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Small boat Round Britain



With the urge to circumnavigate most of the UK mainland, 16 year-old **Jack Daly** found himself a small, affordable boat, fixed her up and got on with it – raising over £5,000 for RYA Sailability along the way. Here he tells the story of his nine-week adventure on board *Padiwak* – his 21ft Corribee.

The 2008 sailing season isn't remembered for good weather with sunshine and steady breezes. Instead, strong winds battered the UK as one low pressure system followed another, bringing unpleasant and unpredictable conditions.

Consequently, it was hardly ideal for sailing singlehanded round Britain to raise money for RYA Sailability, but after 1605M and 44 ports, my 21ft Corribee triumphantly returned to Ramsgate on 23 September.

I started planning some 18 months before leaving. Finding

sponsorship was hard. I sent hundreds of letters and emails off in the hope that they would bring positive results. Most didn't, but the ones that did were promising and as time went on fantastic relationships were built with various organisations supporting the challenge. It wasn't only financial support that sponsors offered, they also provided invaluable and expert advice in their specialist fields.

Then it was time to sort out a boat. I'd read Ellen MacArthur's book, *Taking on the World*, a few years

previously and then had followed Katie Miller's progress, so the Corribee was a possibility from the start. At the time there weren't many boats on the market and the ones that were advertised had either been sold just days before I rang or weren't suitable. One of them, however, ticked most of the boxes. It was a glorious winter's day in Portsmouth when I saw *Padiwak* for the first time. She wasn't all shiny and new and didn't have an amazing array of equipment, but just felt right. Simple and



predominantly southwesterlies, it should mean more downwind sailing and, once round Land's End, it would be a nice run home back to Ramsgate. Sailing the other way round would entail beating to Land's End around some nasty headlands and in some of the busiest shipping areas in the world.

In the spring of 2008, most of the sponsored equipment had been received and installed. It was rather tight with gear arriving only days before she was due to be re-launched and sea trials would be needed to iron out any hiccups, but we did have enough time and the thorough planning really paid off. She was relaunched on 3 May, just over a week before my first GCSE exam. Fortunately I was given a period of 'study leave', so I could go down to work on... sorry, I mean stay at home and study.

Sea trials were completed and before I knew it the start date was approaching. I had chosen 21 June because this was the first day after my last exam, but I eventually delayed a couple of days for better tides across the Thames Estuary.

THE START

On 23 June the day dawned with a fresh westerly breeze, but

sunshine bathed Ramsgate in early morning light. We slowly motored out into a slight swell heading north into the lower reaches of the Thames Estuary, ready for the journey ahead.

The first day's passage was great – with the tide under us we made good time up to the first planned stop, Shotley Point Marina. The wind around the North Foreland was quite strong as it funnelled around the headland, but as the day progressed it started to drop, until I started motoring just outside Harwich. Although I made good time and everything went well I was really tired after the first day.

Throughout the trip we kept a map of the whole of the UK in the support van »

solid, she was the perfect boat to adapt for extended cruising.

Unlike one of the others I looked at, she had twin keels and though I would lose some upwind performance, for a trip round Britain where many of the harbours are shallow and drying, this seemed the more 'user friendly' option.

Conditions for my first sail were perfect: an easterly F4-5 with wall to wall sunshine. It was a great day to put the boat through her paces and she was in her element reaching across the Solent under full canvas with three of us on board. The



Opposite page: In reflective mood with *Padiwak* in Ramsgate just before the trip actually started.
Above top: Crossing the Irish Sea.
Above: *Padiwak* as we found her.

next day she was on a trailer for the trip to Kent.

Just after Easter, *Padiwak* was re-launched and we managed to sail quite a bit exploring the East Coast.

The basic planning was challenging – where exactly to stop over, which way round to go, when to go? I read as much as possible while asking other people for their opinions to make the best choices.

One of the questions I was most frequently asked was: "Why go anti-clockwise?" The reason I'd chosen to go this way was that if we had

CRUISING

and after each day one of my parents would mark where I'd come from and arrived at. After the first few days, the line slowly crept up the East Coast, which was great, but then I looked at what I still had to do and it was easy to get downhearted. Instead of looking at the big picture, I had to look at what we had achieved and just concentrate on getting *Padiwak* to the next

"The motion was violent as the sea built up quickly in the short fetch."

harbour. Shotley, Lowestoft and Wells-next-the-Sea came and went pretty quickly. I was getting the idea of how fantastic the trip was going to be. I was meeting some fantastic people on the way round and, being 'all in the same boat' so to speak, I discovered that sailors tend to help each other out. A prime example of this was when I stopped at the small port of Wells on the north Norfolk coast, which is often left out

of passage plans because the entrance channel dries and you may need to dry out while alongside. After speaking to the Wells Harbour Master I'd intended to leave Lowestoft at 1100 to arrive in Wells at around 2130, anchor outside and wait a couple of hours for the midnight tide. With a good forecast of reasonably light winds it sounded perfect, especially as the HM kindly

said that he would come and guide me in, as he does for all boats. I kept saying "but it will be midnight" and he simply replied: "No problem whatsoever."

So we set off and had a great sail round with a nice SW breeze, until we were off Cromer, where the weather decided to play games. We arrived as planned outside Wells, but instead of light winds we had over 30kn howling through the rigging.

Padiwak was handling the weather with no problem and the anchor seemed to be dug in quite well, but the motion was fairly violent as the sea was building up very quickly in the short fetch it had across the shallow sandbank and into the few metres where we were lying. I was worried that the entrance wouldn't be passable and that I would be here all night waiting for the tide the next day. Then at 2345 Wells' harbour launch radio said "On my way. Be with you shortly." I was amazed that the HM (who is also one of the local RNLi coxwains) came out in his own time on a foul night to guide me in, but this was the level of kindness and generosity I experienced all the time I was there. I couldn't say a bad word about the harbour and would definitely recommend the port to anyone visiting the area.

We progressed up the East Coast to the partly drying ports of Bridlington and Scarborough, before missing Whitby and heading up to

Hartlepool – arriving on the eve of the Maritime Festival. Amble was to be our last English port of call before *Padiwak* entered Scottish waters. We were really making progress, but I would have to deal with difficult harbour entrances if the wind went anywhere in the east, which it inevitably did.

SCOTLAND AT LAST

Again we had a good day travelling from Amble to Eyemouth in the Borders region of Scotland. The weather was overcast at first, but brightened up during the day so that we arrived in Eyemouth in brilliant sunshine. Passing the Farne Islands and Holy Island was great – it's just a shame that I couldn't have stopped off there for a night. The entrance to Eyemouth looks pretty daunting as you approach with waves crashing against the rocks that surround the harbour entrance. As I entered I heard a strange sound like someone exhaling heavily. I



spun round to be confronted by a seal about a foot away, its large black eyes gazing at me. Later I discovered the seals had been living there for about 10 years, probably feeding on the unwanted fish that the fishermen discard. Eyemouth is a beautiful harbour with magnificent views.

My next stop was to be Arbroath, straight across the Firth of Forth. Leaving Eyemouth's rocky entrance was quite worrying, because I hadn't really seen swells this big before. In the Thames we are used to a short, steep chop that can be quite uncomfortable, but these waves were something else. They were very long – we sailed up, over and down them, taking a very long time, whilst periodically losing sight of land. I pretty soon got used to them, however, and it certainly wouldn't be the last time we were to experience swells like them. The passage across the Firth of Forth was great with *Padiwak* really flying on a good NE breeze, so we made good time to Arbroath without problems, despite some reduced visibility.

The weather wasn't too nice for the next couple of days, so I made the decision to stay in Arbroath. I went swimming (in the local pool not the sea) and also had a look around the town. Arbroath has a very interesting museum revealing much of its past history, which would normally go unnoticed. The town is also famous for its 'Smokies' – usually smoked



Opposite page: Mooring on the infamous Loch Ness – Fort Augustus.

Above: *Padiwak* on her road trailer ready for launching, sporting her sponsors' stickers.
Below: Sunrise as we leave Lymington.
Bottom: Fame at last. A TV news interview being filmed on my return.



haddock. Unfortunately, one smoke house is on the harbour wall and when the wind blows the wrong way it filled the boat with a powerful smell of smoked fish.

With a better forecast we sailed on round to Stonehaven, but, like the Wells passage, the weather was disobeying the rules. Coming into Stonehaven with gale force gusts on the nose wasn't too pleasant and at one point I was really thinking "What am I doing out here?", but once inside the harbour, which is set back into the cliffs, we were welcomed by bagpipes, echoing off the surrounding rock face. To be honest, I wouldn't have left Arbroath if I had known what the weather was really going to be like for the passage. I did check numerous weather sites on my laptop before departing, but the weather changed so quickly.

Stonehaven was beautiful and, being festival time, I didn't really want to leave, but I had to go as soon as the weather cleared. Besides, we had a wonderful sail to Peterhead (aka the 'Blue Toon') thanks to a steady SE breeze. The scenery on the way up changed from high clifftops to the busy commercial port of Aberdeen – now one of the biggest ports on the East Coast for oil rig supply vessels. Peterhead Bay Marina is very comfortable and probably the best place to wait out the weather before going round

Rattray Head, which, in the wrong conditions, can be a very rough stretch of water – particularly in wind over tide conditions.

We finally arrived in Whitehills after being stuck in Peterhead for four days due to bad weather. Today it was perfect to get round Rattray Head and start heading into the Moray Firth. As I left the unusually windless Peterhead I saw numerous dolphins. I snapped away with the camera, but they seemed not to want to be photographed, so I ended up with lots of pictures of empty sea.

Whitehills is a lovely harbour that was turned into a marina a few years ago. From the sea it is quite hard to spot, but once in sight its small, 9m wide entrance was easy enough to navigate. Both assistant Harbour Masters were very helpful, especially in recounting all of the local takeaway numbers off the tops of their heads.

Another good day allowed us to reach Lossiemouth, although most of it was under engine after the wind dropped off to nothing. The coastline is beautiful and it would have been great to call in at some of the smaller harbours like Portknockie, if I'd had the time. As I approached, I saw another Corribee, *Bootneck*, sailing along parallel with me. It was great to meet her owners who were as passionate as me about their Corribee.

Northerly gales kept us in »

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