



Russ 'Crazy Horse' Tetlow on one of those moments that can make windsurfing so memorable...

CRAZY HORSE

# frozen moments

Picture if you will a much younger Horse; 21 years old, in the forces in Hildesheim in Germany. I'm sat at a set of traffic lights in my first ever car. It's a beige Ford Taurus (English translation, a Ford Cortina) three door saloon, and I've recently spent 10 days and 10 nights without sleep repairing its failing paintwork. Anyway, here I am, two passengers in the back and one hard-as-you-like regimental boxer in the front (well that's what he reckons of himself). The road directly across from the lights is quite a way over to the left, and just about to make its crossing is a Chieftain Armoured Recovery Vehicle (or ARV) which is basically the bottom bit of a tank, with stuff mounted above to enable it to recover battle tanks when they break down, which is rather more often than they ought to. Like a regular tank the ARV is a tracked vehicle with what looks like six huge road-wheels running along the length of the metal linked track, which is suspended at the top by top rollers. It weighs in at about 60 tonnes. The ARV is returning from the tank training area, whilst the three passengers and I are on our way to the bank.

So there I am sat in the front of my little car looking up to the right waiting intently for the lights to change, probably off in a world of my own. Suddenly with an alarming and almighty metallic crushing and grinding noise the rear left side of my pretty little car starts to sink. In horror I look to my left, and inches away from me are the road-wheels of the tracked ARV, which are taller on their own than my car – you could just make out the top rollers above them. The metallic links of the track actually protrude further out towards my vehicle than the road-wheels, so unseen to ourselves at this particular moment in time, they are the first bits that will have taken the first bite out of my car. The ARV had run in to the rear of my car – only tanks don't just run *in* to your car, they run over them.

A second or two passes, and the ARV starts moving forward again, probably unaware that it's got a little car stuck in its teeth. As it moves forward, it's also pulling my car backwards – crushing metal, bending suspension collapsing as it moves. The hard man sat to my right in the passenger seat was in such a panic he was unable to operate his seatbelt release button, and the two guys in the back were also kicking up a right old hullabaloo as they were fully blocked in – the boxer would have to get out of his seat before they could push his seat forward to facilitate their release, not that they weren't making a valiant attempt to do this already, but somebody was blocking their escape route. It was funny! One of those classic comedy moments that only I seemed to be privy too. They were just in such a state of sheer terror. I casually looked down and pressed his release button – you have never seen



Ben Proffitt soaring over Russ at Rhosneigr during the same session

three men move so quick. I just sat there looked up at these road wheels and thought, Bugger, my bloody paintwork! No fear at all, just a depressing flash back to all those hours spent renovating her.

Apparently the ARV's steering had failed, rendering it unable to straighten its approach from the opposite side. Luckily for them, it was somebody from the Regiment that they had run in to! Not quite so lucky for me, although I have never ever felt the urge to renovate a car since then, so I suppose some good did come of the whole sorry affair...

Fast forward ten years to today – or rather to Thursday 18th May, specifically to Rhosneigr in Anglesey and to windsurfing. It's the early afternoon and I'm out on the water. I've taken my time to get here and have missed the morning's session, which was a more gentle 5m session by all accounts.

I'm on a 3.7 Ezzy Wave SE over a RRD Radical Wave 76, and it's blowing its knockers off with big seas and sunshine to boot. I would have been happier on my RRD 68 Wave Cult from last year's stock, but they'd not been forecasting anything like these conditions, so in my infinite wisdom I hadn't included it in the van. So I was over-boarded and having a hard time of it. Anyway, there I was, having just landed a fairly sketchy jump – from here on, I will ask you to imagine yourselves to be exactly where I am...

Picture yourself out there, in the middle of the sea, big waves pushing in, wind howling, deafening, sea spray all over the place, salt water in your eyes, and you're just starting to slowly move forward. Then something, maybe inner sense or maybe reaction to a tiny glimpse out of the corner of the eye –

maybe even a noise – makes you glance up. Look slowly and deliberately up from in front of you, to your boom, pause a fraction of a second, then move your field of vision up the length of your mast to its tip high above you ... pause a moment ... imagine the space above it, a mast further up, and then yet another mast up again, vertigo setting in, the space frozen in time, like the effect you get when looking up at a towering church steeple, dizzy as the steeple appears to move – got it? Just there, suspended in mid-air impossibly high and *directly* above you at the apex of an enormous back loop, neither going up nor down, but pinned in mid-air, frozen for one wonderful moment at the point directly in between his upward boost and his water-bound descent, is Phil Horrocks, just about to drop in, right on top of your head courtesy of a really high back loop!

What do you do?

Well, actually, I did nothing, I just applauded the wonder of the moment and sailed on. Like the ARV incident all those years ago, sometimes the moment is just too awesome to react to. OK, you could argue that I am perhaps lacking in basic self-preservation skills, and/or am just too stupid to react quickly enough to save my own skin. I should have at least kept an eye on Phil to see if he was going to land on top of me and smite down upon me such injuries as I dare not even begin to imagine! But it probably wouldn't have made any difference anyway – I would not have had enough time to react even if it did look bad. Sailing on was probably the right thing to do, with the moment perfectly frozen in time as a memory snapshot I will hold forever. (Unless I get run over by a tank or something...) ©

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