

## TAM O'SHANTER TO THE AZORES IN 2018/19

### Neil Hegarty

(Flying Fish 2018/2 left Neil, Anne and Tam O'Shanter in Galicia following the 2017 Irish Cruising Club Rally. Tam O'Shanter, a *Chance 37*, was a member of the 1973 Irish Admiral's Cup team and has been in Anne's family for more than 30 years.)

Until you retire you can never imagine the opportunities that are there to be grasped when you actually do it. If you had told me that I would sail to the Azores twice after my retirement I do not think I would have believed you ... not to mention all the other sailing that Anne and I have done since we met. A rally or meet has generally been the driving force as to where Anne's *Tam O'Shanter* would end up. This time it was the OCC's Azores Pursuit Rally. The idea that we could be back in the Azores again was exciting and also challenging for both of us.

*Tam O'Shanter* was in Travemunde for the whole of 2016 while Anne and I concentrated on bringing my *Shelduck* back to Ireland from America (see *Flying Fish* 2017/2). Our plan for 2017/18 was a slow wander home to Ireland for *Tam O'Shanter* through Germany, Holland, Belgium, France and England, but notice of the Irish Cruising Club Rally in Galicia's Rías Baixas in July 2017, followed by the Ocean Cruising Club's Rally in Horta in June 2018, changed that plan. The slow wander home became relatively quick passages – Travemunde to Galicia, then Galicia to the Azores.

On Thursday 31st May 2018, Anne and I took the 0500 Cork-Dublin Aircoach to fly Ryanair to Vigo. On arrival I arranged a taxi collection by Manuel, who had looked after us in July 2008 when my wife, Angela, was ill in Galicia. Even after ten years his number was still in my phone and he was delighted to see me again. The following day my daughter Patricia flew into Santiago airport from Paris, to join her brother John who had arrived from Cork. Manuel delivered them to *Tam O'Shanter*, berthed at Vilanova and well looked after by Benito over the previous winter.

At 1630 on Saturday 2nd June we left Vilanova for the 90 minute passage across the Ría de Arousa to Pobra do Caramiñal to get provisions for our crossing. After relaxing on Sunday, Anne and Patricia spent Monday – a very wet day – provisioning the boat while John and I went to the chandlery for gas and one or two other necessities.

On Tuesday we rose at 0700. Anne went ashore for a final shower while Patricia prepared breakfast, John filled our water tanks and I downloaded the weather forecasts. There was very little wind over all the northeastern Atlantic, and what there was was light and westerly. *Tam O'Shanter* was untied from the marina and we motored out of the windless and grey Ría de Arousa, hoisting sail at 1005 while surrounded by fishing boats and setting course for the Azores on a bearing of 260°. At 1800 we met very heavy traffic, mostly going south, which kept us alert throughout the night, and by 0800 had made good 133 miles, though only 15 under sail since 0200.

For the next five days it was sail up, sail down, motor on, motor off, sail up again. While we were sailing it was magical. With a gentle heave in the ocean *Tam O'Shanter* seemed to relish the freedom of being away, at last, from the shackles of mainland Europe.



### *Dining out in the Atlantic again!*

Under full sail in force 3–4 the helm was finger-light and the yacht perfectly balanced. It was some of the best sailing Anne and I had enjoyed in *Tam O'Shanter* since leaving Fenit in 2010. We were blessed, as there was so little wind over the North Atlantic that some participants returned to the English Channel having no hope of reaching Horta by midday on Monday 18th June.

We had been heading northwesterly when motoring, so when any wind – usually westerly – came up we were able to lay São Miguel or Santa Maria. By this tactic we reached Ponta Delgada at 0500 on Tuesday 12th with no fuel left, having covered 838 miles on

our zigzag passage from Pobra. By entering Ponta Delgada and not completing the minimum 500 mile passage to Horta we had retired from the ocean sailing part of the Rally, but otherwise we feared that we would not get there at all. We found the marina staff in Ponta Delgada very pleasant and, having fuelled up, set off again for Horta at 1000, still in very little wind. After motoring most of the way *Tam O'Shanter* berthed near reception at 0930 next morning, having logged 990 miles from Pobra.

We were allocated a berth on the end of the pier next to a larger French yacht belonging to a couple who had been sailing with their three children for the past few years. We could see *Tam O'Shanter* from Peter Café Sport, where all events started and where the Rally office was based. Horta is a very busy port and, as this was a pier-end berth, I was unsure we could manage all the boarding issues for the week. Our first gin and tonic went down very well however and, having tidied up after the crossing, we spent a couple of peaceful days swimming and relaxing. We also went in search of our painting from our 2009 visit and found, to our delight, that it was still partially there. Almost 50 yachts from both sides of the Atlantic reached Horta for the Rally, one having sailed from Japan via the Panama Canal, but *Tam O'Shanter* was the only Irish entrant to make it to Horta.

We were being joined for the shoreside events by my brother Frank, his wife Ann and my sister Jane. With difficult access to *Tam O'Shanter* six aboard suddenly seemed too many, and Jenny Crickmore-Thompson suggested I speak to José Azevedo, owner of Peter Café Sport, who helped arrange accommodation in two small but well-appointed

apartments a short distance from the café and the beach. With such beautiful lodgings in Horta we decided to take *Tam O'Shanter* to Terceira early – we had tried to book a berth for later in the month but were told that none were available, whereas if we came over immediately we would be allowed to stay until after my birthday on the 28th June. So we did.

At 1945 on Friday 15th June we cast off from Horta pier to head for Terceira, motoring between São Jorge and Pico. It was a cloudless, windless night and the lights on the islands were beautiful. At 0200 *Tam O'Shanter* turned around the southeast end of São Jorge for Angra do Heroísmo, arriving at 0700. We spent two beautiful days in Angra checking out the restaurants and facilities, and flew back to Horta on Monday 18th for the opening event of the Rally – a drinks reception followed by a walk to the historic fort overlooking Porto Pim Bay, where pigs were already roasting on spits. We were all presented with OCC plaques for our yachts.

Having slept ashore for the first time in weeks, I received a phone call at 1100 next morning from OCC secretary Rachelle Turk to say that *Tam O'Shanter* had been lifted ashore by the marina staff in Angra do Heroísmo. She had taken on some water during the night but, thankfully, our neighbour in the marina had noticed the problem and she was attended to very quickly. A seacock had not been fully closed and had back-siphoned in the Atlantic scend. I contacted the insurance company and booked a flight to Angra with the surveyor appointed by Pantaenius, our insurer, leaving Anne and Patricia to welcome my brother, sister-in-law and sister to Horta to start the shoreside events.

In Terceira, *Tam O'Shanter* was safely in a cradle. The surveyor immediately connected water to the engine, started it and confirmed it was okay, then continued to check the boat

*Tam O'Shanter looking small in Horta*





for his report. In Horta, with the family settled in the apartment, they attended a dinner hosted by Peter Café Sport. The following day, Wednesday 20th, Anne, Patricia, Frank, Ann and Jane visited the Capelinhos Volcano Interpretation Centre, built underground to avoid interfering with the existing landscape. Located at the site of the Capelinhos volcanic eruption some 60 years earlier, it is well worth a visit and explains so much about volcanoes. Patricia was delighted to see it again, having been there with me in 2009 when on *Shelduck*.

I flew back to Horta the next day, arriving in time for dinner at Praya Restaurante overlooking Almojarife beach. We enjoyed a lovely meal in yet another beautiful piece of modern architecture with stunning views. The 22nd was whale watching day, which Jane and Patricia had signed up for. They found it exhilarating as the RIBs travelled at speed, and said it was beautiful to watch the dolphins and especially the whales breaching in the open ocean. That evening we prepared for the final Rally dinner in Amor da Pátria, a beautiful Art Deco building opened in 1934 as a Masonic Lodge. Again we had a wonderful dinner, with generous speeches and presentations to every boat by José Azevedo.



With the Azores Pursuit Rally officially over it was time for Anne and me to return to Terceira to attend to *Tam O'Shanter*, so on Sunday 24th we departed Horta leaving Frank, Ann, Jane and Patricia to continue their holiday on Faial. Patricia reported that they took a ferry to Pico, where they hired a taxi to tour the island. They enjoyed lunch at Restaurante Cella Bar near Madalena, yet another award-winning building and extraordinary place to relax. The tour included going up into the clouds – Pico has the highest mountain in Portugal – and they

*Celebrating the  
feast of São João in  
Angra do Heroísmo*



*Neil, Brian, Ann, Anne, Jane, Frank and Beatrijs*

also visited vineyards, a UNESCO World Heritage site, and learned about the history of whaling, a big industry in the Azores until quite recently. On the 27th they flew from Faial over to Terceira to join other family and friends who had arrived to help celebrate my 80th birthday.

Our five-day visit to Terceira coincided with the *Sanjoaninas*, a festival dedicated to São João (Saint John) during which the locals fill the streets of Angra do Heroísmo for ten days during the month of June. In addition to marching bands and dancing we saw the running of the bulls on the port's slipway – I really couldn't have planned a better time to party in the Azores and to give friends Beatrijs and Brian Murphy O'Connor and my family a great introduction to these amazing islands!

By now we had been away for a full month and it was time to return to West Cork and Kerry for some home time. So on Saturday 30th Anne and I flew home, leaving *Tam O'Shanter* safe in the hands of the boatyard.

At the Irish Cruising Club's Annual Dinner in Killarney in March 2019 Anne Hammick, then Commodore of the OCC, joined us at our table for a chat after the meal. On learning that *Tam O'Shanter* was in Terceira she asked if I had met Linda Lane Thornton, our Port Officer for the island, which I had not. So I wrote to tell her about *Tam O'Shanter* and to ask if she could go and check her in the yard. Linda made a singlehanded North Atlantic circuit in an Achilles 9 metre from 1979 to 1982, visiting the Caribbean, Bermuda and the Azores. Later she and Andy, her husband, did a five-year circumnavigation in their Nicholson 35 *Coromandel*, ending in 2013. Linda wrote about it in her book *Fair Winds and Safe Passage* (reviewed in *Flying Fish* 2015/1).

Early in April Anne and I decided to head out to Terceira and see how *Tam O'Shanter* had over-wintered and meet Linda and Andy, who had bought a house and spent their



first winter there. We enjoyed a lovely dinner with them swapping sailing experiences, and Linda agreed to keep an eye on *Tam O'Shanter*. Anne had recently decided to sell her house in Tralee, so we returned to Ireland to look after the house sale and the move. One trip we managed was from Baltimore out to the Fastnet Rock, in memory of those who had lost their lives 40 years previously in the '79 Fastnet Race.

With the house move completed, we headed back to the Azores on 21st September to relax and see *Tam O'Shanter*, though our first stop was down memory lane to the island of Santa Maria. That is where we first met, after lunch at the Clube Naval on 21st July 2009 during the ICC/RCC Azores Rally. On that occasion Anne had flown in from Ponta Delgada and didn't get the opportunity to do the island tour. This time I made sure she saw as much of the island as possible. We enjoyed a 2½ kilometre walk from our hotel to the Clube Naval for lunch, and visited the *Shelduck/Yoshi* wall painting, still in very good condition after ten years. We could not resist the Clube Naval, so returned and dined in the restaurant that evening. Tuesday 24th was to be a cloudless, sunny day so, as planned, I repeated with Anne the 2009 island tour that I had enjoyed so much, stopping for a leisurely swim at Praia Formosa.



The next day we flew from Santa Maria to Terceira to visit *Tam O'Shanter*, as we wanted to check what needed to be done to prepare her for the winter. Linda very kindly collected us from the airport and that evening we dined with her and Andy at Tasca das Tias, one of our favourite restaurants in Angra. My family still talk about the clams they ate there in June 2018! On the Friday Barry and Maggie, friends of Linda and Andy, collected us at our hotel and took us to Linda and Andy's house where we all enjoyed a leisurely lunch. During the afternoon Anne and I first heard about Hurricane *Lorenzo*, which might pass over the

***Anne by the harbour  
wall in Vila do Porto,  
Santa Maria***

*Tam O'Shanter tied down  
awaiting Hurricane Lorenzo*

Azores and was forecast to bring 60 knot winds. The following day we flew home.

On 1st October I received a text from Linda to say that *Lorenzo* was indeed heading their way and that *Tam O'Shanter* had been strapped down fore and aft. The next day another text confirmed that all was well with Anne's yacht. There was no great damage done in Terceira, but the harbour wall at Lajes das Flores had been very badly damaged.

We have now been to the Azores three times since our first trip with the ICC in 2009 and here we are in 2019, ten years on. I cannot recommend these islands enough for their nature, architecture and wonderful people, but most of all for the sailing. It is island hopping at its best. The North Atlantic, as well as being fearful, can be quiet, peaceful and beautiful.

