

## Blown Ashore by Hurricane Earl

This is the account of how we survived being blown ashore and near loss of Easy Go.

It is hard to determine all the causes of a shipwreck. There is usually no one cause but a series of events that accumulate quickly and ultimately end up with damage or loss of the boat.

On Saturday September 4, 2010 at about 3:00 PM ADT Easy Go was blown ashore by Hurricane Earl at River Bourgeois on Cape Breton Island Nova Scotia. Kathy and I were aboard and fortunately no one was injured and the boat was refloated on the high tide on Sunday evening with the assistance of the great people of River Bourgeois. Both the rudder and the keel have been damaged. Easy Go will need to be removed from the water for repairs.



We spent a couple of weeks in Newfoundland in the Burgeo area exploring a few anchorages and enjoying the rugged beauty of “The Rock”. With a good weather report we headed towards Cape Breton Island and after a day at sea we heard that Hurricane Danielle was going to pass by although a safe distance to the southeast over the Grand Banks. She was making some good size swells slowing progress. Two days later Earl made his appearance on the weather forecasts and we were still two days out. Large swells from the south and a head wind made for slow going as we buried the bows and slogged along beating against the southwest wind for two days. We became concerned that we would not make it to a safe harbour before Earl blew ashore.

We arrived in River Bourgeois the morning of Thursday September 2, 2010 arriving off Isle Madame at three in the morning. Approaching the shore all of the lights went out, including the lighthouse. A general power failure had removed our important aids to navigation and left us with no choice but to head back to sea and the safety of deeper water and the navigation markers near the entrance to St Peter’s Bay.

It was a great relief to get into the harbour at River Bourgeois and sail the anchor in near the main wharf near the entrance to the harbour. This is where the fishermen dock. When we came to anchor we sailed in the first anchor, a forty five pound Bruce, to ensure that it would hold well. This anchor was set with one hundred and twenty feet of chain in three fathoms at low tide and four at high. The chain rattled along the bottom indicating that it was a good clear gravel with little weed. We put out a second anchor, a forty five pound Danforth, with seventy feet of chain and one hundred and fifty feet of rode. We didn’t move further up the harbour as the wind was against us and we thought we would be safe enough with our heavy ground tackle. Gilbert, a very experienced fisherman, told us he was moving his boat from the wharf to a more protected location and suggested we raise our anchors and do the same. Winds were forecast to be

about forty knots and we felt that we would be okay, besides we had a couple of anchors and lots of chain out to retrieve. Mistake number one! We broke our rule to follow the advice of fishermen.

It turned out that we had set the anchors in a kelp bed. Mistake number two!

The winds started up late in the morning and the weather forecast changed. Earl was predicted to make landfall well to the southwest in the Digby area and follow a course up the Bay of Fundy. It is difficult to predict the path of a hurricane and Earl swung to the east and travelled along the coast making landfall in the Lunenburg area putting our location in the dangerous section of the hurricane. Now instead of forty knots we were looking forward to sixty to seventy knots of wind. Without a motor, rising winds and heavy ground tackle down we would have to ride out the storm where we were. The harbour is relatively well protected by a natural break wall with a narrow opening that has a strong current on the rise and fall of the tide. The current was noticeable where we anchored but not of great concern. Mistake number three!

The winds continued to build but the seas were not large. We were comfortably riding out the storm staying fairly steady and pulling nicely on both anchors when the first indication that we might be in trouble arose. It appeared that we had possibly slipped a little, or the chain had stretched out a bit and we settled back two boat lengths. The boat continued to holding its new location and a third anchor was made ready to deploy in the event that we started to move again. The wind continued to build as high tide approached then veered suddenly from southeast to south while increasing in intensity and we broke loose. Easy Go drove towards shore stern first dragging both anchors. We came to rest bow out on the sand and gravel bottom with rocks adjacent to a ruined wharf. During all this time Harold, his boat had gone ashore as well but he had been able to get it off, stayed close to us in his boat in case we needed rescuing. It was much too wild to try and get a line aboard and pull us off. Everything was happening very quickly. The pounding on the bottom lasted about half an hour as we driven higher on the beach. We secured a line to shore and pulled ourselves higher on the waves.

As the tide started to fall and the winds diminished. I got in the water which was really nice and warm. By this time the waves had subsided and the wind was down considerably. We put some ropes to the old wharf to try and keep Easy Go from leaning to far over and damaging her hull. This strategy seemed to work well. We managed to get her over on her port side. The water continued to drop with the tide and Kathy was able to wade ashore in knee deep water. Many people came by to help us get the lines to shore, pull up the tender and offer moral support. When we got ashore we were warmed and fed in Wayne's home and taken to stay with Albert and Janice for the night.

We returned to the boat after the morning high tide to start getting her ready for the evening high tide. Carl came out to retrieve us and informed us that two boats and lots of people had been at Easy Go at six in the morning to pull us off. We were not there however so she spent the day high and dry. The evening tide came at six pm and was not as high as the morning tide but we were somewhat afloat. Two boats came to pull but the wind was up a bit so Maynard cut his line off and Harold pulled us off with his boat alone. A little bumping and grinding while we pulled to deeper water ended the ordeal.

Harold towed us to the docks at the River Bourgeois Mariner Society where we are tied up and getting the boat organized. Fortunately we came ashore near the property we had recently purchased so we are making arrangements to stay here for the winter, repair Easy Go and decide what we are doing next.

During the hurricane two other boats came ashore. A sailboat broke its mooring and came up high and dry. It was easily refloated on Sunday morning. At the height of the storm Harold's boat dragged its mooring but he was able to get aboard and motor it off the shore. The floating docks at the RBMS also had a little damage but all was quickly repaired. Many trees were blown down in the area, some of them

quite mature. Most of the damage occurred when the wind suddenly veered from southeast to south and increased in intensity overwhelming boats and trees alike.

Diving the boat on Tuesday showed all the damage to the bottom. Both chines amidships have paint scrapes and bruises from sitting on the bottom. The bottom of the rudder has been ground down. The keel protected us and took the brunt of the damage with the entire bottom having small pieces missing and a little of the reinforcing steel is showing. The bow anchor roller is a little twisted from the pulling off. The hull was not compromised. Now it is time to build a cradle and haul Easy Go from the water to let her dry out and make the repairs.

In our cruising this is the second time that we have dragged anchor. The common theme between the two events was that there was weed on the bottom that prevented the anchors from setting correctly and ultimately leading to their failure.

Lessons learned, pay attention to local knowledge, don't underestimate the power of a storm, find the most protected place you can and finally dive the anchors to make sure that they will stay put.

A special thanks to all the people of River Bourgeois, our new neighbours, for all the help and kindness they have shown us in our eventful entrance and introduction to our new community and home.