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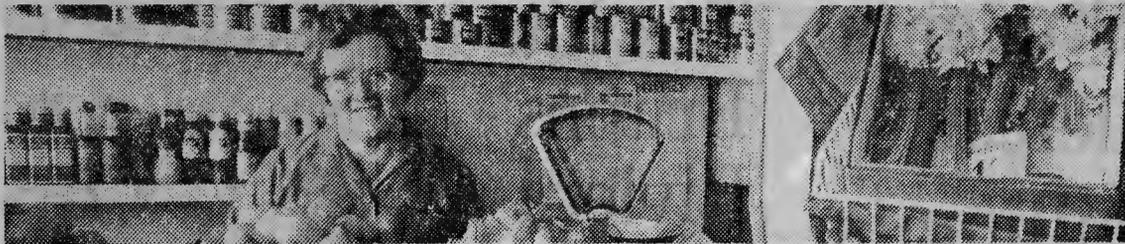
WEDNESDAY, 7 APRIL 1968

DOROTHY ROSE pooh-poohs the idea that she is sad at being left a grass widow for a year while her husband Alec sails single-handed round the world. Pressed she admits: "I might not be actually lonely but it does not mean that I don't miss him. I do all the time—particularly on Sundays when we used to go out together.

"But the shop keeps me busy during the day and in the evenings I've got accounts to do, friends to see, yachting functions to attend. My main problem is that I won't have everything ready by the time Alec gets back in July."

The little sitting room at the back of the Roses' greengrocery shop in Portsmouth is full of nautical bric-à-brac, half a dozen photographs of her husband in sailing clothes, a calendar with boats, neat stacks of "Yachting World," a bright painting of a Cornish fishing village above the fireplace and, moored on a ledge below a bottle opener and corkscrew encased in wood made to look like a Viking ship.

A black and white ageing dog and a younger but equally black and white cat pad round what space is left between table and chairs. Every now and then Dorothy Rose, wearing a deep sea blue overall, disappears to deal with a customer. There is a distant exchange about potatoes, the quality of the apples, a crash of the cash register and she's back explaining why she's actually glad that there is so little



Mrs Rose alone in her Portsmouth greengrocer's shop

The loneliness of the long-distance wife

By Clare Derrington

contact with her husband during the voyage.

"If I knew—really knew—that he could get in touch with me by radio every day I should worry far more, because there would be days when he couldn't—didn't have time perhaps or was in difficulties. Just think then of me sitting at home wondering why—how I should be upset then," she says.

She says her complete confidence in her husband as a sailor and in his boat, "Lively Lady" gives her peace of mind.

She says she does not believe

in telepathy but then adds: "I'd know if something was wrong. Last year when he was crossing the Atlantic I had the feeling he was in difficulties. Later on going through the log with him I found he had had a bad time just at the moment when I was worried most."

The telephone goes: it is an order from an old lady which ends, as so many of the customers' remarks in the shop end, with yet more congratulations. She wanders away to break off the outside leaves of a cauliflower and says, with the first overt

pride of the day: "We're not just an ordinary greengrocer you know; we're high class fruiterers—peaches, early 'strawberries, avocado pears—that sort of thing."

Although there must be three months to go before Alec Rose's return, Portsmouth is already preparing to give this quiet man of the sea a hero's welcome. "If it's a weekday," said one harbour official, "We can expect 1,500 boats to turn out. But if it's a weekend, God help us—there will be 3,000 at least."

Dorothy Rose thinks this huge welcome will upset her husband more than any gale force wind.