

A Kiwi Shout Welcomes Man Who Beat the Sea

Three months of solitary struggle for Kerikeri orchardist Gerry Clark ended at the weekend when his battered yacht was hailed by a fellow New Zealander off Fremantle.

From John Roberson
In Fremantle

The voice was that of one of the New Zealand America's Cup Challenge team, but in the support boat to check on the strange rig battling towards the shore.

Last night a grateful Mr Clark, whose 10.5m yacht *Towara* had been rolled over five times on the leg from the Kerguelen Islands in the Southern Indian Ocean, was being wine and dined by the team.

He recalled that there were times when he considered stepping over the side of the boat to end it all.

But he decided it was his duty to stay alive: "I owed it to my family."

Mr Clark's saga of survival began just after last Christmas while on his three-year voyage which included studying bird life in the Antarctic.

Dismasted

Out of Cape Town and heading for New Zealand, the boat was dismasted.

Mr Clark and his two crew members managed to get to Marilon Island under jury rig.

It was there that the crew decided to stay to await a passage back to Cape Town.

But for Gerry Clark, the thought of abandoning his boat that had taken him seven years to build was out of the question.

So he improved his jury rig and set off to complete the trip alone.

His next stop was at Crozet Island, and then it was on to Kerguelen.

From there he intended to head for Macquarie Island and then on to New Zealand.

Forced

But he was forced to make a landfall at Macdonald Island, where he spent one night before sailing on the next day to Heard Island in search of materials to repair the self-

of canvas, enough to make rough repairs.

On April 15 he set out for Macquarie Island.

Four days later he was hit by the first of two storms. The boat rolled twice, sweeping away the jury rig.

Five days later the second storm came, this time rolling the yacht three times.

The engine was useless and the jury rig was now only a 3-metre piece of wood and the scrap of old canvas.

South

Without the engine there was no way to charge the batteries, so Mr Clark was reduced to the use of a small kerosene lamp for light.

There was no radio, or navigation aids.

He realised that it would be a long time before he reached any land, wherever it might be.

The fear of arriving on a lee shore with a rig that would not take a boat to windward was also a problem.

Although he had changed his plans and was trying to



lighthouse about 15 miles off Fremantle.

It was not until 10 am on Friday that he found his way around Rottnest and its reefs.

Then, the best thing of all, that welcome Kiwi voice.

The New Zealand support boat skipper had seen the strange rig and had gone to investigate.

He found a very relieved Gerry Clark eager to get ashore.

A Customs boat arrived to escort the crippled ship into the safety of the marina.

Expatriate Kiwis are great supporters of their countrymen, and since his arrival, Gerry Clark has been greeted by a never-ending stream of Kiwi well-wishers.

Hoarse

And having not spoken to anyone for three months, he is hoarse from talking.

His plans now?

Well, he still wants to get his boat home. He will have the engine repaired in Fremantle and, with the help of the America's Cup crew — hopes to put an efficient jury rig in the boat.

His wife is trying to find a crew to help him finish the journey.

head for Western Australia, the wind kept forcing him further south.

Even when he managed to claw his way northwards, off the coast of Australia, his problems were not over.

On June 17 he was just 98 miles off Fremantle. But two days later, easterly winds had blown him 200 miles offshore.

When the westerlies did arrive, to blow him towards Fremantle, he was again faced with the problems of arriving on a lee shore.

His first sight of land was at 5.30 am on June 26 when he saw the Rottnest Island

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