

WHAT DO YOU *DO* ALL DAY?

Linda Lane Thornton

(After many years of home-waters cruising, Linda and Andy set off in 2008 aboard their Nicholson 35 Coromandel Quest (now shortened to simply Coromandel) for what became a westabout circumnavigation, completed in 2013.)

As liveaboard cruisers, you know what day-to-day life either at anchor or in a marina is like. Some things are similar to living in a more conventional environment – shopping for food, cooking, eating, washing up, little

DIY jobs (or FIY jobs – use your

imagination as to what

the F stands for!) – but

others are somewhat

different. One question

we're often asked, by

both landlubbers and

weekend cruisers, is

"What do you do all

day?" Of course we

read and listen to

books, clean the boat,

make plans, play ...

but since childhood,

needlework of all kinds

has been my constant

companion, and I

cannot even remember

a time when I couldn't

knit. Patchwork and

quilting are part of this

repertoire and are now

the outlet for my artistic

expression.

When Andy and I left

Blyth in 2007 I decided

to make journal quilts –

small quilts A4 (about

21 x 30cm or 8½ x 12

inches) in size, which

would commemorate

each month of our

travels. At that time, I

didn't realise that we would end up going all around the world: the original plan was to

spend the summer on the west coast of Scotland.

Sunset in Pierowall



So I'd like to share with you some of my favourite journal quilts, and describe the events that surround them. To me they are like time machines: I look at one and am instantly transported back to the time and place depicted in the quilt, which in turn brings back memories of the people we met, the things we did (climbing to the top of the nearest pointy bit is essential to my well-being), the food we ate and the drinks we tried – some memorable for their sheer awfulness, like the local rum we bought in one of the Caribbean islands and ended up using to kill fish. The fish didn't seem to think much of it either.

Sunset in Pierowall

When we left Blyth, our home port some 15 miles north of Newcastle upon Tyne, our original destination was the Shetland Islands, which we had not previously visited. Nature, however, had other ideas and the southerly force 5 we had when we left Peterhead, just north of Aberdeen, gradually increased to force 7, then more rapidly to forces 8, 9 and 10, fortunately from the south. So we altered course and headed instead for Pierowall on Westray in the Orkney Islands, happy to find that the wind

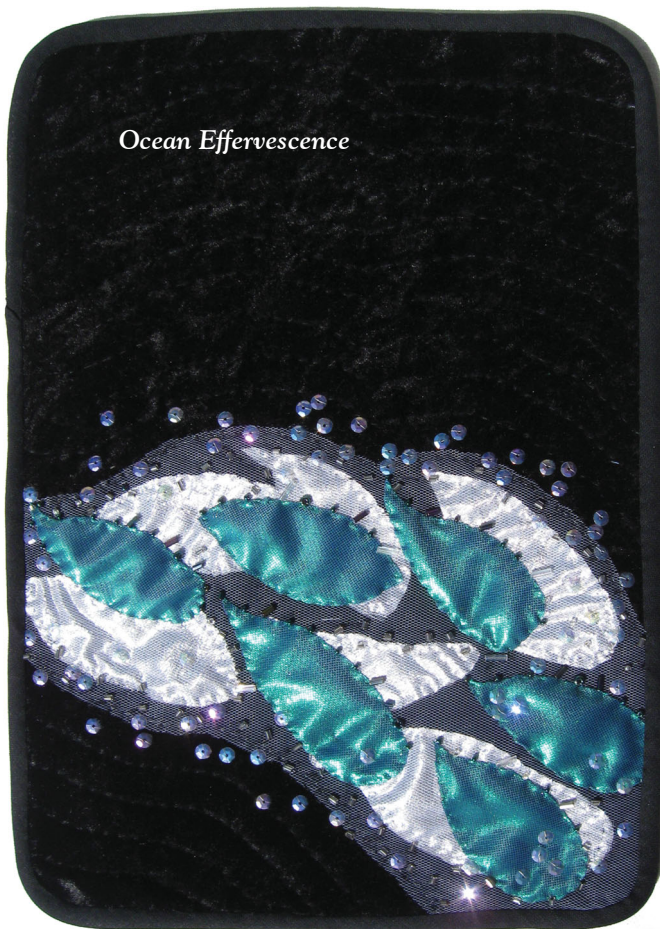
had decreased to a more benign

force 7 by the time we came to negotiate the pontoons of the tiny marina. (See *Layback in the Orkney Islands*, *Flying Fish* 2007/1, for the full story). Sitting on the harbour wall a few nights later, we watched the sun set in a wash of lavender, apricot and lemon as the little local boats bobbed on their moorings. I can still taste the wee (well, not so wee really) dram of Laphroaig that we sipped as we contemplated our new lifestyle. The resulting journal quilt, *Sunset in Pierowall*, remains one of my favourites.



Ballena

Dolphins and whales are an integral part of the cruising life, and we have had many experiences with them, some benign, some rather more alarming. In Ecuador we had the opportunity of



Ocean Effervescence

going whale-watching, as the Humboldt whales were migrating. I managed to capture a photograph of one of them as he breached, and from the photo produced this journal quilt – *Ballena* (Spanish for whale, although in Ecuador it is pronounced *bajena*, with a soft j). What I loved about this encounter was the sheer exuberance of the whale, almost punching the air with triumphant glee. We've seen many whales since, but I don't think I've experienced the same sense of delight as I did with this one – especially as he was quite a distance away, unlike the ones in the Indian Ocean which surfaced about a boat's length ahead of us while we were under spinnaker.

Ocean Effervescence

The last 300 miles from Neiafu in Tonga to Whangarei in New Zealand took five days, and we took more damage in those five days than we had in the entire Pacific. This included my being thrown sideways through the cupboard doors above the heads, knocking them both off their hinges and giving me a severe thump on the shoulder. About the only thing that made the passage bearable was watching the bioluminescence in the water at night, which glowed and sparkled in a myriad shades of blue and green – or so it seemed at the time. I think it has been bettered only during the passage round the Cape of Good Hope, when the whole surface of the sea seemed to glow an unearthly green and the shapes of the dolphins were outlined as they played around us. This journal quilt also reminds me of the friends I made at the Whangarei Patchworkers' and Quilters' Club, which I joined while I was in New Zealand. The aquamarine and silver fabrics came from the stash of a lady, Marie Finnegan, whose daughter did belly-dancing – Marie had brought in a big bag full of remnants and I was happy to take a few sparkly bits for this project. So although the sailing experience may not have been wholly enjoyable, the friends I made in Whangarei more than made up for the few days of discomfort.

The Waterhole

I had seen photographs of Aboriginal art, but was not prepared for the stunning sight of the real thing when we visited the Museum of the Northern Territories in Darwin whilst *Coromandel* was anchored in Fannie Bay. In the heat of the day, the museum was a good place to cool down, so Andy and I spent a lot of time there. Some artists use figurative motifs to depict people and animals, a visual shorthand which is easy to read once you know the key. People are represented by circles, their digging sticks by strips and a *coolamon*, a container made from bark which women use for carrying food items such as honey ants, witchety grubs or bush onions – collectively known as bush tucker – is represented by an oval. Animals and birds, such as kangaroos, goanas and emus, are depicted by the tracks they leave on the ground.

These paintings are simple, colourful, and often tell a story: a glimpse of a moment in time. I learned that it can be the act of painting that is of vital, often ritual, importance rather than the finished painting itself. I sketched this design after visiting the museum, sitting on the beach looking out to sea and wondering what the Never-Never looked like in the dry season. The story behind it goes like this: *It is the dry season. A man with his digging sticks is sitting behind a rock near a waterhole. On the opposite side of the waterhole two kangaroos are sitting drinking. Four more kangaroos are waiting to drink. Beneath the soil is a network of roots from bush onions. In the rainy season they will spring into life.*



Ikan Berenang

If you cruise Indonesia, you will eat seafood – fried, baked, stuffed, boiled. *Ikan bakar* – baked fish – became one of my favourite meals, especially the fish encrusted with

Ikan Berenang

palm sugar which we ate in Maropokot, cooked by the wife of the harbourmaster. When we were in Belitung, a beautiful island with the most amazing granite boulders, one particular beach bar did *cumi* – deep fried squid, which was served in a bowl the size of a baby bath. Mona's *cumi* (pronounced *choomi*) has become the standard by which Andy judges all other deep fried squid. So I knew that I wanted to have something fishy as a memory of Indonesia. I did several sketches, but I didn't have any fabric which reminded me of fish, so I put the sketches on hold. A month or so later, we

were wandering around the old town of Phuket in Thailand when I saw a bolt of fabric with designs of fish: perfect! Mindful of the limited space I have aboard *Coromandel* for storing such things I managed to persuade the young man to sell me just 25cm, then fussy-cut the two fish in the quilt ('fussy-cut' means to cut out a motif specific to one's purpose – which could be from the centre of the piece). *Ikan Berenang* means *Swimming Fish*, so this quilt reminds me of all things fishy in Indonesia.



Anak Krakatoa

The ancient volcano of Krakatoa lies between Sumatra and Java. It is most famous for obliterating itself in an explosive eruption in 1883 that was heard as far away as Japan and New Zealand – the dust thrown up into the atmosphere gave rise to brilliant sunsets for nearly three years. Today a new volcano, Anak Krakatoa – *Child of Krakatoa* – rises from the centre of the ancient *caldera* and we spent our last night in Indonesian waters anchored to the south of Anak Krakatoa but still within the old *caldera*. It was very calm, with a slight zephyr from the west, and we decided to go to the south anchorage to avoid the particulates that were drifting from the summit. The charts indicated a

depth of 25m, but as we approached we found the depth shallowing – 25, 20, 15, 10 – eventually we anchored in about 5m. Andy was still sitting out on deck watching the afterglow of sunset while I was doing the washing up, when a tremendous explosion sent me hurtling up on deck to see a huge plume of smoke and ash ascending from the crater. We could see glowing pieces of rock raining down into the sea, trailing smoke behind them. Secondary explosions continued for another three hours or so before the volcano settled down for the evening. After a very tranquil night we awoke to a glassily flat calm and a quiescent volcano. Wandering around the deck Andy asked, “Have you see these bubbles?”. All around *Coromandel* little bubbles were rising to the surface. “I think we’ll be on our way,” he said, going forward to start taking in the anchor. When the chain came up it was not only bright and shiny – it was hot as well, So this quilt shows Anak Krakatoa in full swing.

Anak Krakatoa

Inspiration continues to flow in – from the sea, from landscapes, from the ever-changing moods of the weather. I do a lot of daydreaming about what I could do, especially on night watches when the only light comes from the moon and stars. The

constantly changing wave patterns, the different colours of breaking waves, the play of light on the sea – are all stimulating to the creative impulse. That, at least, is my excuse for sitting doing nothing, just watching the waves roll past.

