Dainty in the Mediterrannean

Dainty off Saint-Tropez

Peter Nicholson has just returned from Cannes and St Tropez where he and his team won their group. This was Peter's 18th attempt and finally on October 5th in his last year of competing he achieved his goal of winning the black group.

This epic voyage involved a three day car journey overland of over 900 miles towing his Sunbeam Dainty from Bosham to first Cannes (to race in Les Regattes Royales) and then in Les Voiles de Saint-Tropez.

On the Friday towards the end of the Cannes racing week in quite a blow Dainty's boom broke in half. It looked as though she would be unable to compete in St Tropez. No local boatyard could mend or replace it. Fortunately, with a phone call to Haines just before they closed for the weekend, John Tremlett searched through his stock and found one. The problem was then how to get it to the South of France to be rigged and fitted in time for the first race of Les Voiles on the Tuesday.

Phone calls and emails and texts were made by the team to get quotes for the transport of this boom. No plane would carry anything as long as the 3.7 metre boom. All we could get were quotes of £2-3k + from carriers who just might make it in three or four days.

However, on hearing of Dainty's distress, fellow Sunbeam sailors Viv and Anna Williams, who have the family firm Sailboat Deliveries Ltd, dropped everything, went round to Haines that Friday evening to collect the boom and drove 908 miles to Saint-Tropez. This is typical of the wonderful old-fashioned camaraderie in the Sunbeam class at Itchenor.
We looked for friends within the classics, and Josh skipper of Viveka, 1929 and 80ft LOA, obliged and towed Dainty at 5 knots the 25 miles round the coast to Saint-Tropez [A most beautiful cruise with the YC de France fleet racing past!]

It was then up to Georgie Eggleton and Owain Parker to spend Monday fitting the boom and installing the missing single line reefing.

So Dainty was able to race on the first day in St Tropez…in fact she had a perfect pin end port tack start, survived a wind hole after an hour and another hour later some 20 knots of wind in a very bumpy sea. We won the race, not only on handicap, but she was the first yacht over the finishing line for her group. What an amazing achievement for Peter and his team!

None of this deterred arrangements for Dainty's traditional Soirée that evening at sunset by our mooring, this year beside the Big Boats off the Sube.

IOD Josephine's crew and skipper Jerome, John Slatter & Gladys. Christine, Chris Moore & Cheryl, Peter, Owain, Zanny, Sally, Viv & Anna, Georgie and Ollie.

Dainty went on to win her class on the second day, helmed by Ollie Gilchrist, with Owain and Christine. On the third day racing was abandoned due to the lack of wind.
So, everything to play for on the final Saturday.

Tuiga from Dainty

Meanwhile Dainty competed in the Gstaad Yacht club's Centenary trophy for 100+ year old yachts on the Thursday. In a pursuit race with the world's most powerful and beautiful yachts such as Tuiga, Mariquita, Mariska and Rowdy. Dainty had a wonderful sail with Peter, Ollie and Chistine, but this was another occasion to watch the fleet sail closely past us!

Saturday dawned with no wind, and everything depended on Dainty's last class race. However, after hours of floating around the wind came in, Beaufort 5 or 6 and very wet reaching along a bumpy sea. Unfortunately, the course chosen consisted of five one mile reaches and fetches. This did not suit Dainty's handicap, and the larger boats left us behind.

Then luck changed for Dainty, the wind headed on the last leg, and up the Golfe de Saint-Tropez to the finishing line it turned into a beat, where Peter could excel. The electric pump could only just cope, but Dainty finished, with a very wet crew, 2nd on handicap for that last race of Peter's and secured the trophy for the week.

Over the two French regattas Peter's crew consisted of: Oliver Gilchrist, Chris Moore, Christine Graves, David Giffard, John Tanner, Georgie Eggleton and Owain Parker.

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Georgie, Owain, Christine, Peter and Ollie at black Group Prize Giving

Christine Graves
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