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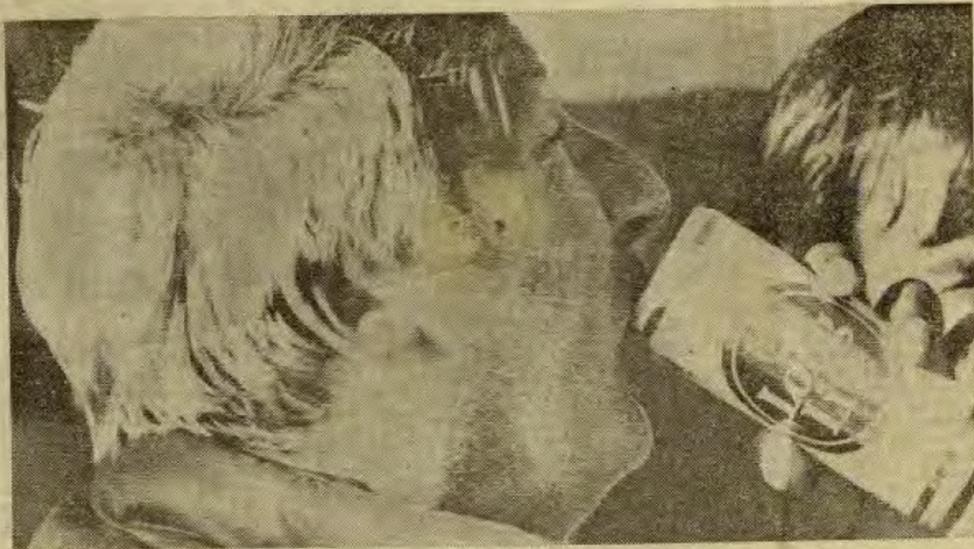


# Bruised Heath talks of ordeal at sea

# TED: MY WORST HOURS



YESTERDAY'S EXPRESS



PICTURE BY MICHAEL STROUD

Cheers! Mr Heath celebrates his safe arrival yesterday

By Michael Charleston

**EDWARD HEATH**, his body bruised and his yacht battered, came home from the Fastnet race disaster last night and said: "It was the worst experience I ever had."

"We were fighting massive seas. It was very frightening — the sort of thing you would never want to experience again."

The Tory former Prime Minister looked tired, with thick stubble on his chin. He drank a can of beer to celebrate the safe arrival of Morning Cloud and his 11 crew at the Plymouth finishing-line.

He said he was below navigating when the great gale "knocked over" the yacht soon after rounding Fastnet. He was flung across the cabin and "badly bruised in several places."

But there was never any question of Morning Cloud foundering: Mr Heath denied reports that they lost their rudder or put out Mayday signals.

They completed the course safely, "but it was a tragic race with so many losing their lives."

## THE ROWS

Mr Heath commented on two controversies arising from the disaster—the weather forecasting and the suitability of boat design.

When they left Cowes last Saturday "we were well briefed on the 'met' situation and knew there might be the possibility of a Force-8 gale," he said. "But there was no indication there would be a Force-10, let alone a Force-11. It raises the question of how far ahead can you warn people."

As for design, he said, the 44ft Morning Cloud "is a lightly built boat—and we have come through."

How the rows developed  
**WEATHER:** The Meteorological Office in London said

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By JOHN McCORMICK

**THE WIVES** and sweet-hearts of nearly 200 missing yachtsmen were facing an agonising wait last night.

All day they had paced the pierheads at Plymouth, anxious for news of the 20 yachts still missing in the Atlantic.

Last night the death toll in the Fastnet disaster had risen to 15.

But hopes were kept alive by several reports of survivors being picked up.

The rescuers were still gallantly pressing on with their search by sea and air amid reports that more bad weather was on its way.

A spokesman at the RAF's Southern Rescue Centre, Plymouth, said: "We do not know how many of the boats we are looking for are still afloat."

"It is an enormous area of sea and these yachts are pretty small."  
There has been an unremit-

ting search of the 150 miles stretch of sea between the Scilly Isles and Ireland where over 300 yachts met up with the murderous winds which blew at nearly 80 miles an hour.

Three RAF Nimrod planes and several Navy helicopters scoured the disaster area.

One of the Navy helicopter crewmen at Cudrose, Cornwall, vowed last night: "We will not stop until we find them all."

## Victim

Late last night it was learned that the Chancellor of the Exchequer of Guernsey seemed certain to be another victim of the disaster.

Counsellor Peter Lord Dorcy, 51, was washed overboard from his yacht Cavle on Tuesday morning.

Nothing has been seen of him since.

Grief and gallantry:  
Pages 4 and 5

**Save our Sailors!  
Wives in vigil as the hunt goes on**

## Yacht race tragedies

From Page One

it was "nonsense" for the organisers, the Royal Ocean Racing Club, to claim the weather was "freak." As Mr Heath said, it issued gale warnings last Saturday.

But ROCR secretary Alan Green said it did not predict "cyclone" conditions. In fact the forecast outlook was of "light to moderate south-west winds." He added: "Everyone realises that sometimes forecasters are wrong."

**NUMBERS:** The man who bore the brunt of the rescue, Commander Bill Berry of Cudrose naval air station, said the race should have been restricted to 50 yachts. With over 300 at sea the rescue task had been "fantastic."

Then he declared: "A lot of these yachts should not have been out there."

Mr Green said limitation of entries was now being considered.

**DESIGN:** Australia's influential Sydney Cruising Yacht Club said it "had warned of potential disaster."

The answer from England was that yachtsmen are supposed to make their own decisions.

In fact an Australian team won the race.

One survivor, however, spoke out strongly. At Cross-

haven, Co. Cork, where the yacht Zap reached safety, Olympic yachtsman Richard Hughes, of Southend, said:—

● I believe safety is being sacrificed for speed. In the quest for lightness, modern yacht designers are trying out new materials which just aren't up to extreme sea conditions.

We were lucky. We had six guys on board who were strong and fit.

But I wonder how many yachtsmen regarded the Fastnet race as a week's holiday, a bit of a doddle and good fun—until now?

## MONEY

**THE COST** of rescue operations by the Royal Navy and RAF could be over £500,000.

Labour MP Mr Sydney Bidwell is to ask the Government to publish details of the bill facing the taxpayer. And he wants yachting organisations and sponsors involved to be "invited" to contribute.

Mr Bidwell said those engaged are "normally well-heeled, well-to-do people indulging in fairly expensive sport for their own pleasure."

Yet the cost of rescuing them would be borne by "many taxpayers in poorer parts of the country who cannot afford a car, never mind a yacht."