

Blue note

All the trash in the water from our own clumsiness makes me blush with embarrassment, says Jess Lloyd-Mostyn

Bagpuss is floating away!” comes the fervent cry from our daughter. Every sailor has a plan for a man overboard situation. You consider how you would manoeuvre the boat to recover someone from the water and the process for getting them safely back on board. As sailing parents we’ve learned to size up each moment for what we would do if one of the little ones suddenly toppled over the side. The guardrails are swathed in netting and we insist on harnesses under way and lifejackets in our dinghy.

But, as safety-conscious as we are for both our small fry and ourselves, there are many who are lost overboard. Yes, it is time to eulogise and acknowledge all those ever-so-valuable items that are, unfortunately, gone forever to the watery depths.

It started with an unfortunate throw. Our boat and outboard keys were hastily chucked into our dinghy. One swift bounce on the inflatable floor sent them ricocheting off and plopping into the murky anchorage in Guadeloupe. Since then there has been a slowly growing list of tools, flip-flops, clothes pegs and sunglasses that have one by one slid, blown and fallen from our hands, usually at the most inconvenient moment.

The perfect knife for filleting fish was accidentally chucked into the sea along with the guts of a dorado; an awkward and fiddly job on our bow roller had James using an adjustable spanner, that suddenly slipped as he turned it and it was flung into the drink; as I diligently un-pegged the cloth nappies hanging on a line at our stern my infant son meticulously tossed each one over the side.

It’s funny when you consider how conscientiously we protect heavy and precious items, gently hoisting the tender onto the foredeck with countless lines attaching it. Yet neither of us had the foresight to stop a blow up, baby swimming ring from whooshing off the deck when the wind picked up.

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JESS LLOYD-MOSTYN

Jess and James left the UK in 2011 in their Crossbow 42 and have sailed halfway round the world, growing their crew en route. Follow their journey at water-log.com.

considering the lengths we go to managing our waste, helping support a cleaner ocean. Could we have started our own garbage island somewhere?

Perhaps our most dramatic loss was one en route from New Zealand to Vanuatu. We were hit by a storm that, contrary to all predictions, had moved in the opposite direction from what was forecast and slammed straight into us. During the sustained 55 knot winds, the boat and crew remained solid and sturdy. What really caused a problem was the genoa sheet that ended up flogging wildly and got caught underneath the surfboard and ladder that were lashed to the lifelines. Grappling with the helm there was nothing else to be done in those conditions other than to stand back and witness the snaking line whip itself into an angry ball that slowly beat the board

to death and hurled the ladder over after it. Alas, more junk in the ocean, but at least it wasn’t one of the crew.

When working on our VHF aerial, checking the connections for corrosion, James was clipped on at the top of the mast. Any job at height can make you a bit nervous but perhaps the most irritating possibility is dropping an all important screw, washer or pin whilst you’re up there. Which, is exactly what happened of course. And, of course, the connector that dropped from his hand was some oddly specific and bespoke German item that, on the hook in Panama, would be a nightmare to replace. Understandably, he descended the mast steps cursing loudly and kicking himself.

Of course a little inconvenience, a few items lost in the sea here and there, is a small price to pay for our sailing lifestyle. However, sometimes, Neptune sends us a bit of luck. Three days after he dropped it, I spotted the VHF connector in the most improbable place, on the slant of our sprayhood. Dancing down below to present my errant skipper with this prize I waxed lyrical about the chances of such good fortune to which I was promptly told “Don’t go overboard, Jess.”

Which is exactly why I sent him diving in to recover the Bagpuss toy, lobbed over the side by our youngest.