

The Silhouette Owner

The journal of the Silhouette Owner's Association

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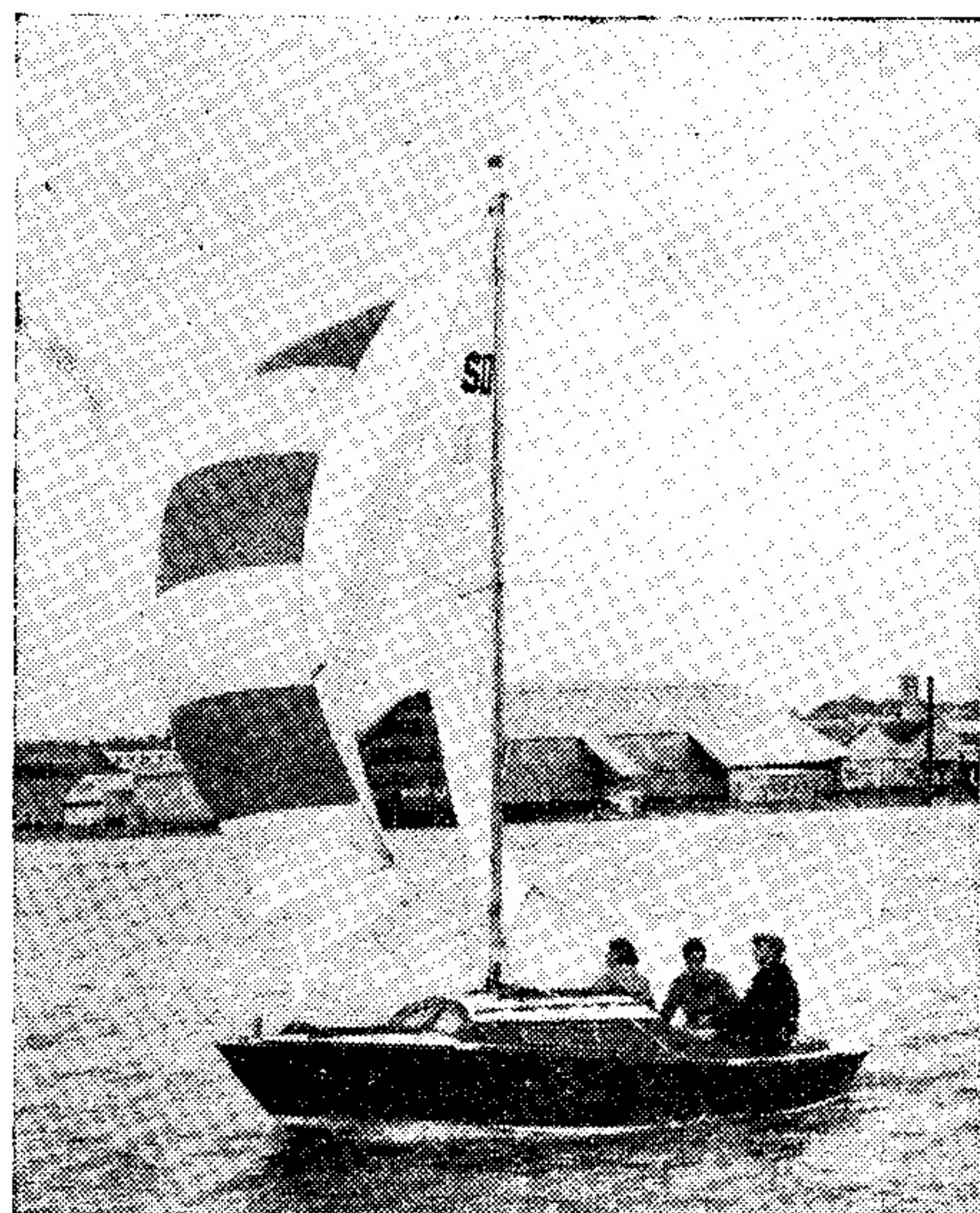
23, Roach Avenue, Rayleigh, Essex.

Masthead Rig

By Robert Tucker

A GREAT deal of water has flowed between a great many keels since the first Silhouette hit the water; and many more-recent owners know little of those early days. In 1953, when the original Silhouette was designed, the concept of a small, cheap little yacht in which a couple of enthusiasts could sail 'longshore was little more than a dream; there were a few "dinghies with lids on" but, being fairly easily capsised, they were hardly what was wanted. So we got down to the real bare essentials, and what is now the Mark I was born—a true little cruiser, which the amateur could, and did, build for £85. We used a standard dinghy mainsail, for economy, and probably only those early owners will believe that a working suit of cotton sail cost about £10! Times have changed.

As a result of our experiences in 1954, we conceived the Mark II basically the Mark I widened 10%. The now-famous serpentine sheer was an incidental development sparked off by an idea from a



Mark I owner. The same sail plan was retained, and the outcome was a tough little seaboard whose drawings were first published in the American magazine *Rudder*, in April, 1955. The first boats were centre-boarders (believe it or not), and the credit for pushing the marriage of the Mark II and bilge keels must go to Jimmy Hamilton, whose SII/2 preceded my own SII/1 by a few months.

Now that the design is six years old, and sail numbers exceed 600, the time has come to take stock, and to consider changes.

The first change proposed has come about through American demands and will please many English owners. Many of you have complained that the Silhouette is undercanvassed, and we all know that, unless very carefully rigged and trimmed, she is inclined to weather helm. Now, after a full season's trials in the United States, we have decided to go over to a masthead rig. The mast position and mainsail remain unaltered, but the jumper struts disappear, as the forestay and jib halliard move to the masthead; the tack remains in the same place.

The outcome is a jib with an 18 ft. luff and an area of 50 sq. ft., and this has proved a real winner, improving both speed and balance. As a corollary, the genoa area is increased to 125 sq. ft. and the spinnaker to 100 sq. ft., so that the old masthead balloon jib which many owners have sported is no longer necessary.

It is appreciated, of course, that many of you will have the old rig, and will want to convert to the new one. Naturally, this is not mandatory, and some owners will prefer to retain their present smaller sail areas. But for those who want to change, Hurley is making up a conversion kit comprising a new masthead fitting, a new forestay and a new jib. Conversion will thus be a simple job, since the jumper struts can be retained or can be replaced by a second spreader. Existing jibs and genoas can be retained, and will obviously give useful service under sundry conditions—one can never really have too many headsails.

Owners interested in making their own conversions can obtain prints of the new sail plan from me, although I regret the need to make a charge of 2/6 to cover printing and postage.



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The Log of the Dolphin By Herbert Firth

On Sunday night, June 19, last summer, Herbert Firth, of Timperley, Cheshire, left Abersoch, North Wales, in his Silhouette II Dolphin (sail number 488) bound for Saundersfoot, in Carmarthen Bay. He was accompanied by two friends, Bert De Cecco and Alex Shaw. They made Saundersfoot on the evening of Thursday, June 23. Here are some extracts from the log of the voyage.

Sunday, June 19. It was decided to make the passage to New Quay by night. Weighed anchor at 22.00 hrs. and left under sail. HF set course on 185 deg. mag. B de C at helm and AS on watch. HF then went below to rest, with instructions for him to be called at midnight, as it was anticipated that we would sight the Causeway Bell Buoy Light at about 00.20 hrs. Wind Northerly, heavy swell, but calm.

Monday, June 20. HF on deck at midnight and Causeway Bell Light sighted at 00.05 hrs. Boat on course, which gave much satisfaction and confidence. Wind and swell increased slightly, and we sailed at a cracking pace; the dinghy nearly pooped us on one occasion. Night was clear, and able to steer by the stars . . . Dawn broke and HF brewed coffee, which was much enjoyed by the watch. Arrived Aberystwyth 09.15 hrs. Low water in harbour and set course for New Quay without going ashore. Wind SW and able to sail on broad reach until a few miles off New Quay, where we arrived at 13.45 hrs. Anchored in harbour below low water point. HF slept ashore with the crew on board.

Tuesday, June 21. Left under sail at 09.00 hrs. Wind SW, tide on ebb, sea calm. Porpoises sighted; one came round our stern . . . Arrived off Dinas Head at 14.13 hrs., earlier than we had expected, and decided to continue beyond Fishguard. Set course for Strumble Head. Passed lighthouse at Strumble Head at 15.25 hrs. and met tide and rip

against us. Found we were not making much headway, and went further out to sea to avoid the rip. Decided to spend night in the area Trevine, and set course for the coast on a bearing of 222 deg. mag. When just off Ynsdeullyn Island course was set for the cove at Aber Castle, where we anchored with both anchors at 18.00 hrs.

Wednesday, June 22. Left Aber Castle at 08.20 hrs. with B de C at the helm. Made very good running with offshore wind and ebb tide. Started up motor at 10.10 hrs. in preparation for Ramsey Sound . . . Through Ramsey Sound by 10.50 hrs. with no trouble, and set course of 140 deg. across St Bride's Bay. 13.00 hrs—approaching Tusker Rock and B de C took over helm in readiness for Jack Sound. Met a tremendous tide rip through the Sound and had great difficulty in getting beyond The Bench. Weather deteriorated, wind increased to Force 6. One very big wave nearly turned us over, and the crew thought that we were not going to make it, but make it we did. Big seas mounted up just outside the Sound, but we continued SE into them to get clear of the rocks . . . The coastline here is most inhospitable, and we crept round the coast until we reached St Ann's Head at 14.30 hrs... Eventually decided to make for Dale Roads and were very relieved to see some small craft moored there. Arrived Dale 15.00 hrs. and anchored with both anchors . . . Met the Commodore of the Dale Sailing Club, who was most helpful, and advised us regarding the sea firing ranges between Milford Haven and Caldy Island. Informed that the Coastguard had had us under observation after leaving Jack Sound. Wish we had known this at the time, as it would have relieved us of some anxiety!

Thursday, June 23. Contacted Range Officer at Castlemartin by phone, who advised us that firing would be in progress from Sheep Island to St Govan's Head from 08.00 hrs. until 17.00 hrs. and from 20.00 to 23.59, and that the only way we could proceed on our course was by keeping 12,000 yards S of the coast, clear of the danger area. We were not prepared to go so far offshore, due to the danger of further thunderstorms, and arranged a rendezvous off Sheep Island with the RASC boat *Hyperion*. Set sail from Dale at 11.15 hrs. and made for Sheep Island, where we were contacted by *Hyperion* and instructed to tie up alongside her until the All Clear was given. HF went aboard *Hyperion* and found skipper and crew most helpful. They were most intrigued by the fact that we had come through Jack Sound, and gave us much useful advice about the remainder of our cruise.

At 12.55 radio message received to the effect that we could proceed, and we made course for Linney Head. Tide rip and big swell off Linney Head and near Crow Rock, which gave us a few anxious moments. Whole of coastline between Sheep Island and St Govan's Head most inhospitable . . . Making good time with offshore wind, flood tide, and outboard. Passed Saddle Head at 14.30 hrs. and Broad Haven at 14.50 hrs. . . .

Kept close inshore until off Stackpole Quay and then set course for Manorbier. There met by RASC boat *Syke*, who informed us that

due to the AA firing range to seawards we could not proceed, and were to go into Manorbier Bay and await instructions . . . At 16.00 hrs. the order came through that we could proceed, and we set course for Lydstep Point. Through Caldy Sound and past Giltar Point by 16.56 hrs. Passed Tenby at 17.15 hrs. and arrived Saundersfoot at 18.00 hrs. at high water. Entered harbour and tied up alongside wall.

All of us were very thrilled in having completed what we set out to do. Boat and Seagull behaved magnificently, and the skipper and crew had learned a great deal.

Editor's Note. *Dolphin's* passage of Jack Sound was more heroic than the log indicates. This sound is a narrow channel separating Midland Isle from Wooltack Point. It is described by the Admiralty's *West Coast Pilot* as "little more than one cable in width between The Crab stone and The Cable, but very convenient for coasters with local knowledge." The *Pilot* warns against broad yaws which may set a vessel on the rocks, and on the strength of the tidal streams there.

The Journal

WE are gratified by the growing interest in the Journal that is being shown both by members of the Association and by people outside it. We are always glad to send copies to interested people but, inevitably, costs have to be met. We have therefore priced single copies of the Journal at 6d. (post paid 8d.) Members of the Association will, of course, continue to have it posted to them each month without charge.

Since we are anxious to make the Journal as big and as interesting as possible, and this, again, needs finance, a proportion of the space each month will be made available for advertisements. We feel that this will offer a valuable opportunity to advertisers to make known their goods and services to Silhouette owners, and also that it will be a useful additional service to readers. We should like to express our very real gratitude to those advertisers in this issue who have shown faith in the Association's new Journal in these early days, and we hope that our readers will support them. It will naturally be a help to us if people will mention *The Silhouette Owner* in replying to advertisements.

We want short articles and letters from Silhouette owners on all aspects of Silhouette life. Please send all material submitted for editorial publication to the Hon. Editor. Inquiries about advertising space and rates should be addressed to the Hon. Advertising Manager, at the same address—The Old Hall, Marple, Cheshire. Telephone: Marple 1458.

Small advertisements of boats or gear wanted or for sale and the like will be accepted at 3d. a word (minimum ten words, or 2/6).

Regional Groups

REGIONAL groups of the Silhouette Owners' Association are being formed in a number of areas. The following have undertaken to act either as Group Secretaries, or as provisional secretaries to help in the formation of groups, which will, of course, elect officers and local committees as they become established.

South-East (Thames, Blackwater and Crouch). Mr Stan Morgan, 44, Station Crescent, Rayleigh, Essex.

Upper Thames. Mr Eric Hounslow, Fair Winds, Bladon, near Woodstock, Oxford. Tel: Woodstock 337.

South Coast. Mr G. R. Oliver, 52, Middle Road, Higher Denham, Bucks. Tel: Denham 2602.

North-West. Mr J. R. L. Anderson, The Old Hall, Marple, Cheshire. Tel: Marple 1458.

Forth. Mr A. M. Hodge, 13, Castle Street, Edinburgh.

The *South-East Group* held a constituent assembly on November 20 and elected a provisional committee. Three sailing events have been proposed—to Quay Reach, Foulness Island, on April 29, a race-rally from the mouth of the Crouch to the Blackwater on June 24, and a race in the Southend Yachting Week to be sailed, it is hoped, under the burgee of the Alexandra Yacht Club. Mr Desmond Pollard has generously offered a trophy for this event. The Up River Yacht Club, Hullbridge-on-Crouch, has officially adopted the Silhouette Class and will be promoting at least one open event next season.

The *North-West Group* has arranged to hold a meeting at Chester on January 22 to elect officers and committee. The meeting will be at 12 noon at the Talbot Hotel, Newgate Street, Chester, and all Silhouette owners in the North West, wives, and interested friends are cordially invited. Lunch will be available at 6/6 a head.

The *Plymouth Group* held an inaugural meeting on November 25. It is hoping to arrange a National Championship and Rally in Plymouth Sound, with the Corinthian Yacht Club as hosts.

Local Silhouette owners and prospective owners at *Rhyl* held a meeting at Rhyl Yacht Club on December 7 and formed a Silhouette Section. It will arrange a programme of cruising and racing events under the club's sponsorship. The secretary of the Silhouette Section is Mr W. D. Evers-Swindell, Wychtree, Tre Wen, Denbigh, N. Wales.

First Season By Douglas Wilkie

I HAVE sailed my Silhouette for only one season, so many of my problems will seem elementary to those with more experience. Perhaps my conclusions may be of some use to someone who is buying a boat and starting operations *next* season. To set the scene I should

explain that I have sailed with my wife (prone to mutiny, but a good cook), and often a young baby. The accomodation is so well arranged that we did not seem too overcrowded, even on a three weeks' summer holiday with plenty of rain.

Only one thing has gone wrong with the boat. The propeller shaft of the Vincent engine has seized up. I wish somebody had told me about those little grooves in the water-lubricated bearing that should be kept cleared out with a piece of piano-wire. The engine itself has never given any trouble, so long as it was kept reasonably cool on long journeys.

The rig is easy and convenient to manage, though the boom has an annoying habit of catching on the back-stay. I have heard alarming stories about the iron tabernacle—it is said that if a shroud parts, the cabin top will be carried away—but I have never heard of the catastrophe's actually happening. Has anyone? The tabernacle is very convenient for raising and lowering the mast, and I don't want to scrap mine without good reason.

A tiller clamp is necessary for single-handed sailing and heaving-to. We made a most effective one for about three shillings by screwing to the tiller one of the hook-an-toggle fasteners that are sold for closing trunks. A Terylene cord is threaded through the fastener, and fixed to either side of the cockpit. The toggle grips and ungrips the cord in an instant.

To reef or not to reef seems to be a question over which Silhouette owners disagree. I am strongly for reefing. After all, the maximum speed of a Silhouette is about four and a half knots, probably reduced by a knot when towing a dinghy. This speed is certainly reached in Force 4, so in anything stronger it is merely a strain on gear and nerves to keep up full sail.

We are interested in cruising, and with such a low speed and the tides what they are, we have been driven to plan everything well in advance. The best way seems to be to plan backwards, in distance and time, from the destination; in this way you can always tell whether or not you are on schedule. If you are not, the only thing is to start the engine, and in good time. Our rule is never to miss a tide for the honour and pleasure of arriving by sail. When we break the rule, we don't arrive.

We sail on the Blackwater and thereabouts, that is, in shoal water. Many of the swatchways—example, the Raysand Channel and the Swin Spitway—are very shallow at low water, which is when you are normally obliged to use them. When the soundings get less and less, and approach your draught, you can easily go frantic wondering

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whether the better water is to port or starboard. The only fact that you can depend on is that there is better water behind you, to which you should return as soon as possible. There, you can anchor, and think peacefully about your situation. This all sounds simple, but we, alas, spent some hours aground on the Buxey through not catching on to it. We were helped into this predicament by the fact that our steering compass, mounted on the aft end of the cabin, had an unsuspected deviation of 15 deg. Later this was found to be entirely due to the speaker in our radio: they are fearfully potent things.

The main thing that I should still like to be told about the Silhouettes is the limit to its practical performance under various conditions of wind and sea. Our longest and most boisterous passage was from Burnham to the Walton backwaters (35 naut. miles in 10 hrs. 40 mins.; wind S-SSW, Force 5, max. gusts Force 7) last July. Wind and sea were mostly behind us and we covered much of the distance under jib alone. But is it practicable to *beat* under these conditions? I felt too tired and worried to try it just as an experiment, and did my final beat into Hamford Water under engine, making only 1.5 knots through the water, and pounding frightfully. A pooling of experiences within the Association about passages made and conditions encountered, would be a tremendous help to newcomers like me.

Association Notes

IT is hoped that as many Silhouette owners as possible who can get to London on Saturday, January 7, will come along to the Silhouette Party which the Association has arranged at the Sols Arms, Tottenham Court Road. Time, 7.30.

Arrangements for the Cruise to Calais about the first week of September are going ahead. It will be a help if owners who may be able to take part will let the Hon. Secretary know as soon as they can. Even provisional entries will assist the organisation.

Subscriptions for the 1961 season are now due. The Hon. Treasurer will be grateful if anyone who hasn't paid his sub. yet will do so as soon as possible.

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