Bon Voyage to the Womble
The Mathews Yacht Club hosts the Ocean Cruising Club as Womble prepares to set sail for Halifax, Nova Scotia.

In May twenty Ocean Cruising Club members, several also members of MYC, met for breakfast. Will and Martha Story, Port Officers Deltaville/Mathews organized it to send off our member John van Schalkwyk, Port Officer Halifax, as he prepared to sail eight hundred miles back to Nova Scotia. He left on May 27th and safely arrived home on June 2nd. John documented how the trip originated, and what went into the preparation of Womble for the passage. Part One of his story follows.

John van Schalkwyk, way at the end of the table (under the arrow), is joined by too many friends and club members to name here. A few of the principals, however, are: Angelique Enneking (foreground), former owner of the now newly named Womble; Dave Mackay (left), the new owner; Gord Read (second on the left), crewman and recent OCC member.
The passage from southern Chesapeake to Halifax began with a February e-mail from Bob and Angelique Crampton in the Chesapeake: “[BEACH BUM] is going to a wonderful family whom we know will look after her…They are almost your neighbours we believe…” I called the new owners, Dave, Aine and son Ben Mackey, who live about 25 minutes from us here in Nova Scotia. I introduced myself. Dave was debating whether to truck or sail the boat to Nova Scotia. I offered to crew and in time Dave made the decision to sail her. Shortly after, Sid Shaw, who is organizing the OCC mentoring program in North America, e-mailed us that he had been contacted by Gord Read in Ottawa. Gord had joined the OCC looking for offshore experience. Dave and Gord spoke; we would be a crew of three.

In April Dave and family drove to the Chesapeake and spent a week getting the boat ready. Her new name would be WOMBLE, named by young Ben after the English children’s character, a name that is both a noun and a verb:

Definition of **Womble**

*noun*

• a fictional animal inhabiting Wimbledon Common in London, characterized as clearing up litter.

*verb*

(womble) [no object, with adverbial of direction] informal

• wander in a casual or relaxed way: once we’d arrived back in Cambridge, we wombled quietly home

WOMBLE is a Via 42 built in aluminum in France in 1985. She is cutter rigged with two centerboards, one fore and one aft. Boards up she draws about 3 ft. and down almost 7 ft.
Saturday, May 18:

Dave and I flew from Halifax and Gord from Ottawa to Richmond, VA. Dinner chez Bob and Angelique. Dave and Gord slept aboard on the hard, I at Bob and Angelique’s.

Sunday-Thursday, May 19-23:

On Monday WOMBLE went overboard after Dave spent several hours in a skiff with her in the slings above him, working on freeing the two center boards. Once in the water we raised the boards but could not get the aft board down again. We motored 10 minutes across the harbour to a borrowed slip at the Urbanna Harbor Marina.

On Tuesday I moved aboard. I drove to Richmond to pick up our 3 new big 12 volt batteries. Dave ‘walked’ up the mast to repair the broken anchor/tri light and replace the broken VHF antenna. Problems.

Wednesday we did a food shop at Food Lion and Walmart. Then a second trip to Walmart. We worked on getting the SSB radio to transmit. Dick Graziano came to check the radio. Not promising. I have set up a radio schedule for every afternoon when we are underway with Erik.
Hein/VE1JEH in Nova Scotia. Erik will follow our passage and keep our wives informed. We also need the radio to receive the offshore weather forecasts.

Thursday we tried again to lower the boards, even trying to hammer down the pistons. No go. We took her out for our first sail. She sailed well on full main and full 130 genny. The genny furled nicely. The slab reefing worked well though the jam locks at the forward end of the boom needed some coaxing. Approaching the slip the low oil pressure buzzer came on and the engine lost power. We let her drift gently along side the long pump-out float. When we started the engine it ran well again. Back into our slip. Tim Scheid came down and dove on the boards. He got them down (forward board all the way down and aft 75% down) and we decided to leave them in those positions.

Gord, Tim & Dave. The boards are down.

During these 5 days we had been watching the offshore weather. The forecasts were calling for NW winds 10 to 20 (i.e. on the nose for us) with NW 35 off of Cape May on Saturday. The first southerly winds would not be until late Monday afternoon and those would be light. So even if we
were ready to go we still would have to wait for weather.

Friday, May 24:

The alternator does not work. The backup alternator does not work. Will and Martha Story took us to lunch and Will found (on his new smart phone) a portable 800 watt 2-stroke gas generator on sale. We drove to Newport News to buy it after first looking at Walmart, Home Depot and Lowes.

Saturday, May 25:

We bought a bottle of rum to give to Clyde as thanks for his letting us use his slip at the marina. Gord and I returned the rental car to Enterprise in Gloucester. Bob Crampton picked us up at Enterprise and drove us back. Bob said goodbye and wished us a safe passage. BEACH BUM, now WOMBLE, was leaving her faithful owner after 27 years.

Back aboard Dave ‘walked’ up the mast, repaired the VHF antenna and installed a new wind speed/direction indicator. We could not get the parts to repair the broken anchor/trilight. He was aloft 1 hour and 45 minutes.

Dinner at the local Café and then to bed. We planned to leave early in the morning, motorsailing S to Queens Creek in Mathews to lie on Chris and Bill Burry’s dock, to arrive at about high water. We had decided to go S down the Chesapeake and exit between Cape Charles and Cape Henry, then sail the rhumb line to Halifax.
Dave aloft
Sunday, May 26:
“0545  We’re up.  Sunny, clear and light from the W.
0625  Off the float.  Motor hesitated.  Dave pumped the primer pump.  
23 miles to Queens Creek.
0715  Genny out.  Motorsailing.  7.5 knots.”

Chris and Bill Burry had offered dockage and to take a look at our SSB radio.  Because there had been strong NW winds for almost a week, the low tide was well below normal and even though we were coming in at high, 
they were worried about the depth in the creek.  They came out in their run- 
about to guide us in.  At 1030 we were at their dock.

On the way down the Chesapeake the engine had hesitated several times and 
we opened the engine hatch (the sole of the cockpit) so Dave could pump the 
primer pump.  We had to fix this.  At the Burry’s dock Dave and Gord 
worked on the engine; there was a fine fuel leak at the pump.  Dave 
tightened down the top.  Bill and I worked on the SSB and tuner.  It was 
clear that the radio/tuner setup was not working.  Chris loaned us her Dad’s 
radio and another manual tuner, and Bill walked me through the fine art of 
manually tuning.  Chris served lunch on their deck.  By 4pm both engine and 
radio were working.  I called Erik, our Nova Scotia contact, first on the 
phone and then on the radio.  Good contact.

In the late afternoon the tide was extremely low and we were sitting on the 
bottom.  Our forward board remained down but the after board now came 
half way up.  We left it there for the entire passage.
Bill and Chris Sunday afternoon when almost all systems seemed to be working.

Our 7 day forecast was excellent. Winds would be S to SW or S to SE 10 to 20 possibly building to 15 to 25 farther offshore. Maximum seas would be 5 to 9 ft. In short, the wind would be ‘up our skirts’, blowing us home. This after almost a week of strong NW’lies. We were ready to go.

More to follow....