

One way of going ashore

Geoffrey Nockolds



DYARCHY

Photo. by E.C.H.

Dyarchy from Roving Commissions 1946

Roger Pinckney's log of 1949, when he was Vice Commodore, says 'It would be quite wrong to say the presence of an octogenarian on board seriously limited the scope of our cruise this year, when she happens to be my mother and the ship is *Dyarchy* it is unnecessary to bother.'

I found myself as a crew on *Dyarchy* in 1954 in the La Rochelle area. Roger, his mother and two cousins of theirs, the Peacocks, who had apparently never stepped on a boat before, made up the crew with yours truly. It was calm sunny weather, so we were able to anchor off a lot of the forts and islands. We went into Le Chateau on Ile d'Oleron and having got hard aground in the approach channel, got towed back into the channel by another Roger, the owner of 26 oyster parks.

Thinking we all ate oysters, he brought us five dozen each of those splendid Marenne greens every day, but Roger and I were the only two who ate oysters!

The first evening we went into the town for dinner. The drill to get Mrs Pinckney ashore was apparently by hoisting her up in the bosun's chair and then 'catting' her in onto the quay. But this turned out to be not that simple. It soon became plain the mechanics needed to achieve this were not working in our favour. When I started to pull in the controlling line under the bosun's chair, I began to be dragged remorselessly towards the edge of the Napoleonic quay which started sloping down to the dock about three feet in. Soon I would become a pendulum weight on the end of the bosun's chair. Luckily Roger, the oyster park owner, who was near by, saw my predicament and put his arms round me to try to pull me back. But, my progress towards the edge of the dock continued remorselessly. However, reinforcements were close at hand and soon there were more fishermen trying to pull us back.

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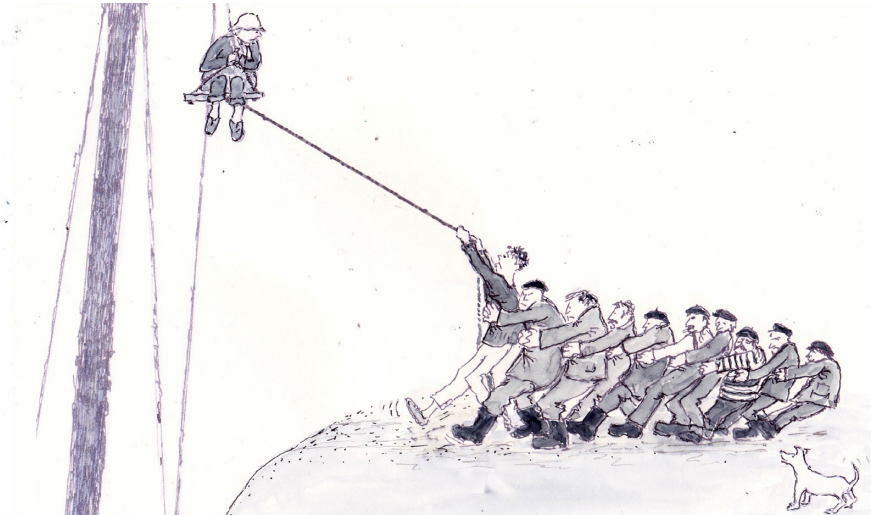
Geoffrey a few years ago and now (right)



Eventually there was the spectacle of no less than eight Bretons behind me, arms round each other's stomachs forming a human chain before our progress to disaster was halted. I had visions of a bosun's chair with old Mrs Pinckney, and me, below the chair on the catting line, followed by some Frenchman swinging like a pendulum.

When the situation had been stabilized and her feet were on the ground, Roger made fast the jib halyard, jumped onto the quay and helped her off the chair, which she did quite unfazed, as if it was her normal method of going ashore.

The next night the entire population must have turned out to watch a repeat performance which was rather more controlled this time.



Mrs Pinckney coming ashore by Marcia Pirie