

REVIEWS

IN BED WITH THE ATLANTIC – Kitiara Pascoe. Published in soft covers by Fernhurst Books [<https://fernhurstbooks.com/>] at £11.99. 264 129mm x 198mm pages including eight of colour photos. ISBN 978-1-9121-7716-5

The subtitle of this book, '*A young woman battles anxiety to sail the Atlantic circuit*', could be slightly off-putting for a seasoned ocean sailor. Most OCC members have made several ocean crossings, and while testing situations of course can frighten anyone, does someone else's chronic anxiety make interesting reading? In this case yes, it does – because Kitiara Pascoe is an excellent writer with an eye for detail.

When her partner Alex buys an elderly and unloved Nicholson 32 to sail to the Caribbean, Kitiara battles with self-doubt, not least because her sailing experience is almost nil. In the past she had been plagued with periods of depression and panic attacks, so while she wants to experience the adventure of crossing an ocean, visiting tropical islands, and swimming in warm water, internal voices keep telling her 'I don't think I can do this'. A year-long refit for the boat, including fitting an Aries wind vane, reminds Kit of how little she knows. A steep learning curve is normal at the beginning of your first long cruise – it certainly was for this reviewer – but being reasonably confident and determined is essential.

Fortunately Alex is calm and competent, and Kit is surprised to find that she is seldom seasick, a major cause of deciding that sailing isn't for you. The young couple manage to cope with the various problems that invariably crop up on a shakedown cruise, and when *Berwick Maid* and her crew leave Falmouth for Spain, it's Kit's first night passage. The five-day crossing is bouncy and cold, and she's miserable until dolphins appear and play around the bow, an uplifting experience that we've all enjoyed. Arriving in La Coruña with force 6 and huge waves behind them, Kit is overwhelmed with relief. After cruising the *rías* they leave for Porto Santo, Madeira, the Canaries and a month-long crossing to Grenada. As her confidence grows and she relaxes, Kit finds herself enjoying the way of life that we are all so familiar with.

The book covers *Berwick Maid's* three-year cruise – north up the island chain to St Martin, across the Caribbean Sea for a lengthy stay in Panama, and back to spend three months exploring the Bahamas (where the author becomes increasingly disillusioned by the high price of imported American food, and anchorages full of boats that arrive in the autumn and don't move for six months). Some well-researched historical background makes interesting reading at this point.

So *Berwick Maid* heads for home, and with a 27-day passage which includes a lightning storm, Kit has plenty of time to analyse her feelings.

She comes to the realisation that it wasn't the bad weather that was the problem, it was her reaction to it – seeing it as a constant battle, instead of just dealing with it. She's beginning to feel at one with the sea. Another gale and an errant halyard twisted round the mast and forestay keeps the crew busy before landfall in Flores, followed by stops in São Jorge, where Kit gives a vivid description of bull running on the quay at Velas, and a street festival which they enjoy in Terceira. With their return to the UK getting closer, Kit worries about getting back – will everything have changed while she hasn't? What she does in fact discover is that the whole world has opened up – suddenly things that had terrified her before the Atlantic circuit have become doable...

All in all a fairly standard cruise, with the exception of the detour to Panama and back again, but an interesting insight into how one young woman overcame her demons and discovered mental strength she never knew she had. This book could be very helpful to a potential crew member, probably female but not necessarily, who is frightened at the thought of what she's getting into and doubts her ability to cope. The strong message is, 'Yes, you can!'

Liz Hammick

(6226 words)