

# Yachting



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# "Dorade's" Transatlantic Passage

By

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Roderick Stephens, skipper of "Dorade," looking astern at a big one

WELL, here we are in the North Sea, since yesterday noon (June 12th), when finding favorable tide conditions we shot through Pentland Firth, by Scapa Flow, into this rather chilly, cheerless and choppy sea.

We have had, on the whole, a fine passage and a fast one, 18 days 5 hours from departure, Great Round Shoal, Nantucket, to landfall off St. Kilda Island, one of a group of rocky islets to the westward of the Hebrides. We were just 22 days out of Larchmont at 6:00 P.M. last evening and should make Bergen (Norway) in about 48 hours more. Winds have been favorable all the way and, with the exception of short spells where it was light, have been able to lay desired course, as the following will show: Great Round Shoal to landfall, distance sum of daily runs, 2639 miles, distance logged, 2721; time, actual, 431.25 hours; time, days (ship's time), 18 days, 5 hours. Average speed logged, 6.31. Our Kenyon log, of great help for comparative speeds, ran quite a bit high when recording distances, 2902 miles for an average of 6.72.

*Dorade* is really an extraordinary little ship and I can now better understand her excellent record, quite apart from the fine handling she has always had. An extremely fine sea boat, she is, as my old Scotch friend Sir Jonnie Dunlop would say, a "fine floaty wee boat," so that one is able to keep her going when others would heave to. When even the discretion of age such as I possess would deem such a course desirable, youngsters of the type *Dorade* breeds continue to scud before it. Her rig is handiness personified. Only once was the off watch called on deck, as two were ample for ordinary handling, and major operations were generally left until the shifting of watches. We had some really hard weather, first a near gale some one hundred miles south of Sable Island, in which we hove to for four or five hours under forestaysail and mizzen, more for comfort's sake and desire to see how she would act than from necessity. Our next real blow came later, after clearing the Banks. It was of real gale strength for some 36 hours and we took it on our port quarter, under mizzen and forestaysail alone most of the time. At that, we logged between eight and nine and got our biggest day's run of 190 miles. The sea was quite the heaviest I have yet met in any of my sea ventures in small boats, yet *Dorade* took it without a whimper, and once convinced we were not going to be properly pooped, coasting down the big waves was exhilarating. We had two more blows of nearly equal strength, each of about 24 hours duration. One we ran dead before, under squaresail and forestaysail; the next, and for a time the worst, we also took on the run, this time better rigged under storm trysail and small storm jib. Have again been impressed with the utter futility of lumbering up the modern small boat with squaresail and its gear. Took us nearly one and one half hours to set a simple one, with a more than excellent crew, and nearly as long to get down and stow — at considerable risk to those working forward on the narrow deck. Trysails are easy to set and nearly as effective when up, and

put much less strain on gear. We also tried "Bobbie" Somerset's double spinnaker rig of the *Jolie Brise*. Worked fine up to near gale strength. A spinnaker set on each side, no other sails. Unfortunately, we did not have two small ones with intermediate hoist, and the necessity of topping the boom too high for the one with the long hoist up to truck, got us in our only trouble. She took a sheer, head of sail got aback, wrapped around mast and upper leeward spreader, breaking latter when again filling away. Rod's getting aloft, bringing down the wreckage, splicing, fishing, rerigging as good as new, in some three hours' time, all in a heavy sea and gale of wind with boat rolling 45 degrees each way, was as fine a piece of practical seamanship as I have seen in a long time.

Have only one fault to find with *Dorade*. Perhaps it is more an acquired vice than an intrinsic fault, and whisper it softly among the ocean going crowd, but *Dorade* is a rollovermaniac. At any time running free, with or without provocation, she is prone to indulge in orgies of rolling — unrestrained, unrestrained, free, wide and handsome. Perhaps it is our deep loading, her narrow beam, or the rather heavy mast, but, my, can she roll! After a winter's cruise in a pitching fool like *Nina*, and now on this rollicking roller, I am like the normal sea passenger longing for a roll when she pitches and a pitch when she rolls. Luckily, our narrow beam does not give too much room to be thrown around and, on the whole, we have been very comfortable — if cold. Below she is quite dry, except for the usual problem of masses of wet clothes; and while skylights have been battened down, Rod's contraption for mounting cowl ventilators on small boxes on deck, with separate standpipe underneath to quarters below, have worked to perfection. Shall never go to sea without similar gear again if it can be helped.

Grub has been good, and Dave Leeson as cook is a grand success. Seldom sick, but clumsy on his pins, and while a marvel at pancakes, biscuits, etc., his idea of menus is not always suitable to an old man's appetite. For example, one day's program: Breakfast as usual, fruit, cereal, bacon and eggs, coffee; lunch, sardines, one hard boiled egg, apple sauce (all on one plate at same time) and beer; dinner, pancakes and pancakes and coffee. I like pancakes now and then, but not from soup to nuts as a dinner.

Rod is a superlatively fine seaman in every way. As a navigator, he as yet lacks self-confidence (the only respect in which he does) but as I soon found his daily fixes agreeably coincided with my rather casual daily dead reckonings, became quite satisfied, and all landfalls have been perfect. "Ducky" and Porter are, of course, more than average good, and all hands have been kind to the old man and let him take the stick when real work has to be done.

June 14th, 4:00 A.M. Have had slow but pleasant drift across the North Sea. Just now entering Kors Fiord, leading to Bergen, some thirty miles further up inside waters, and ought to drop our hook inside of 25 days out.