

## **Darramy on tour No 12: ABC's Islands, Argentina / Chile, and Columbia August – December 2009**

Hello, none of those weird greeting again just: Hola amigos,

How's it all going with you guys?

For Sue and I it's been busy, we put Darramy in the boat yard at Curacao at the end of July and Sue came home to the UK and she reportedly had a ball visiting friends and family, a great Brian free time! She really enjoyed a week in Anglesey in Paul and Paula's caravan with her grandchildren. Meanwhile I went back to the Chilean Lake district to climb some Volcanoes. I joined the rest of the group in Santiago in good spirits as all my gear turned up this time, which was a great start. Sadly the weather in Chile was pretty vile so we headed over to Argentina for some good skiing, plenty of off piste if you made the effort to climb to it. This was my first visit to Argentina, and we were in the Patagonia district, some spectacular scenery, wonderful hosts, and of course I had some



**Argentinean White Stuff**

Argentinean steak (as one does)! One week in Argentina then it was back to Chile, a fantastic spectacular journey ending with two hours by ferry ship across a lake which joined the two countries. The weather was still iffy, but eventually we got a crack at Villarrica Volcano near Pucan. (This is the one that Graham Bell climbed in the BBC program High Altitude, well worth watching). We set off from the hotel at 6.00am, and started our ascent from the base as the lift system was not working. We skinned up for 4



**Snow shoes on Me**

hours before donning crampons and carried on with the ascent, skis on our back packs, another 5 hours later we reached the summit, what an amazing phenomena. You could smell the sulphur from the volcano as it was still grumbling so it must have been pretty hot in there! And, here we were on the outside about to ski down. Wow! We did not stay at the top long as the weather window was closing, we ended up with 70 kph winds, and had a 400

metre ice field to side slip down

before darkness, after that it was on with the head torch and another long decent back down to the transport, I loved it, but not all members of the party agreed with me,

skiing down in fresh powder in the dark was good fun, but not for the faint hearted. (Enough said!) Once again Christian (Amity Tours), Guido our Swiss Guide, together with Lee & Gareth from Snowworks UK. looked after us well and we all got down safely, I enjoyed a few beers that night having captured another volcano. We headed to Corralco, our last ski spot, and Lonquimay volcano. This I climbed last year, but this time we went up a different face, and made the summit in four hours with a superb half hour decent. I also had a go at snow shoeing, a good way to travel in deep snow, and again went horse riding which I found to be really good fun, In all a memorable trip, lovely hotels etc, but marred by the weather which only allowed an attempt up two of the five volcanoes.. Oh well, maybe next year!

Then it was back to the UK to catch up with Sue and see Lottie my first Grandchild,



she was then 7 months old and saw her Grandpa for the first time, must have liked me as she did not cry for about 5 minutes, (someone said that might have been delayed shock)! Anyway it was good to catch up, Judith, Nick and Gary have been doing a good job looking after everything, so did not need me interfering to much, we visited loads of friends, but as ever there is never enough time, We did

#### **The Younger Generation**

manage to go for a couple of days sailing in Holyhead during Gaffers weekend on a 90 foot Topsail Schooner which was great, and we had a mock sea battle with the Anglesey Hussars providing Cannons and Musket fire!

The end of September saw us back in Curacao, we relaunched Darramy and went up to Santa Kruz for a while to sort out the boat properly as we had a few miles to sail to reach Cartagina (Columbia) before Christmas, This area of the Caribbean Sea has a pretty bad weather reputation so we had to make sure everything was working and in good order. Al and Joan on "Break and Run" joined us so we did a bit more diving as the coral in that part of the world is stunning. Anyway, back to the sailing. We left Curacao for Aruba at the end of October, the wind was light, but it seemed a good weather window to make the passage. After a few miles the wind seemed just right for our lightweight spinnaker or kite for us



**Kite Flying off Aruba**



racers (for you landlubbers it's the very colourful sail at the front, when going well its great, but can often go wrong, then you may end up in the brown smelly stuff)! First we had to find it, we try not to carry too much junk on board, but how wrong I can be, eventually I discovered it under all my snow ski stuff; Once we got it flying, (I had forgotten what a wonderful sail this was having last used it in Portugal a few years back) we sailed all the way to Oranjestad in Aruba, and checked in with the authorities. Some people rave about Aruba, but it was not for us, based on tourism, It seemed to cater for people wanting shopping malls, Casino's, and loads of entertainment, still after a few days we set off for Los Monjes Sur, a Venezuelan Rock, This time the big spinnaker came out, We were on a roll, sailing along, fishing line out a wonderful Dolphin display for about an hour, We had to watch out for squalls, but fortunately



**Checking In!**

they seemed to go either side of us so we left the kite up. We even managed to hook a Bonito which provided us with a couple of nice meals. We made good time and arrived before dark. Here, you could tie up to a rope strung across the small bay for the night, the only problem was the authorities wanted us to check in, but the dinghy was stowed on deck and a lot of trouble to launch, and as the authorities made no signs of giving up, I stuffed all the papers in a waterproof sack, dived in and presented them dripping wet with

the said documents, they were amused, and finally accepted I was not going to get the dinghy for them, we sat on a bench on the old quay and did the admin, then I dived in and swam back – Job sorted!

We then had a longer leg to Cabo de Vela (Cape of Sail) a notorious windy spot on this coast. A 4am. start was called for (Yuk)! but by sun up the big kite was flying, we had to gybe a couple of times always a bit hairy with just the two of us, anyway we were steaming, I could see us breaking records with this passage, all the old racing tweaks were being done, I was by then getting pretty cocky and now decided to gybe again, by this time (I know some of you have already guessed, it went wrong), 20knots of wind two poles out a mega broach took place (which to the initiated,



**Cabo de Vela**

we were on our side), fish swimming past the windows, everything that could go wrong did, the kite ended up in the water and it took an hour to get everything sorted, by which time the crew suggested not to re fly it and put it away. We had a more

sedate but safer sail to Cabo de Vela! No records were broken, only a bit of gear, It's my own fault we have always had set rules for this sail and I broke them, but still it was a great sail whilst it lasted.

The following day was damage assessment, but not before buying 3 lobsters off the local fishermen. 3 for £7.00 not bad! Welcome to Columbia! Break and Run joined us the next day and we decided to stay for a while as the wind was bit light for the next few days. We went ashore and walked around, met some local tourists who wanted to do a photo shoot with us, everyone seemed very friendly, although there was not a lot to see, but every place has its own beauty. We ended up staying about 5 days before an overnight trip to 5 bays, recommended for its scenery.



**A Brace and a half of Lobster!**



**A Local Photo Shoot**

We set off for an overnight sail, no spinnaker was even suggested, (peace and harmony are a very important part of our life style!), but any way the wind was good enough to do without it, out went the fishing line, we had already caught a couple of nice 2.5 – 3kg tuna, then the line went ran out again, We were sailing down wind so could not slow the boat down, and it took about twenty minutes to wind this fish in, but at the last minute, it had one last attempt at escape and dived down under the boat, the line went slack, it had snagged on our Duo Gen ( a water driven generator we tow from the back of the boat to produce power) it cut the bloody line, I was well peed off and pulled in an empty line, put the rod



**Sue. Joan & a new kid on the block!**



**Owzat!!! Well Caught !!**



away in disgust, however all was not lost, I went to check the DuoGen, and lo and behold, there was my Tuna with the line wrapped around the generator propeller, well you have never seen a DuoGen recovered from the water so quickly, and we had a nice 3.5 kg tuna to boot, I had to put that photo in, as, with all fishy tales no one ever believes you!

Arriving at 5 bays was a wonderful experience, as we saw for the first time for a while in the Caribbean, many trees and much greenery. For a second, it reminded us of a Scottish Loch, but then we realised the sun was shining the water 30C not 30F, and no midges! We stayed a few days then the Guarda Costa moved us on as it is now a marine park. We sailed to Puerto Velero across the Magdalena river which is



**Cinco Bays**

supposed to be another dangerous bit of water, but as we had left with 30kt winds the seas were pretty big anyway, so we did not notice any difference except a strange meeting of river water mixing with the salt water, we were 6 miles offshore but just sailed into brown water, it was spooky. Eventually we sailed out the other side and ended up in Puerto Velero after a fast sail. This is a good safe anchorage with a kite surf school. Break and Run headed to Cartagena, we don't Buddy Boat as the US folks call it, but did sail loosely with Break and Run some days and enjoyed their company.

We stayed to have a session kite surfing, which was pretty eye opening, first you have to learn to tame this kite, which is like a wild stallion, you have to learn to fly it whilst being dragged through the water at a fair speed (plenty of body irrigation goes on here), eventually you learn to tame the kite, and then another scenario takes place, the instructor Martyn produced a board a little bigger than a tea tray with a couple of foot holds, and tells you to stand on it whilst flying the kite. Well after many attempts ending up battered and bruised and again fully irrigated, I managed to stand up and kite surfed for a small distance. The next day I broke the 100 metre distance, blimey talk about fast, it was amazing. Plenty more practice is needed, but I



**Meeting the locals, Puerto Velero!**

learned the basics, Martyn spoke pretty good English, but some instructions were lost in the translation from Spanish to English so it was not that easy, and another attempt

will be made sometime in the new year, but we had to head to Cartagena to meet up with the Malarkey's for Christmas.

Arriving at Cartagena after another great sail, we met up with Trevor and Jo who showed us around the old city,. What a busy vibrant place this is full of history, it is buzzing A great mixture of historical buildings in the old town, and modern high rise all around the water front of this busy harbour. So this is where we are at,



**Modern Cartagena**

wining and dining in fine style, (an average quality meal costs about £5.00 per head). We are as usual awaiting some spare parts to be sent before moving. We have to make a plan for Christmas, and may head to the San Blas Islands, then return here, who knows. But Sue says she is not going anywhere until she has a day in the town having a good shopping fix!

I have just looked at our log book and realise that we have now done over 10,000 miles since leaving the UK in 2005. and over 25,000 since purchasing Darramy in 1993. I also looked for the spinnakers again, but could not find them. I think Sue has put them well out of reach!!!

So, Adious Amigos

(Delete as applicable)

\*Best Wishes\* \*Kindest Regards\* \*Love and Hugs\* \*Cheers\*

And a very Merry Christmas (None of that politically correct Happy Holidays for us) to you all...!

Brian and Sue

You can view our previous travelogues of the last four years on our OCC site [http://www.oceancruisingclub.org/component/option,com\\_mamblog/Itemid,102/task,show/action,view/id,1910/Itemid,102/](http://www.oceancruisingclub.org/component/option,com_mamblog/Itemid,102/task,show/action,view/id,1910/Itemid,102/) Click on this link if you are really bored!

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