

Darramy on tour No3 April 2006

Winter tales

Hi everyone,

Thought it was about time we updated you with our progress, we left Lagos, a couple of weeks ago and headed for Seville, sadly we didn't make the city because at this moment in time have an engine problem so we are literally sailing everywhere trying to get back to Lagos to get the problem sorted out. We hope it is not too serious having reconditioned the engine two years ago with this trip in mind.

Any way when we last wrote, and that is ages ago, but it does not seem long ago to us time has just flown by. We made our base in Lagos as you know, soon we were involved in a near shore side existence, we joined a Portuguese class, and became completely baffled with this strange language, actually a bit of it stuck and we are able to get by, however there is so much English spoken here on the Algarve, it was hard to practice, and if you managed a sentence in a shop, the assistant would always come back with another question so it is an uphill struggle, but they do seem to understand me when I say **HOW MUCH!!**

October came and went we started a boules game each week and it became quite competitive, especially the grand final of the Autumn series which was won by Carol one of the lovely people we have met here, and the Winter series was won by Rick. I started a diving course, but Sue did not fancy that so she enjoyed the shops and sunshine instead.



Alan and Yvonne came over to visit in November, and we had the worst weather they had seen here for a long time, however we had a few beers and saw a few sights as they had a hire car. We have managed to get really hi tech and had internet via wi fi on the boat together with Skype for phoning. And that was great to keep in touch and sort any home problems out, At the end of November we flew back to the UK it was great to catch up with family and friends, and Sue loved seeing her grandchildren Michael and Laura who had grown quite a bit since July. We returned early December driving back in Sue's old Fiesta, its only 18 years old, that was quite an adventure, as we were loaded up with a pile of stuff I needed to fit on the boat, and weren't sure if the car would make it. But managed to persuade the insurance company to give us European breakdown cover for £3.00!! it does pay for them to record all calls, as they disputed their original quote, so in the end they relented and only charged the original £3.00. so we got away with that one! We caught the ferry to

Bilbao and drove 500 miles the first day and got across the Portuguese border, we agreed to stop in what looked an old town called Estremoz, on driving up the cobbled streets the car suddenly started making lots of horrible noises, this is at 5.00pm on a Friday evening, going dark, I dive out and look underneath, nothing hanging off, so open the bonnet to discover the cooling fan hanging off, phew that was lucky, nothing to serious after all, who needs a cooling fan! we are in Portugal and it's winter, I decided that as long as the car was moving it would cool, I have had previous

experience of this years ago when the children were small, and drove from the M6 to Bordeaux without one, but then I was on holiday. Estremoz was proper Portugal, the only tourist they seem to get were Portuguese so our language classes helped to come into their own. The next day we set off for



Atlantic coast beach

Lagos without incident and replaced the fan on Monday morning at the local scrap yard, its been some time since I had used scrap yards for car spares, but tricks learnt in youth still have a place, the guard dogs all look alike here or at home and most scrap men look like gypsies some things just don't alter.

It was then flat out to install the new equipment on the boat, my new friend Tony gave me a hand, and Sue and his wife Pearl seemed to find lots of shops to visit each day, and test out many restaurants to find where we were going to celebrate the New Year. We installed more solar panels, new ventilation vents, more technical stuff and a Single Side Band radio which has the facility to send short e mails across the ocean and most important we can receive weather reports. We used the car to discover the Algarve and the Atlantic coast . Some of the beaches on the Atlantic coast are absolutely magic beautiful golden sand and no one on them.

Christmas came and went various parties were attended, my children came over during Christmas, and it was great to see them, and Amy went off to Seville to see in the New Year and got engaged to Matt, so its back to the UK in September 2007 for a wedding, by which time I will only possess shorts and tee shirts, so I hope she does not need me to dress up! (mind you, Sue has started looking



French Alps, a long way from the sea

at outfits to wear). January soon went, the weather was still quite comfortable and it was great to see the nights starting to draw out. We came back to the UK end of Jan so Sue could Grandchildren it, and I went off to the French Alps Ski Mountaineering what a great week, blue skies and magic snow, and thanks for your company Geoff.



Sue together with Pete & Sue

We were pleased to be back in Lagos early Feb, Sue and Pete arrived the day after we got back and we had a busy week sightseeing and just enjoying other company - really good friends.

After Sue and Pete went home we made plans to go to Granada in Spain in the car and made it a two week holiday, Granada, then on to Murcia to visit Glyn and Jan in Mazaron then we drove all the way along the southern coast of Spain to Gibraltar, This

part of Spain did not impress us one bit, it seemed like a building site all the way to Gibraltar, we are sure there are some nice bits, but we had difficulty finding them. In Gib we spent a day touring the Rock, it was really quite impressive, and steeped in history after leaving there and seeing the tunnels etc, so many lives lost defending the place We came away thinking there's no way we should give up that place..



Rock of Gibraltar in the mist

After Gibraltar we caught a ferry to Africa and visited Tangier in Morocco, Yes JK, we saw camels.



Two of the famous Gibraltar Apes



Marble Dining room Hotel Continental

What a contrast to Europe, it was very poor, but the people all had a smile and treated us very well. We stayed in the "Hotel Continental", which is an old hotel overlooking the harbour, full of character from the 30's, you could imagine the Bogart style of films stars being there, quite an inspiring place. We felt very safe and soon discovered our way around the Kasbah area.

So safe I risked a shave in one of the little barber shops cut throat razor and all, and lived to tell the tale! Mind you it was quite cold so on returning to Spain we decided to head back home to Lagos. Another 1250 miles on the car.



A close shave in the Kasbar



Judith, Michael & Laura together with Nana & Brian at Alvor

It was now early March and we had more visitors, Judith came out with Michael and Laura for a week, the weather was mixed, but that did not stop the children going in the sea, they had a great time and so did we, they were really good and enjoyed staying on the boat. Michael learnt to row properly so no doubt will want to take his Dad on the river in Chester. Well done Michael.

During this winter we have met some great people and enjoyed the company of friends from Canada, America, Holland, Guernsey, and we hope to keep in touch as most of us are all going in different directions now. We have had some great parties on different boats, and the winter boules became very competitive, especially when the North Americans learnt how to play properly. (Rick he's the Canadian) won the winter

championship after turning up late and missing 4 games).

The Marina in Lagos has been first rate, and treat us all well, they tried to put something on each month of interest to us, one of the things they did was organise a trip on the Caravel which is a replica of one of the ships used by Henry the

Navigator in the 1400's that was quite an experience sailing with a lateen rig, and they put on a great lunch as well



One of the great things about being here was the free exchange of information between everyone, the radio net in the mornings was a great resource to find out most things, there is a wealth of information in this type of Marina and an answer to some problem can usually be found, thanks everyone for your help.

Whilst writing this we are in Spain, and although bureaucracy here is meant to be less than Portugal we are collecting paper. Today we paid 10 euros for a berth for the night, and it took 12 sheets of paper to complete all the formalities, we are going to keep a log of the amount of paper used to book us in and out of these places, it seems a bit daft, here we are trying to recycle, use solar energy and these guys are going through forests like there's no tomorrow, its amazing how one becomes more aware of the environment when you start to become more self sufficient.

As you can probably gather we are still enjoying ourselves it does not seem nearly 9 months since we left, but time does fly when you are enjoying yourselves, thanks to all at home who are looking after things, it is appreciated.

Any way we will continue our shake down cruise get the engine fixed soon we hope, then head west to the Azores where we hope to update you with our progress.

Adios Amigos