



Robert Holbrook: the man who made the crash test project possible



The Crash Test team (left to right): RYA cruising manager Stuart Carruthers, YM's Kieran Flatt and Andrew Brook, and skipper Chris Beeson

Meet the wrecking crew

Met Robert Holbrook, the man who bought a yacht worth £35,000 and handed her over to our newly launched Crash Test Boat team.

Over the coming months, we will be giving her a starring role in a series of 'controlled' sailing disasters, which include a dismasting, a capsize, a hole below the waterline, fire in the engine room and, finally, a gas leak and explosion.

As managing director of Admiral Boat Insurance, Robert has seen all sorts of yachting disasters – from UK coastal dramas to mid-ocean calamities – and he has paid out thousands of pounds to compensate insurance clients who have fallen victim to the unexpected or the unavoidable. A keen cruising and racing yachtsman, Robert believes our Crash Test Boat series will help promote safety and good seamanship – and, perhaps, avoid some of those insurance claims! As he says: 'Why not learn from our mistakes so you can avoid making your own?'

Some 40 years ago, *YM*'s then editor, Des Sleightholme, launched a series of 'troubleshooter' articles, which were a prototype for the RYA Yachtmaster practical courses.

'She will play a starring role in a series of 'controlled' sailing disasters'

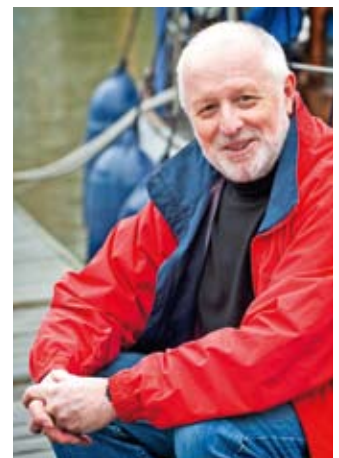
Having passed his own Yachtmaster exam, Des thought of the practical skills he hadn't been tested on – exercises deemed too risky, or expensive to manage.

Bill Anderson, then RYA cruising secretary and now *YM*'s monthly columnist for 'A Question of Seamanship', was an observer of the tests and recalls how readers were 'dumped' off the Devon coast in mastless 26ft Soling keelboats with an assortment of ill-fitting spars and sails and told to improvise jury rigs.

For our Crash Test Boat project, we have the support of the RYA, the RNLI, Osmotech UK (to repair the damage), Ocean Safety, Marina Developments Ltd and others. We hope the series will provide an understanding of how accidents happen and how to avoid them.

Find out more about our Crash Test Boat project on p88 and meet the boat herself on p92.

Don't miss the next issue, on sale 5 May. We run the Crash Boat aground, compare furlers and snuffers, find secret anchorages and much more



Paul Gelder, editor



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Aground! Someone's pride and joy washed up at Thorpe Bay, near Southend, Essex



A photo taken from a liferaft by a solo skipper



A fire aboard can quickly become lethal



Hull damage can follow a dismasting

NEW SERIES STARTS NEXT MONTH HOW TO DEAL WITH DISASTERS

Worse things happen at sea, they say. Good seamanship relies on many skills – not least navigation, boat handling, an understanding of the weather and the ability to deal with emergencies. Our new Crash Test Boat project aims to help you stay safe

What's your worst sailing nightmare? Sinking or capsizing? Have you ever run aground on a lee shore? *Yachting Monthly* has acquired a second-hand 40ft Jeanneau Sun Fizz 40 ketch, which we will be using over the coming months to challenge received wisdom regarding major disaster incidents on board. Every yachtsman fears a knockdown in heavy weather or,

worse, a 360-degree rollover. In the 1979 Fastnet Race, sailors abandoned perfectly seaworthy yachts, taking to their liferafts for fear of being injured as loose objects down below became deadly missiles in capsize. If your yacht was holed in a collision, how easily could you stop the flood of water? Would your bilge pumps cope? In the event of a dismasting, how would you cut away the rig before it punched a hole in the side of the hull? How would you

make a jury rig to sail to safety? Could you cope effectively with a galley or engine fire? There is plenty of first-hand testimony from yachtsmen who have survived these alarming scenarios. But nobody has methodically tested what happens in controlled and monitored conditions. There will be no shortage of ideas from fellow yachtsmen on the right way to tackle a whole range of problems. But without trying them, how do

you know which works best – or works at all? When it comes down to it, there is no substitute for experience. Our Crash Test Boat will be used to test our theories – as well as yours. We want to hear your stories and solutions. We'll put them to the test. The aim is to give you the best possible tools to avoid and troubleshoot crises afloat and, if you can't, the confidence to use methods that you know have been tried and 'Crash Boat tested'.



PHOTO: LESTER MCCARTHY

'WHY I BOUGHT A BOAT TO WRECK'

Robert Holbrook, founder and managing director of Admiral Boat Insurance, explains his motivation behind the test series

I was introduced to the concept of the Crash Test Boat by *Yachting Monthly* editor Paul Gelder and his team at last year's Southampton Boat Show. My enthusiasm grew as I realised this project could be a real benefit to yachtsmen. Often, the first natural human instinct when an emergency or disaster strikes is panic. In a series of controlled

experiments, the *Yachting Monthly* crew plan to put theory to the test by re-enacting some typical worst-case scenario sailing accidents or emergencies – such as grounding, capsizing and mast failure. Risk assessment and careful consultation with experts will be at the core of all tests. How often are incidents like this photographed and filmed in detail? By sharing their findings

in a series of articles, I could see how yachtsmen could learn much invaluable information. First, we needed a suitable 35-45ft monohull as a test boat. We also needed some project partners who could add in-depth knowledge and experience – and share costs! I approached Osmotech UK, at Hamble Point



Crash Test Boat – a 40ft ketch

Marina, which has an unrivalled reputation for repairing damaged yachts. A couple of weeks later, Jim Hirst from Osmotech told me about a 1982 Jeanneau Sun Fizz ketch, which was for sale and fitted the bill perfectly. Admiral bought *Fizzical* in November 2010 and the project was born. Everyone we have spoken to has seemed equally excited about the concept of *Yachting Monthly's* Crash Test Boat series. MDL has generously given us free berthing and lift-outs at Hamble Point Marina and the RNLI and RYA have also lent their support.

Meet the team, more about the project →

MAIN PHOTO: JOHN WHEELER/ALAMY; ABOVE: PPL



Stuart Carruthers, the RYA's cruising manager, attempts to push a saibag of fenders under the hull to protect the topsides

Hard aground!

PHOTO: KIERAN FLATT

PHOTO: LESTER MCCARTHY



Don't miss our first test next month

For our first Crash Test Boat experiment, to be published next month, we deliberately ran our 40ft ketch aground. We've all done it at some stage. Running aground is probably one of the most common yachting

The Crash Test Boat high and dry on the spit at the entrance to the Hamble River

disasters in the list of accidents that might befall us. If you're lucky enough to have a soft landing on mud, or you run aground with a rising tide, you'll probably be able to laugh it off in the yacht club bar afterwards. But if it's a lee shore and the tide is falling, or worse still, there are rocks around, it could be a catastrophe, resulting in the total loss of your boat.

We asked Yachting Monthly readers to tell us about their own experiences of grounding



'Soon the windows were under water,' recalled Bill Stewart

Bill Stewart
I was motoring towards Faro, Portugal, following buoys upriver. At 1145, I ran ground on a sand spit and couldn't motor off. I attached the anchor to a masthead halyard and rowed it into deeper water to starboard, but it was no use, the tide was falling. As it rose again, water came

up the galley drain so I closed the seacocks. Soon the windows were under water. At 2000 we were almost afloat so I motored ahead but, was soon aground again. So I laid a stern anchor down our track to secure us against the flood. By high tide, at 2200, we scraped off and were guided into the channel by the crew of an anchored yacht. **Lesson learned:** You must have full charts for unfamiliar ports and, as a general rule, always enter them on a rising tide.

Terry Wickens



We were sailing around Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour when we strayed out of the channel and ran hard aground. Friends who were sailing with us in a boat with less draught threw a long line. By attaching the spinnaker halyard they towed us over and into deeper water. They said afterwards that very little effort was needed to heel our boat to 35 degrees. **Lesson learned:** Don't lose concentration in the shallows. If you do, have a good and competent friend around to assist, especially on a falling tide.

Chris Enstone
We went aground on the rocks off Paimpol after confusing a minor channel marker for a main channel one and took a short cut over a rock that would have been awash, had it not been a flat calm day. We eventually motored off.



It can happen to the best navigator, says Chris Enstone

Our 2011 programme of controlled sailing disasters

Over the next 10 months we will be subjecting our Crash Test Boat to a punishing programme of destructive experiments – putting to the test the recommended methods for getting out of trouble after enacting a series of real-life 'controlled' yachting disasters. Here's what we'll be looking at over the next few months

Dismasting

After breaking our mast under sail, we'll test methods of getting rid of the broken spar before it threatens to puncture the hull, then make a jury rig with what's left. We'll also list essential rig checks to keep your rig safe.

Through-hull trouble

Something heavy shifts in an overstuffed locker and a seacock snaps off, or the engine coupling fails and the prop shaft drops out... We'll test old ideas and new kit to find out how to stop a boat sinking. There will also be some maintenance tips to help you spot signs of imminent failure.

Holed below the waterline

There's a thud and the boat groans before sailing on. Within moments the cabin sole is afloat

and you've got a big problem. We'll find out how long it takes to locate the hole and which emergency fixes work best. Plus tips on helpful modifications.

Capsize

Yes, it's rare, but all it takes is the right wave. We'll be capsizing the Crash Test Boat twice to test a variety of devices that will reveal whether the cabin can be made safe or is a hell-hole in the unlikely event of a capsize or knockdown.

Galley and engine fires

We'll test a variety of measures aimed at making sure you can extinguish a fire before you have to abandon ship. We will also look at the most common causes of fire on board and examine the steps you can take to prevent fire breaking out and to stop a small blaze from getting out of control.



We will capsize our test boat to test safety and security in a rollover

Steering failure

We'll be looking at what happens when the steering cables of a wheel-steered boat snap or slip off the quadrant and exploring what you need to do. There will also be advice on tuning and maintaining your steering system.

Gas explosion

When did you last inspect your gas pipes and hoses? We'll find out how much gas makes how big a bang and exactly what it can do to you and your boat. We'll also be testing a range of devices and step-by-step safety procedures.

WE WANT YOUR IDEAS

Have you experienced any of these incidents or know anyone who has? How did it happen? What did you do? Do you have a plan for one of the emergencies above you'd like us to test? Email yachting_monthly@ipcmedia.com or write to: Yachting Monthly Crash Boat Test, IPC Media, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU

Meet the Crash Test Boat team

Our team of testers and consultants have thousands of miles of sailing experience and a host of RYA qualifications, from Yachtmaster Instructor/Examiner to sea survival

Chris Beeson, skipper Over 30 years' sailing, 40,000 ocean miles logged including three Fastnet Races, two Transatlantic crossings, one non-stop Round Britain and Ireland Race. Author of the *Handbook of Survival at Sea*

Graham Snook, staff photographer Over 32 years' sailing experience and more than 10,000 sea miles logged. Has cruised in the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean. Owns a Sadler 32 sloop, *Pixie*.

Andrew Brook, crew Yachting Monthly's Geoff Pack Scholar has sailed for 15 years. Worked on Mediterranean charter yachts: one season instructing with Sunsail, one season as flotilla engineer with Setsail. Two longest passages: Gosport-Corfu (2008), Torquay-La Coruña (2010)

Lester McCarthy, staff photographer 40 years' experience, many extended passages around the UK and Europe. Owned many boats, from a tugboat to a classic wooden Vertue sloop. Currently owns two photo boats, a RIB and a dory.

Simon Jinks, consultant Ran the RYA Yachtmaster programme, navigation and safety courses, now a partner in SeaRegs LLP, specialising in MCA codes, safety management systems, RYA training, accreditation and charter. Used to write Yachting Monthly's Practical Seamanship series

Stuart Carruthers, RYA cruising manager More than 40 years' sailing, thousands of sea miles both as crew and skipper. Cruised extensively, including most of the European

and North Mediterranean coast. Detailed knowledge of the many technical and regulatory issues that affect leisure sailors.

Paul Lees, consultant Founder and principal of Crusader Sails, sailmaking for over 40 years. Veteran of the 1979 Fastnet Race, former skipper of J Class *Velscheda*, highly experienced inshore and offshore racer. Has also been a boatbuilder – 32 boats launched.

Mike Golding, consultant One of the world's top ocean sailors, awarded an OBE in 2007 for his contribution to the sport of sailing. He has sailed singlehanded around the world five times. Once called 'the unluckiest yachtsman in the world', he has been dismasted several times and once lost his keel but still managed to finish the course.

Kieran Flatt, crew YM production editor, former dinghy instructor and sailing school bosun in France and England. Owns a 28ft Twister, *Cleaver II*. 28 years afloat. 5,000 miles as skipper in northern Europe, half of that solo.

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