

# CRUISING LOG

**Readers' Cruising Stories**

*Yachting Monthly's* founder Herbert Reich wrote in the first issue in 1906:

**'We shall be glad to receive the best logs and cruising stories offered to us from all parts of the world'**

106 years later, nothing's changed! We're still publishing your cruising stories

**PLEASE SEND YOUR STORIES TO**  
yachting\_monthly@ipcmedia.com

## Don't let it break you

Jess Barber on the philosophical lessons liveaboard cruising can teach

There are certain things on a boat that are relatively easy to do without, and others which, when they suddenly stop working, can stall your plans, your mind and your spirit.

There are some items which you can have back-up systems for, like an alternative GPS, or a generator, or ground tackle. But there's a limit to what an average cruising yacht can carry and few can boast a second dinghy, a back-up stove or a spare mast.

In fact, all boats become more bespoke as time goes on. We, for instance, have a 24-year-old French windlass on a UK boat, built in South Africa, with a Japanese engine that is currently in Mexico!

We have found that the real trick is to just roll with the punches.

Things will break, and no amount of money or diligence will alter that fact if you want to



LEFT & ABOVE: Jess' husband James practised pulling the chain up by hand

And there are some failures that you simply learn to live with.

You see, there is a happy accident born out of things breaking – you always learn something. A large part of determining whether a piece of kit is truly essential is to see how well you can manage without it. And, by taking apart and studying the remains of the latest item to stop working, you'll discover a lot more about your boat.

We have now been without refrigeration for a good eight months of our journey. We had a chest fridge which was working when we left the UK, but it was behaving oddly by Gibraltar. When we were crossing the Atlantic we shut it off, fearing we were losing battery power (the issue was actually a faulty voltmeter). By the time we reached the Caribbean the compressor had totally conked out so we just decided to do without.

It was much easier to do than you might imagine, particularly as refrigeration is the main power drain on most boats. Because we were island-hopping we were always close to land so we simply bought ice to fill up the defunct chest-housing and used it as a cooler. No problem.

Similarly our autopilot stopped working. During our last ocean crossing we sailed with two friends on board, yet once we were back down to only the two of us on board it seemed natural to continue to hand-steer. Until, that was, we were off the coast of Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula and turned the autopilot on only to discover that it wouldn't hold a course. Yet another malfunction, but we both think that we became better sailors as a result of this loss.

With no autopilot we found we ending up playing with our sail-trim more in order to better balance the boat – especially when sailing upwind. We had several passages where we didn't need to touch the helm at all.

Our automatic bilge pump had never worked which wasn't much of an issue until the first time we planned to leave the boat for a long period, which happened to coincide with hurricane season.

Had we not had the deadline of the impending downpours and storms, it would probably still be on the list. And having to use just the manual pump before then gave us a better understanding of how much saltwater we took in through the stern gland and how much freshwater we ever had from rain.

I imagine there are many of us

**'A happy accident is born out of things breaking – you learn something'**



Adamastor, a Crossbow 40, and her hefty 30kg (66lb) anchor

Yachting Monthly readers share their cruising stories

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A relaxed downwind passage, off the southern coast of Cuba



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JESS BARBER



LEFT: James at the winch, as Adamastor nears St Kitts

When the windlass did kick the bucket it was no big deal, until we started talking seriously about the South Pacific. The greater

anchoring depths we'd be facing coupled with the challenge of sailing with a baby made us bite the bullet and bring a new shiny windlass back to Pacific Mexico from England at Christmas.

We are now facing the realities of buying a new piece of equipment for our lovely sailboat: the new windlass has different dimensions and specifications to the old one (the original manufacturer no longer exists) so fitting it will require adaptations to be made to the anchor locker.

You never do lose the hope that each new repair will somehow be simpler, be dealt with faster, be solved with 'plug-and-play' ease, and that afterwards your boat will suddenly become flawless.

But, in the event that it's not, at least we can all keep learning.



Jessica Barber with husband James and daughter Rocket, who was born in Mexico

### Jess Barber

Although new to sailing, Jess Barber and husband James left Falmouth in 2011 aboard *Adamastor*, their Crossbow 40, with the aim of sailing the world in two years. After enjoying eight months in the Caribbean, they decided to take longer over the circumnavigation. Their six-month-old daughter, Rocket, was born in Mexico. You can follow their progress at [www.water-log.com](http://www.water-log.com).

