

## A very big bang at Bough Beech

*Chris Bell, 21275, tells the tale of a nasty incident that, fortunately, had a happy ending*

Millennium Series event number 1, May Bank Holiday, at Bough Beech. Monday was bright, windy, F4, ideal sailing day. Great sailing and competition with the mid fleet constantly changing places. It was tiring sailing four races, two sets back-to-back, but most exhilarating and enjoyable – just what the Laser 2000 was designed for.

Having completed the day's racing and staying the right way up, with lots of encouragement from the helm for the crew to hike harder, we were both very tired. Making our way back to the slipways we discussed what our various jobs were in order to pack the boat up on to the road trailer for the journey home. We did not really take much notice of the prevailing wind conditions – F4ish – or some of the other Laser 2ks dropping their mainsails before making their way in.

We had a plan, one I am sure many use. Sail in, slow down, crew hops out, holds the boat whilst the helm does his bit with that flappy thing at the end of the boat. Fetch the trolley, etc. So here I am holding the starboard shroud. Tom jumps out on the port side, gets hold of the boat – "I'll get the trolley!" – typical response "Yeah!". Just as I am about five metres away the boat swings round, followed by the main – Bang! – the loudest bang heard all day. (The Hulleys heard it across the other side of Bough Beech.)

I look round and Tom is lying face down in the water, not moving. I send up a big shout "help". Other sailors drop what they are doing and come running. Pick Tom up out of the water, he's holding his head, dazed, not sure what day of the week it is.

Make a quick assessment, look at his head and face. What's the damage? What did he hit? Fortunately good initial signs – no floods of blood, shape of the head looks OK, and he is smiling, talking and responding. A very large lump develops on the right side of his forehead, blood from his mouth, chipped front teeth. Fortunately one of the Laser sailors is a doctor and gives some very useful advice. Tom visits our local hospital that evening and he checks out OK. I am just left with the difficult bit of explaining to his Mum what had happened to her precious son.

On inspecting the boom, as you can see from the picture, not only was it buckled, but it was also bent – new boom required. Insurance claim! Fortunately, Duncan, one of the Laser reps was competing. I spoke to him and gave details – Noble is the insurer, "no problem" was the reply. "Call Noble first thing Tuesday morning and they will sort you out."



This I did, filled in the on-line claim form and heard back from Noble later the same day. Laser Direct called me to enquire after Tom and to let me know they were aware of what had happened. I required a new boom and Noble's authority to proceed with the claim was emailed to Laser. I paid the £50 excess by card to Laser. The new boom arrived on Friday morning.

What an incredibly easy and efficient claims procedure. If anyone bemoans paying the premium, as with any insurance policy, it is only when claiming that this can be appreciated.

"The Boom" has been cut down and mounted to make a Laser 2000 trophy. Following discussion with John Cox and Trevor Bradley, this was presented at the Inlands to the Boswells, as an annual prize known as the Bell Boom for the last boat recording finishes in all races, to give encouragement to those further down the fleet who work even harder than those at the front, just to finish.

A big lesson to take away from all of this – you may be tired, but seamanship still counts – on a lee shore, drop the mainsail before landing – avoid avoidable accidents.

Tom's still sailing, so it must have done him some good as he came away with first youth helm at the Inlands.