

Lymington team grab the Poole to Cherbourg World Record.

The family were wandering around in Cowes in 2010 after the Cowes-Torquay-Cowes race when Dave announced, "I've just realised that there is no World Record for the Poole to Cherbourg course". A bit of investigation proved Dave was exactly right and the idea then rattled around in our heads for almost a year until Mike's wife Maggie heard one of her favourite tunes on the radio and said "Look guys, either stop daydreaming about this, or do it!" (The tune? The Monkees and Daydream Believer).

Team Hot Lemon were ready for a challenge in 2011 and we quickly organised scrutineering by the RYA and completed the mountains of paperwork needed to obtain the necessary permissions. Bob and Sharon Eddings from the Royal Motor Yacht Club in Poole kindly agreed to be the official timekeepers in their RIB Foxfire at the start line in Poole Bay and Chris Strickland was accompanied in his RIB Seahound by experienced power boater Russell Gould to be the official timekeepers in Cherbourg.

Weather is everything for these Record attempts, it is more important than the boat, the crew and almost everything else so we waited several months to find just the right conditions; in the event, although the sea was reasonably smooth, the wind was from the wrong direction blowing from the South but as it was only 10-12 knots we decided to run as that force of wind would make almost no difference to Hot Lemon because of the tremendous torque from her diesel engines.

Dave's wife Wendy had already earned her stripes as a part of team Hot Lemon as she had accompanied us in a number of RIB races and we were delighted to welcome her on board as a very competent member of the team.

On Friday 30th September, Bob & Sharon timed Hot Lemon away at 10.52.54 hours using an Oregon Scientific Radio Controlled Clock; the first twenty miles were delightfully flat calm and we were able to run at close to our top speed of 60 knots. As we lost sight of the Purbeck Hills the lazy long swell increased to about 1 metre and our driver Dave needed to swing us across the face of the advancing seas so as to keep Hot Lemon from launching off the top of the swell. We were still making good time but had reduced speed to about 55 knots to keep our propellers in the water and obtain constant drive; taking across the swell slightly increased the distance but as there was no existing time for this Record we weren't at all bothered, we just wanted to get there and set the first World Record.

Dave needed to alter course a few times in order to correctly run under the stern of passing ship traffic and this also increased the distance a little but we were determined to abide by IRPCS (the International Regulations for the Prevention of Collision at Sea) and to maintain a track at right angles to the shipping lanes.

Before leaving Poole we had made mobile phone contact with Chris and Russell in Seahound as they had arrived in Cherbourg the night before so as to make preparations; they told us they had enjoyed a 'really good evening' at the Café de Paris, which is our favourite cafe on the Cherbourg quayside, we hoped the 'good evening' wouldn't affect the time keeping! Approximately 60 minutes out of Poole we were able to make out the French coast in slight mist, conversation dried up as tension mounted ... would we run into a discarded net, would we suffer mechanical problems, would Seahound be ready for us...

YES, it all worked fine and we slowed some distance offshore so as to pass through the Western entrance at less than the outer harbour (the Grande Rade) speed limit of 14 knots which then reduces to 8 knots in the inner harbour (the Petite Rade) and to 3 knots in the marina. Now it was our turn to 'have a good time' and Team Hot Lemon accompanied Team Seahound back to the Café de Paris for a celebration. If you're ever going to Cherbourg we'd strongly recommend this

restaurant, it is reckoned to be the best in Cherbourg, really delightful folk and delicious food, have a look at www.restaurantcafedeparis.com and check on Google, they really are the tops.

It was possibly the glass of vino which then gave us the idea to attempt to set an even faster time on our return run to Poole and, as we had already informed the RYA, we only needed to notify and position the timekeepers in Cherbourg and Poole before setting off once again. Seahound timed us out of the Western Entrance at 12 knots before we then accelerated up to more than 60 knots as Hot Lemon was now lighter on fuel and we had a gentle force 12 knot breeze directly behind us.

The crossing went well and we had no need to divert from our rhumb line as there was little traffic in the shipping lanes and as we closed to some ten miles from the UK coast we were several minutes ahead of our previous time, then ... *trouble* with a capital T. A bilge alarm sounded, we slowed and noticed thick black smoke from our exhausts as the engines laboured, we lifted the engine bay hatch and looked at several inches of water, ah!- that doesn't look like Record breaking stuff. Our three bilge pumps were not quite coping with the inflow but Dave leapt into action with the reserve manual pump and stemmed the flow, Wendy also set to with our bucket and things were quickly stabilised. A radio call to the Coastguard resulted in the 25 knot Swanage D Class ILB "Jack Cleare" being alongside in only a few minutes shortly to be followed by the 16 knot Swanage 'Big Daddy' all weather lifeboat the Mersey Class "Robert Charles Brown". Our Poole timekeeping team of Bob and Sharon Eddings were also alongside as were Chris and Russell in Seahound together with several dive boats and other craft which had heard our call to the Coastguard, quite a fleet of spectators watching us pump and bail, Mike's comment 'it's good exercise for you Dave' didn't seem to go down too well as I found myself overseeing matters from the helm position ... both we and the very helpful RNLI mechanic tried to find the source of the leak but couldn't so a large pump was transferred from the 'RCB' and quickly emptied the remaining water.

In the meantime, Mike made a slightly humorous mobile phone call to James Sydenham the Manager at Salterns Marina in Poole Harbour; the call was along the lines of... 'Hi James, you remember that in 1992 you kindly turned out in the middle of the night to lift my overturned RIB Rhubarb from the water, how would you like to do that again, it's a little easier this time as we're still the right way up! The folk at Salterns are always extremely helpful and even though it was after hours on a Friday, James quickly assembled his team and he was at the controls of their 45 tonne Travel Hoist to pluck Hot Lemon from the water immediately we arrived, thanks (again) James, I'll try not to do this a 3rd time. (for detail of that earlier event click into Racing Articles on this website).

Team Hot Lemon & Team Seahound then repaired to the excellent Salterns Hotel for a noggin or two and mugs of hot chocolate before returning in Seahound to Lymington where Mike accidentally slipped off Seahound's wet tubes into the water whilst securing a line; fortunately he was still wearing my flotation suit but with iPhone and electronic car keys in an outside pocket....

So, a World Record, a good lunch, a rescue by the RNLI, a very soggy end to the day and a call to my long suffering wife Maggie for a lift home.

PS: we found that one of the rubber bellows on an outdrive leg had failed big time and we then had a 100mm opening to the sea, that needs quite a bit of pumping! We have now fitted two gastight valves before our water strainers so that we can use 600hp of pumping if this ever happens again.

Dave, Wendy and Mike Deacon