

## THREE THOUSAND MILES FOR A PINT!

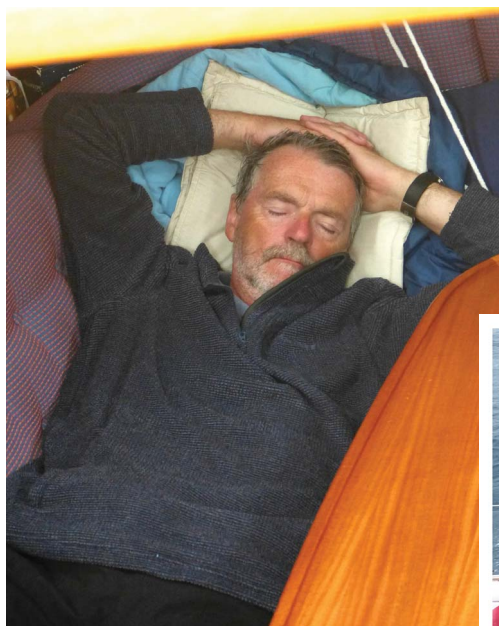
### David Burall

*(David and Susie were greenhorns when they joined Epic Ventures' Round Britain Rally in 1993 and benefited from the encouragement of experienced sailors. They qualified for the OCC with an Atlantic crossing in 1999 and in 2009 sailed Kerenza, their newly-commissioned Najad 380, from Sweden. This article was first published in the Chichester Yacht Club magazine and was written to encourage club members to venture out beyond Western Approaches!)*

In June 2017 Kerenza was in St Peter Port when Port Officer Dick Emery spotted our flying fish burgee and came on board for a coffee and asked, "Are you guys coming to the Azores next year?". I replied that we were far too old (150 years combined) for another ocean passage. "Get yourselves a couple of gorillas," he suggested. Susie glanced at me with an eyebrow raised and I knew we were committed! The idea of a Pursuit Rally – start anywhere in the world to arrive at noon on 18th June 2018 – was irresistible, so a few phone calls were enough to recruit Chichester YC sailing 'gorillas' Steve Cray and John Lake to crew on the passage out, and 'young gorilla' 18 year old Edward Cray for the return leg.

Kerenza sailed the CYC Cherbourg race on 26th May 2018. From there Susie and I made our way to Falmouth where we provisioned and Steve and John joined us, and after safety briefings etc and supper in the Royal Cornwall YC, on 6th June we

set sail. The winds were light, so we made some westing passing south of the Scillies. Aficionados say don't cruise to a deadline but we had one, so sadly it was on with the iron topsail. Historically June winds in the North Atlantic are mostly force 2–4 from the west-northwest quarter, but 2018 was the exception and for three days we had mainly light winds from the east-northeast (cold) quarter, logging 37 engine hours.



Kerenza's laid-back crew  
– John Lake (above) and  
Steve Cray (right)



The deal with quartermaster Susie was that she would be chief cook and bottle-washer and Steve, John and I would run four three-hour rolling night watches from 2100, with one on watch and one on standby in case it got rough. I also have a rule that the skipper is always called for any unusual event. This watch routine worked well, and the big plus was that the crew enjoyed a high standard and variety of cuisine appearing from the galley. We saw little traffic with few ships, but dolphins, turtles, a whale way off and, for a couple of days, fleets of Portuguese men o' war. A Norwegian singlehander in *Villekulla* was bound for Oslo via Hardway Sailing Club in Portsmouth Harbour. "Why Hardway SC – we've not heard of it?". "I stopped there on my way out and have to go back – they are either sailors with a drink problem or drinkers with a sailing problem!" came the reply. These VHF chats do help pass the time! Three days out from the Azores we picked up OCC yachts *Tyrian of Truro* and then *Manketti* on AIS and chatted about progress, the fickle winds and our superior cuisine.

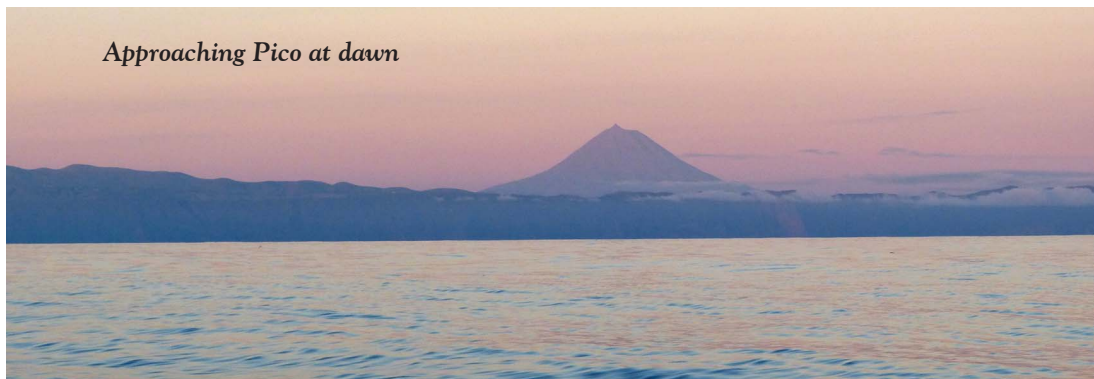
It was a relatively uneventful passage. With the wind astern we had some slightly worrying noises from the mast end of the boom. Our gorillas carried out a full inspection of the gooseneck and rod kicker fittings and found some wear but no risk of early failure. We decided to contact shore crew Alexander Cray and ask him to bring a spare gooseneck bracket when he and Louise flew out to greet us. Steve had a Garmin gadget – he has many gadgets – which logged our track on the internet and was used for texts to and from shore. I splashed out on an Iridium GO, mainly for PredictWind forecasts and routing plus texts and e-mails – a relatively cheap device but expensive airtime.

*Kerenza* sports furling main and genoa, a furling Code Zero\* and a top down furling gennaker\*\*. We used them all in different combinations, or none at all! I never get bored at sea – somehow the movement of the boat and the ever-changing seas are captivating. As skipper I do get anxious about fresh water consumption – we carry 400 litres plus bottled water for drinking (allowing a litre a day plus per head), and have a flow metre after the pump in order to monitor usage. Even more, I'm paranoid about power – *Kerenza* has 420 ampère hour battery capacity charged from the engine, plus an Efoyl fuel cell for support. We use the autopilot a lot, and together with the plotter these eat amps! I was more relaxed about diesel, with a range of around 900 miles from 325 litres in the tank plus two 20 litre cans on the deck. The guys say I'm obsessed about my teak decks!

\* A cross between a genoa and an asymmetrical spinnaker, used for sailing close-hauled in light airs.

\*\* A cross between a genoa and a spinnaker, but used when further off the wind.

*Approaching Pico at dawn*



*Flying the battle  
flag off Pico*



As with many passages the sailing was mixed, and frustrating at times. The log early on has a lot of east-northeast (astern) force 1–4, but for a couple of days it veered southeast 4–5 and then round to south-southwest, from which we had force 6 and hove-to for lunch in comfort at the saloon table! Later we had more westerly 3–4. I see from the log that our best noon-to-noon run was a modest 134 miles. In all we logged 1340 miles and approximately 90 hours under engine – we couldn't be late, with our shore crew waiting to greet us, and docked at 1430 on 17th June.

With organisational support from the OCC, Horta Port Officer José Henrique Azevedo – who has followed his father Peter and grandfather Eduardo in welcoming sailors to Peter Café Sport for a century – did a terrific

job. We enjoyed a roast pig barbecue, a bike ride down from the volcano, a trip over to Pico, whale watching, a *levada* walk, a grand dinner and more – a full week.

We said farewell to Steve and John and were joined by Mandy Lyne, a friend from Cambridge, for our cruise of the islands. We loved São Jorge, where we had three nights at the small marina at Velas. From there we sailed to Terceira to anchor off Angra de Heroísmo for a couple of nights, before continuing round to the east coast of the island and the marina at Praia da Vitória.



*Susie, approaching  
Horta*





*The ship's company about to cycle down to Horta from the volcano*

Car rental is inexpensive, as are most things in the Azores, and an excellent way to enjoy the beauty of these volcanic islands.

On 2nd July we pointed *Kerenza's* bow southeast and had a lumpy, uncomfortable night sail for the 90 miles to Ponta Delgada on São Miguel, the largest of the Azorean islands, where there is a large and well-served marina. The island is stunningly beautiful, a truly unspoiled gem in the middle of the Atlantic.

Reprovisioned and joined by Edward Cray, we set sail on 6th July for the homeward passage. The wind gods were kinder with more south and west, generally force 3–4. I was on watch at 0130 on 10th July in pitch darkness, when AIS picked up *Condor Valparaíso*, a large ship, 24 miles north-northeast and on an exactly convergent course – her heading indicated a CPA of around 200m!\* We were hard on the wind on port tack and my first thought was, 'are they on watch?'. Just in case, at 12 miles I called

\* CPA = Closest Point of Approach

*Beautiful São Jorge, with Pico and Faial on the horizon*





*A typical 'Imperio do Espirito Santo' chapel in Terceira*

on VHF and got the response, "Yacht Kerenza, I see nothing on radar". At least he wasn't fast asleep! At 5 miles this was amended to, "This is *Condor Valparaíso*. I see ve haff risk of collision!". He suggested I turned to port, but after a 'discussion' he reluctantly agreed to alter course so that we passed port to port.

The next day we completed a 150 mile noon-to-noon run, though for much of the passage our SOG\* was slowed by a 0.5–1 knot adverse current. Strangely, we hadn't noticed this much in our favour on the way out – was this because we were further east, or because sailors notice the unfavourable more than the favourable?

\* SOG = Speed Over Ground

*Central São Miguel*



*Hydrangeas line the road in São Miguel*

We enjoyed a couple of visits from dolphins and two fairly close encounters with whales. Then on 13th July we were chased by a minke whale of about 8m, which kept just off the stern for around 10 minutes – we wondered if he was a male looking for a mate? Finally he came alongside, rolled over, and turned away. These experiences, the night skies ablaze with a carpet of stars, the bioluminescence







*Edward, Skipper David and the Quartermaster  
in the Western Approaches*

and the sunsets are the joys of ocean sailing! Mandy and Ed bravely even went for a swim in 2000 fathoms! (No, I don't swim!)

On 17th July, after 1482 miles at sea, we anchored in the dark off Chichester Harbour's East Head to await the floodtide. It was just over seven weeks since we had left, the log read 3015 miles, and Susie and I had so many happy memories!

#### **Susie's notes on provisioning and the galley**

Food plays an important part in daily life on longer passages and a flexible approach works best for us. The routine of three meals a day interspersed with snacks and drinks becomes important, especially if it's cold and rough. Checking the weather forecast determines whether it's simple 'bowl' food or a more leisurely knife and fork occasion. Vacuum-packed meat from the butcher ensures longer life, and cooking double portions during calm spells helps when the sea state makes life difficult. If I'm the only one in the galley, then I know where I can lay my hands on everything! Offshore, washing up is done in seawater and rinsed in fresh to conserve supplies (no watermaker on *Kerenza*).

For night passages I fill a 5 litre airport\* with boiling water and store it in the small second sink so there's no boiling of kettles and clanging about while off watch crew are trying to sleep. Colour-coded insulated flasks from Sainsbury's (other suppliers available!) with handles hang in the sink. A large Tupperware® 'nightbox' is available containing snacks, coffee, tea, hot chocolate, cuppa soups, savoury/sweet biscuits, Mars Bars and Twix.

We don't run a 'dry' boat – wine, beer and soft drinks constitute happy hour around 1800 local time, giving an opportunity to air any grievances (we are living in a small environment and tensions are inevitable), chat about progress, or lack of, share news from home and engage in general banter – it is something to look forward to. A PredictWind forecast is eagerly awaited and routeing discussed.

'Land ahoy' is a welcome shout and there's always anticipation, excitement and a great sense of satisfaction that teamwork, a sound boat and preparation have paid off. Now all that's needed is a beer, a hot shower, a decent meal and an uninterrupted night's sleep!

\* An insulated, pump-action, hot water dispenser

