



Photo by S. Pulford

Sloop YOUNG TIGER

TONS T.M. 4½
L.O.A. 22.25 ft
L.W.L. 18.25 ft
BEAM 7.1 ft
DRAUGHT 2.25 ft

SAIL AREA 235 sq. ft
DESIGNER D. A. Rayner
BUILDER Westerly Marine Construction
YEAR BUILT 1964

A VOYAGE TO AMERICA

by Simon Baddeley

The idea of sailing *Young Tiger* to America came to me at the Boat Show and I mentioned it to Denys Rayner, who in a quiet way has had a lot to do with getting me hopelessly involved with small boats. Until then, when I suppose the decision was made, crossing the Atlantic was a joke; boring, unseamanlike and rather too dangerous. After January such opinions began to look like excuses, and when shortly after leaving university I found that my first job involved going to the States I started planning for a long cruise, allowing for a final decision about the crossing later and talking coyly of a cruise to Gibraltar. The Lymington water people are good at playing this game and were wonderfully reticent, managing to be encouraging whilst giving me the feeling that if I sailed in again sooner than expected not a word would be said.

Young Tiger sailed from her home port on the morning of 21 August with Alan and Christie Trist, Bob Hayes, myself and a Hasler vane gear. We got to Poole in time for tea. We sailed on to Portland the next day, passing the Bill in the gathering darkness, awed by the sound of rushing water all around, and arrived in Dartmouth in the morning; a drizzly day and all of us a little the worse for a blustery night at sea on our first lengthy passage. From Dartmouth we ran up to Brixham for a night and warnings of F. 10 winds had us securely battened down for the night. Nothing came of it except a lot of knots to be untied next morning. Under a sultry blue sky we drifted almost windless through the swells off Start Point, slaughtering and eating about thirty mackerel beautifully cooked by Christie.

I had not visited the West Country before, so our next stop, the Yealm river, was a surprise. With *Young Tiger's* shallow draught we were able to get way up the estuary, stopping for supper almost under the branches of a large oak. The next morning my super crew had to go back to London and sadly I left them waiting for the bus as I headed for Land's End. Although *Young Tiger* was beating past the Lizard by 0900 the next morning it was not until 1800 that I sailed through the narrow entrance of Mousehole harbour. One of the reasons I had not balked at this prolonged

beat was because I had been able to sit below reading, but also because owing to the way I had fitted the vane gear the outboard motor had to be taken right off the stern for the servo-blade to swing freely. In these circumstances I had to have a good reason for using the motor, since getting a 9 h.p. Johnson out of the quarter berth and on to the stern was quite a rigmarole.

After a day in Mousehole stocking up, I sailed for Bordeaux at 1900 on 30 August. As we headed away from England before a pleasant north-west breeze I sat below reading Hammond Innes by torchlight. There was not much shipping about on this side of the channel. It was no great problem to check position, with the radio beacons on Round Island and Creach coming over on the Heron Homer with deafening clarity. The wind stayed steady, though moderating slightly the following morning when I carried the spinnaker for 4 hrs. Stiff and Creach lights appeared in the distance just after sunset, the wind increased and even out here, giving Finisterre a berth of 20 miles, there was a nasty short sea. The loom of the Ile de Sein light appeared after midnight and more wind forced me to take six rolls in the main and change to the No. 2 jib. Since I was uncertain of the strains on the vane in these conditions, I towed a couple of warps astern and they seemed very effective in checking a tendency to yaw that the gear was, of course, unable to foresee. (I'm sure it won't be long before that ingenious colonel solves this problem.) It seemed as Ushant drew astern that the smell of burning seaweed came drifting on the wind, or maybe it was just a recurring memory of that place where in the previous year I had given myself a fright stupidly trying to navigate a route I had 'discovered' on the chart between Molène and the passage de Fromveur.

1 SEPTEMBER. 1400. Warning of a northerly gale. 1600. Mainsail down. No. 1 jib up. Wind north, F. 5-6. Making good progress.

2 SEPTEMBER. 0900. Still blowing F. 6. Same rig. Log 242.

1000. Fix! Four crosses in F. 6-7. Log 248.

(This fix followed bearings on about seven stations—Ile de Sein, Les Balcines, Belle Ile, Eckmule, Creach, Consol etc.—but with the gear doing all the dirty work one had little excuse for not being v. conscientious about navigation.) At this point I was concerned neither to get blown too far south not to get too close to the Plateau de Rochebonne.

2000. Log 290. Wind increasing and gusting F. 8. Taking occasional splash in the cockpit.

2045. Lying to. F. 6-7. Comfy.

3 SEPTEMBER. 0001 put out sea anchor—fairly comfy—occasional

noisy bangs, but no strains. Cooking is very easy with the Horlicks food bars. Well fed, quite unfatigued and only mildly anxious.

1130. Sailing again under No. 1 jib.

2100. Loom of Pte de la Coubre and Pte de Chassiron dipping. 30 miles to go to Gironde sea-buoy. Soundings of 28-27 fathoms checks with the cross bearing. (The depth sounder is another gadget I had not used before and now found very useful.) Wind F. 3, west.

4 SEPTEMBER. 0700 in the mouth of the Gironde. Log 374.

1400. Moored off Paulliac, blew up the dinghy and went ashore for a bath after sharing a chicken at the invitation of two Frenchmen on a yacht moored nearby.

Between Land's End and the Gironde sea-buoy I must have spent most of the time in bed. It had been possible to eat and sleep regularly and being unfatigued I had no difficulty getting myself up to reef or trail warps as necessary. Though twice I awoke muttering apologies for being late on watch. At Bordeaux I tied up at the yacht club and left *Young Tiger* for my stepfather to take on through the canals to the Mediterranean for his first proper holiday in years.

I returned to England to make preparations. September was spent seeing friends and relatives, buying charts and books of distant places, bargaining for a sextant, making a will—moving in a dreamlike whorl through the noisy rainy streets of London. I asked a friend of mine from university out to dinner and asked her if she would like to come with me as far as Gibraltar. She liked the idea and we agreed to meet in Sète on 1 October.

It had been sunny when the train pulled out of London, but it was pouring in Paris, and all night as the train hurried through France the windows had been splashed with gusts of rain. The connexion from Avignon to Sète turned a bend where the track ran along the shore and my excitement at seeing the Mediterranean was checked as the train shaken by the wind trundled along before a vista of grey breaking seas. *Young Tiger* lay safe at the yacht club, littered with wave-thrown debris. We talked of the journey through the Midi, my stepfather looking younger than when he started. The waves made hollow explosions against the sea wall as we sipped our beers, listening to a tape-recorded diary of the trip.

On 2 October the Levanter had passed. The sea was bright. From the sea wall the fishing-boats could be seen bunched on the horizon like a flock of rooks, netting shoals of sardine driven in by the storm. Susanna arrived in time for breakfast and we spent the

day preparing the boat. In the evening, after dinner at the 'Taverna', we strolled back through streets busy with the loading of sardines, and motored out into the windless Mediterranean 800 miles to Gibraltar, and a month to do it.

Our first week in the Mediterranean proved rainy and grey and we travelled often under power, beset by large swells and little wind, stopping at Banyuls-sur-mer, Port Lligatt, Cadaques, Estartit and Arenys del Mar. Most of the tourists had gone home and we strolled through streets of empty bungalows and hotels into towns where voices were heard from one end of the street to the other. The air was oppressive and damp and the bare hills were often obscured by low cloud.

On the 8th we awoke in Arenys to fresh blue sky and the promise of heat at midday. And it was a sultry afternoon as *Young Tiger* motored into Barcelona, brooding below its surrounding hills, strange steeples emerging from the haze. Sue seemed to have taken to the boat and I had taken to her cooking.

The outboard had been doing too much work, but 4 days later a gentle breeze from the south-west set us on the 110-mile journey to Majorca. Only at midnight did the lights of Barcelona fade astern. The moon, a great squashed blood orange with a charming grin, rose and lit up the red of our sails. At dawn the high coastline of the island lay all across the horizon, the wind now gentle from astern. Sue and I lazed on the foredeck the whole sunny day with Oblomov doing the work. So light was the wind that not until the moon rose again did we catch the scent of pine from the warm land as we came to anchor in Port Andraitx.

If I hurry in describing the rest of the trip to Gibraltar it is because I don't like to parade my ineloquence in attempting to describe all the pleasant places we discovered and the people we encountered. After Barcelona we seemed to have caught up with the sun on its retreat south and the sombre weather of the Gulf of Lions which had depressed us did not recur.

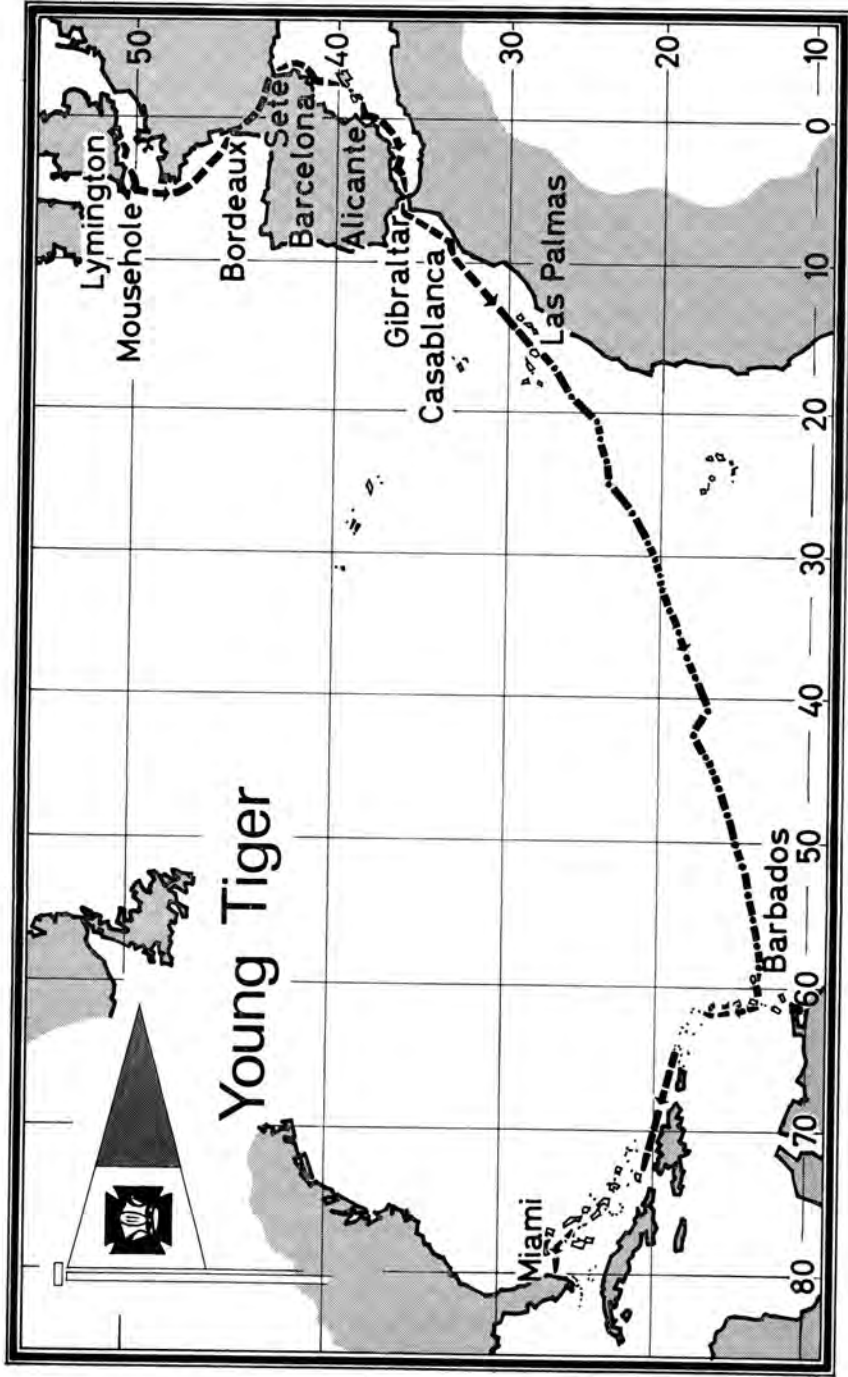
From Majorca we sailed to Ibiza and Formentera and back to the mainland at Alicante. There was still too much powering, but that is typical of the Mediterranean. Between Alicante and Almeria, a 160-mile stretch we did in one go to catch up on our timetable, we were caught in a thunderstorm which dazzled, deafened and scared us, rumbling on about the horizon hours after *Young Tiger* had been left becalmed in the darkness on an oily swell. On this part of the Spanish coast the winds seem to lurk behind massive capes, waiting to disappoint those who hope to make their harbour

before dusk. Round the blue and distant tip of Cabo de Gata, as we drifted towards it the morning after the thunderstorm, there blew a strong westerly breeze against which we could make no headway. I headed into Escullos Bay and anchored in its shelter about 2 cables south-east of the old fort in 3 fathoms. After dark we slipped round the cape in calm water and picked up a night breeze that got us, after midnight, into Almeria—a Moorish town, white under the moon.

In the last week of October a Levanter took us by the heels and under grey skies amidst seas too short even for Oblomov I steered all one day while Sue fed me sandwiches and cups of tea. That night in Motril my arm ached with the unaccustomed exercise. In the morning it was pouring with rain; we took the coach to Granada to marvel at that ancient capital of Moorish Spain, and came home soaked to the skin to sip cups of hot chocolate.

As Gibraltar drew near I realized Sue would soon be returning to England. My job was already arranged in the States; she had yet to find one in England and must hurry home. I had lost my enthusiasm for single-handed sailing and the Atlantic Ocean now seemed rather scaring. Such thoughts I tried to keep to myself. Lulu and Dennis, a Swiss couple in another small boat, cruised in company with *Young Tiger* for a while. Surreptitiously I curried their casual optimism about the Atlantic crossing. I remember one evening joking about the most suitable French translation for 'milk-run'. On 2 November we arrived in Gibraltar. My crew was in a dilemma. She wanted to sail on—she ought to go home. It took a week of telephones and cables from friends and relatives ('Utter madness proceed watery grave stop please return immediately'—was one from a friend) before she realized she wanted to go home, but she ought to go on. We went to the supermarket and loaded *Young Tiger's* belly with canned goodies, and motor-sailed much of the way over for a brief stop in Tangier. Africa, looking green and fertile, stretched away convolutingly towards Ceuta. At mid-day on Monday, 15 November, with a fresh easterly breeze we sailed out of the Straits. Once past Cape Spartel we turned south and the Gates of Hercules closed behind us.

Seven hundred miles to the Canary islands; down this stretch of the African coast we were passing through the Horse latitudes, a mild imitation of the doldrums, where the south-west winds at the edge of north Atlantic depressions vie with the north-east trades and the colours are all half-tones, the evening skies suggesting the weedy turquoise of a Victorian colour print. We kept



offshore, catching brief glimpses at dawn of the low-lying coast and the glow of Moroccan towns at night.

18 NOVEMBER (also night of the 17th)

The lights of Rabat lay abeam for the first part of the night—about 2100 I took down the sails and we tried to sleep—v. uncomfortable—everything slipping and knocking in the cupboard. At midnight there was a gentle breeze from the south-west and I got the boat sailing westward and we got some sleep in. Hardly any shipping about. After sunrise we were sailing nearly north-west at about 1 knot, having made 10 miles during the night—useful room for a tack inshore. But there was no wind at all—I took out the Crescent (we carried this little $4\frac{1}{2}$ h.p. outboard as well as the Johnson because its low consumption allowed for prolonged motoring, though at about 3 knots or less in a calm sea). Settled down reluctantly to a day of motoring.

A fishing-boat passed us several times, hauling in tunny on one occasion; waves and grins from three nutmeg faces. Dead mirror calm on a large swell by mid-afternoon and I began to consider entering Casablanca. Within an hour this was more or less decided and I steered a direct course on Casablanca air beacon. Shoals of porpoises came swimming and plunging in a leisurely manner—they really seemed to take their timing from the waves.

As dusk came on, the lights of Casablanca appeared—first the big flashing light on Pointe de El Hank, then the occulting light on Table d'Oukacha. The leading lights showed very clearly a mile from the harbour, but I wouldn't like to try and make this port with a strong wind from the west. It is immense—a flashing buoy marks the end extremity of an unfinished mole nearly 2 miles long protecting three large moles. We motored right to the end of the harbour and found the yacht club in the fishing-port—tied up alongside another yacht on a trot and decided to stay independent of the shore at least for that evening. Three days at sea for 160 miles.

So we drifted and motored and occasionally sailed to Casablanca. Our third day there waiting for the trades we rose before dawn and ran through rain-soaked streets to catch a bus to Marrakesh, driving through rolling hills of red arable land towards a range of moon-like mountains. The city was full of dead palaces and markets where we made friends only with those who didn't try too hard to sell us their goods, but even so spending far too much. After 4 days in Casa' there came a gentle tradewind and we stayed with it until, at noon on 28 November, in the vaguest way the tops of mountains loomed ahead then disappeared as the sun grew hotter. The next thing we saw were the lights of Las Palmas twinkling

gaily over the sea. At midnight *Young Tiger* was anchored among a lot of other small boats dressed for travelling.

A lady on a yacht in Las Palmas warned us to put paper in the ends of our clothes hangers to protect shoulders in the days ahead. She could not think of any other serious problems. I checked and rechecked everything and even took the mast down. All the time there was much visiting between the assembled yachts and you could tell where there was a gathering from the cluster of empty dinghies around someone's stern. With four other boats we decided to make it a race to Barbados, agreeing to leave on 7 December. On that morning, Sue had a telegram from her parents wishing her a happy Christmas and a good journey. At the market we loaded a taxi with fresh vegetables and fruits and rowed them back to the boat; all the water-cans were filled and rowed out, too. I deflated the rubber dinghy and scrubbed off the oil it had collected in the harbour. Then we had some lunch.

Smoking, we sat and waited. Peter Tangveld, who had raced across once with Victor Allcard, was to start us off. At 1500 the klaxon went and *Romance*, *Vent de Suroit*, *Flyd*, *Odd Times* and *Young Tiger* sailed out with much blowing of horns from the remaining yachts. The sky was very blue; the breeze gentle. One by one we rounded the end of the long mole and moved to the ocean swell again, the other boats drawing slowly ahead of us. The sun set behind Gran Canaria and quite suddenly it started to rain and shortly afterwards to blow hard from the north-east. Yves, the single-handed French boy, exchanged 'ca va's' with us in the blowy night as *Romance* creamed past *Young Tiger*, Sue and I struggling to lower a spinnaker kept up far too long for the sake of overtaking him. We did not see him again; the boats were scattered by the wind.

Four days Oblomov steered through grey seas as *Young Tiger* hurried south. We lay in our bunks, occasionally looking out for ships. On the fourth night we were west of the shipping lanes and no longer saw the dangerous friendly lights rocking through the swells, but in the morning the sky was blue in parts and the wind much less strong. With time signals from the radio and Sue with pencil and stopwatch, I jammed myself in the hatchway and tried to balance the sun momentarily on an elusive horizon.

12 DECEMBER

Took a sight for longitude + a noon sight—this gets exciting and I think I'm getting the hang of it. It's a good sextant and I'm beginning to feel affectionate towards it now that I can actually use it. Basic principle is that of comparing observed altitude (+ corrections, etc.)

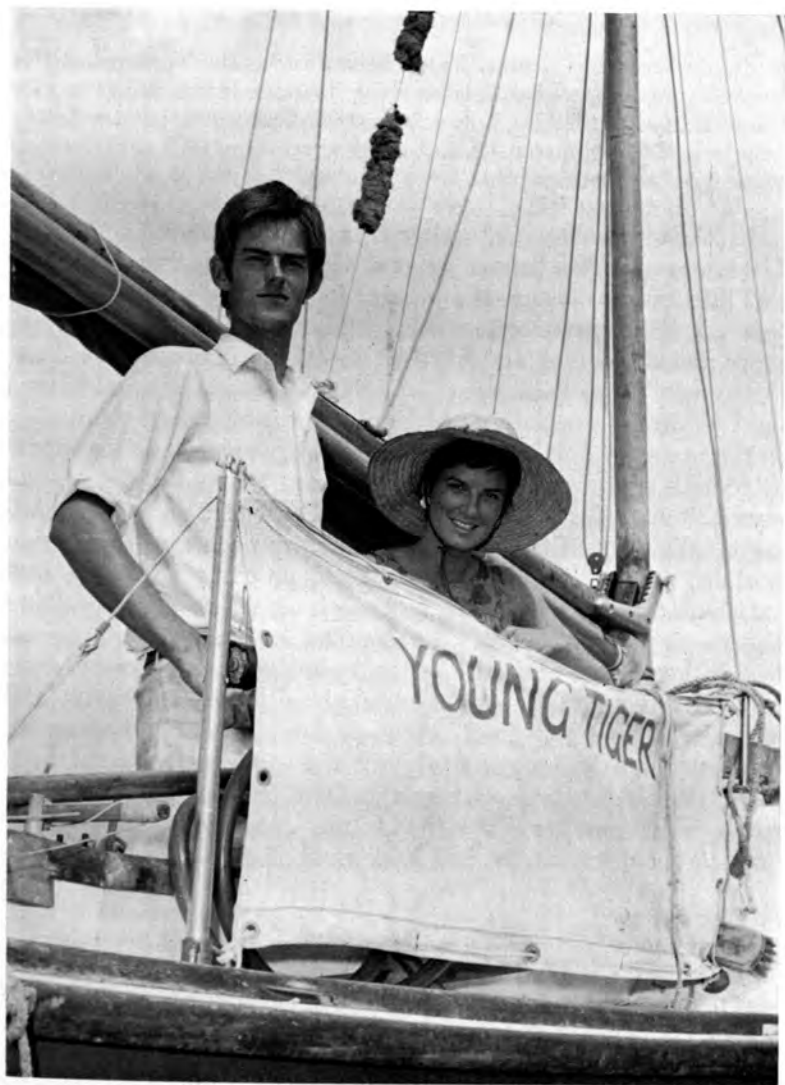


Photo by Bahamas Tourism

SIMON BADDELEY AND SUE PULFORD

with a tabulated altitude for an assumed position—this gives a position line only and another sight is, of course, necessary for a fix—a noon sight makes a useful cross. What I could never understand was this business of just assuming a position near one's D.R. position; I couldn't see how on earth one could find one's real position from a position which was quite imaginary—not even one's D.R. position. Still, it's

gradually becoming clearer. I may have a try at star sights when I've plucked up courage—but it is amazing how one learns things as soon as one really has to. Also, how efficiently a short-wave radio makes up for a lack of chronometer—B.B.C. overseas serves us well, and Susanna is essential on the stopwatch.

I reckoned we had come more than 450 miles from Las Palmas. Those were my first proper sights at sea. The next day the rotator and line and the means of attaching it to the log were all carried away. It didn't matter; I could navigate with a sextant! At dawn every morning I took a sight; then another at noon. If these came close to my Dead Reckoning I didn't bother to take an afternoon sight to check, especially as by then the sails obscured the sun.

We ate well. For breakfast, 2 hours after sunrise, we'd eat porridge with syrup and cups of tea. At lunch I would make a pig of myself; it might be mashed potatoes, real or from a packet, depending on the state of the weather, canned spinach and Hungarian goulash, macaroni cheese or spaghetti, or curry with rice, and meatballs and marrow or beetroots with white sauce. For pudding either oranges from our sack, or semolina, canned fruit or creamed rice or prunes and custard. For tea, basically my need rather than Sue's, I had tea and perhaps toasted fruit cake or Ryvita and Marmite. Supper, cooked in semi-darkness (we only had an oil lamp) was usually soup or fruit juice and biscuits; perhaps a tin of fruit. Other snacks between meals included more oranges, chewing-gum ('Don't you dare plant that on me'), soggy crisps or popcorn (my *sole* cooking contribution) with syrup. I did the washing up.

15 DECEMBER

Wind now F. 4-5 and if the sea gets up more I'll reef. It's the size of the seas not the strength of the wind that decides one's sail area in a boat this size—Oblomov can't handle as much sail as I can. A depressing cloudy morning after the promise of blue skies in the early dawn. There is very little twilight now as we approach the tropics. After breakfast I took off the boomsail which has a lot of pull in it (this is the No. 2 jib lashed under the boom and sheeted to the edge of the cockpit) and with Sue's help reefed the main until it was only a little larger than the No. 1 jib. This was O.K., but I wasn't really happy with our progress until I'd rigged the No. 2 jib amidships in the foretriangle on the extra halyard rigged in Las Palmas. This took much of the bite out of her tendency to turn to windward and yawing is not too serious, though God knows what course we actually steer—I feel we are very much a leaf in the wind being blown steadily towards our destination—there's no doubt that this is a square riggers' route. Somehow I'd expected

to be steering due west on the starboard tack with the trade on my starboard quarter—as it is, we steer well south of west on the port tack with the wind pretty well astern.

When the wind did get strong we rolled down the main and put in a couple of cabin slides—the gunter spar coming down with the sail gave us no extraneous mast when we reefed, so that in strong winds with the main as small as the jib we presented an amazingly cosy rig to the following wind. When the wind was weak we festooned the ship with sail; two foresails on the forestay, the little jib beneath the boom, the dish clothes abaft the cockpit. But whether it blew weak or strong it never stopped and always came out of the E.N.E.

On the small-scale chart taped to the head of my bunk a slightly curved line seem to grow imperceptibly away from Africa and into the space of the ocean. As the days passed and merged, boredom was the least of our worries. We worked steadily through an extensive selection of books—Dante, Lawrence, Flaubert, Tolstoy and many lesser authors were read whilst one or the other of us lay sunbathing safety line attached, or down below propped in a bunk. Sue was teaching herself the guitar and we both kept diaries. The nights were 12 hours long and neither of us needed that much sleep, so we whiled away the time till ship's midnight in conversations of world-shaking import. Early morning often found me, to Susanna's annoyance, checking the wavelengths for the latest stations to come in range and searching for the sometimes elusive time signal from Beltsville.

22 DECEMBER

Today should see us past half-way—a position on the chart marked by a sounding of 2,890 fathoms with a bottom of 'choc. cl. gl. oz. & sh.' (chocolate clay, globigerina, ooze and shells about 3 miles down). Long large swells—not too uncomfortable. Some rain shortly after dawn—wind blowing F. 5. Sun hot. I took a sight with some difficulty at 1300, then retired to bed with a headache from continually staring at the reflection of the sun. Took a noon sight and got a fix suggesting a run of 190 miles in 2 days and putting us 15 miles inside the half-way mark (we should be there by tea-time). Slept until headache improved—had a late lunch of prunes and Ambrosia rice. Sue sunbathed—some really impressive great swells coming up astern. Sometimes a grey murky mass of cloud appears astern boding ill—but somehow the wind stays the same and the clouds move on to give the blue sky once again. It is hot and bright in the middle of the day and this is likely to become more pronounced, since we've passed the shortest day of the year

(yesterday) and are continuing south. We are just entering time zone P (G.M.T.—0300) I hope this swell and wind (now up to F. 6 at times) moderates sufficiently to allow us to celebrate Christmas.

23 DECEMBER

The wind increased during the night and at about 0400 ship's time we got down the main—fairly chaotic with us shouting at each other against the wind. (And me keen not to have to bother to come head to wind to do this—you don't have to with a gunter rig.) The whisker pole came unstuck, but was replaced and we returned to our bunks. I've been getting up occasionally during the night to look out for ships as we are crossing what I imagine is the route from the Cape to N. America. (But not a vessel was seen.) I finished *Madame Bovary* before breakfast and after breakfast we raised the main again—the top of the yard lower than the masthead.

By Christmas Eve *Young Tiger* was well past half-way and well into the tropics. The compass variation was 19° W. That evening my log reads: 'What a night sky—after a sunset of Canaletto tints—pink on high masses of cumulus cloud; the stars came out—the larger ones twinkling red, green, and blue whilst the rest blinked. Sue saw the new moon before it went behind a cloud.' That night a freak transmission brought us a half-hour fragment of the *Messiah* from England. The next day, after an enormous lunch, chicken with stuffing followed by Christmas pudding, brandy butter and double cream and white wine, a shower of rain caught up with the boat, and as the water ran off the sail at the gooseneck I collected enough in a bucket for us to wash our hair and scour ourselves of a fortnight's saltiness. On the radio I picked up the Barbados beacon signal from 1,000 miles, using the main aerial.

Every day now the tall clouds refreshed us with showers, but the wind blew more gently and we felt at home on the sea, carrying our horizons along with us, until on 30 December the clouds melted and *Young Tiger* hardly moved. One at a time we swam, scraping the barnacles off the hull as the boat idled through the water or allowing ourselves to be dragged gently along astern.

A day later the breeze came in fresh with more north in it and I gybed to the starboard tack, revealing bunches of compressed baggywrinkle on the new weather shroud. *Young Tiger* was often accompanied by a little petrel skimming over the waves with amazing virtuosity and on occasions we saw a pair of bosun birds with their long thin tails. But never a shark or a whale or a dolphin approached our lure, which rather than let it slow us down I kept aboard most of the time. Besides, we didn't really want to catch

anything. So birds were the only living things we saw except for one caterpillar discovered in the bilges and the occasional flying-fish skimming away from our bow wave like startled rabbits. Usually to the other's chagrin they were only seen by one of us at a time.

The seas were getting larger and the trades increasing their strength. The D/F is picking up Barbados beacon loud and clear and on the wireless there are steel bands. On the evening of the 3rd with 150 miles to go we lowered the main. But the next day the sky is blue and up it goes again with three rolls. *Young Tiger* is sprinting for her landfall now. The wind-ruffled water seems to crawl slowly up the face of the seas, emphasizing their size; now and again they break with a noise like the exhalation of steam, but they are benign and only occasionally does spray produce a startled exclamation from Sue sunning in the cockpit. Down below I do my landfall homework as if I hadn't had it all worked out months ago.

Sue has written in my log at this point: '*N.B.* the skipper has— it must be emphasized—spent all the day when the BIGGER seas were breaking LYING IN HIS BUNK, protected by the closed hatch and *two* slides in the door, not to mention the rug which makes a barrier against drops slanting in through the tiny gap which was thus left open. He has therefore NO conception of what these seas were really like and is playing it all down to look blasé. The mate has a much more decent respect for these *large waves*—she has been splooshed by them.'

I took a moon sight at dusk on the 4th which showed we had only 50 miles to go. Constant watch through the night and constant check on radio bearings—Barbados beacon splitting the ear-drums when I forgot to adjust the volume. Clouds collected during the night, obscuring the bright moon, and at dawn it was blowing hard with rain everywhere and haze ahead. We stared ahead until our eyes ached. Suddenly a break in the cloud let through a sunbeam which shone on the land about 10 miles off—green and incredibly exciting.

Throughout the morning the weather cleared as we ran fast down the south coast of the island, staring at the little houses and the distant palm trees bent one way by the constant wind. The only yacht in the race that had arrived before us was Rusty Webb's *Flyd*, an 8-tonner. We anchored close to him and, after seeing the immigration launch, went ashore together.

Solid ground (how we staggered and everybody laughed), cold beer from Rusty (a condition of winning the race), people, cars—all one's sensations slightly raw, so that the simplest things gave pleasure. We dined on steaks that night at an hotel by the white



Photo by S. Baddeley

OFF THE BEACH AT BEQUIA

beach overhung with palms. Yet after a week we had found ourselves a routine. After a bathe in the warm water by the beach opposite the anchorage we would go into Bridgetown to check the poste restante. Our first visit we reaped a bevy of telegrams and congratulatory letters, some of them sent confidently before our arrival. We went to the 'Chatterbox' to read them and sip milkshakes. As we were leaving Mrs Moore, who ran the milk-bar, introduced herself and promised to drive us around the island later on. She was the first of many friends we made in Barbados. I can hardly remember an evening when we bought our own supper. Returning from the post office to the boat, we would peer out to see if anyone else had arrived. René, the Belgian on *Vent de Suroit* came in the day after us, and a letter awaiting him informed us all that Yves had lost *Romance* two days out of Las Palmas when his galley blew up; taking to a rubber dinghy, he had been picked up by a tanker 15 hours later. One after another there arrived other boats that had been in Las Palmas with us, and 10 days later *Odd Times* with her two Englishmen came gently round the head of the bay to be greeted by a barrage of horns from the assembled fleet. Four days later we sailed on to Bequia, after a final evening having

dinner with our competitors. One of our toasts was to Yves and a new *Romance*.

It was sad leaving Barbados. Many of our sailing friends were now going on westward for Panama, but I was thinking of Barbados itself as the island faded imperceptibly astern in the dusk; one day when Sue and I had hired bicycles and gone out along the shore to eat a cooked chicken from a paper bag, washed our hands in the sea, before riding inland, pedalling laboriously along devious country lanes running through fields of sugar-cane rustling in the trade wind, freewheeling down to Bridgetown before dusk, sucking sticky chocolate lollipops, to have baths then dinner with friends beside the sea.

Bequia is round 100 miles west of Barbados and just south of St Vincent; an easy run, but I was getting lazy. The north-west current across this passage is well-known. I allowed for it at first, did not feel it in the lee of Barbados, and so steered a direct course. A foolish grin crossed my face when mid-morning the next day I called Susanna up to see the high shores of St Vincent looming straight ahead. We had to beat south for 14 miles with little wind and a contrary current, eventually powering cautiously into Admiralty Bay, Bequia, to anchor in pitch darkness.

At dawn we found green hills all around, the little houses of Port Elizabeth and careened schooners at the head of the bay. Some charming Americans chartering a yacht invited us to share the only taxi for a tour of the island. We piled in and hauled over the hill to Friendship Bay to find a beach littered with conch shells and meet the crews of the whaling boats that lined the shores propped on massive vertebrae of dead whales. In the tiny post office at Port Elizabeth the postmaster was selling off one-cent stamps to foreigners who seemed excited by the fact that Bequia was spelt 'BEOUIA'. I captured the last available sheet. One night and several nights thereafter a band of youngsters rowed out to play calypsos, singing 'Sweet sweet Sue, where you get Uncle Simon from' in high-pitched childish voices.

Here we met David Robertson's *Vagabond* for the first time. Two evenings we dined in the Caribee Hotel with Clay, Jay and Isaiah of *John Hanna*, nearing the end of a circumnavigation, planned for 10 years before they left, from San Diego. Isaiah, a Fijian prince, joined them half-way across the Pacific. At Bequia, as in all our ports, we met many people; bores were rare, though many of us talked too much. I was often glad of a nudge from my crew as I rambled on over a rum-punch.

After a week *Young Tiger* sailed southward for a brief visit to the Grenadines, anchoring at Cannouan, where we were taken to buy stores by a band of fishermen who took over the boat for a short trip. We went to Tobago Cays, a much-frequented 'deserted' anchorage, where we made ourselves guests on *Nanise* and enjoyed the company of Colonel Odling-Smee and his worthy crew—staggering back to our own boat too late for an early start next morning. We reached Cumberland Bay in St Vincent a day later, 31 January. It was a long time to cover 40 miles, but a small boat working up the windward chain makes little headway in the lee of the high land, for there is still some sea running there, but very little wind. We washed in the stream that runs into the head of the bay and later in the day continued on to Chateaubelair, where *Young Tiger* was left anchored under the eyes of Father Garnes, the Methodist minister, Henry Ashton, fisherman, and the police sergeant, whilst we were whisked away to spend two luxurious days on the coconut plantation of Cyril Barnard, whom we had met on the beach at Bequia.

I realized that every stop in this area we would be tempted to linger, but it was now February and I was supposed to be in America by the end of March. It is a fretful thing to have to hurry in a small boat, but from St Vincent, beset with homesickness for the Barnards' hospitality, we increased our pace up the rungs of the ladder. Staying briefly at St Lucia, Martinique, Dominica and Iles des Saints, *Young Tiger* threaded the canal between Guadeloupe and Basse-Terre, going aground at one point in the middle of a mangrove swamp. The big oar lashed on deck for months as jury rig cum emergency steering was at last used as a lever to ease us stern first into deeper water. That evening we anchored offshore, but in shallow water, to avoid the midges from the swamp, and sat watching the sun sink below the mountains of Basse-Terre. In Antigua next day we found we were not the smallest boat to cross the Atlantic this year; two English boys in a plywood *Debutante Dido* were preparing the homeward voyage via Bermuda after crossing to Barbados a month before us. While we lay at English Harbour, spending several soirées aboard Humphrey Barton's *Rose Rambler*, we were caught up by the Queen's Indies tour, and along with the other yachts dressed overall to pay our respects. During the visit the virtuosity of the steel bands was astonishing—everything from local tunes to the Alleluia chorus!

Antigua was followed by St Barthélemy, where we finally said good-bye to David Robertson, who was not quite so pressed for



Photo by S. Baddeley

RETURNING ABOARD AFTER SHOPPING AT ST VINCENT

time. In the harbour here we came across another member of the club, D. F. Southern in *Aguila*. So on to Tortola, where we passed two pleasant days moored off the Batham's Cay and being invited to dinner by two really nice New Yorkers.

On 1 March we sailed direct for Great Inagua in the Bahamas, 500 miles away. The weather was good and the trades still blew steadily. The first night, just north of Culebra island *Young Tiger* was examined by a warship whose sinister shape loomed astern, stopped for a moment then sped silently away. At about tea-time the next day both of us were below when I caught a glimpse of

something; looked again, I saw a ship's upperworks filling the whole window. I dashed out, leaping to disconnect the windvane, perched on the bumpkin turning the tiller with my foot as the freighter *Alcoa* of New York thudded by less than 30 ft away. Someone shouted 'Are you all right, fella?' as the wing of the bridge passed almost overhead and *Young Tiger* bore slowly up despite her goosewings, bounced through the wash and cavorted in the white swirling wake as the ship continued on her way straight as a die without so much as a delayed alteration of course. We were nearly as dead as if we'd been wrong and the sun was shining out of a clear sky.

The good weather continued as we headed through the 30-mile gap between Cape Viejo Frances and the Silver Bank, but the sea was steep and uneven in the funnel. The log rotator which I had finally replaced was useless, as the sea was covered with patches of Sargasso weed.

5 MARCH

Towards dark, a panicky exclamation from Sue down below cooking; 'God, there's something alive down here on the floor', and she jumped on the bunk whilst a black (amorphous shaped in the gloom) object smaller than a mouse crawled quite quickly into the stern compartment. What was it? A cockroach, I hope. I had visions of a tarantula, but didn't tell Sue—sprayed the stern compartment with insect killer and hoped for the best. To the south as we hurried along in this rotten sea stood magnificent banks of land cloud behind which blinked back and forth sheets of lightning; an ominous backdrop for that sinister land we were avoiding by sailing this far north.

On Sunday morning, 6 March, I peered out of the hatch after poring over the chart and saw land. What a difference from the West Indies—Great Inagua strewn across the horizon in low patches often obscured by swells and only 5 miles off. That afternoon the wind went right round from east, through south, to north and grew fresher. Inagua has no proper harbour. We motor-sailed down the reef-bound southern coast, wondering what to do. Eventually with the sun 6 in. above the horizon we approached South Bay, the reef, it seemed, breaking gently all along, closed the breakers on half-throttle, a low swell running with about 5 fathoms beneath us. I stood on the gooseneck and pointed a shallow passage through the reef; weeds on the rocks lay on the surface within a yard either side. With relief we anchored in 5 ft of calm crystalline water over white sand. During those last 5 days the near collision, the nearness to the banks and to unsheltered land,

the choppy cross-seas and the possibility of finding no sheltered harbour at the end of the passage had all contributed to a feeling of ill-being which made our final arrival and Sue's wholesome supper all the more pleasurable. The wind whistled dismally in the rigging; the lighthouse blinked and in the darkness we could make out the faint loom of the settlement. In the morning we went ashore to explore—a sterile strand covered in dried Sargasso weed, bottles, light bulbs, plastic sandals and whitened pieces of wood from distant places; low scrub everywhere with solitary broken palm trees, sandflies, lizard and orange butterflies. Not a sign of a living soul but for the distant lighthouse, emphasized as a dazzling white column as the sun reflecting off it contrasted it with the greyness of the clouds that had passed beyond. Not for 2 days did the wind lessen. Then we sailed round to Matthew Town settlement and moored in a tiny rowboat harbour whilst a large Canadian yacht rolled in the Roads. We met a Spaniard, Augustine, and a Haitian, Emilio, both employed by the salt company, and they drove us out to the big salt lake amidst scenes of ominous and awesome desolation; dead tree stumps for acres; salt-pans tinged with pinkish algae; salt-gathering machinery rusting; snowy mounds of salt, and then in the distance a speckled streak of magnificent pink—a small flock of roseate flamingos grazing the shallow lake. All the while the wind blew warm and damp, bearing the hint of a smell of decaying vegetation.

When the wind allowed we sailed to Man-of-War Bay above Matthew Town and anchored by a coconut grove. A man with a panga knife approached along the beach; I asked him to split a nut for us and we sat and ate the meat. He was the warden of the grove; he showed us his home—a wooden hut beside a leaning rush kitchen bent by a hurricane. He showed his young pigs and his fish-traps. But we had to hurry—I kept forgetting. At dawn the next day *Young Tiger* headed north, passed through the *Mira por Vos* passage that night and then lay becalmed all the next day. A lone grouper nibbled at the weed along the hull. The next day in light airs we made Portland Harbour anchorage, which despite anything said in its favour proved, with the prevailing wind, to be the most uncomfortable anchorage it has ever been my displeasure to spend a night in. Come morning, we got out of there, delicately skirting patches of coral, and crossed to Long Island. From there on we were inside the land all the way to Nassau. Sailing up the west coast of Long Island we spent a night at Diamond Crystal Harbour, then passed the Nuevitas Rocks and headed for the Exumas.

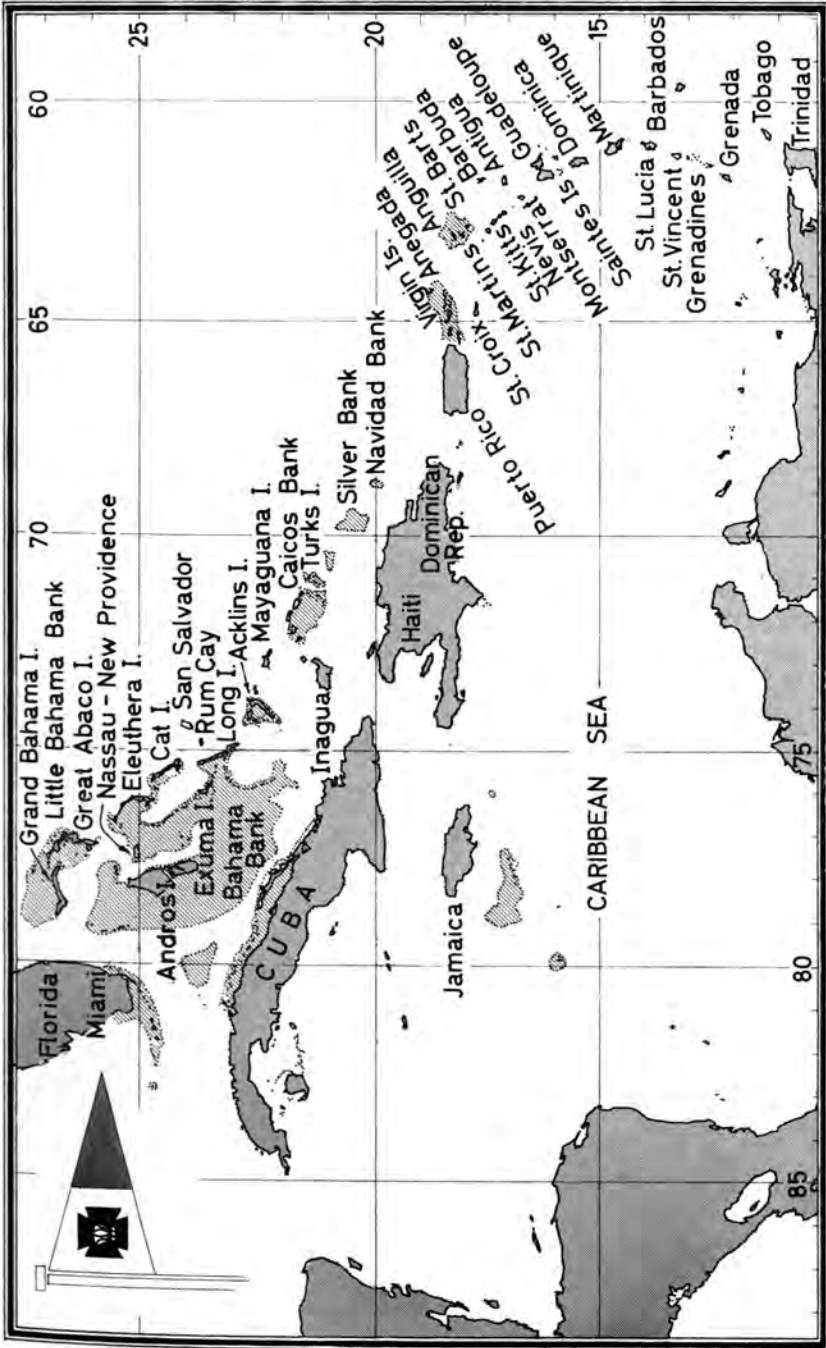


Photo by S. Baddeley

A CHANCE MEETING WITH BARRACUDA FISHERMEN

20 MARCH

Off early, sailing swiftly down the coast of Little Exuma and Exuma. Hog Cay cut was identified from the sketch in the *Bahama's Guide*—however, apart from this I had only a vague idea of which particular part of the coast we were passing. It is getting decidedly cool in the mornings now and it was not until ten that we began peeling off sweaters. Jew Fish cut would have been difficult to find if I hadn't seen a slender light structure on a rock between two cays. So far we'd not seen a single coral head in this area or been in less than 8 ft of water, but now the sea grew very shallow as we approached the cut. We avoided several very dark patches and skirted a few other doubtful areas, but even so we sailed for minutes at a time with only a foot beneath our keels over a weedy bottom. The Great Bahama bank really showed itself—great



strips of pale green knee-deep water to starboard and hints of it on the horizon to port. We were soon reaching over clear seas with 8 ft again below us in the direction of Rocky Point—an extension from the west coast of Great Exuma. Here we anchored for the night in 2 ft of water near low tide amongst low islands. Went ashore on the largest island, vainly named Simon Island, and explored one beach that looked smooth and pleasant with coral sand, despite its rocky honeycombed fringe, and called it Susanna Beach.

So we crossed into the Great Bahama Bank, our shadow close beneath us, the wind blowing freshly over gentle seas—the water was azure over coral sand stretching eastward to the Exuma Cays seemingly floating on a sea which appeared translucent as far as the horizon. At night we anchored on the Bank. On 22 March *Young Tiger* arrived in Nassau late in the evening and anchored in East Bay.

A telegram giving me a few weeks' grace allowed us to stay 3 weeks in Nassau. Much of the time was spent cleaning up the boat in anticipation of selling her—a melancholy task. We made a week-end excursion to Highburne Cay with sailing friends we had met at Nassau, and in the middle of the night a squall came howling through the harbour, producing confusion akin to that of a Beaulieu River meet after dark! The steering-vane and stanchion were blown off the boat and Sue dived and recovered it from 10 ft of water the next morning.

Finally we began the last lap to America. As we approached Cat Cay we were narrowly missed by six waterspouts which came curling down from a belt of grim black clouds moving across our path. On 17 April *Young Tiger* sailed into the Gulf Stream, and in the middle of the afternoon we sighted skyscrapers ahead.

Although we landed in Miami at dusk, the Customs and Immigration, wishing to spare us the cost of Sunday overtime charges, did not officially clear the boat and allow us ashore until 1100 the next day, when we set out up the Miami river—the lifting bridges closing behind us seemed to cut off the ocean irrevocably. We left the boat for sale at Bertram Boats, through the kindness of Richard Bertram.

It was not until August that I met up with a young lawyer and his wife in Washington who fell for *Young Tiger* and shortly afterwards bought her from me, one of the conditions of the contract being that I should show him how to handle 'all those ropes', and another condition which he kindly inserted being that I could always take the boat out if I came to visit Washington. They hope sooner or later to go further afield.