there was a current of two-three knots running under us also pushing us in the right direction. We were basically sailing up the backs of these huge waves then surfing down the front of them. As gravity pulled us down the wave, the force of the wave would shoot us along so fast that the helmsman could feel, and the crew could hear, the whole hull vibrating. This was exhilarating sailing but also tricky as you had to make sure the boat didn't round up due to the sudden change in direction and speed of the "apparent wind" due to the acceleration of the boat through the water. We were consistently topping out with speeds over the ground in the high teens (17, 18, 19 knots) on each wave, and on the really big waves you could break into the twenties. It became a small competition between the crew to see who could record the highest speed on the GPS read out. But when we realised the same thing was happening on all the yachts, it expanded to the whole fleet. During the radio schedules each yacht would report their new top speed along with the crew member who obtained it.

Our top speed of 26.4 knots still stood as the fastest any of those yachts reached during the circumnavigation, and it was one of our female circumnavigators who was helming at the time. We didn't know it then but the announcement of her name over the radio caused some distress within the crew of *London Clipper*, who were only allowing their better helmsmen to take the helm during this period of weather and sea conditions, while we were still rotating our helmsman throughout the crew-members. I didn't find out about this until Ian Dickens from *London Clipper* published a book called "Sea Change", documenting it in his story of the Times Clipper 2000.

The third point about us being in an almost unbeatable position in that race typifies the rollercoaster of emotions that we encountered during the circumnavigation. After the thrill ride of the down-wind blast described above we had to once again cross the ITCZ (Doldrums) and we knew from previous experiences that with the weather predictions available to the yachts that where

you decided to cross was little more than a lottery. As we approached the Caribbean Sea and the fleet started to get more and more strung out as yachts would hit “wind holes” and sit around in the same area for periods that could extend to days at a time, we found ourselves leading the fleet with hundreds of miles between us. We seemed to be gently sailing along and each radio schedule we would put further distance between us and our competitors.

We had not finished better than fifth up to this point and the elusiveness of a podium finish (top three) was the one thing the crew was yearning for. The possibility of finishing overall in the top three had mathematically passed us by, but we could still finish in the top three in an individual race. And here we were towards the end of race 14 theoretically past the latitudes where the ITCZ is, hundreds of miles ahead of our competitors and still sailing sweetly along in the warm humid conditions of the Caribbean. It was sheer bliss until we stopped.

We sailed into our own wind hole and just stopped dead. It wasn't often we'd seen what we called “snake eyes” on the wind instruments 0.0 knots of wind speed, but this time we would see it for hours on end. With the size of our yachts and our experience we knew that we needed at least 2 knots registering on the wind instruments to even get our boat moving. There was nothing else for it but to go swimming and wait, and wait. Each 12 hour radio schedule now showed the rest of the fleet gaining on us then over-taking us. One by one they would pass us, each radio schedule another yacht would be ahead of us and our spirits that were so high only days before were slowly sinking lower and lower with each position we lost. It got to the stage of not wanting to know the results from the radio schedule when coming on watch because we couldn't bear it any longer. Eventually the wind did pick up, we did get moving but we were back down with the tail-enders again and the hopes of our podium place had been dashed once again. It did however mean that I'm probably one of the few people in the world to have gone skinny-dipping in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean at three am, pitch black with nothing more than a water-proof torch. The things you do to cheer yourself up when depressed and bored!

For our New York stop-over we were moored in a marina on the New Jersey side of the Hudson. A short ferry trip from our marina to the World Trade Centre marina took us over to Manhattan Island and the bustle of down-town New York. This stop had a different feel to it than the previous ones. The next race would be our last ocean crossing, people were starting to look to the future, what they would do when they finished, what their next chapter of life would hold for

them. This had changed peoples lives; some people had met their “life-partners” and become engaged while on this adventure. Others had made life changing decisions that would affect their careers, while others had had their eyes opened to a wider world than they thought they lived in, but the fleet as a whole now had a sense of returning home. We’d be heading east for the first time since setting off from Plymouth. The clocks would be going back instead of forward. I spent a lot of time in New York as a tourist with my wife, going to Central Park, the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art etc. This list also included the bar on the top of the World Trade Centre, in which my wife, a number of my crew and myself, had a great time drinking one too many cocktails and enjoying the views before going on our way.

That was shortly before we were due to set sail over the Atlantic in early September 2001.

I think it was only a few days out of New York that we received news about the terrible events at the World Trade Centre on the 11th September 2001. This news came to us via e-mail from the race director. The monolithic towers that had stood before us the week before were destroyed, along with hundreds of lives, lives that only last week we probably interacted with. The bar-men, the elevator operator, the receptionist, all could be within the list of casualties. This was shocking news for the whole fleet, and seemed to affect us all quite heavily, probably due to the timing of us leaving.

Apart from the World Trade Centre attack, the last ocean crossing stands out in my memory for a few reasons. It was the place where we saw the best and most aquatic life throughout our travels. Hardly a day went past without seeing dolphins. Numerous whales of indeterminate species were seen, one doing barrel rolls under our hull at night, being picked out by our high power torch shining into the water, the white tips of his flukes clearly visible. The bioluminescence in the North Atlantic was amazing as well. These are microscopic animals that give off a green glow when disturbed. At various points in the journey we’d seen different types from small localised sparkling to large explosions of light in our wake almost as though there were small depth charges going off behind us. The North Atlantic gave us the most constant stream of green glow in our wake that we’d seen. At night it was as if we were leaking some form of glowing paint from our boat, as the bioluminescence continued to glow bright green for a long time after it had been disturbed. The most wondrous show however was when the two combined and the dolphins arrived in the dark. They could be seen a long distance off as they left a trail of

glowing green behind them. They looked like weird glowing torpedo trails heading straight for the boat. When they got close enough to see, the whole dolphin seemed to be covered in a bright green glow as it disturbed the bioluminescence in the water it was swimming through. I don't think I've ever seen anything weirder or more wonderful in the natural world.

The second point of interest in Race 15 was that it involved a long period of time when we were sailing within sight of *Bristol Clipper*. At this stage of the race *Bristol* had the most race points and we had the least, yet there we were match racing with the race leaders and at times out-pacing them. Proof if any were required that our sailing skills were equal to that of the race leaders. This last ocean race was supposed to be a blast from New York, over to Lizard Point off Cornwall then South to Jersey. The idea of the route via the Lizard was that is the official transatlantic crossing timing gate, and we were trying to see how fast the Clipper 60s were compared to the record holders. Once more the weather gods intervened in our plans, the Azores high drifted unusually far north and left the fleet drifting around in the North Atlantic, with little or no wind. This proved disastrous to all the supporters who were planning to meet us in Jersey. It became apparent that we were not going to arrive in Jersey until after the day we were supposed to leave and the flight tickets my wife had booked were promptly thrown away uselessly in the bin. The fleet arrived in Jersey about a week later than expected. We were delayed so much that some of the boats were starting to get worried about their food stocks during the last couple of days, with *Bristol* in particular complaining that they had nothing much more than rice left.

The stop-over in Jersey was somewhat shorter than planned due to our extremely late arrival. Clippers' plan to have a last stop-over so close to Portsmouth was to guarantee the arrival date of the fleet back into Portsmouth, but our late arrival into Jersey had thrown even their worst scenario plans out of the window and therefore they had had to postpone the great arrival back into Portsmouth. Victualling the boat for the last race over the English Channel was a bit of a joke. Instead of the vast quantities of cans and packets and fresh fruit & vegetables that we'd got used to loading onboard before setting off, this time we sent one person to Marks & Spencers who came back with a couple of carrier bags of sandwiches. The last race was only going to be an overnight race across the channel back to the Solent and Portsmouth, and there was no requirement to carry vast quantities of food and water. At this point we knew mathematically that it was impossible for us to finish overall any higher than last place, eighth out of eight as I like to say now. But we'd still never finished in the top three in any race so we were pushing as hard now as any race previously, and we did

record our best finish position in this race, fourth. We never managed the elusive podium position but by the end it was less about the race and more the accomplishment.

The thing I remember most about the final race is charging up and down the Solent in front of all the spectator boats, rounding marks, launching and dowsing our weary battle scarred spinnaker, that had been through one too many broaches and repaired a few too many times. It reminded me of the day on the Solent all those years ago when I watched the Whitbread yachts come home, except this time we were the spectacle instead of the spectators. We were the weather-beaten sailors returning from a great adventure. We were the reason all these craft had come out on the water today. That more than crossing the finish line was my feeling of fulfilment. In contrast crossing the finish line, although enjoyable was more a feeling of relief and finality. It was the end of a journey but also the end of an era, and the start of another journey that is the rest of my life.

The overall winner of the Times-Clipper 2000 was *Bristol Clipper*, who finished one place ahead of us in Race 16. They apparently had a discussion about whether to let us pass them before the finish line, as it would not affect their overall standings and would have given us our coveted podium position of third. They decided not to because they thought we wouldn't want to be gifted the position – they were right.

I hadn't realised it at the time but the crew party/prize giving in Jersey really became our farewell celebration within the crew, because as soon as we set foot back onto mainland Britain, the crew started to split-up and socialise with friends and family who had come to see them, and start the next chapter of their own lives.

People often ask me, and I sometimes ponder on, what I personally got from the experience. Sir Robin Knox-Johnston insists that it instils a confidence to tackle any situation or problem. Personally I think I had my eyes opened to the world. It's small enough to sail around, but big enough that no one person can see or know it all. I've seen and done things I'd never have imagined before setting out, but also met people from all over the world who are just normal everyday people going about their lives. The biggest thing I've learned however is that there is a lot more to do with your holiday than sit on a beach (although that also has a time and place).

And the answers to the question I was asked before the start - was I happy enough with my achievement as I didn't go "round the horn" but went the "easy

way round"? - is a definite "Yes". Would I want to go and participate in the BT now? The answer then, six years ago, immediately after completing my circumnavigation was a definite "No"! Now looking back it would have to be "Possibly"! Although since then the Challenge Business has folded and the BT Global Challenge of an east-about circumnavigation is no longer held, so the decision on that question is immaterial.

However, the Clipper route has now been altered to venture into the Southern Ocean!