

THE WARMEST OF WELCOMES: Cruising the East Coast of the USA Jonathan Lloyd, Roving Rear Commodore

(Jonathan and Anne left the UK in June 2014 aboard their Malo 42 Sofia, and were appointed Roving Rear Commodores two years later. Flying Fish carried their account of Cruising Tasmania in 2017/18, and Jonathan's very useful notes on The Challenge of Passage Planning in the Southwest Indian Ocean a year later.

The last section of this article also appeared in the March 2019 Newsletter.)

Having completed our circumnavigation in March 2018 when we crossed our outward track on arrival in Martinique, our plan for the remainder of 2018 was to cruise up the East Coast of the USA as far as Maine, participate in the various rallies which the OCC organises along that coast during the months of summer, and then head back down south to warmer climes in the autumn and winter. We were particularly keen to embark on this venture as we had lived and worked on the East Coast of the USA on two occasions before my retirement. The first was from 1992 until 1994 in Washington DC, and the second was from 2004 until 2007 in New York. While we had managed some sailing on Chesapeake Bay and Long Island Sound, it had been limited to weekends and holidays and we wished to explore the whole coast at our leisure and in much more detail. Our appetite was further whetted by OCC members who, having participated in previous OCC rallies in the area, assured us that we would receive the warmest of welcomes wherever we went. We were not disappointed!

Our original intention had been to leave Sint Maarten in March and make our way leisurely to the Spanish Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, and thence to Florida, Georgia and the Carolinas, before joining the first OCC rally of the year on the Chesapeake in mid June. However, a major problem with the mainsail in-mast furling system, which necessitated the removal of the mast, delayed us by over a month. FKG Marine Rigging were inundated with work following Hurricane *Irma* the previous September and could not fit us in until after Carnival in early May, when all work ceases for a week while the island celebrates. This delay necessitated a change of plan – if we were to arrive in time to participate in the Chesapeake Historic Cruise we would need to head directly to Beaufort, North Carolina from the Spanish Virgin Islands or Puerto Rico, continuing round Cape Hatteras to the Chesapeake.

While in Sint Maarten we had linked up with OCC member Eve Wilhite aboard *Auntie*, whom we had first met in the Marquesas in 2015 and last encountered at Thursday Island in the Torres Straits in July 2017. The plan was to sail in company to the Chesapeake, as Eve is a singlehander sailing a 53ft yawl. We had been advised that a simple and straightforward way to clear into the USA was to do so in Culebra in the Spanish Virgin Islands, which is part of Puerto Rico and a US territory. Provided one sails directly to mainland USA no further clearance is necessary. All went according to plan, and both *Sofia* and *Auntie* had a pleasant sail to Ensenada Honda in Culebra and a quick dinghy trip ashore to clear in at the airport, where a very helpful immigration official made the process as painless as we had been told.



*Anne and Jonathan
aboard Sofia. Photo
Dianne Tertreault*

After a day exploring the island with Eve, the next stage of the plan was to head to San Juan in Puerto Rico and explore the attractive old city before continuing on to Beaufort, NC. At this point the

forecast arrival of Tropical Storm *Alberto* on the US East Coast intervened and resulted in a change of plan as, if we were to reach Beaufort before its potential arrival, we would need to leave Culebra almost immediately and endure significantly strong winds for the first few days. While we were happy to set off in these conditions, Eve as a singlehander was more reluctant, so regretfully we parted company.

After an uneventful passage we reached Beaufort 12 hours prior to the arrival of TS *Alberto*. On berthing at the marina in Morehead City, which is just next door to Beaufort, we were delighted to find old OCC friends Ed and Sue Kelly on the dock to greet us. They have a house just up the road in New Bern, NC. They had

recently completed the Great Loop of the USA in their catamaran *Angel Louise* (see the June 2018 Newsletter) and were also planning to attend the various rallies. After securing *Sofia* to withstand a battering from TS *Alberto* we spent a pleasant two days exploring the local area with Ed and Sue before heading up the coast to Norfolk, Virginia.

In Norfolk, OCC Port Officers Gary Naigle and Greta Gustafson had very kindly agreed to hold mail for us. They have a delightful shoreside apartment with its own private dock complex, where OCC yachts are made welcome. However, it was out of action undergoing a major refurbishment just then, so we'd been advised by Ed and

*Sofia berthed in
South Basin, Portsmouth*





OCC yachts on RRCs Bill and Lydia Strickland's dock on the Corrotoman River

Sue to use the free town dock in Portsmouth, on the opposite bank of the Elizabeth River. No sooner had we docked than Gary was there to hand over our mail. He then gave us a tour of Norfolk before inviting us to drinks in their apartment. The following day he drove us to the West Marine chandlery in Virginia Beach, and found an optician where I could get my damaged spectacles repaired. It was a first experience of how helpful and hospitable our Port Officers on the East Coast can be, but by no means the last! It was no surprise to learn that they had been awarded the OCC Port Officer Service Award for 2017.

After Norfolk, next on our agenda was a short trip up the James River to visit Yorktown and explore the historic battlefield and the excellent new Museum of the American Revolution. From there we headed up the Chesapeake to the Corrotoman River, to join Regional Rear Commodores Lydia and Bill Strickland at their lovely home overlooking the river. As two other OCC yachts – *Blue Velvet of Sark* and *A*



Capella – were already on their private dock, they very kindly arranged for their neighbour to host us on his dock and then laid on a very enjoyable drinks party for all those present, including the crew of *Hullabaloo* which was anchored off.

A replica 17th century merchant ship on the dock at St Mary's

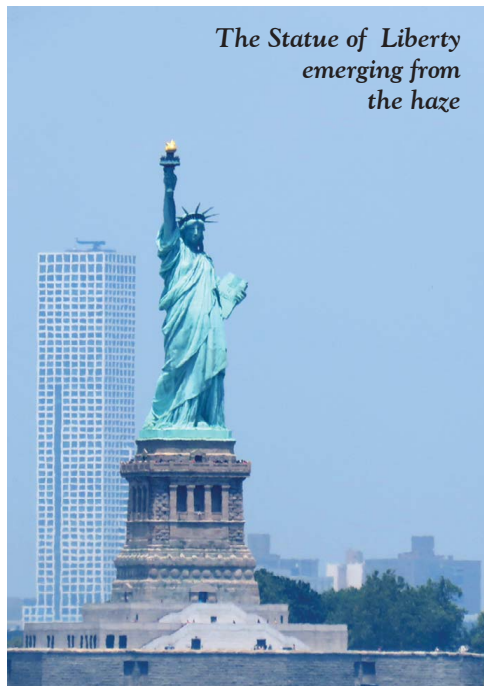


The dinghy drift at Leonardstown

From the Corrotoman River it was a short hop to Reedsville, Virginia, where the OCC fleet was gathering for the start of the Chesapeake Historic Potomac Cruise. Reedsville is a fishing port of long-standing, and the home port of the ferry to historic Tangier Island in the southern Chesapeake. Members spent an interesting day visiting the island and enjoying an excellent seafood lunch. After Reedsville the fleet had a bouncy sail up to historic St Mary's at the mouth of the Potomac River, the original capital of Maryland and now home to St Mary's College. After an enjoyable potluck supper in the grounds of the College, next day it was time to head further up the Potomac to Leonardtown, where the fleet anchored off in Breton Bay. While there the fleet enjoyed the camaraderie of a dinghy drift and a splendid farewell dinner on the final day. Our sincere thanks go to Lydia and Bill, who put so much effort into organising such a memorable few days. (See the September 2018 *Newsletter* for a full account of the Cruise.)

After the Chesapeake Cruise ended on 14th June we had two weeks to reach Newport, Rhode Island for the start of the OCC Southern New England Cruise. Our passage took us up the Chesapeake via Solomons Island and Annapolis to the Chesapeake &

Delaware Canal, and then down the Delaware River/Bay to Cape May, New Jersey. From there it was a short hop up the coast to New York harbour and through the East River to Port Washington on Long Island. There is no doubt that New York is one of the most scenic and historic harbours in the world, and it was a tremendous experience to sail through it in our own yacht. We could even see our old apartment (the centre building on the right) close to the UN Building overlooking the East River.



*The Statue of Liberty
emerging from
the haze*





*Oyster Bay
sunset,
Long Island*

After Port Washington we had a quick refuelling stop in the very attractive Oyster Bay before crossing Long Island Sound to the historic town of Essex on the Connecticut River, where we

linked up with Ed and Sue Kelly again. *Angel Louise* was out of the water undergoing repairs to one of her propeller shafts, so they had hired a car and we were able to join them in exploring the area. Next we headed further up the Connecticut River to Hamburg Cove, the home port of Dirk and Gretchen Aurin and their lovely William Garden ketch *Peregrine*. We had met them in the Galapagos in 2015 and their circumnavigation had more or less paralleled our own.

Following this pleasant interlude we headed back downriver to Essex and on to Newport the following day, where several OCC yachts were already gathered for the start of the Southern New England Cruise, meticulously planned and organised by Mike and Jane Eslinger. We anchored off the famous Ida Lewis Yacht Club in company with several other OCC yachts. The club was very welcoming and hospitable, and offered us free temporary membership. After a welcome dinner in Newport the fleet sailed up the harbour to Bristol in time to enjoy the oldest 4th July celebrations in the country. There was also time to visit the fascinating Herreshoff Museum and the America's

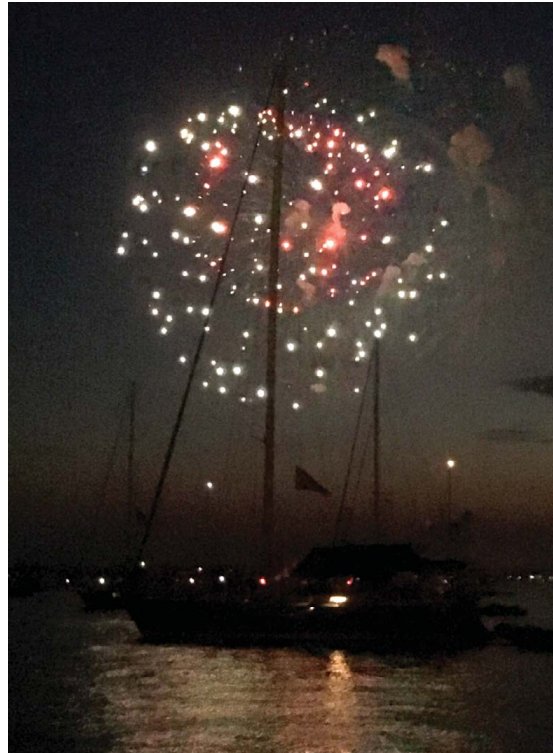


*Peaceful anchorage in
Hamburg Cove on the Connecticut River*

***4th July fireworks at
Bristol, Rhode Island***

Cup Hall of Fame, which is located on the site of the old Herreshoff yard.

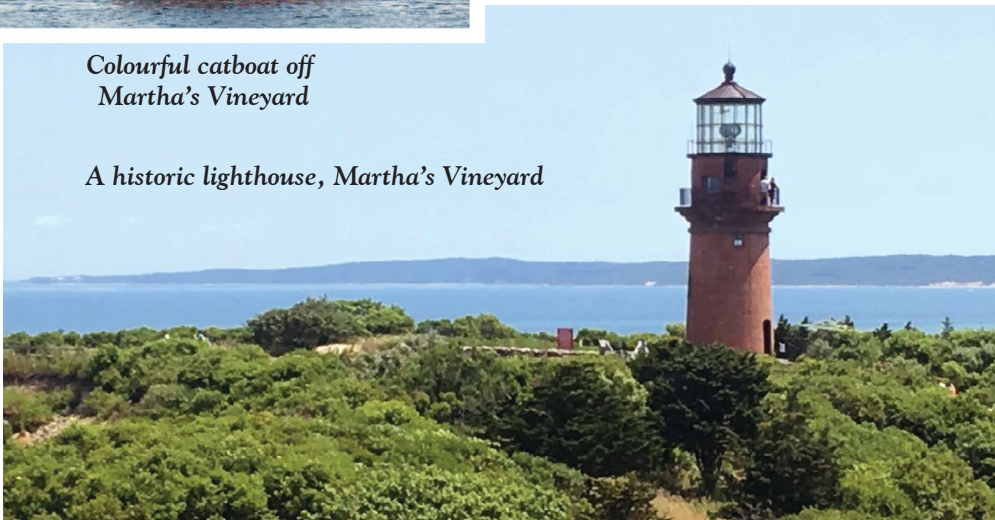
At that point we had to leave the rally and return to Newport to sort out a significant problem with our steering, while the fleet moved on to Dutch Harbour and then Block Island. We rejoined the Cruise in New Bedford, Massachusetts, which was the country's principal whaling port in the 19th century and is now home to a fascinating whaling museum. We enjoyed a guided tour of the historic centre of the town before departing for Martha's Vineyard



where the cruise was due to end. The fleet anchored off Edgartown and there was plenty of time to tour this most attractive island, attend a farewell party in the Edgartown Yacht Club, and enjoy a dinghy drift, before the fleet parted and went their separate ways. Again, our sincere thanks go to Mike and Jane for organising such an interesting and enjoyable rally.

***Colourful catboat off
Martha's Vineyard***

A historic lighthouse, Martha's Vineyard



Following the rally our intention had been to accompany Ed and Sue Kelly up to Maine to join the OCC Rally in Camden, Maine in mid August. Our route would take us through the Cape Cod Canal to Gloucester, Massachusetts, and from there to the wonderful cruising grounds of Maine. Unfortunately at that point fate intervened. No sooner had the Southern New England Cruise ended than I had a nasty fall in the cockpit and badly damaged my shoulder. A visit to Vineyard Haven Hospital for x-rays revealed that I had fractured it in four places and would need surgery to repair the damage, and our insurance company decided to repatriate me to the UK for this. Consequently we needed to find somewhere on the mainland coast to leave *Sofia* at very short notice while we returned to the UK.

At this point Regional Rear Commodores Dick and Moira Bentzel sprang into action, tasking POs in the region to identify suitable yards. We opted for the Barden Yard in Marion, MA which was recommended by PO Larry Hall, and were fortunate to have calm conditions to motor there from Edgartown with Ed and Sue Kelly on *Angel Louise* acting as escorts for most of the way. We were very disappointed not to be joining them for the Maine Rally, but fortunate to have such good and caring friends.

On arrival in Marion, Larry Hall was there in his launch to greet us and help us to our mooring. During our brief stay Larry could not have been more kind and helpful. He not only helped Anne remove all the sails in sweltering July heat, but also assisted with the

Pensive skipper awaiting repatriation



lift out, arranged for a local b&b, lent us a car, took us to dinner at the Beverley Yacht Club (where he is a Past Commodore), and arranged for us to have the use of the club's facilities while we were there. Such help and hospitality was much more than we could possibly have expected and we will never forget it.

While I was recuperating back in the UK, following surgery on my shoulder on 1st August, we read with considerable envy the reports from Ed and Sue Kelly and other OCC members of the wonderful time that they were having in Maine enjoying lobster feasts and the camaraderie in Camden. In spite of the plethora of lobster pots, rocks and fog, Penobscot Bay is one of the world's

Sofia on POs Gary and Greta's dock in Norfolk

great cruising grounds and well worth the effort of heading that far north. We were sad not to be able to enjoy its many attractions on this occasion.

Anne returned to Marion at the end of September to move *Sofia* south to Beaufort, NC, with the help of US friends, before the onset of significant autumn gales and winter weather in New England. Despite the damage caused a few weeks earlier by Hurricane *Florence* to marinas in the area, POR Dianne Tetreault had managed to find *Sofia* a place in Homer Smith Docks and Marina from November to January, where I would be able to rejoin Anne for my recuperation to continue.

On Anne's return to Marion, Larry Hall once again came up trumps, providing the same level of support and hospitality as he had done previously. After her crew had been collected from Boston Airport, Anne decided that in view of the weather and the need to get to Annapolis on time for their return flight to Florida, it would be best to head directly to Cape May outside Long Island, rather than down Long Island Sound and through New York Harbour.

This plan worked well, and after a brief stop in Cape May *Sofia* headed up the Delaware River to the Chesapeake & Delaware Canal, with further stops at Reedy Island and Chesapeake City, before heading south down the Chesapeake. Sufficient time had been made up for a brief exploration of the Eastern Shore, calling in at St Michaels and Oxford prior to arriving in Annapolis. Here too PO Westbrook Murphy could not have been more helpful, and insisted that *Sofia* stay on his private dock in Almshouse Creek on South River while Anne arranged her crew change and sorted out various issues on the yacht. Westbrook and his charming wife Cindy were truly hospitable hosts – they provided transport for daily shopping trips, spent hours in Home Depot solving a plumbing problem, drove Anne's departing crew to Reagan Airport in Washington, DC, collected her incoming crew from the local train station some 20 miles away, and provided laundry and shower facilities in their home for all. Westbrook also drove Anne to several battery suppliers and called in an old friend with expertise in electrical issues to advise on her options. In addition, both he and Cindy had Anne to dinner on multiple occasions during her ten-day stay. Such was their hospitality that Anne said it was very hard to leave!





Anne rounding Cape Hatteras

Even so, as soon as Eve Wilhite arrived to crew *Sofia* for the next stage they set off down the Chesapeake in blustery and increasingly cold conditions. Following brief stop-overs in Deal Bay and Reedsville, they arrived in Norfolk to a warm welcome from POs Gary and Greta on their private dock complex, which had now been refurbished. Anne decided to remain in Norfolk for a week to assist Eve with repainting the deck of *Auntie*, in nearby Hampton Roads, before the weather deteriorated further. Once again Gary was very helpful in providing transport and, with provisioning complete and *Auntie*'s deck repainted, it was soon time to head south round Cape Hatteras, with a short stop-over in the anchorage behind Cape

Lookout before proceeding to the marina in Beaufort. As we had come to expect by now, POR Dianne Tetreault was helpfulness itself, providing transport and generous hospitality – a typically warm Southern welcome.

Dianne Tetreault, POR for Beaufort, North Carolina

With *Sofia* now safely tucked up in Beaufort for the winter our East Coast cruise had come to an end. In spite of my injury it had certainly lived up to our expectations – the rallies were great fun and very well organised, and the support we received from Port Officers along the way exceptional. In summary, there are many reasons for undertaking a cruise up the US East Coast, including:

- wonderful cruising grounds in the Chesapeake, Long Island Sound, New England and Maine;
- a series of very well-organised and enjoyable OCC rallies, which are sensibly spaced apart;
- an outstanding network of supportive Port Officers;
- great cities such as Charlestown, Washington DC, New York and Boston within easy reach.

