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Please forward to **Mr Ewen Southby-Tailyour**. Retired Royal Marines Officer.

Dear Mr Southby-Tailyour

I am researching the history of Hurley Marine and wondered if you would be able to help me by answering a couple of quick questions?
I have owned my Hurley 24/70 since 1988 and have read with interest your account of your entry into the Observer Round Britain race of 1974 aboard 'Black Velvet'.

I wonder if you would be kind enough to contact me please. This would be of great interest to our members.

Amongst other things I am trying to find the racing yacht 'Tailwind' One of two 38' racers built by Hurley just before they went bankrupt in 74. The design later became the Swedish Tailwind 32 and 35. The other Hurley 38 'Orangepeel' has been recently restored in Florida.

Plus the history of JOG racing and the involvement in it by SHE prepared Hurley 22s yachts.

Thank you

Yours sincerely

Nick Vass
Vice Chairman, Hurley Owners Association

www.hurleyownersassociation.co.uk

Dear Nick,

I am not sure what it is you want so I am giving you a potted history of *Black Velvet* and you may do what you like with it!

In 1973 Jonathan Mason was the managing director of Hurley's in Plymouth. He was a friend of mine and suggested that Hurley built the smallest boat acceptable for the two handed round Britain race and the single-handed transatlantic race. In those days it was 24 feet.

Black Velvet was built and exhibited at the London boat show in January 1974. She had no engine and extra weight in the keel was made up of heavy chain which could be removed. I regret I cannot remember the weight. I had one large sweep on board with which I could scull her at about 1 1/2 knots - that was all that was needed although in extremis I did have a small dinghy and an even smaller outboard which I could lash alongside and which give us about two knots . I had the fore hatch sealed shut when she was built to ensure that the fore cabin was the one dry place in the boat in bad weather. Not always the case with small boat hatches of that era.

During spring of that year Hurley was taken over by an asset stripper and rumour reached my wife whilst I was in the Mediterranean that they would be taking her back and selling her as an asset. My wife paid a Plymouth crane driver (Millbay Docks) a fiver and had her lifted out onto a Royal Marines lorry (she had chatted up the duty officer) and she was quickly driven into the nearby barracks and hidden until I returned from the Med.

When I did return the asset strippers complained that they couldn't find the boat but as the race was due to start shortly agreed to let her go if we knew where we could find her.

So I sailed in the smallest and only engineless boat in the 1974 two handed Round Britain Race.

As expected we were last into Cork where, because of the IRA threat, all service boats had to anchor off with no crew allowed ashore. Damn silly, as it only marked us out. During this time Clare Francis filled my water tank with Guinness. In fact we did not discover this until after we had sailed for Barra. My crew at this stage had proved totally unsuitable and agreed (it was his idea) that I would do all the sailing during the legs and when ashore he would clean and do all the chores during the compulsory stops. This even meant cooking and washing up every meal and at one stage I was enjoying a drink on another yacht when he rode across, collected me, rowed me back to Back Velvet and then after supper rowed me back to the party. One other competitor was heard to remark that it was nice to see officers still taking their batmen with them to sea!

Off the north-west coast of Ireland we hit a series of northerly gales and my crew had a total, emotional collapse. I decided to turn direct for Plymouth from where I sailed sometime single-handedly to meet the fleet at Lowestoft.

There we met up with one of two others who had retired or had gone through the Caledonian Canal and we invented (with the Royal Western yacht clubs permission) the round South Britain race. Two of us set off but the other retired somewhere along the south coast and I came on single-handed to Plymouth. In the end I had sailed nearly as many miles as if I had gone round the top. We had a spot of bother with the Royal Yacht off Cowes at 0300 when my crew (for about 20 miles) fired a starting cannon at her.

After all that was over black velvet was badly damaged whilst on her mooring by a runaway barge in a gale. Also at that time I received a call from the then, I think, accountant suggesting that if I appeared at a certain pub with £2000 in notes in my pocket then she would be mine. As I had not been allowed to move her despite warning the receiver he agreed for the damage to be paid. It was during that arrangement that this offer was made. I was not sure that it was legal so I telephoned Sir Kenneth Cork (of Cork Gully) himself over the weekend. He was not amused but in the end offered the boat to me for the same amount. As this was a bargain I took it.

I then sailed her extensively around the south coast and out into the Atlantic achieving many more than the average miles for a comparable boat of her size. During the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977 we entered and won the West Country division of the Royal Thames yacht club Silver Jubilee race. We were the smallest boat nationwide and in Plymouth sailed over 100 miles in the 24 hours of non-stop gales while others (everyone larger and some even Royal Navy training vessels) sheltered within Plymouth Sound. We received a very fine engraved decanter.

In about 1980 I had an engine fitted (a Vire of almost a minus amount of horsepower) and then sold her to one my Sergeants at Poole. Almost immediately after the sale she broke her moorings and ended up stranded on the beach at the top end of Poole Harbour. She had not been damaged other than a few minor superficial scratches.

After that I'm afraid I lost touch but did see her for sale at Poole (Cobbs Quay) one or two years ago. I believe the present owner is up for membership of the Royal yacht Squadron: which will make it the second time she has appeared on their lists under two different owners.

And that's about it - except to say that in all the gales that have weathered at sea I was as happy in black velvet as I have been in many much larger vessels; the motion was often uncomfortable of course but we never seemed to be in any danger as she simple rode over everything. she was a cracking little boat in which both my children sailed within days of being born and in which they cut their first nautical teeth.

I am afraid this is slightly in note form but gives the main essence of my time with her. I was sad to see her go but life had to move on as the family grew.

All the very best, Ewen

A Hurley 24, the prototype of the ATLANTA 25 entered the 1974 Round Britain race and although she could not complete the race due to sickness of the crew, she sailed over 2000 miles in 29 days through not less than 5 full gales. The following are various extracts from reports and letters.

From Yachting and Boating Weekly.

The 24/70 which was exhibited at Earl's Court has been entered in the 1974 Observer Round Britain Race by the owner, Captain Ewen Southby-Tailyour, a Royal Marine officer. Named Black Velvet, the Hurley looks like being one of the smallest yachts in the race, and far from being structurally strengthened and modified, the only differences from the standard production boat will be the gimballed cooker and strengthened rigging.

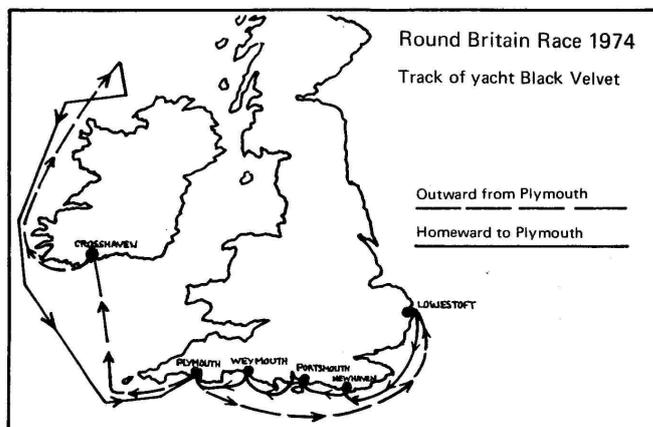
Extract from letter written by
Capt. Ewen Southby-Tailyour—
Royal Marines
Yacht 'Black Velvet'

We had a reasonable run from Plymouth to the first stop in Crosshaven and came in eighth overall on handicap which we reckoned was quite good. Our troubles really started after that although by that time I was becoming concerned about the crew. The second leg took us up the outside of Ireland. After five days of fighting against headwinds we had our first real gale. Luckily it was from the South and so we were able to run before it in the right direction. In fact we achieved the remarkable distance of 102 miles in 24 hours under bare poles and storm jib. All that on only 17½ foot waterline length. After a brief pause of a few hours the wind came round to the North and again blew a gale. This time conditions were more unpleasant as the southerly 15 foot swell had to be reversed into one from the North.

At this stage (only eighty miles from the outer Hebrides) my crew became worse and made it quite clear that even if we were to make Barra he would be unable to continue. We were at that stage, in common with about six other yachts in the area, riding out the new gale in a South-Westerly direction. I decided to head straight for Plymouth and see if I could salvage something from the Race by picking up a new crew and sailing for Lowestoft and entering for the last leg, albeit unofficially.

So I arrived in Plymouth after a non stop voyage of 864 miles in eleven days; single handed for the most of it with a sick crew and through two full Atlantic gales. Throughout the whole of this part of the journey Black Velvet behaved perfectly and at no time did I feel in the slightest concerned for her ability to come through safely. Indeed in the last Race when I took a 50 foot yawl I was more concerned in a gale than ever in Black Velvet. Nor at any one stage did I suffer from a gear failure or breakage; nor have I yet had to pump water from her bilges. To my mind a remarkable performance on her part.

However the saga does not end in Plymouth. Two days after the second leg marathon I sailed from Plymouth with an inexperienced but very keen crew who had been press-ganged at the last minute to help sail her to Lowestoft. He was as sick as the previous man but was able to continue on the 400 miles to the end.



In effect much of this leg was single handed but was achieved without incident and in the excellent time of under three sailing days. On arrival in Lowestoft we found a number of yachts who were still in the race but who considered that the effort of refusing to give up and get to Lowestoft for the final leg was an achievement in itself. There was another yacht called Fidget who also had refused to admit defeat and had come through the Caledonian Canal to take part in the final leg. We decided to race her back to Plymouth.

We sailed from the Royal Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club (having informed the Observer and Royal Western and received their blessing), on the 29th July. The Observer published an article about the yachtsmen who never give up. All was well until a near gale off Beachy Head which delayed us some hours. Eventually it was obvious that we would have to drop my crew at Newhaven and continue down Channel single handed again as time had run out. I could have left the yacht there but the aim of making Plymouth was becoming an obsession as I felt that Black Velvet deserved the credit for sailing over 2,000 miles without herself giving in. So after a stop in Newhaven, I pushed on to Portsmouth in company with Fidget. By this time I was becoming extremely tired as I had been sailing for three weeks without much help and mostly in bad weather. For this reason I managed to pick up a new crew in a two hour stop over in Portsmouth just to take me through the Needles Channel to Weymouth so I could get some little rest before the tiring passage across Lyme Bay in time to meet my self-imposed deadline of 4th August back in Plymouth.

All went well to Weymouth and I sailed alone from there after a one hour stop over. I sailed at three in the afternoon in time to catch the tide around Portland Bill and set off across Lyme Bay in a rising Easterly wind. An Easterly gale hit us at three in the morning and once again we were under bare poles, this time South of Start point light. This lasted about two hours and was really unpleasant although Black Velvet behaved impeccably.

Eventually the weather moderated and

we were able to set a course for Plymouth only to be hit by a second gale this time from the North. However, we managed to arrive off the Yacht Club after 23 hours at the helm and feeling absolutely exhausted, but delighted to have proved that it was the crew and not Black Velvet that had originally pulled out of the race.

The final result was that she had sailed over 2,000 miles (a longer distance than the race) through as many gales as the other competitors, but had suffered no damage and had behaved perfectly.

So to the future. I am very keen to enter her for next year's single handed race to the Azores and back, and even for the next Round Britain.

I hope the above is of interest to you.

Extract from 2nd letter written by Capt. Ewen Southby-Tailyour

... However, one or two interesting facts emerged. On finally arriving in Plymouth the day before yesterday, I had sailed 2,000 miles most of which was in effect single-handed and through no less than five full gales with absolutely no damage or strain to the yacht. One fact that probably attributed to the unfortunate collapse of my crew was the fact that for eight days we had no heating arrangements and so I could only force him to eat the occasional tin of cold rice pudding on the eleven day run from Crosshaven to within eighty miles of Barra and back to Plymouth.

In conclusion it would be unfair to leave out any comment on Black Velvet herself. Under no weather conditions did I feel the slightest bit concerned for her ability to come through. Indeed I felt more concerned during the last Round Britain Race in a gale in the 50ft Yawl I took! I have yet to pump salt water from her bilges. She much preferred the long breaking seas of an Atlantic gale than the short sharp seas of a Channel Force 6. I was able to go to windward in a gale reasonably comfortably under the heavy No.2 Jib and really only used the storm jib if running before a gale to steady her without too much speed if the direction was wrong and the breaking seas just too much for the comfort on the bows. All this on 17½ ft waterline!