

Darramy on tour No.5
March 2007

Sorry this turned out to be a long one, never mind a bit of bed time reading for you! Well here we are again, we haven't travelled to far since our last news (travel log) at time of writing this bit, (we have now, but more later) but we have really enjoyed the Canaries. We had already done some of Lanzarote, and from there we headed back north to a small island just north of Lanzarote, this was called Graciosa, what a magic place. No real roads, just sand tracks, a small marina. Here we met up with Richard and Margaret, whom we last saw in the Azores. The beaches here were empty, good swimming and snorkelling, life was very slow, the harbour master was a real businessman, he only charged us for the days he worked, so we ended up having 5 weeks stay for the price of 3, but it was 6 euro per night! On our way there Roy and Jan Pickford from Deganwy called us to say they would be Lanzarote the next week, so we arranged to meet and had a super day drinking Roy's cheap wine he brought with them, a good meal in a local restaurant, (there were 3 on the island). Then Sue's daughter Sarah came out to visit us for a week, she really seemed taken with the



island, vowing to return next year (she has now booked for Easter), we had a lovely week, and it was nice for her to see and share in the type of life we are now leading.

We had a few b-b-ques, quite international, one night we had sailors from Eire, America,

New Zealand and Australia, Canada and Jamaica and a lovely Swiss couple who had taken a few years out to travel. If you really want to get away from it all Graciosa is a place worth looking at.

From there we went back to the south of



Lanzarote, and spent a week doing all the sights on the island, although a rocky island it did have charm and character, Most of the building were designed under the directive of Caesar Manrique a local architect/artist, his influence was everywhere. We toured his original home built in a volcano, rooms linked by tunnels very different but his use of the natural light made this somewhere

special, we went down larva tubes, one 2 Km long, we saw water features that

Manrique had designed in natural surroundings. Yes, we enjoyed it all, anyway it was time to see more islands so it was south to Fuerteventura, we had already been here a few years ago, so did not tour inland, but enjoyed a few pleasant places on the east coast, nothing too exciting, but good to be on the move again, it is always nice to arrive somewhere new, and discover the local village or town, the sailing was excellent, very little motoring.

From Fuerteventura we headed over to the south of Gran Canaria, another great sail 70 miles in 10 hours, we had to go to the south as the capital Las Palmas was full of yachts starting out in the ARC (Atlantic rally for Cruisers) this is a cruise/race for about 200 yachts which go across to St Lucia each year near the end of November.



Another normal day!!

We found if we telephoned ahead we could reserve a berth in a marina, turning up on speck could lead to you being turned away as the marina was full, and there were limited choices as to where you could anchor safely in this area. So we had to plan our wanderings a bit. Whilst in Puerto Rico we met up with old sailing friends Roger and Vicky on El Vagabond, they had left the UK in July and were heading over to the Caribbean in December, it was great

to see them, so we had a few beers together, and a pre Christmas party, before we both went our separate ways, we will meet up in the Caribbean though. We ended up in quite a chic resort called Porto Mogan, which was very pretty, and from there we explored Gran Canaria inland, very different from the busy touristy south, the mountain roads were pretty hair raising (even on my head!), the small mountain villages did not reflect the touristy areas, and it seemed quite a contrast to what could be 20 miles away but at least 1 hours hard drive away. On the sea or in port, we kept coming across other people we had met previously in other ports, so we were always on the look out for boats we knew.

From Gran Canaria we went across to Tenerife, which is a well populated island with the Brits and Germans, we did not want to spend much time in the tourist places, but we did have a few days out exploring the national park area. Here we stayed in a Parador for a couple of nights as I wanted to climb Mount Teide (highest mountain in Spain) 3718 metres high. An 8.00am start in the mist a bit like some of the winter days spent in Snowdonia hills at home, however the climb was quite long and 4 hours later I met Sue at the top of the cable car she didn't seem very tired after her



Peaking on Teide

accent in 5 minutes!! We had already acquired a permit so we could go up the last 200 metres to the peak, and that was amazing, the views from so high were stunning we could see all the Canary Islands from one place. It was pretty cold up there so after a quick photo shoot with the Wallace flag at the summit we headed down, and both

caught the cable car to the bottom. It was good to share such a high peak with Sue even she did cheat to get there! We returned to the boat the next day, it was good to be back on board, two nights in a hotel being pampered is not good for our way of life!

We then had Christmas in mind, and had previously decided we would like to spend it on the Island of Gomera. As previously, we had pre booked our berth so were expected, it was only a 30 mile trip and we started off with very little wind, but the wind filled in, and within 10 minutes we were caught in the wind acceleration zone, this is a feature of the Canaries where the wind can funnel between the islands without any warning, we were being hit with gusts up to 40 knots, and very steep seas, after a quick retake of our situation we decided to carry on as we only had 15 miles to go, we reefed the sails right down and carried on, it didn't get any easier until we entered the harbour in San Sebastian, by which time we thought we and the boat had been through the washing machine. We lost a solar panel, found a couple of leaks and various other little jobs that had to be attended to. This was not a bad thing in the end as we now believe we have sorted out all the weak spots on the boat (we hope). Just got to sort out the two crew! San Sebastian and the whole island are magical, the way of life is very slow, they are not there to rip off the visitors, just nice people who want to please and show you their island which is well worth visiting. The scenery is stunning a lot of volcanic ravines, lead down green valleys to the sea, driving is pretty



tough some of the mountain roads are steep and twisty, NO, really twisty, it seemed strange driving, and having to spend half the time looking out of a side window to see where the car was heading. The views were spectacular, but to enjoy them properly we used the local bus which took one and a half hours to get to the other side of the island 25 miles away, you

were able to take in fantastic scenery the trick was to get to the bus stop early and be first on so you could sit at the very front, and enjoy the suspense of the front end of the bus hanging over the cliff edge as you went around a corner. On Gomera, there is some wonderful walking many trails so the walkers among you should consider coming here. Although a small island it has a magical charm, and one we had not come across in the Canaries apart from Graciosa. Christmas day was spent socialising and having Christmas dinner sitting in the cockpit in the sunshine, very different from the norm at home, or at least the temperature was.

We have not been cold here this winter, the temperatures are really pleasant, most days its just shorts and tee shirts, occasionally a top is needed at night.

Early January we went to the Island of La Palma, it is said to be the prettiest of the Canaries, and it was certainly pretty good, the Marina facilities were limited, but the town of Santa Cruz was just oozing history from the days of pirates etc. Again

friendly people, the National park was well worth visiting, nothing seemed to be spoilt, miles of banana plantations on the west coast, and a couple of what looked fairly smart resorts on the west coast, lots of good walking again, we



El Shako La Palma,
Is that you Ron S?

only went for a few days but ended up being there for nearly 2 weeks. We can try and sum up the people in both Gomera and La Palma, as that they are enjoying tourism, but haven't yet tried to ruin it by ripping the visitor off, taking your money is not the b all and end all, its just incidental to their way of life. We did not find the smaller islands expensive, many times we would leave a restaurant checking the bill to see if they had left anything off, but no, it was all charged for.

We had intended to go to the Cape Verde islands, but due to various reports of piracy in that area, we felt we did not want to put ourselves at undue risk. Different people had given us conflicting reports, but the advice received was to be very aware, so maybe another day, mind you one of you did point out to me that due to my connections in the financial world, the pirates would have made us welcome like one of their own!!

We had hope to set off across the Atlantic in January, and decided we would like to leave from Gomera as Christopher Columbus did in the Santa Maria 500 years ago, but first Sue was down with a flu bug, the when we did set out the wind died, so we were left with the option to drift around for a few days or head back into Gomera, Gomera won, On our way back in we saw our first whales, then dolphins. We have set various dates to leave, but now yours truly has got this flu bug so we are not sure when we will go. Its typical we send you details of how to follow us then we don't go anywhere!! We will, keep checking the web site http://www.pangolin.co.nz/yotreps/reporter_list.php

Well finally on 18th February we left on our transatlantic voyage. We were both apprehensive as neither of us had crossed a major ocean before, we knew that we had prepared the boat well, so it was just getting to grips with being completely on our own for 3 or 4 weeks, and having to sort any problems out ourselves, there would be no one around to help. We had studied the weather for a long time and were able to receive forecasts for the next 6 or 7 days so we always had an indication of what weather to expect, but we had the advantage of sailing in the trade winds, and hopefully the winds would be from behind most of the way, and all the routing

information about wind strengths and probability of hazardous weather, showed us that the time of year we had chosen was very favourable to our voyage. Any way we set off and set up the twistle rig, which is two foresails on one roller so we could reef them together, and not use the main sail at all. We set up Wilf, the wind vane self-steering, and let it all happen. To cut along story short we adjusted the sails when the wind strengthened or eased, and were able to keep the boat sailing at all times. Wilf behaved wonderfully and kept us on course. It took us a few days to get our sea legs, but soon Sue was baking bread every couple of days, it was wonderful to



The girl from Nimble

smell the aroma of fresh baked bread wafting up from the galley. We had enough



First fish, look out St Peter

fresh produce to last a week, then it was going to be down to preserved foods for the rest of the trip however we did not allow for the fisherman amongst us to work his magic, we trailed a line after the first 5 days as we had to eat all the fresh meat etc first, so only wanted to catch what we could eat. Any way one morning suddenly the reel started to run out, and the rod began to bend. Panic stations!! It was a fish. We grabbed the rod and started winding the reel in, the rod bent and bent, we let the fish run for a while (yes we had already seen Jaws!) and gradually wound in a fish. The colours of our tea as we wound it in was fantastic a beautiful blue and gold and silver flashing though the water slowly getting bigger as we got it along side then trying to hook it with the gaff. We got it into the cockpit, it

seemed massive in reality it was 2.5 kilos, but once I had cut the head off it lost a bit of weight. Then it was gutting time, no problem this fish looked really appetising. And it did taste fantastic, enough for us to pig out for a couple of days. It turned out

we later discovered to be a Dolphin fish quite a common species in the tropical Atlantic. In the end we caught 4 of these, and also toward the end I got a 4 kilo Blue fin Tuna. That was big!! But by this time we had perfected our landing technique, and managed to get 4 meals out of the tuna. This was proper fresh fish, the taste and flavours were magic. We nearly caught a few more, a couple got away; one bent a large number 6 hook. And another broke the hook, so we felt we didn't want those anyway!

The days and nights passed quickly we did 3 hour watches at night so we were fairly tired, but saw no other vessels for about 2 weeks, the night skies were superb, you can see so much without any light pollution spoiling the effect. The planets and constellations we found hard to identify, and wished we had a better program to recognise these. With hindsight we should have invested in a program for this instead

of relying on a freebie. Each day we checked all the gear for wear and damage, we were quite fortunate in this as we had very little to maintain, we had been warned by others who had done this voyage previously to beware of ropes chaffing. With information in mind we used plastic reinforced



pipng over the wear points on the sheets and guardrails, this saved a lot of wear and tear. The only repairs we had to do was to reaffix a winch handle pocket. We made water every couple of days so we were able to shower everyday using out solar shower, and the fridge kept stuff cool. Things went really well it was great to receive your e mails, it was like the postman coming each morning when we put the SSB radio on to get the latest forecast. As we approached the Caribbean we tuned in to listen to the local Carib net of other yachties (local name for liveboards). With the position reports Sue's grandchildren Michael and Laura had their school in Upton



following our voyage, so maybe some of the children there will get the bug to travel the oceans, as I remember following Francis Chichester in

Gypsy Moth 4 circumnavigate when I was at school. The only other problem we had

was that our water powered generator started making funny noises and stopped working, we managed to dismount it from the back of the boat and try to repair it, we got another 12 hours out of it before it finally died, although it did effect our ability to charge the batteries, the solar panels worked their magic so we did not suffer to much, (the suppliers have been great and diagnosed the problem by e mail, and sent parts for us straight away), it is a magic bit of kit, and to be fair the after sales have been very good. Other than that we had a magic voyage although tired we arrived in Martinique 21 days after leaving Gomera we covered 2659 miles and are now adjusting to Caribbean French and sleeping all night, thanks for all the e mails on our arrival. We really appreciate your thoughts and comments. We will try to update the position report each week so you can see where we may be. Click on this link:

http://www.pangolin.co.nz/yotreps/reporter_list.php

Any way its ouvoir for now

Brian and Sue