

Tobermory, the C&C 24 skippered by Ross MacLennan of RBYC completed its second trip to the north end of Last Mountain Lake and back (circumnavigation) August 21 and 22, 2001.

The first trip occurred in the first week of July, 2000 under nearly perfect winds from the west allowing fast sailing both north and south with few tacks and moderate waves. The 2001 trip was much different and tougher.

On Tuesday August 21, the winds were from the south or southeast but light to very light. Tobermory with regular crew, Ruel Gilchrist and Don White, left RBYC about 11 am but after slow sailing ran out of wind between Kedleston and Grand View Beach. It was decided to motor as far as Rowan's Ravine and if necessary stay the night, but shortly after the Stone Barn bay the wind picked up and we sailed for the remainder of the day. Similarly, to the 2000 trip a short stop at Rowan's was followed by a great late afternoon and evening sail, ending at Etter's beach for a night of swinging on the hook.

The last 2 hours of the 21st featured unique sailing. The lake was absolutely like glass, not a ripple. Dead calm you say? No! Tobermory, with Ruel at the helm, was gliding along at a steady 5 knots under the 170 genoa. It seemed as if the breeze was coming off the land and skimming several feet above the water and the boat was just gliding through the warm evening.

An early start on Wed. the 22nd saw Tobermory go further north to the Last Mountain Lake Regional Park at Govan. Because the high wind and rocks made the skipper turn around about a mile from the park in 2000, it was necessary to go as far north as reasonable this year. That turned out to be to the last (furthest north) house in the park. Following the map we headed for the island just south west of the park but got a bit too close to it and hit the soft bottom twice. We quickly headed east to the middle of the channel and continued north until we hit bottom again off of the last house. That was the signal to head back. As we left the shallow area at the north end, the wind began to pick up coming more from the south than the southeast. In other words we had nothing to look forward to except, almost 50 miles of beating into a head wind and ever increasing waves.

After downsizing to the mylar 150, good progress was made and we had lunch in the shelter of Big Arm or Liberty arm where Triple T resort is located. As the wind strengthened we downsized to the 140 but after a few hours of minimal progress we realized that the sail was essentially blown out or stretched and we weren't making much progress.

After going to the 90% blade, the speed picked up and after a real tough afternoon of beating into big waves we arrived at Rowan's Ravine about 5pm. The only incident was getting too close to the west shore on one tack and once again hitting the gravel bottom just as we tacked. By this time the crew and skipper were tired and the thought of beating into the wind and waves all evening and part of the night, seemed a bit too much, especially for the crew who for some reason had not slept much (any) the night before. The rumor was that someone had snored all night keeping everyone awake. As skipper I could not confirm these rumors since I slept fine but to quote Don White, "Ross, as a fireman for 30 years, I have slept in the same room with hundreds of men. After last night's performance I would rate you number 2 for snoring". I'm sure with a little practice I can go for number one next year.

Never the less, to give the crew a chance to snooze and to take a break from continually beating and tacking we motored from Rowan's almost to Pelican Point before putting up the sails for the final leg. There was some regret about motoring because in 2000 every foot of the trip was done under sail, but this was a cruising trip and some motoring is allowed when cruising?

Under increasing winds caused by an approaching storm we sailed into RBYC about 8:30 pm August 22nd, tired but with a feeling of accomplishment.

Ross MacLennan