

At 10.30p.m. on May 10, three days out of Suva, Fiji, bound for Port Moresby, Chidiock Tichborne struck a submerged object, pitchpoled, lost her mizzen mast and was completely swamped. My last bucket was lost, two other buckets had been lost since leaving Suva. All were tied on, but pulled out of their handles. The jib and main were ripped, and the new sails lost before they could be bent on.

All attempts to bail with pots, bags, and ultimately a plate, were unsuccessful, even when I later fothered a tarp beneath the hull; and I had to live in the inflatable dinghy tied to Chidiock, which of course did not sink although she remained gunnel deep in the water, for 14 days while we drifted 300 miles to the New Hebrides.

On May 24 I was able to row the dinghy across the reef and land at Emae Island. Chidiock drifted ashore that night. She flipped in the surf on the reef and incredibly suffered no hull damage whatsoever. Not even a scratch. It is incredible that Chidiock has not just survived but that from the gunnel down, she is completely sound.

Webb Chiles.
July 1980.



**Chidiock Tichborne
is a Drascombe Lugger.**

Drascombes are tough, Webb Chiles has proved it.

Round the world single handed.

Webb Chiles has proved himself to be a man with amazing courage and nerves of steel but above all he is tough and durable. His Drascombe Lugger has proved itself equally tough and durable in the most extreme conditions man and boat could ever face.

Webb Chiles is no ordinary sailor, he is not even an ordinary fanatical sailor, but a man who has accepted the truth about himself, who has taken a long hard look at himself and recognised that life for him has no meaning unless he is defying the elements in a sailing boat to get to paradise, which for him is freedom.

Six weeks after spending 300 days alone in a 37ft. boat sailing round the world, he suddenly faced up to the fact that the executive life was not for him and that what he really wanted was to anchor 'out there' off some lovely island. He has written about that moment of decision *"the solution was simply to reaffirm a decision made years ago. A decision setting personal freedom far above all other values. And if money is an unfortunate necessity for those of us to whom 'freedom' means 'boat' then I could be free again - sooner - not by making more money, but by opting for less boat"*

Having made an equally close study of his finances he allocated £2,500 for the boat and £1,500 for fitting out.

His choice fell on an 18ft. Drascombe Lugger, a glassfibre and teak boat built in Totnes, Devon by Honnor Marine and a popular boat for day sailing all over the world with a well earned reputation for toughness and seaworthiness. Even so it was with some surprise that Honnor Marine learned of the voyage that Webb planned. The boat supplied to him was a standard boat with one or two small modifications.

On November 12th, 1978 he left San Diego in poor weather which stayed unexpectedly cold for the first week before turning into a storm which lasted for 12 days. 12 consecutive days and nights of rain, at times continuous, at others in squalls and never a significant pause.



The durable duo - Webb Chiles in Chidioc.

In his account of the voyage, published by Sail Magazine, Webb explains that distress from a storm in any boat but particularly an open one comes as much from duration as intensity and whereas most storms only last three or four days this one lasted an agonising 12 days. His only protection, if you can call it that was the foul weather gear he was wearing and a tarpaulin under which he used to slide as he puts it *"like some dreadful insect retiring into its slimy cocoon"*. He lay beside the centreboard night after night from where he could reach the tiller and all the sheets, see the compass by raising his head and pump the bilge, unaware of sleeping until at 0300 on the eighth night he experienced a small drama with the tarpaulin which momentarily seemed to be suffocating him.

His irrational reaction was to open the first can his hands came upon in the dark. It turned out to be a lemon cake which the rain turned into pudding before he could get a second mouthful. After the rain came squalls and a freak wave which took him by surprise while his attention was concentrated on calculations. It laid the lugger on her side and threw him and much of his equipment overboard. From the water he watched as she righted herself before scrambling back on board to start bailing furiously. It was at this point he says that a sentence from the owners manual flashed through his mind. It was something to the effect that, although a Drascombe Lugger has sufficient flotation to prevent her from sinking, it is rarely possible for the crew to pump out a completely swamped boat. It took him 45 minutes to win the battle.

Two days after this event the mizzen mast collar broke and it toppled, only to be jury rigged in five minutes.

Amazingly this was the only breakage



The Idyll that makes it worthwhile in Bora Bora.

anywhere on the boat during the voyage. One of the serious losses from the capsize was the toilet paper. The Nautical Almanac provided the solution. Webb points out how fortunate it was that his voyage took place at the end of the year and was quite fast so that at the end of the trip the Almanac had only been eroded to late July. Even after the storm had finished the normally ever present N.E. trade winds did not materialise. With his stove out of action he had to improvise a non cooking diet but stayed in good health.

The last week at sea was *"an absolutely incredible week of sailing in the S.E. trades"* during which he covered 850 miles including one day's run of 146 miles.

Now it was calm, sunny and warm and he arrived in the Marquesas on December 18th, 1978 after 34 days of sailing and only five days after two 40 footers who left at the same time. Neither the sailor nor the boat were found wanting during this amazing voyage.

On January 2nd 1979, unable to replace in Nuku Hiva many of the items lost or damaged, Webb set sail again for Tahiti. An uneventful passage was anticipated and experienced until on Friday January 12th he hove-to 6 miles from Papeete harbour Tahiti, expecting to enter in daylight next morning. Instead, he began a hair raising experience in continuous, violent storms bringing countless swampings.

Just one sentence from his account published in Sail Magazine USA, demonstrates the Luggers seaworthiness *"once when the jib sheet jammed we reached a new high water mark, one from which I feared we could not recover - yet recover we did and I have still to discover what the builders consider to be a fully swamped boat, though God knows I have tried"*

This voyage ended with 35 continuous hours at the tiller before he finally made Papeete harbour at 4 pm on Tuesday Jan 16th.

The photograph over the page was taken by Webb Chiles during his 14 days drift to the New Hebrides from where he will continue his voyage. *"I have every confidence in Chidioc, perhaps even more now than in the past"* he has written from the New Hebrides.



The morning after, Emae Island, The locals don't believe it.

The Drascombe Formula

All Drascombe boats are designed to give the same satisfaction to their owners.

Few will want to follow in Webb Chiles footsteps but all can take comfort from the knowledge that they are equal to the worst possible conditions, and very practical sailing boats.

Drascombe boats give you more pleasure per foot.



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Honor Marine (Totnes) Ltd.,
Seymour Wharf,
Totnes, Devon, England.
Telephone: (0803) 862228

or in the U.S.A.
MAINE MARINE CORP.
Route 32,
Waldoboro, Maine 04572.
Telephone: (207) 832-5323.