

BASHING IT OUT with a BIG TRI. BY JOHN GOODWIN

SAILING FROM CAPE TOWN TO DURBAN IN THE
VICTRESS TRIMARAN

(40 ft. x 23 ft. x 2 ft. 9 in.)

DELIVERY by the builders had been promised for the first week in March, but when I saw her in early February I realised she would be delayed—however, the crew and I were not prepared for such a mad last-minute scramble as we had.

The object of the trip was to sail to Durban for the boat show and demonstrate the sea-keeping qualities of an ocean-going Tri. As it was, we sailed the day immediately after the first sea trials, too late for the opening of the show, but with a good chance of getting there before it finished.

On board were George Hawkins, the owner and agent for Piver Trimarans in Southern Africa, John Kerr, radio communications, Bob Kershaw, Jaap Allison and myself as skipper.

Leaving the Cape Town docks at noon we beat into a south-easter, which picked up in strength as we neared Cape Point. *Victress* was heavily loaded with stores, but in spite of that we made rapid progress (7-8 knots and tacking at 100°) and rounded the Point inside the Bellows three boat lengths off the rocks at midnight.

I laid off the course for Hangklip and was able to get the ship to sail herself and then took a watch below, leaving George in the chart house. We had watches of two hours on call, two hours on the helm and four hours off.

Anyway, on going below, I was much surprised to find a glass of flowers (given to me by my children and placed on the cabin table) still there and not a drop of water spilt in spite of the turbulent waters off the Point. This demonstrates a trimaran's comfort at sea.

The following day the wind dropped away and we started the motor, a 20-h.p. Mercury outboard lowered through a trunk in the chart house, and motored most of the way to Mossel Bay where we stopped for two hours for more petrol and to take on fresh food and dry out the charging plant which had got well dampened around Cape Point, thanks to the badly-fitting hatches and vents.

There were many deck leaks, too, from the skylights, vents which had not been sealed and many holes drilled through the decks by the electricians and radio engineers which had been left with daylight shining through!

We had a beam wind on leaving Mossel Bay and made a good 30 miles before it died away at midnight. The motor was lowered into position, but we then discovered that the starter recoil was not working and we had to hoist the motor once or twice, remove the cover, rewind the cord by hand, lower the whole outfit again and start it.

Fortunately, she started easily and I checked our position on the chart and found we were just off the Knysna Heads. What better excuse could we have for a visit?

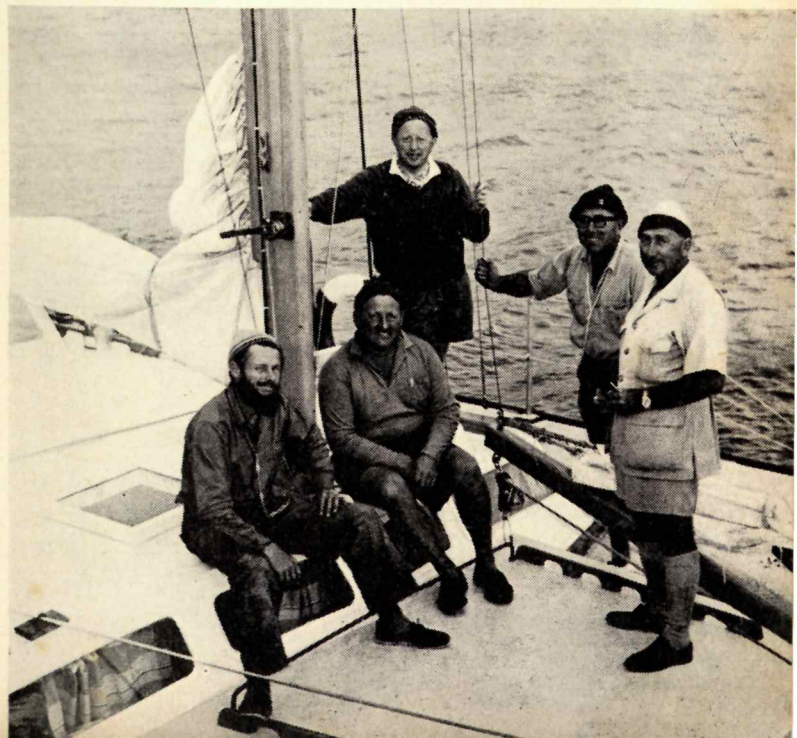
At 2 a.m., with no moon showing through the thick clouds, we worked our way over the bar, between the

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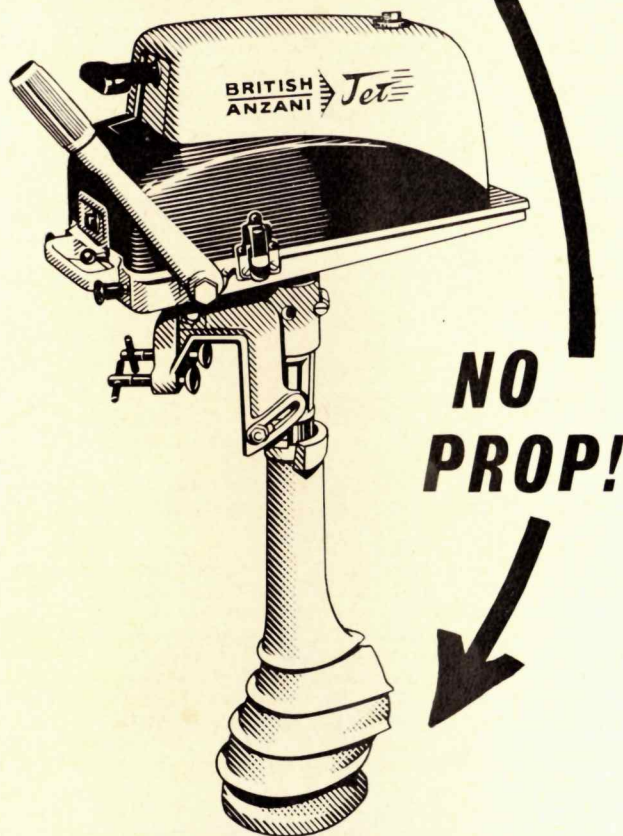


The 40-ft. Trimaran *Victress*, which has just completed a successful round-trip to Durban and back—one of the most testing coastal voyages in the world. She proved herself basically as capable as conventional deepsea cruisers and added the special virtues of the type. Here she drops into Buffalo Harbour, on her way from the Cape.

Victress's crew for the "up" journey—left to right: Skipper John Goodwin, of Speedwell and Stormvogel fame, Bob Kershaw, John Kerr, Jaap Allison and George Hawkins who had the ship built. Her owner is now Roy Finlay, who plans an ocean crossing with his spouse.



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BASHING IT OUT By Tri to Durban

(Continued from page 65)

narrow rocky heads, and into the lagoon. Bob was keeping a watch from the bows with an Aldis lamp to pick out dangers and we slid through into Ship's Cove and proceeded up the harbour.

The Knysna Yacht Club was having a regatta and the boat shed was brightly lit. I mistook this for the clubhouse on the end of the pier and steered too close to the sand bank and stuck. With only 2 ft. 9 in. of draught, she was easy to push off; Bob jumped over the side, had her in the channel in a few minutes and sailed on up to Hentie's Boatel where we docked just after 3 a.m.

Hentie was rudely awakened but very kindly robbed a new outboard of the parts to repair ours. In the meantime we were supplied with coffee and later a large breakfast — for all of which there was no charge!

We were escorted out of Knysna Harbour past the yacht club, where Bill Burton the Commodore gave us a *bon voyage* wave, and over the bar which had got up with the change of tide, by *Barmaid II*, Hentie's catamaran.

John Kerr was reporting our position daily to H.Q. in Maritzburg on a single sideband transmitter, and close to port we used the radio telephone. Apart from the two radio transmitter-receivers, we carried two logs, two radio direction finders, one Eddystone receiver and one depth meter. A generating plant was installed in one of the sponsor's to keep all these instruments and our lights supplied with power.

As we neared East London there was some speculation as to our fuel supply holding out. A light breeze did in fact help us and we made it into harbour with only three gallons in the tank.

George was buttonholed by the South African Customs — who were not to be left out of the general excitement — and returned to the ship with a most impressive set of papers (in triplicate) with a huge red seal at the top!

However, we were escorted out of the harbour by a motor launch and waved goodbye as the sheets were hardened in for a beat against the north-wester.

Towards Port St. Johns we ran into a violent electrical storm. It was one of those dark and stormy nights when anything can happen, and did. First of all the wind sprang up and whipped the sea into a cream-cheese foam, then the hydraulic steering came unstuck. While we were battling in the dark to get in sail and stream the sea anchor we were drenched with sheets of rain and spray. The vivid sheets of lightning showed up the rockbound coast towards which we were drifting out of control.

After some feverish work we were able to repair the steering and set the staysail, and ran before the wind which was fortunately now blowing straight for Durban. The electrical storm died away and the wind increased to 40 knots on the wind-speed indicator as the sun at last came over the horizon.

We were now running down some considerable waves under main, staysail and mizzen, surf riding on the crests. There was a considerable strain on the rudder and steering became difficult. At last an extra-large wave built up

Skipper John Goodwin, shows the broken rudder which sheared off when *Victress* broached, while running hard.



astern and *Victress* poised herself on the crest and shot forward at a tremendous speed which I estimated at 18 knots. The steering went light and she swung in a great curve and came up broadside to the wave which broke underneath her, sending her sliding sideways.

She had broached at speed under ideal conditions for a capsize — and all that had happened was the rudder broke off neatly at the water line!

We dropped the sails and streamed the sea anchor. I unbolted the hydraulic ram and, rigging a halyard from the mizzen through the end of the boom, we lifted the damaged rudder clear. Bob and Jaapie had the spare one on deck by this time and it was lowered into place.

I thought it would take a long time to get the pintles fitted to the gudgeons but, as luck would have it, I slipped the rudder on at the first attempt and exactly 40 minutes after we broached we were in business again.

The wind lightened in the afternoon and we sailed past the South Coast of Natal during the evening, entering Durban Harbour at 3 a.m. the following day just 8½ days out from Cape Town.

I would make the following points of comparison with a conventional yacht:

- (1) Decidedly faster on all points of sailing.
- (2) Heels only about 5 per cent and is therefore more comfortable although at times the motion is a little more jerky.
- (3) Safer at sea, as there is no heavy keel and would remain afloat even if severely damaged and leaking. They are also beachable.
- (4) Cheaper foot for foot.
- (5) More room is required for mooring and getting under way.
- (6) Not so positive in stays as a keel yacht and requires different methods of handling. I feel here some redesigning of the steering would help a lot.

Victress's crew for the trip back to Cape was: Skipper, Lieutenant Commander Dick Prior, Commodore of the Point Yacht Club; a New Zealander, Peter Hargreaves; an American, Hank Pauloo; a Rhodesian policeman, Danny Werth; and, of course, her owner Roy Finlay.

She met heavy weather most of the way down, and took 14 days instead of the expected five or six in consequence. Off Agulhas she had the familiar dusting, being blown 100 miles out to sea. She brought herself and her crew back to her home port, however, in fine fettle.

John Goodwin. ■■

Stormvogel's record passage

IT is good to see how consistently *Stormvogel* lives up to her rather redoubtable name!

She arrived back in the Cape for her refit after a real fighting head-wind passage from Las Palmas and now, on her way to do battle in this year's classic New York-Bermuda ocean race, the Stellenbosch-built racer continues the story of hard sailing.

Only sketchy details come to hand while Kees Bruynzeel's ship is at sea, but we know from a cable from Belem, Brazil, to his home that she broke her own record from Cape Town to St. Helena by getting there in 9 days 16 hours. Distance is 1,700 sea miles.

Then, later, we heard briefly from Port o' Spain, Trinidad, that on the way up the South American coast she broke the triple century for one day's run. Her distance by log of 302 miles has never been bettered to our knowledge by a yacht designed to the rules of the Royal Ocean Racing Club and the Cruising Club of America which set a measured limit to overall length of 73 ft.

In the old heyday of sail, clipper ships sometimes did this running their easting down before a whole gale (and in fact almost hit 400 on rare occasions), but these ships were at least 1,000 tonners. *Stormvogel* might have had a bit of a lift from the coastwise current, but her day's run is still an astonishing achievement.

Also on the high seas now out of Cape Town is Col. S. H. Jeffrey's fine Uhlmann-designed motor-sailer ketch *Corsair* bound for a cruise of indefinite length. All South African yachtsmen wish her fortunate passages. ■■

SOUTH AFRICAN YACHTING: May/June, 1964

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