

1950

For our next gale we jump to the second week in the Transatlantic Race. In this event the three small yachts *Mokoia*, *Samuel Pepys* and *Cohoe* were entered together with two larger yachts, Mr. Jack Rawlings's new Class I *Gulvain* and Lieutenant-Commander G. C. L. Payne's Scandinavian double-ender *Karin III*. Before the start of this Transatlantic Race I had *Cohoe's* false bow removed. It had given no trouble, but I thought the boat would be better without it. I need not have worried, for it proved so strong that it took us a tremendous time to dismantle it, even with the aid of two shipwrights from the dockyard. There were hundreds of screws to undo and we were thankful when at last the task was done and it lay by the roadside in pieces. It would have survived a hurricane.

With me in *Cohoe* I had Jack Keary as mate, Tom Tothill as navigator and John Halstead, a young American ex-marine who wanted to work his passage to take up a vacation job in France. They were a tough crew and I needed them, for the race was to prove something of an endurance test. With a total of four, watch-keeping arrangements were altered. In day-time, watches of three hours were kept and at night six hours, in order that the watch below could in theory get six hours' continuous sleep, though in practice they rarely did. There were always two on watch at a time, although the one not steering was free to go below if he was not needed for spinnaker handling or other duties.

The race started on Sunday, 2 July, in an almost complete calm, and it was not until the fourth day, with *Cohoe* tailing (as she always did in light airs) over 100 miles behind the fleet, that the wind freshened, bringing with it almost trade wind conditions, with a smart following breeze, a big blue sea under a sunny sky and zest and movement in hull, spars and sails. These conditions gradually gave place to grey skies and rough sailing in the second week as the yachts entered the mid-Atlantic stage of the race, where a series of depressions were moving across.

On Tuesday, 11 July, *Samuel Pepys* and *Cohoe* were very close, had we known it, and *Cohoe* for the first time had temporarily taken the lead. Both yachts reported Force 5 to Force 6 winds, both crews were beginning to feel fatigue following on ceaseless driving and spinnaker work. On Wednesday, 12 July, conditions were much the same, but the wind backed to the west and the barometer fell 7 millibars to 1,009 millibars.

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