

A season blighted with failures

Our Covid year had good news and bad news. The good being that I am pretty sure I got Covid in early February, but I didn't connect my symptoms with what was going on in China and then Italy. The other good news was that after much bad timing, we did get some quite good local sails in the Solent in the autumn and even escaped the ditch a couple of times. So, now the bad news which is always more 'interesting' and 'instructive' ?

What a surprise. Blighted by Bad Timing, the mal-de-yotti perennial condition. The gaps between Lockdown 1 and 2 were systematically filled with poor weather, work, collision, gear failure and the cancellation of the Lymington-Yarmouth ferry service resulting in my taking to paddling to and from my Moody 36, Joanna, in my rather short and therefore worryingly slow, whitewater kayak. On one occasion due the waveset a mile off Yarmouth, missing it entirely and having to paddle back up from almost Fort Victoria. Better than the Azores I guess, but still quite tiring.

No doubt you want to hear about the collision from the list above, but that was only notable in that Joanna was hit by a manoeuvring yacht in the marina and the mortified owner fessed up immediately.

Force 4, Solent: Pulling in the inhaul of my in-mast furling Maxiroach, the line came clear out of the drum. No worries though as the sail was furled. River Beaulieu southern end pontoon, broadside to the wind: I rotate the drum three turns in an attempt to re-attach the inhaul and ensure it had a few turns that would purchase on the drum when the sail was fully furled. Three turns and a gusting force 4 plus is just what it took to rip the whole sail out, boom swinging violently over the pontoon, boat heeled over, sail thrashing. I tried to lasso it with a line, but it was just too ferocious. So, I yanked out the vertical battens and dropped the sail. So, so predictable. Am I really still on dumb learning curves? Motored back to Yarmouth.

On restoring the rig, I found that the line had failed where the securing grub screw held the line in the drum. I hoisted the sail, furled it and it jammed. The only thing that worked was to rotate the lower end of the drum assisted by levering with a screwdriver. Then it jammed again with visible pleats about 2/3 of the way up the slot. More screwdriver levering. At which point I noticed that the lower bearing holder edges were shattered allowing the drum to orbit when being rotated, especially with the outwards pull of the inhaul. Ball bearings had also dropped down and jammed between the holder body and the spar. I removed the drum to show total lower bearing cup failure.

A quick look at Maxiroach online told me that they had gone out of business some time ago and that the fittings were not generic. So, I rang my go-to, Allspars of Plymouth. Within 10 days they had a new lower bearing holder lathed from Delrin and supplied replacement Delrin ball bearings which I collected from their Swanwick office with the assurance that if that didn't sort it, they would stick with me until it had been. Superb service and a very sensible price. I fitted it and bingo. Solved.

Add a slight overheating of my Beta 43 at max revs to the seasons equation caused by a one third blocked heat exchanger stack and on reassembly, a snapped phosphor bronze retaining bolt, and there you have one Moody 36 spending most of 2020 as a rather lovely floating caravan in the rather lovely Yarmouth. Ce la vie!