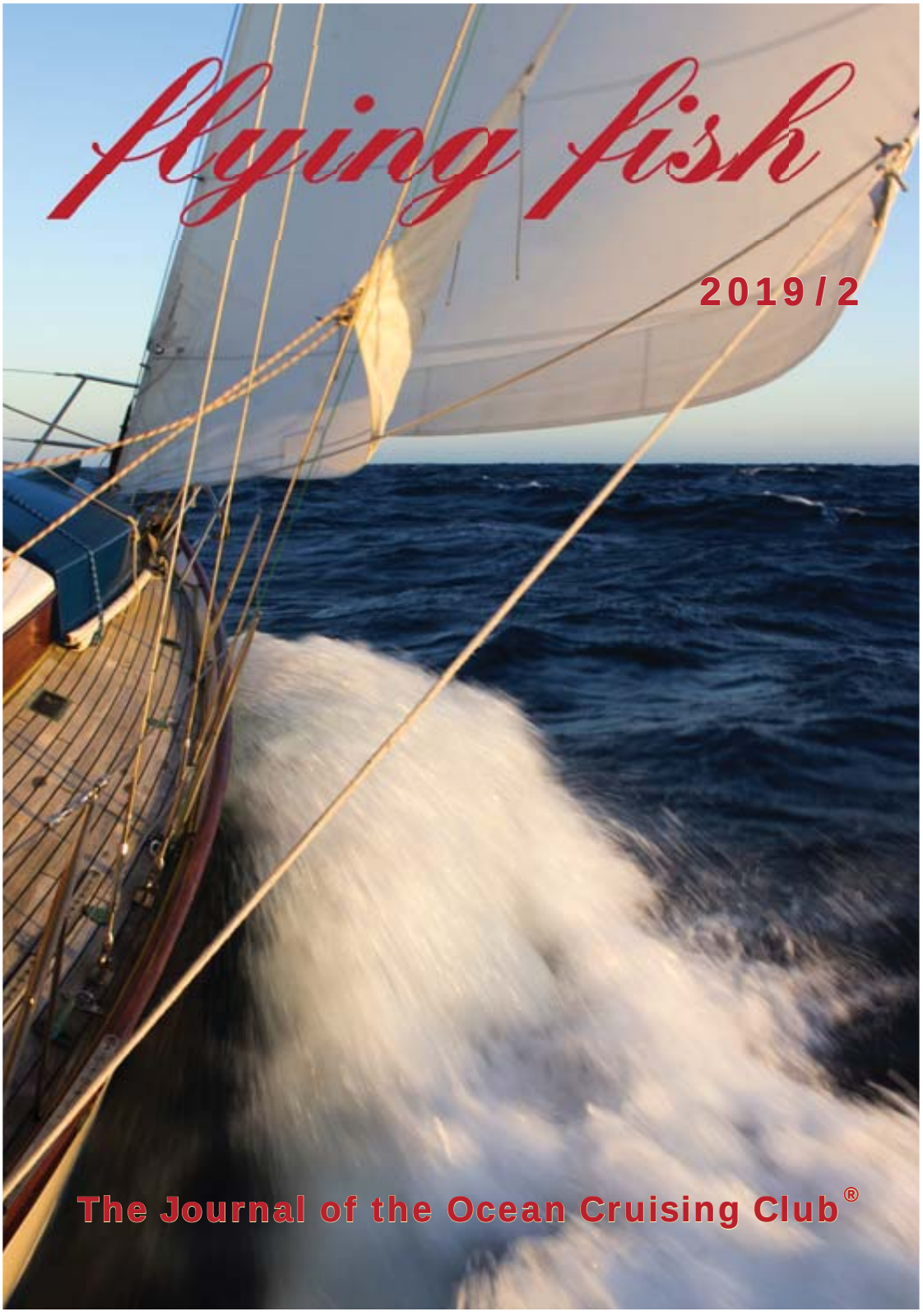


Flying Fish

2019/2

The Journal of the Ocean Cruising Club®

Liquid assets.

Beauty and durability — Epifanes coatings offer you both. Our long lasting varnish formulas let you craft brightwork that outshines and outlasts the rest. Our two-part Poly-urethane paints flow perfectly and apply easily with a roller-only application, resulting in superior abrasion protection and an unsurpassed mirror-like finish. Look for Epifanes at your favourite marine store. And check out the "Why We Roll" video on our Facebook page.

EPIFANES®
Yacht Coatings

AALSMEER, HOLLAND ▪ THOMASTON, ME ▪ MIDLAND, ONTARIO ▪ ABERDEEN, HONG KONG
+1 207 354 0804 ▪ www.epifanes.com

FOLLOW US

OCC officers

FOUNDED 1954

COMMODORE	Simon Currin
VICE COMMODORES	Daria Blackwell
	Paul Furniss
REAR COMMODORES	Jenny Crickmore-Thompson
	Zdenka Griswold
REGIONAL REAR COMMODORES	
GREAT BRITAIN	Beth & Bone Bushnell
IRELAND	Alex Blackwell
NORTH WEST EUROPE	Hans Hansell
NORTH EAST USA	Dick & Moira Bentzel
SOUTH EAST USA	Bill & Lydia Strickland
WEST COAST NORTH AMERICA	Ian Grant
CALIFORNIA & MEXICO (W)	Rick Whiting
NORTH EAST AUSTRALIA	Nick Halsey
SOUTH EAST AUSTRALIA	Paul & Lynn Furniss
ROVING REAR COMMODORES	Nicky & Reg Barker, Suzanne & David Chappell, Andrew Curtain, Franco Ferrero & Kath McNulty, Ernie Godshalk, Frank Hatfull, Bill Heaton & Grace Arnison, Alistair Hill, Barry Kennedy, Stuart & Anne Letton, Pam McBrayne & Denis Moonan, Sarah & Phil Tadd, Sue & Andy Warman

PAST COMMODORES

1954-1960	Humphrey Barton	1994-1998	Tony Vasey
1960-1968	Tim Heywood	1998-2002	Mike Pocock
1968-1975	Brian Stewart	2002-2006	Alan Taylor
1975-1982	Peter Carter-Ruck	2006-2009	Martin Thomas
1982-1988	John Foot	2009-2012	Bill McLaren
1988-1994	Mary Barton	2012-2016	John Franklin
		2016-2019	Anne Hammick

SECRETARY	Rachelle Turk Westbourne House, 4 Vicarage Hill Dartmouth, Devon TQ6 9EW, UK Tel: (UK) +44 20 7099 2678 Tel: (USA) +1 844 696 4480 *e-mail*: secretary@oceancruisingclub.org
EDITOR, *FLYING FISH*	Anne Hammick *Tel*: +44 1326 212857 *e-mail*: flying.fish@oceancruisingclub.org
OCC ADVERTISING	Details page 232
OCC WEBSITE	www.oceancruisingclub.org

CONTENTS

HEALTH WARNING

The information in this publication is not to be used for navigation. It is largely anecdotal, while the views expressed are those of the individual contributors and are not necessarily shared nor endorsed by the OCC or its members. The material in this journal may be inaccurate or out-of-date – you rely upon it at your own risk.

I nearly always write my editorial at the very last minute, with the justification that until I know exactly what the issue will contain, how can I write about it? But this time I have four things on my list – no five! – so here we go...

Having bade goodbye to Bungay Printers in my June editorial, I'd be saying 'hello' to Hobbs the Printers if I hadn't already visited them in Southampton, as well as having been corresponding with them for the past six months or so. This is their first *Fish*, following the September *Newsletter*, and they've already proved themselves both pleasant and professional to work with. I foresee a long and successful partnership.

Secondly, as someone who never passed a language exam at school and is now struggling to learn Portuguese, I have to mention the three members who have written articles for this issue despite English not being their first language. Thierry Courvoisier shares the third part of *Cérès's* voyage through the Russian inland waterways, Helena Klocke continues her passage aboard *Kiwa* begun in the last issue, and we join Eugénie Nottebohm aboard *Guilia* as she progresses from a nervous newbie skipper to an accomplished singlehander, largely illustrated by her own drawings and watercolours. I'm filled with admiration for all three!

As the author of a number of books I was also very impressed by Leanne Vogel's *Western Caribbean Cookbook*, which features nearly 80 recipes contributed by participants in the 2018–2019 OCC *Suzie Too* Rally from Curaçao to Belize. Plainly a great deal of socialising went on and, as we all know, when yachties socialise food nearly always features. Many of her fellow cooks have given permission for their recipes to appear in *Flying Fish*, and the first two will be found in this issue with more to follow in the future. Alternatively, visit https://oceancruisingclub.org/Publications to download the entire book as a PDF or order a hard copy – it would make an excellent present for a fellow sailor.

Next, I owe sincere apologies to Alastair Fraser who should have been credited, together with his sister Caroline, for the obituary about their mother Ann in *Flying Fish* 2019/1. I'm confident that Ann would have understood, however – an unforgettable character and good friend, she was famous for losing and mislaying things!

Finally the usual reminder – the submissions DE**ADLINE** for **Flying Fish 2020/1** is Saturday 1st February, but as I have three articles already on file, plus another three promised, it would be unwise to leave it until the last moment. If you've not contributed previously please take a look at *Sending Submissions to Flying Fish* on page 34, or the more detailed *Guidelines for Contributors* downloadable from the website at https://oceancruisingclub.org/Flying-Fish-Archive. I shall be away – and away from wifi – for much of December, however, so don't panic if you e-mail me and don't get a proper reply for weeks, though I'll post an out-of-office message if I can remember how!

Cover photo: Celeste with a bone in her teeth en route to San Francisco from Cape Flattery, Washington State – see 'Passage to San Francisco', page 5. Photo Ellen Massey Leonard and Seth Leonard

mailasail
satellite communications

WiFi onboard

Specialists in WiFi, 4G and satellite for reliable internet onboard

Unbeatable prices on WiFi, 4G & satellite

- Iridium 9555/9575 handheld phones
- Inmarsat Fleet One and FleetBroadBand FB150 / FB250
- Iridium Pilot and **NEW!** Iridium Certus
- WiFi boosters and 4G modems

World class backup & support

- Excellent after sales service
- Global delivery and technical support
- Who else will you call mid-ocean?

Joining the dots

- Email compression services
- Blogging and position tracking
- Weather services - use your favourite app!
- Firewalls to control spend

Buy from the market leaders in communications
(Don't forget to ask for your OCC discount!)

mailasail
satellite communications
AZAB
AZORES AND BACK RACE 2019

Proud sponsors of the 2019 MailASail Azores and Back Yacht Race!

BEST QUALITY

+44 20 70432832
www.mailasail.com

PASSAGE TO SAN FRANCISCO
Ellen Massey Leonard

(*Following a four-year circumnavigation from 2006 until 2010, Ellen and Seth are now based in Hawaii. Over the past six years they have cruised most of the Pacific rim from Alaska to Mexico, in addition to completing a second Pacific crossing followed by a three-month cruise through the French Polynesian islands.*

Celeste *is a 40ft wooden cutter, designed by Francis Kinney and built by Bent Jespersen in Sidney, BC in 1986. Although classic above the waterline, she sports a fin keel and a separate skeg-hung rudder.*

All photographs were taken by Ellen or Seth, as was this issue's dramatic cover photo. Visit their impressive blog at https://gonefloatabout.com/ for many more.)

The West Coast of the United States is not known for its idyllic sailing grounds. From Washington's Juan de Fuca Strait down to San Francisco, and even beyond, the coast is a rock-strewn lee shore, indented by only a few harbours with difficult bar entrances. The most notorious of these is the Columbia River, infamous for its enormous breaking waves. The northern West Coast is known for fog, strong, cold winds, confused seas and a south-flowing current that eddies weirdly at Cape Mendocino and other headlands. In short, it's a place most sailors just want to get past in order to reach the warmer climes of Mexico and the idyllic cruising in the Sea of Cortez.

Sailors in the Pacific Northwest, contemplating the passage south, all agree that the trip isn't easy and that the longer you wait in the year the worse the passage will be. They also tend to concur on calling in at San Francisco Bay, a milestone after which the hops are shorter and the weather milder. That's pretty much where consensus ends.

Celeste sails past one of Southeast Alaska's many waterfalls

Regarding the detail of the passage, there are as many theories as there are sailors, which is appropriate given that every day is different out there, every boat is different, and each person's passage will be a unique experience.

The theories run along several lines. One topic is the latest date by which a sailor must round Cape Flattery, the headland at the entrance to the Strait of Juan de Fuca, gateway from the Inside Passage to the North Pacific and the northwestern tip of Washington State. On this issue there is the least controversy, with most sailors agreeing that it's a bad idea to go later than 1st October. Another point of friendly debate is whether or not to make a direct passage from Neah Bay, the harbour just inside Cape Flattery, to San Francisco, or to break up the passage at various harbours along the Washington, Oregon, and Northern California coasts.

Related to this is the question of how far to stand offshore before turning south. One school of thought says to stay close – only 5 to 10 miles off – so that you can duck into port quickly when a gale is forecast, and cross the bar before it becomes dangerous and the Coast Guard closes the harbour. Another is to go well offshore – as much as 200 miles – on the theory that the swells are better behaved in the deep water beyond the continental shelf, the wind potentially more consistent, sea room great enough to run before a storm, and crab pots non-existent should you encounter a calm and have to motor. Yet another idea is simply to sail the rhumb line between Cape Flattery and Cape Mendocino, the next big cape one has to round before reaching San Francisco. This puts you between 20 and 60 miles offshore at any given time, not ideal for ducking into harbour or for running before a storm, but – at around 700 nautical miles – the shortest and thus potentially fastest route. All of these theories are correct, of course, depending on conditions, forecasts, each individual boat, and each individual sailor's preferences. So the story of the passage that my husband Seth and I made is simply one example of the many possible ways to tackle this trip.

Seth and I originally intended to make this voyage in 2016, setting off right at the end of September as soon as we'd completed our boatyard work in Port Angeles, Washington. Our cold-moulded wooden cutter *Celeste* had spent the previous three years in Alaska, including a voyage to the Arctic and two winters in Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands. As many people know from the television show *Deadliest Catch*, Dutch Harbor sees major storms every year, and one of these had damaged *Celeste*.

In October 2015 a typhoon from Japan curved northeast through the Aleutian chain,

Part of the damage sustained in Dutch Harbor. Note the distorted turnbuckle (bottlescrew) at far right

A cold winter in Washington State

bringing rotating winds of more than 100 knots to Dutch Harbor. Fortunately the only storage for sailboats there is in the water, so *Celeste* was not blown over on the hard but merely caught her toe-rail under the dock. One of her chainplates and the turnbuckle (bottlescrew) on one of her shrouds were bent, the jib track was mangled, her jib cars were pulverised, part of her toe-rail was splintered and several stanchions were bent. Seth and I patched up the essential repairs before setting sail again in the spring of 2016, but there was much more to be done once we reached the well-stocked chandlers and boatyards of Washington State. In addition to the remaining repairs there was also some deferred maintenance, such as a new cutlass bearing and fresh varnish.

As is so often the case, the more we did the more we found to do – including entirely new standing rigging – and our launch date kept getting pushed back. We missed the 1st October deadline, but we hoped we might still find a window to go before November. At the time we were not as adamant about the 1st October date as many West Coast sailors. We knew the weather would deteriorate, but we had sailed in some pretty terrible weather in the Arctic and knew *Celeste* could handle it, and we had yet to learn just how fast and how badly conditions could deteriorate off the West Coast.

We learned soon enough. October seemed to be one big low pressure system, with high winds knocking trees on to power lines and heavy rain falling for 28 days out of 31. November was worse, with the GRIB files featuring big purple and red blotches slamming into the Oregon and Washington coasts one after another. By December Seth and I had resigned ourselves to the reality that the only way we'd reach San Francisco that year was by car.

Kodiak bear and cub

When spring finally arrived in late April, we decided to take advantage of the fact that we were still in the Pacific Northwest and spend another summer exploring more of Alaska. We sailed as far as Kodiak Island and gunkholed around there before turning around, which meant that we were running late again. On reaching the Inside Passage we sped south, mostly sailing non-stop day and night with only occasional pauses in deference to the strong tidal streams. Some of our friends thought we were nuts – after all, it still felt like summer in British Columbia even in mid-September. But we knew from the year before how important that 1st October deadline was – we were positively determined to have rounded Cape Flattery by then.

We reached Port Angeles again by 22nd September, said hello-goodbye to our friends there, dealt with some much-needed marine toilet maintenance, and checked the weather forecasts, heaving sighs of relief at the prediction of steady 20–30 knot

Making haste through the Inside Passage

Port Angeles pier

northwest winds. We cast off for Neah Bay on 28th September. The prevailing wind in the Juan de Fuca Strait is westerly, often with some force, which essentially doubles the 60 miles between Port Angeles and Neah Bay. We were blessed with a dead calm on our departure day and motored over glassy water the whole way, reaching the anchorage just in time to be positioned for the strong northwesterly which we hoped would carry us all the way to San Francisco.

September 29th dawned grey and gusty, with the kind of cold, horizontal rain that tells the Pacific Northwest that summer is over. The wind was blowing 15–20 knots from the southwest, which meant we faced a wet beat around Cape Flattery and then a close reach down the coast until – we hoped – the wind veered into the northwest. Between the southwest wind and the east-setting current flowing into Juan de Fuca Strait we had a slow, choppy start. By the time we'd finally rounded the Cape, our

Sea stacks at Neah Bay

The sun came out and the seas lay down as we rounded Cape Flattery

foulweather gear was dripping with spray and rain and our nerves were a little frayed from dodging shipping traffic in the intermittent, low-lying fog. But we'd made it! We'd rounded Cape Flattery two days before our deadline. As if Neptune was celebrating with us, the skies cleared almost as soon as we'd rounded. The seas lay down as soon as we got out of the worst of the current and the wind diminished enough to make our close reach quite comfortable. We had a lovely view of the famous cape ... and then we were off to San Francisco!

Due to the prediction of steady northwesterlies, Seth and I had decided to sail the rhumb line route between Cape Flattery and Cape Mendocino. If the GRIBs were correct, we would not encounter more than a fresh gale (force 8), and that from a favourable direction. We wouldn't have to duck into a harbour and, as interesting as the ports of Washington and Oregon no doubt are, we wanted to take advantage

A brown pelican, denizen of the California coast

of the weather window to do a non-stop passage. We also had a bit of a schedule, having signed up for the Cruising Club of America's bi-annual members' meeting and dinner, which was to take place in San Francisco on 12th October. Furthermore, with such good wind in the forecast, there seemed no need to go far offshore and add many more miles to the trip – we would be sailing, not motoring, so were much less worried about catching crab trap lines (autumn is Dungeness crab fishing season on the West Coast) and, while the smoother seas beyond the continental shelf would doubtless be more comfortable, we didn't think it was worth it in exchange for adding two days to the passage.

Easy 'camping' meals …

By dawn on 30th September the wind had come into the west and we were rollicking along on a beam reach. *Celeste*'s combination of fairly light displacement (for a cruising boat), long overhangs, narrow beam and rounded hull shape makes her a lively ride – her motion has even been known to make some of our Southern Ocean sailor friends a little ill. So we felt no shame in eating quick and easy 'camping' meals on these first two days of the passage – no time in the galley and no dishes to wash. Next day, when we were about 60 miles off Oregon, the wind veered into the northwest and began to build, gradually and steadily. Soon *Celeste* was in her element, rushing ahead with the wind on her quarter. She loves a strong wind from astern – more than 20 knots and her motion smooths right out.

The wind continued to build next day, and reached its peak at about 0500 as we passed Cape Mendocino 20 miles off on a moonless, partly cloudy night. We were not quite far enough away to avoid the unpleasant, swirling currents and resulting steep, choppy waves. Our Cape Horn wind vane had been working beautifully throughout the passage until a big wave crashed full over *Celeste*, clean over her cabin top. The wave broke off one of the blocks that led the control lines from the wind vane's rudder to *Celeste*'s tiller. We spent the next half hour with me at the helm and Seth struggling with a head-torch, fasteners, and screwdriver to repair the problem, but then the wind vane took over again and steered us the rest of the way to the Golden Gate.

Our northwesterly eased over the final two days of the passage and we noticed a significant increase in air temperature. Gone also were northern birds – the murres, rhinoceros auklets and northern fulmars – and instead we began to see those comic denizens of the California coast, brown pelicans. In the late afternoon of 4th October, five and a half days after leaving Neah Bay, the Marin Headlands loomed out of a bank of fog – the perfect, quintessential San Francisco landfall. Reddish brown in the evening light, they meant the end of the big West Coast passage, the completion of a tough trip.

The wind died with the sunset and we started the engine for the first time since Neah Bay. The fog remained thick over the Golden Gate, cloaking that narrow strait and its famous red bridge in a damp quilt. Between the darkness and the fog,

Approaching San Francisco Bay and its characteristic fog

Seth furls sail as we approach the Golden Gate

the visibility was reduced to practically nothing. Even with an excellent radar, chartplotter, AIS and foghorn, plus my local knowledge as a native San Franciscan, it would probably have been more prudent to heave-to and wait until morning to enter the Bay, but we went ahead anyway, excited to have arrived and looking forward to waking up in the city the next morning.

The moon over San Francisco

A time-exposure of the Golden Gate in fog at night as seen from Celeste's deck

The tide was with us, shooting us under the bridge as our radar picked out the ships going in and out. Everything was going well, with the radar targets lining up with the AIS-identified container ships, tankers, and freighters. We were keeping well to our side of the channel, out of everyone's way. Then a radar target appeared that had no corresponding identification on the AIS. What was it? It looked large enough to be a ship, and prior to AIS and the requirement that all commercial ships have transponders we would have known for certain that it was, but we were very stressed until we actually saw it looming in the fog. It was most definitely a ship. We passed each other with no problems, but it was a tense moment and I still do not know why the ship was not transmitting on AIS. It was a little lesson, though, in how technology – when it fails – can sometimes make things more confusing than they were before, and why it's important not to neglect simple skills like listening for foghorn blasts.

But then we were through, under the Golden Gate Bridge and into San Francisco Bay. Suddenly we were motoring under clear skies – the fog was stopped up in the Golden Gate and hadn't spilled into the Bay. The moon shone big and bright overhead, the city's lights formed a sparkling skyline, and the Bay Bridge was outlined in a million twinkling bulbs. We turned north for Richardson Bay, the free anchorage area off Sausalito, opposite the city of San Francisco. Once the anchor was down and holding, the sail cover on, the lines coiled, and the cabin tidied, we opened a celebratory bottle of champagne and toasted our arrival in one of the world's great coastal cities.

This article first appeared in the American magazine *Ocean Navigator*.

Free State Yachts

International Yacht Brokers

Since 1981

Specializing in Quality Cruising Yachts

Lolygag, Hallberg Rassy 49,
Deale, MD Call for details

Our brokers and administrative personnel are uniquely qualified and dedicated to assist clients in the different aspects of buying or selling their yachts. We offer 35+ years of experience in brokerage, new yacht sales, yacht commissioning, service & repair, after - sale support , circumnavigation planning.

***Scout,* Hallberg-Rassy 39, Deale, MD**
Call for details

We've been selling a lot of boats, and need more listings!

Please contact us if you are considering listing your boat.

Please visit our website for more information about what we can do for you!
www.freestateyachts.com
Meet our brokers
Roger Johansson and Bob Frantz

Contact us @ 1-800-871-1333 01-410-867-9022
sales@freestateyachts.com
www.freestateyachts.com

Hallberg-Rassy

THERE AND BACK AGAIN … A BALTIC CRUISE

Neil Matson

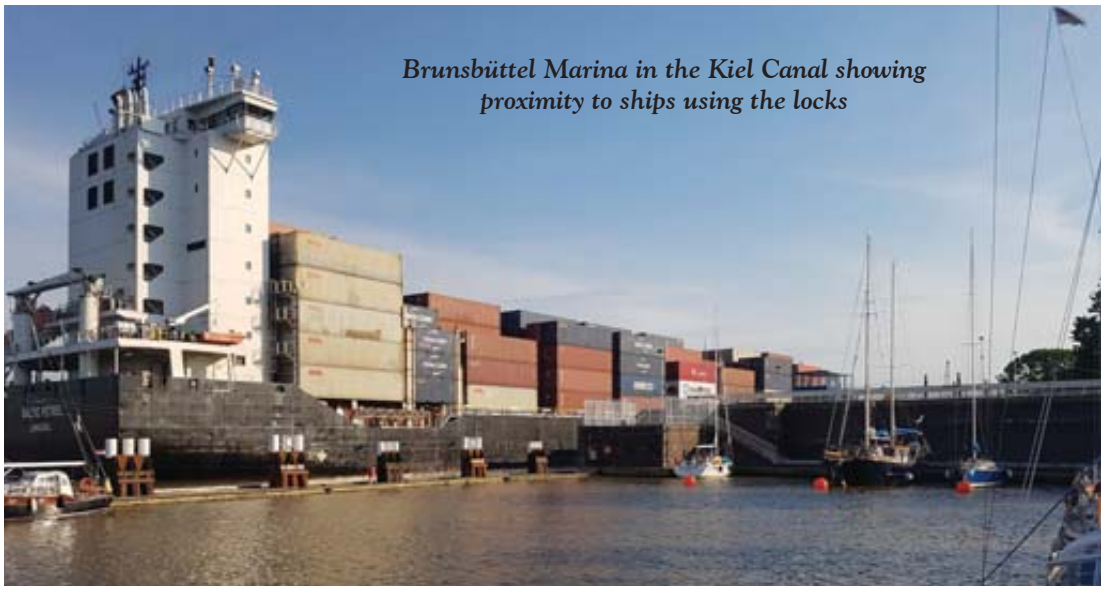
(Neil has impressive single and two-handed racing experience, including the 2009 Fastnet and 2011 Azores and Back Races, in addition to family cruising around the English Channel coasts. But there's always somewhere new to explore…)

The idea of heading for the Baltic started whilst cruising the rías of northwest Spain in 2016. There we met Frank and Tine from Hamburg, who said, "You must sail the Baltic, it's beautiful". Then in 2017 we met Bert from Amsterdam who said exactly the same thing. So, at the beginning of May 2018, I set off sailing solo on *Vela Fresca*, my Dufour 34 Performance, allowing myself plenty of time to get to Lübeck to meet my wife Liz, who would fly into Hamburg to join me. In 24 years of solo/short-handed offshore racing and cruising from my home in the West Country I had sailed to France, Ireland, Spain, Madeira, the Canaries and the Azores, but I had never sailed east past the Strait of Dover.

I had a number of options for reaching the Baltic from the West Country. One was to sail along the south coast, across the Thames Estuary, then cross the North Sea to the Netherlands and take the Staande Mast (standing mast) route from Ijmuiden or Den Helder to Delfzijl – thereby avoiding a good part of the (sometimes difficult) North Sea – and then enter the Baltic via the Kiel Canal. Another was to cross to Ijmuiden or Den Helder, stay outside the Frisian Islands to Cuxhaven, and again use the Kiel Canal. A third was to cross the Channel before reaching the Thames Estuary, coastal sail along France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany, again for the Kiel Canal. After careful study I ruled out the Staande Mast route due to inconsistencies in advice as to whether, with my 2·1m draught, I could get through (I later discovered that part of the route had been closed for bridge repairs for nearly three months that summer … always check!). I hadn't decided which of the other two routes to take when I departed, but I was prepared for both.

A busy Dutch Bank Holiday in Oudeschild Marina on Texel

After brief stops at Cowes and Brighton I started tacking along the coast in a pleasant



Brunsbüttel Marina in the Kiel Canal showing proximity to ships using the locks

force 3 northeasterly, planning to reach Dover and consider options there. However, a tack out of Rye Bay opened up the opportunity of an excellent reach across the Channel to Boulogne, so I took it. Arriving off Boulogne in the early evening, with a pleasant though dying breeze, I continued through the night, taking care through the shoals off Northern France. By late afternoon the next day, with a mixture of sailing and motor-sailing, I had passed France and Belgium and came into Breskens in the Netherlands and the pleasant marina there. All had gone well and I felt that I had made good progress.

A couple of days in Breskens was followed by a good sail past Europort – checking in with the port authorities as required before crossing the port entrance – and on to Scheveningen near Den Haag. From there a day sail took us past Ijmuiden and Den Helder to Oudeschild on Texel, the start of the Frisian Island chain. With my 2·1m draught I had intended to continue outside the Frisian Islands rather than chance the inland waters, but a chance encounter with a very helpful Dutch couple moored next to me in Oudeschild, together with a poor forecast in the North Sea, tempted me to take the inshore route to Vlieland. This was via the Scheurrak passage, and my new friends emphasised the need to be at buoys 47 and 48 at high water to ensure safe passage. Stronger than expected headwinds and a consequent boat-slowing chop delayed my arrival at these buoys by 20 minutes and this was enough to give me some anxious moments with little water under the keel. The lessons were: be very careful with tides in Dutch waters, and follow the buoys and not the charts. There is so much silting and shifting of sand inside the Frisian Islands that charts are out-of-date almost as soon as they are published, whereas the coastguard check and move buoys regularly to give the best passage. If in doubt, call the coastguard – they are extremely helpful.

With my folding bike deployed, Vlieland and its marina were a delight. I was getting used to the sheer intensity of local sailing and the variety of craft, with the Dutch barges particularly impressive. The next stop was Lauwersoog where a long entrance and a badly silted 'new' marina caused some difficulties. From there, via a brisk overnight sail, I timed my entrance to the Elbe on a flood tide and put into Cuxhaven, poised for the Kiel Canal.


NORWAY
58°N
10°E
20°E
N
Skagerrak
Kattegat
SWEDEN
DENMARK
GERMANY
POLAND
LATVIA
LITHUANIA
RUSSIA
Baltic Sea
Lickershamn
FÅRÖ
Farösund
Grankullaviken
GOTLAND
Ventspils
Kalmar
ÖLAND
Liepāja
Karlskrona
UTKLAPAN
Åspö
HANÖ
TÄRNÖ
Klaipėda
Copenhagen
Dragor
Höllviken
Ystad
Simrishamn
Rodvig
CHRISTIANSÖ
FEMÖ
Klintholm
BORNHOLM
Svaneke
Bagenkop
Sassnitz
Kaliningrad
Kappeln
Schlei
Hel
Sopot
Gdańsk
Westerplatte
FEHMARN ISLAND
RÜGEN ISLAND
Kiel Canal
Kiel
Laboe
Orth
Stralsund
Brunsbüttel
Travemünde
Kühlungsborn
Cuxhaven
Lübeck
Elbe
54°N

Sailing boats of all shapes and sizes share the Baltic

With another flood tide I locked into the Kiel Canal (negotiating the extremely low pontoon that you have to secure to in the lock) and spent the night in Brunsbüttel next to the locks. The Kiel Canal was fascinating – what a piece of engineering! I had already been impressed by the amount of shipping in the North Sea, and could hardly believe the size and number of ships passing through the Canal in both directions (nor how close they pass you...). On exiting the Canal I made my way to Laboe at the entrance to Kiel, then on to Orth on Fehmarn Island, Travemünde and then inland to Lübeck where, having completed nearly 780 miles, Liz joined me.

Lübeck, with a marina close to the city centre, was very pleasant. Leaving there we headed north via Kühlungsborn and into Stralsund, opposite Rügen Island. An old Hansa town, Stralsund was friendly and full of fascinating history. The main marina was a short walk into town and there were pleasant beaches nearby. After a few days we continued to Sassnitz on the east coast of Rügen Island, and there congratulated ourselves on managing our first box berth (doing better than some fully crewed local boats!).

Next came a 70 mile beam reach across to Svaneke, a small harbour on the Danish island of Bornholm. Bornholm is advertised as the Baltic island with the most sunshine, but unfortunately it rained for one of the two days we were there. We crossed to the nearby small island of Christiansø with its natural harbour and peaceful setting. In the past it had been a place of exile, and from 1826 to 1841 its reluctant inhabitants included the Danish theologian, scholar and political activist J J Dampe.

An overnight motor-sail east brought us to Poland and the peninsula of Hel. This was fascinating with, like much of the Eastern Baltic, a mixture of long beaches, historical buildings and relics of its Soviet era. We had a short sail from Hel to Gdańsk, past the memorial at Westerplatte (ensign duly dipped in respect) and mile upon mile of busy shipyards. The marina was right in the heart of this vibrant city, 80 percent of which

The entrance to the Danish island of Christiansø

had been destroyed during World War Two. Large areas of historical buildings have been painstakingly restored and others are still being restored, all standing alongside modern buildings and redevelopments. There was history throughout the city, along with a sense of tragedy from its wartime near destruction, as exemplified by the imposing and impressive Second World War museum. There was also a sense of energy and

Dipping the ensign by the Westerplatte memorial, Gdańsk

Gdańsk as seen from the city centre marina

purpose as it continues to strive to rebuild and develop itself. We were impressed. From Gdańsk we sailed a short way up the coast to the very different, fashionable town of Sopot, where we sat out a couple of days of strong winds.

The sea area off the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad sits across the direct route between Sopot and Lithuania. We had heard many tales of difficulty in crossing this area due to it frequently being closed off for Russian naval manoeuvres – and being firmly patrolled during such times. The Swedish Navtex service was invaluable in giving up-to-date

The sand dunes of Nida in Lithuania. A Russian watch-tower from the Kaliningrad enclave can be seen in the background

information, as dates and duration of closure can change at very short notice. We made it through, but only by dint of an unpleasant overnight sail with strong headwinds and an uncomfortable sea. Arriving at the port of Klaipėda in Lithuania, we were made welcome by the harbour master and given a berth in the Castle Marina. A day trip, by local ferry and bus, to the sands at Nida was excellent.

Another day, another country – Latvia – with a brief stop in Liepäja and then on to Ventspils. Since leaving Sopot we had been experiencing increasingly stronger and cooler northerly headwinds. The summer of 2018 was unusual throughout Europe and the Baltic was no exception – during the summer the winds are usually southwesterly, so the consistent northerly winds were not expected. In Ventspils we were weatherbound for six days as the northerly winds reached gale force with rain. We took the opportunity to travel inland a short distance to Kuldīga, a small, peaceful, medieval town boasting the widest waterfall in Europe. At the first weather opportunity, with the wind continuing to be northerly and with an eye on how much time we had left, we left Ventspils and reluctantly turned west rather than pushing on to Estonia. As if to validate our decision the sun began to shine and we enjoyed a glorious 80 mile reach across to the Swedish island of Gotland, arriving in the Fårösund at 0300 – but we were so far north that it now barely became dark. We secured to a rickety pontoon in a small marina and enjoyed the spectacular scenery.

In a way we were now heading home, although there was still plenty to see and do as we sailed from Fårö to Lickershamn and then on to the island of Öland and a superb quiet anchorage and abandoned quay at Grankullaviken. From there we sailed across and into the famous Swedish Archipelago – a myriad of small islands, anchorages and harbours. The locals say that "There are two types of sailors in the Baltic – those who have hit rocks and those who haven't hit rocks ... yet!" Fortunately we were travelling very slowly under engine (looking for a transit line!) when we nudged our submerged

En route to Gotland in the late evening

The harbour at Utiklapan

rock – it was not on the charts (paper or electronic) but it would be extraordinarily difficult for every rock to be shown. There are 'safe passages' shown on charts and used by ferries, commercial craft and leisure boats, and we used these, but in such surroundings it's almost a 'must' to do a little exploring! As a precaution we were lifted out in Kalmar and a visual inspection showed superficial scratches on the bottom of the keel. Suitably chastened but reassured, we resumed our travels.

Kalmar was impressive, especially the castle. There were more islands to explore – carefully! – as we rounded the south of Sweden and headed west. The small isolated island of Utiklapan, first used as a place of refuge by fishermen and then fortified, was very atmospheric with its natural harbour and lighthouse.

We continued west through small islands with stops at Aspö near Karlskrona, Tärnö, Hanö, Simrishamn and Ystad before passing through the canal at Höllviken and

Well-sheltered in Danish Bagenkop

entering Danish waters. Dragør was a very pleasant harbour, a short bus ride from Copenhagen. Then we headed south-southwest along the Danish coast via Rødvig, Klintholm, the Femø Sund and Bagenkop to Kappeln in Germany. Kappeln is inside the entrance to the River Schlei and breathes boat building, especially wooden boats. The river and its towns were very pleasant and peaceful and the scenery stunning. It was only a day sail to Kiel, where Liz returned home and two friends, Steve and Rachel, joined me for the final part of the cruise.

We left Kiel in the latter half of August, by which time there was already a sense that the Baltic summer was coming to an end with more variable weather conditions. Making full use of weather windows we reached Vlieland, where we sat out some bad weather. Then, with further poor weather predicted, we cut inland, sailing from Vlieland to Harlingen and locking into the remarkable inland waters of the Ijsselmeer and, after a brief stop in Enkhuizen, the Markermeer. We sailed through Amsterdam, exited into the North Sea at Ijmuiden, and stopped at Scheveningen. A superb sail from Scheveningen along the coasts of Belgium and Northern France, continuing through the night to the following day, brought us to Brighton and recovery time. From there, via Yarmouth on the Isle of Wight, we continued to my mooring in Devon.

The cruise ran from early May to early September, covered some 2900 miles including 1400 miles in the Baltic, and took in seven countries. The Baltic is steeped in history, has spectacular scenery, wonderful people and varied cultures, and has a real pride in its maritime heritage. From busy city marinas to isolated anchorages there is much to appreciate and enjoy. Just be careful of perhaps shallower waters than we are used to (unless you are an East coast sailor) and ... rocks!

A version of this article appeared in the August 2019 issue of *Sailing Today*.

Scene on the River Schlei

MARINE SUPER STORE

www.marinesuperstore.com

In-store or online, we stock a wide range of technical clothing, safety, marine electronics and general chandlery

Free UK mainland delivery on orders over £100

Find Us
7-11 The Slipway
Port Solent
Portsmouth
PO6 4TR

Contact Us
+44 2392 219433
sales@marinesuperstore.com

TRUSTPILOT

www.bruntonspropellers.com

Discounts available for members of the Ocean Cruising Club

BRUNTONS

VARIFOLD

The ultimate propeller for cruiser racer yachts.

A unique blade design ensures the lowest possible levels of noise and vibration with excellent performance ahead and astern under power, and minimal drag under sail. For engines to 1000hp.

AUTOPROP

Lets you sail faster... and motor farther.

The unique auto pitching abilities of the Autoprop propeller have made it a firm favourite among cruising yachtsmen for many years.

SIGMADRIVE

...the 21st century solution to noise and vibration.

The SigmaDrive is an easy to fit, no maintenance unit made from a special bronze alloy and contains no rubber or bearings. There is a model for virtually any type of drive and engines up to 1300hp.

Bruntons Propellers Ltd

T: +44 (0)1255 420005 E: sales@bruntons-propellers.com

Oakwood Business Park, Stephenson Road West, Clacton-on-Sea, Essex, CO15 4TL, UK

www.bruntonspropellers.com

BERMUDA TO ENGLAND – MY FIRST SAILING EXPERIENCE, Part 1

John Robshaw

(*Past member John Robshaw forwarded this account of a transatlantic passage with OCC Founder Hum Barton in 1969, thinking – quite rightly – that we might like to add a copy to the Club archives. Wearing my dual hats as both Archivist and Editor, I felt it deserved a wider audience.*)

It was 1969 and I was into my second year of travelling. I had spent a year working in Bermuda and then Barbados and was planning to head to Europe next. Although I had no sailing experience to speak of, I had my heart set on crossing the Atlantic by crewing on a yacht. I had no schedule or time pressures and was looking for ways to travel as slowly and interestingly as possible. Since I was leaving the Caribbean in May I hoped to catch a yacht heading back to Europe for the summer sailing season, but unfortunately it seemed I was a few weeks too late and would have no choice but to fly to Europe, with a stopover back home in Canada first.

On my way to Canada I decided to call at Bermuda to see friends, and was picked up at the airport by John, with whom I was staying. On the way from the airport, when I was relaying my story of my search for a crewing job, he told me that just that morning the local newspaper had run a story about a famous old sailor who had just arrived from the Caribbean and was looking for one more crew member for the passage to Europe. What a coincidence!


le's nearly 70 — and he plans another voyage across Atlantic

The newspaper cutting which John had seen the morning I arrived in Bermuda

Rose Rambler in the Caribbean

Next morning I headed to the yacht club in St George's hoping to be interviewed for the job. I knew the odds seemed stacked against me – I couldn't cook or navigate and I didn't even know my way around a boat ... but I WAS eager! I had a long and very enjoyable chat with skipper Humphrey (Hum) Barton and his first mate Bill. They told me the plan was to stop at the Azores and then head to Portugal or Gibraltar since the boat was in need of work. Bill and I were both 25 and we really connected. As I was leaving he whispered to me that I'd be OK since I was English, educated and could pay my way after the trip was over – three key requirements for Hum.

After the interview I dropped into the offices of Cooper & Lines, the accounting firm where I'd worked while I lived in Bermuda. I spoke to one of the partners, who I knew was a keen sailor, and told him about my possible imminent sailing opportunity. When I mentioned that the skipper was 69, had a heart condition and was half blind, he strongly suggested that I would be taking a huge risk and should reconsider my decision, but before I could change my mind I got a call to say I'd been accepted.

I boarded *Rose Rambler* at 5pm on 24th May 1969 and stowed my gear, after following advice to wrap it in plastic bags. When I first met Hum little did I know I was in the presence of an accomplished and well-known sailor. He was Admiral and Founder of what became the internationally-known Ocean Cruising Club, counting such famous sailors of the day as Sir Robin Knox-Johnston and Sir Alec Rose among its members. Hum thought the membership was about 650, but at the end of the voyage we discovered that it was actually 1800.

Hum was born in 1900 so was 69 when I met him. He was quite a story-teller and we learned many details of his adventurous life. He had qualified as a pilot in the First World War and been a naval engineer in the Reserves in the Second. He was the author of three books about his sailing adventures, as well as many articles. One was about his 1950 two-handed crossing from England to New York in a 25ft yacht with no engine. The voyage took 47 days, of which "four days were spent in a hurricane that just about finished them off".

He had been a yacht surveyor in his later working life, valuing boats for insurance purposes, and had retired ten years previously. Now he lived aboard *Rosie* and spent his time sailing around the Atlantic and Mediterranean, following the sun. He thought he had set the record for Atlantic crossings in small yachts – I think it was 14 by 1969. He said many times that this was going to be his last long trip, since it was getting to be too much for him. When I joined the boat in Bermuda he was beginning the second to last leg of his 1968/1969 cruise, which had started in Malta and had taken him to 99 ports in the previous 14 months – a true rambler!

He was wiry and about 6ft tall, and a 'tough old sea dog'. He told us he'd had meningitis, malaria, typhus (the only survivor of an epidemic in a settlement in Malaya, now Malaysia) and broken ribs. His eyesight was so bad he couldn't make out a face more than a few feet away and was planning to have cataract surgery when he was next in England. The meningitis had damaged his legs and he needed assistance to walk. His liver was bad as a result of the diseases he'd had and, no doubt, his alcohol consumption. He 'smoked like a chimney and drank like a fish' as the saying goes. His coronary heart disease, *angina pectoris*, acted up periodically, for which he had medication. He could be quite grouchy at these times, so Bill and I tried to humour him and keep his mind on something else.

Bill Nelson turned 26 during the trip. He was an extremely capable sailor, whose father and friends were all sailors and who had lived near the sea all his life. The passage might have taken much longer if Bill hadn't been on board, as he was adept at solving most of the mechanical and sailing gear problems we encountered, sometimes with Hum's guidance. I found him to be very likeable, with a great sense of humour and also very patient while 'teaching me the ropes'. Bill and his wife had sailed from England to the West Indies, crewing on another yacht. They then worked for a hotel in Antigua and when that job finished his wife, five or six months pregnant, flew back to England. Bill moved on to the British Virgin Islands where he met up with Hum, whom I believe he had known previously since they were both from the same part of England. Bill and Hum sailed from the BVI to Bermuda with an ex-WREN officer, but she left when they made landfall.

The day after I boarded Bill gave me a detailed tour to learn various nautical terms and sailing procedures – I discovered that Hum was a real stickler for the use of correct terminology! *Rose Rambler* incorporated everything he thought that a yacht of her size should have, based on his considerable sailing experience and from his many years surveying boats. Five years old at that time and the first of the Rambler class, she was a 35ft sloop, 29ft on the waterline with 5ft 6in draught, 9ft 9in beam and a 42ft mast. She displaced 8 or 9 tons, including 2½ tons of ballast, making her a sturdy and seaworthy ocean cruising yacht, and had a top speed under sail of about 7 knots. She was powered by a 36hp Perkins four-cylinder diesel, and carried 70 gallons of fuel which gave a cruising range of 700 miles – quite a distance for a small yacht. This came in handy when we experienced calm weather en route to the Azores as we were not forced to ration our fuel too strictly. She could carry up to 80 gallons of water, and we used two gallons a day between the three of us when economising. Food was calculated at 25lbs per head per week and we left Bermuda with about four weeks' supply. So all in all, with food, fuel and water, we were 1800 to 2000lbs heavier at the beginning of the passage than at the end.

Before we left Bermuda we were berthed alongside another yacht from England, a 42ft yawl yacht named *Nanice*. They were also heading to the Azores and Hum decided we would leave when they did and race them. Her cruising range under power was only about 100 miles, so we thought that if we ran into much calm weather we would have no trouble beating them. At 0915 on Monday 26th May we set sail from Bermuda on the first leg of our journey with *Nanice* right behind us. We were pretty well on our own, however, as our radio transmitter wasn't working due to a lightning strike *Rosie* had suffered earlier on.

The first day's sail was agonisingly slow as there was little wind, and we managed only 62 miles in 24 hours. The temperature was in the 80s Fahrenheit (the high 30s Celsius), the sun was beating down, and we were inching our way through the 'Bermuda swell' with the boat slowly pitching and rolling. This gave me a headache and I had no appetite for lunch, but fortunately I didn't get seasick and by supper time I felt fine. After that I was in a constant state of hunger and never missed a meal.

Steering was easy, as she was so well balanced that her Gunning windvane self-steering could steer her for hours and sometimes days if the conditions were right. It made our lives much easier as we could stay below in the cabin and just pop up every 15 or 20 minutes to check the compass and ensure everything was okay. It also meant we could have our meals in peace and comfort, not least because both stove and saloon table were gimballed. We steered by the compass, and if the wind was too light we motored. On the first leg we motored about 250 miles because at one point we hit a calm which lasted four days.

Hum taught me how to use the sextant and plot our position on the chart. The angle of the sun at its highest point, or zenith, gives your latitude, and a combination of measurements at other times of the day are 'reduced' using mathematical tables to give you your longitude. Both are lines, and the intersection of the two is, in theory at least, your actual location. The north star can be used in the same manner. I found that the determination of the angles and the use of the sextant came easily to me – the mind of an accountant, I suppose. Hum told me I could always get an ocean crewing berth if I knew how to navigate.

We towed a 'log line' consisting of a simple rotator mechanism, like a large spinner, on the end of a 40–50ft line, to measure distance through the water. At the end of each watch we recorded the miles travelled in the log book, together with the compass course, estimated wind force and direction, and any other relevant information such as ships sighted and their courses, sail changes and times of starting and stopping the engine (fuel consumption was also checked periodically by dipping the tanks). We would then plot our estimated position on the chart and compare it to our dead reckoning position as a double-check on the accuracy of our celestial navigation. There were sometimes slight differences, but generally they were pretty close.

We split the day into a watch schedule for cockpit duties, while those off duty could sleep or do whatever. I was on from 1400 to 1600, 2100 to midnight and 0600 to 0900, which meant I cooked breakfast. While on watch we were responsible for ensuring we stayed on course, watching for wind changes and trimming the sails accordingly, and watching out for squalls by checking cloud formations. One of the most important duties was to watch for commercial shipping. We had a radar reflector, but it was only a foot or so across and I always wondered how much

of a blip it made on a ship's radar screen. It would have been a great help to be able to contact an approaching ship by radio, but as mentioned earlier, our radio transmitter was dead.

Sleeping was not a problem with all the fresh air and exercise we were getting. 0600 came around very quickly, but once on deck the wind and movement of the boat woke me up instantly. We used fabric guards (lee cloths in the UK, leeboards in the US) to keep us from falling out if the boat rolled too much – up to 40° in rough weather. We were on port tack for the last 12 days of the passage because the north-northeast wind remained constant. The deck over my bunk leaked when we shipped water and there was constant dripping which I tried to avoid when sleeping. The motion of the boat made me dream constantly, in colour and about different things each night. Hum talked in his sleep, sometimes carrying on a conversation and getting cross if you didn't answer!

We ate very well. We had an icebox so had fresh meat, vegetables and fruit for the first five or six days, and after that ate tinned or packaged food. My appetite hit an all-time high while at sea and I was permanently hungry. Hum made lunch and supper and was a pretty good cook, and we had an impressive variety of concoctions even when a lot of it came from cans. I did the washing up and, every few days, pumped the bilges. Cooking and eating was fun and sometimes challenging, especially in high seas but, amazingly, we never ended up wearing any of our food. I suggested dragging a fishing line behind the boat, but Hum had experienced fishing lines getting hopelessly tangled with the log line.

Humphrey Barton's Vertue XXXV, during her 1954 crossing of the North Atlantic which led directly to the founding of the Ocean Cruising Club. Oil on canvas by the late Roy Glanville RBA RSMA

Between, and sometimes during, watches we played cards, read, slept or navigated. I read Hum's three books first and then whatever else was available. We listened to the radio, always trying to pick up a music station, but most of the time we had to settle for the BBC or US overseas news broadcasts, or occasionally a communist station. Bill and I decided that, to avoid one dangerous task, we would grow beards rather than shave. It was quite sunny for most of the passage and not as cold as I had expected – I even had a few chances to sunbathe *au naturel* when I was sheltered from the wind – and it only rained on maybe three or four days. If we needed to go up on deck in the rain or in a high sea we wore one of Hum's weather-proof coats, so we never got wet to any degree and none of us even had the sniffles.

Often at night there was bioluminescence in our wake. I gather this is caused by tiny plankton-like organisms that produce bright pin-points in the water when disturbed. When schools of fish came close at night they sometimes created bioluminescent streaks, and it was quite a sight to see porpoises crossing the bow at night, leaving shining trails like torpedo tracks, then suddenly veering off or under the boat to appear on the other side. One night I saw a bioluminescent trail about 100 yards away. It was 70 or 80 yards long and kept appearing and disappearing. I thought a huge sea monster might appear, but I think it must have been a school of fish swimming close to the surface. It was passing us so must have been caused by something alive. It was quite a sight!

I went through the log book before we reached the Azores and here are a few excerpts:

2nd day: sighted two large (±30ft) whales cavorting on the surface not more than 30 or 40 yards from the boat and seemingly quite oblivious to us. Later we sighted and then came alongside *Nanice*, which was stuck in a calm. We motored off, leaving them drifting around aimlessly, and didn't see them again until we reached the Azores. (We felt confident we would win the race, but later they picked up a better wind than us and ended up beating us by three days!)

4th day: electrical storm with much lightning during my night watch, but fortunately we weren't hit. We hove-to, had a couple of drinks and went to bed to let the storm blow itself out. It had moved on by morning.

6th day: set a *Rose Rambler* record, according to Hum, for distance travelled in 24 hours of 165 sea miles – she must have been doing close to her maximum speed of about 7 knots. The sea was high and the crests ran 10–15ft, often higher than the cabin top. (A sailor never refers to a 'wave', according to Hum – that is what someone does with their arms when they're saying goodbye.) Most of that day we were running downwind. During my night watch I remember happily singing away to myself and feeling the excitement of speed as we surfed on the crests, until Hum was jolted awake by the turbulence and decided we should reef.

9th day: sighted our first ship in eight days, a Dutch freighter which altered course to get a closer look at us. Often, according to Hum, they'd ask if you needed anything and sometimes they'd pester you until you made them feel good by asking for something. *Rosie* must have looked the size of a cork with a matchstick for a mast from a ship in

A scrimshaw portrait of Humphrey Barton, in the collection of Peter Café Sport, Horta

mid ocean. We sighted ten ships on the passage, but saw very little other life except for jellyfish and a 10ft wide manta ray floating on the surface – and the porpoises, of course. Most of the time we were sailing in water three to four miles deep.

12th day: Bill's birthday. We celebrated with a bottle of wine that Hum had kept for a special occasion, followed by rum and Tia Maria. Unfortunately there were no ladies on board to complete the party.

16th day: saw three ships and figured we were crossing the shipping lane between Gibraltar or the English Channel and New York.

18th day: last day. We sighted land at 0830 (everything seemed to happen on my watch!) when the tip of the island of Pico's 7700ft volcano came into view. The peak was about 10 miles beyond our destination of Horta, a main stopover port for international yachts and the main town on Fayal (now usually spelt Faial). As we got closer to land it was apparent that we were exactly on course – Bill, who was doing most of the navigating, had produced an extremely accurate landfall!

Just after we sighted land a small plane flew overhead three times at about 100ft altitude – so low that we could clearly see the pilot. We found out later that it was a Portuguese Air Force plane searching for schools of tuna, which were an important part of the Azorean economy at that time. They also reported us to Horta, because *Nanice* had alerted the authorities to watch out for us. Then a school of porpoises arrived, swimming within three feet of the hull, jumping out of the water and always staying near the surface – our personal marine escort! I reckon they were 10ft or longer. Then a few miles from shore a couple of fishing boats came by and waved (they also reported us). We entered harbour about 1800, after logging over 2000 miles. It was Friday 13th June and I wondered if that meant anything in the way of luck, good or bad!

The second part of John's account, covering their time in the Azores and onward passage to Lymington, will appear in *Flying Fish* 2020/1.

SENDING SUBMISSIONS TO FLYING FISH

CONTENT: anything which is likely to be of interest to other members – cruise and liveaboard accounts (including humour), technical articles, recipes, letters, book reviews and obituaries. Please check with me before to submitting the latter two, and also tell me if you're sending the same piece elsewhere, inside or outside the OCC. Finally, please double check that all place, personal and boat names are spelt correctly.

LENGTH: no more than 3500 words and preferably fewer than 3000, except in *very* special cases – and normally only one article per member per issue.

FORMAT: MS Word (any version) or PDF, with or without embedded photos (though see below), sent by e-mail to flying.fish@oceancruisingclub.org.

ILLUSTRATIONS: up to 20 captioned photos, professional-standard drawings or cartoons. **PLEASE** don't send more than this – while you have a single piece to illustrate, I receive up to 20 articles for each issue, so may have 400+ images to juggle! Any digital format is fine, but please contact me before sending prints.

Photos should measure at least 16cm wide at 300 dpi or 67cm wide at 72 dpi (the default setting for most cameras). If this means nothing to you, please send your photos **EXACTLY** as they were downloaded from the camera – merely opening and saving under another name degrades the quality. If sending photos by e-mail, **manually** attach no more than three per e-mail (do **NOT** use the 'attach to e-mail' facility available in many image programs, which compresses the file data), rounding off with a separate message telling me what you've sent. Alternatively use WeTransfer [www.wetransfer.com] a great little free (!) internet program. Finally, please include a list of captions, including credits, in the order the photos relate to the text. Something along the lines of: '**01** (DCM 3285) Preparing the boat for sea; **02** (DCM 3321) Leaving Horta, John at the helm; **03** (DSP 00045) The whale! Photo Sue Black'; is ideal.

CHARTLETS & POSITIONS: a rough chartlet if relevant, for professional re-drawing. If your article includes cruising information useful to others, include latitudes and longitudes where appropriate, preferably as a separate list.

COVER PHOTOS: eye-catching, upright photos of high resolution and quality, with fairly plain areas top and bottom – sky and sea? – to take the standard wording.

COPYRIGHT: please ensure you either own the copyright of photos or have the photographer's permission for them to be reproduced on the OCC website as well as in *Flying Fish*. A credit can be included, but *Flying Fish* does not pay reproduction fees.

DEADLINES: 1st FEBRUARY for June publication and **1st OCTOBER for December** publication, though an issue may be closed earlier if it becomes full.

For more information, either e-mail me or refer to the ***GUIDELINES FOR CONTRIBUTORS*** to be found on the website. Thank you.

Anne Hammick, Editor
flying.fish@oceancruisingclub.org

@BerthonGroup or search **'Berthon'**

BERTHON

www.berthon.co.uk

INTERNATIONAL YACHT BROKERS

UK OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK

Lymington United Kingdom
0044 (0)1590 679 222
brokers@berthon.co.uk

Mandelieu La Napoule France
0033 (0)4 93 63 66 80
brokers@berthonfrance.fr

Palma de Mallorca Spain
0034 674 461405
brokers@berthonspain.com

Rhode Island USA
001 401 846 8404
sales@berthonusa.com

'THE WORLD'S MINE OYSTER; WHICH I WITH SWORD WILL OPEN'

William Shakespeare 1564 – 1616

HUMPHREYS 77'

DEERFOOT 63'

OYSTER 46'

AZUREE 46'

BLUE WATER CRUISING YACHTS FROM BERTHON

SCANMAR
INTERNATIONAL

Home of the Monitor Windvane

Your Source for Self-Steering and Emergency Rudder Solutions

- **Monitor** Windvane and optional Emergency Rudder
- **Auto-helm** Auxiliary Rudder/ Trim-Tab Windvane
- **Saye's Rig** Windvane
- The **SOS** Emergency Rudder
- **Pelagic** Autopilot

Contact us to determine the best solution for your boat – multihulls too!

Introducing the ANCHOR RESCUE

Don't set sail without it!

www.selfsteer.com

San Leandro, CA

510.215.2010

scanmar@selfsteer.com

Richmond, CA

THE WESTERN CARIBBEAN'S BEST KEPT SECRET
Chris Burry and Madeline Hibberd

(*Chris and her husband Bill have owned* Plover, *a 1976 Dickerson 41, for 35 years and have twice sailed her transatlantic. They often cruise to the Canadian Maritimes from the southern part of the Chesapeake Bay where they are the Port Officers for Deltaville and Mathews, Virginia.*

For their month-long trip to Belize in January 2019, they flew into Belize City where they were met by Port Officer Paul Hunt. He pointed them south in the direction of Placencia, where they joined OCC friends Roy and Madeline Hibberd who live aboard their 46ft Prout catamaran, Mithril of Newhaven.

All prices are in US dollars except where stated.)

Belize has been on our bucket list ever since we sailed past her reefs 30+ years ago, on our return trip from the Mediterranean to the US via the western Caribbean. So when we got an invitation from our British friends Roy and Madeline Hibberd to join them aboard *Mithril of Newhaven* for a month's cruise in Belize, we jumped at the opportunity.


69°W
68°W
N
Gulf of Mexico
Havana
CUBA
MEXICO
BELIZE
JAMAICA
GUATAMALA
HONDURAS
Caribbean Sea
SAN SALVADOR
NICARAGUA
Pacific Ocean
COSTA RICA
PANAMA
Panama City
AMBERGRIS CAYE
18°N
San Pedro
CAYE CAULKER
ST GEORGE'S CAYE
Belize City
Cucumber Beach Marina
DROWNED CAYES
TURNEFFE ISLANDS
Belize River
GUATEMALA
Spanish Lookout
Belmopan
San Ignacio
Turneffe Atoll
Lighthouse Reef
CAYE BOKEL
BELIZE
Dangriga
STANN CREEK
Sittee Point
TOBACCO CAYE
Sittee River
GLOVER'S REEF
Sapodilla Lagoon
SOUTH WATER CAYE
SOUTHWEST CAYES
BLUE GROUND RANGE
Placencia
Monkey River
RANGUANA CAYE
NORTHEAST SAPODILLA CAYE
Punta Gorda
FRANK'S CAYE
SAPODILLA CAYES
16°N
Gulf of Honduras
GUATEMALA
69°W
68°W
HONDURAS

Mithril of Newhaven at Belize City Marina

Prior to our trip we e-mailed Paul Hunt, OCC Port Officer in Belize, and he recommended that we fly to Placencia to meet *Mithril*. Paul met us briefly at Belize City airport and saw us onto our local flight, a short 20 minute hop south and then a two mile taxi ride into town. Roy met us at the municipal dock and took us out to the anchorage, where there were about twenty other sailing boats, most either American or Canadian.

Placencia is the southern headquarters for cruisers and for the small Moorings charter catamaran fleet. There are several well-stocked grocery stores and vegetable stands, and you can buy diesel and gasoline (petrol) from the dockside fuel station. Local cruisers hang out at a bar named Yoli's, where they leave their dinghies before walking through the back streets up to the small town. On our first day ashore we stopped at a roadside stand for a lunch of stewed beans with coconut rice and fried plantains – it only cost $2.50 apiece.

Next day we sailed 20 miles south to the well-protected anchorage at Monkey River. We searched the mangroves for local oysters and plucked them right off the

Placencia's back channel

roots. Madeline steamed them open, and we ate them with melted lemon butter and garlic. The following day we sailed 20 miles east to the small island of Ranguana Caye (16°19'N 88°09'W) on the main Belize barrier reef. We used the most recent version of Freya Rauscher's *Cruising Guide to Belize* – see **page 49** – which includes co-ordinates and GPS waypoints. But even with digital charts, sometimes the waypoints and courses plotted were inaccurate.

Ranguana Caye is a beautiful, palm-treed island in the middle of nowhere. We found three moorings off the west side of the caye, but once secured we decided the NE trade winds were making it too windy and rolly to take the dinghy ashore safely. Fortunately the wind and waves died overnight and we awoke to a flat calm sea. We ventured ashore to check out the island and found a thatch-roofed bar with four beach cabanas for rent [www.ranguanacaye.com]. We enjoyed a coffee at the bar while Juan explained where we could snorkel on the reef just off the island, so we donned our gear and headed out. Once in the warm, clear water we found fish swimming around the brain coral and coral sea fans. It was a lovely spot and we felt as though we'd found paradise.

From Ranguana Caye we sailed back to Placencia as there was a weather front coming through. After the front we took advantage of the northeast wind to head 25 miles southeast to the Sapodilla Cays (16°08'·3N 88 15'·2W). The cruising guide describes the southern four miles of the barrier reef as a series of large shoal and reef patches intersected by deep channels, with eight islands that make up the Sapodilla Caye Marine Reserve. Good navigation was critical and we kept a watch on the bow when it got shallow.

We set course for Northeast Sapodilla Caye where there is a protected anchorage. Once settled in we piled into the dinghy and set off for the reef. Although the water was a bit stirred up, visibility was good and we saw more fish than at Ranguana Caye. At sunset the horizon cleared and we could see mountains on the mainland of Honduras 25 miles to the southeast, yet it felt as though we were on a South Pacific island in the middle of nowhere. After dark we watched the lights of a departing cruise ship heading to sea.

The anchorage at Northeast Sapodilla Caye

An anhinga or snake bird on the Sittee River

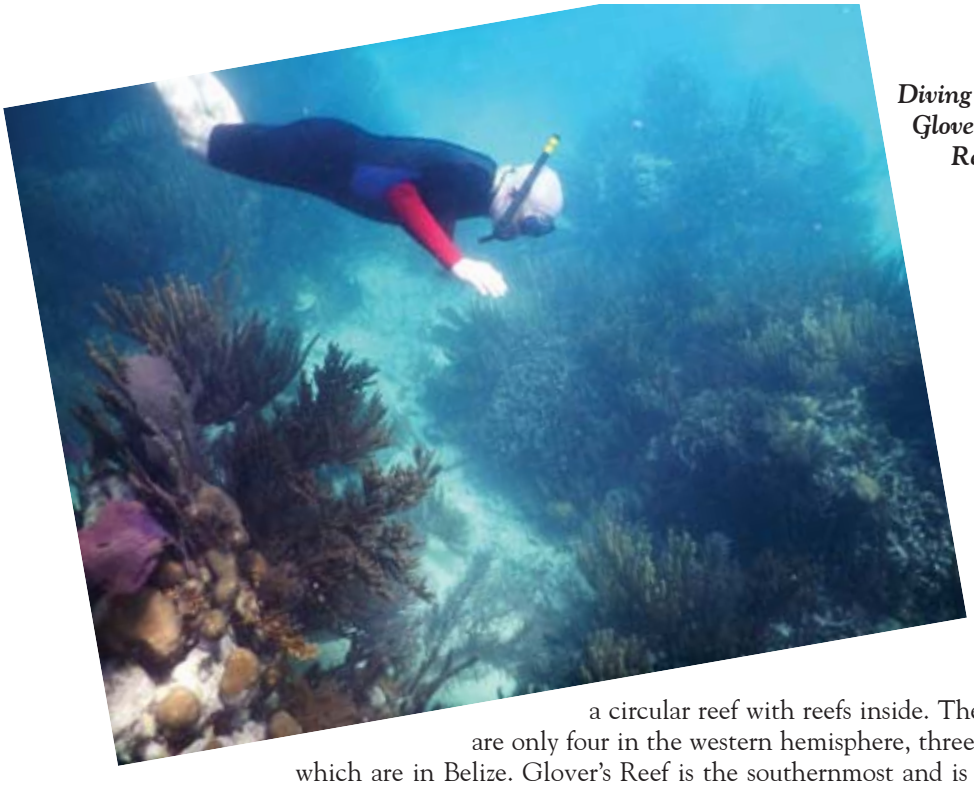
The wind shifted to the west overnight and we awoke to a long surge which made the anchorage uncomfortable, but by mid-day the seas had moderated enough for us to explore in the dinghy. We went south to Frank's Caye, where we found a white sand beach fringed with coconut palms, then dove back in the water to explore the reef. It was better than the previous day and we saw even more fish, including a beautiful black French angelfish. On our way back to Placencia we set out two fishing lines and caught seven fish, all mackerel except for one cero, also known as pintado or kingfish.

Next day we sailed a few hours north to the Sittee River. We anchored near Sittee Point (16°48'·2N 88°16'W) and took the dinghy up the river where it felt like we were on the Amazon. There were lots of birds and it was very lush and green. We saw an anhinga, also called the snake bird, and there were royal terns and white egrets. There were eerie noises in the jungle which sounded like jaguars stepping on branches, but we saw nothing except birds.

With another front and northwest winds coming, Madeline recommended that we take a slip at The Reserve [thereservebelizemarina.com], the new Sapodilla Lagoon marina (16°47'·1N 88°18'·3W). They had an introductory offer of $25 per night so we motored in and secured at the dock. There was a building close by with laundry and hot showers, plus we were able to buy diesel, gasoline and water. It is a huge marina with over 100 slips to accommodate megayachts, but there were fewer than a dozen boats. Unfortunately the marina property is in receivership and there is a major investigation under way.

In the morning we set off for our third trip out to the barrier reef. We spent a night anchored at Blue Ground Range, before heading 20 miles offshore to Glover's Reef (16°42'·9N 87°51'·1W), one of three offshore atolls. An atoll is

The Reserve resort



Diving at Glover's Reef

a circular reef with reefs inside. There are only four in the western hemisphere, three of which are in Belize. Glover's Reef is the southernmost and is 15 miles long and 5 miles wide. It was declared an underwater park more than 15 years ago, and is managed by the Belize government which collects Belize $10 per person per day – about US $40 for the four of us for two days.

As we approached from the west we could see the turquoise waters surrounding the atoll. We anchored off the Southwest Cayes and took the dinghy ashore to explore, learning that there was a bar and restaurant at the Marisol resort where we could have drinks and eat dinner. But first we wanted to snorkel on the reef. We spent two glorious days exploring the reefs, swimming with the fish among the prettiest coral we had seen so far. We saw a spotted ray, plus large schools of blue tang, colourful rainbow and stoplight parrotfish.

On the second day two local boys paddled by in their canoe. They offered to sell us lobster and conch, and returned with four cleaned and split lobsters and conch meat. We paid $5 per pound for the cleaned conch and $12 per lobster. In the evening we went ashore to the Marisol resort where we paid $25 per person for a dinner of barracuda, baked macaroni and cheese, coleslaw, cooked vegetables and homemade biscuits. The meal was great value and a nice break from *Mithril*'s galley.

After our trip out to Glover's Reef we headed back to the mainland. It was a four-hour sail and a large pod of porpoises joined us. They surfed the waves and then swam under *Mithril*'s bow before circling back and doing it all again. We entered the barrier reef at South Water Caye (16°48'·9N 88°05'·1W), where there is a wide cut. We planned to anchor off the island and go ashore, but not until we had swum on the reef at the cut, where we saw some schools of fish and a stingray. South Water Caye is one of the largest inhabited sand cayes in southern Belize and home to International

South Water Caye

Zoological Expeditions Belize [izebelize.com], which runs expeditions to the reef and marine biology courses for students. There were coconut trees all over the island and a beautiful site with nice-looking cabanas.

Next we headed to the mainland town of Dangriga (16°57'·9N 88°12'·7W) so that *Mithril*'s visa could be extended for another 30 days. With a population of 11,500, Dangriga is the largest city in southern Belize, and was originally named Stann Creek. The people are of Garifuna culture, descendants of African slaves shipwrecked in the eastern Caribbean. They were moved to Belize from the islands years ago and are famous for their unique culture and drumming. We bought food at the local supermarket, plus lots of fresh produce including coconut, plantain, papaya and pineapples at the Dangriga Central Market. It is a very colourful town and the local people were very

Roy opens a coconut

Entering Dangriga Creek

friendly, though there is a shallow bar you must cross to get up the Stann Creek river, on which you can get swamped in the dinghy and eaten by crocodiles.

From Dangriga we headed 10 miles back out to the barrier reef for a night before sailing out of Tobacco Caye Cut early the next morning. The wind was east-northeast 15–20 knots and right on the nose. We pounded into the waves through the cut, and then pointed *Mithril*'s bow northward. The winds and waves were much higher than we had anticipated as we sailed due north to Turneffe Atoll, the largest of the three atolls in Belize. We entered Turneffe on the west side at Blue Creek and passed through a channel in the mangroves. Once inside it opened up, and we anchored in the southwest corner near Turneffe Island. A local skiff approached us with three young men, part of the Turneffe Atoll Sustainability Association (TASA) who work to preserve the atoll. They questioned us about what we planned to do, how many people were aboard, and how many days we planned to stay. They live on Caye Bokel and invited us to stop by and visit their camp.

After lunch we went out exploring and to snorkel. The waves breaking over the reef were rough so we didn't get too close, but we found a small buoy we could tie on to and dove over the side. The water was stirred up but we saw some fish, including a grey angelfish which blended in with the coral, plus some staghorn coral. In the morning, a local fisherman approached in his *panga*, a type of small canoe, to ask if we wanted any lobster, fish or conch. We asked for fish and he said he would come back later that afternoon. He asked for rum in payment and offered us a free barracuda, which we accepted and then cooked for lunch. Just before sundown a different boat approached with the fish. They sold us three large snapper and cleaned them on Roy's fish-cleaning table while a frigate bird hovered off *Mithril*'s stern.

The next day we took the dinghy to Caye Bokel to visit the young men. They showed us the small cabin that four of them shared. They live on the island for two weeks and then get one week off, and get supplies from the mainland to cook their meals. After a few days at Turneffe and increasing trade winds, we sailed back to the mainland inside the barrier reef. We had a fabulous downwind sail, with gusty NE trade winds of 20–25 knots behind us.

Our next destination was St George's Caye (17°33'·3N 88°04'·9W), where Paul Hunt's family have a holiday home. It was the country's first capital in the 1700s, and when the Spanish tried to take the island from the British in September 1798 the British defeated the Spanish fleet. The Battle of St George's Caye is commemorated with a national holiday on 10th September and there is a cannon to mark the location. In addition to a

Chris & Bill on St George's Caye

handful of private residences the island has a resort, the St George's Caye Resort [https://www.belizeislandparadise.com/] where we went ashore for dinner. From St George's Caye it was a short day sail north to Caye Caulker (17°44'·8N 88°02'·5W). This island is more populated, so was a good place to buy provisions and explore ashore. It used to be known as a backpacker's heaven but, with a daily ferry to Belize City two hours away, is no longer as quiet as it used to be. There are no cars on the island, only bicycles and golf carts.

Caye Caulker

After a day on shore, we positioned *Mithril* so we could access the Caye Caulker Marine Reserve. It was a short dinghy ride out to the reef and we had a beautiful, calm day. We were protected inside the reef and picked up a mooring while we snorkelled, then moved to another mooring further north to try another spot. When I went to grab the mooring line we saw brown shapes below the surface and Madeline called out, "Sharks in the water!". Hundreds of brown nurse sharks were surrounding the dinghy. The local tour boat operators feed them – it is known as Shark Ray Village with a shark and ray habitat! We did not get in the water but were brave enough to put our cameras underwater for photos!

From Caye Caulker we meandered back south to the Drowned Cayes (17°29'·2N 88°06'·6W), 10 miles east of Belize City. We explored in the dinghy and saw barges in the mangroves. We thought they were abandoned until a tug came in and began manoeuvring them and collected them on a tow line. We were told that the barges are used to transport bulk sugar out to cargo ships waiting offshore. From the Drowned Cayes, *Mithril* sailed west towards Belize City. We got in touch with Paul Hunt, who lives in the heart of the city and volunteered to drive us around.

First we had to find and enter the channel to the Cucumber Beach Marina [https://www.oldbelize.com/marina/], five miles west of the city. The marina was very pleasant with hot showers and laundry plus diesel, gasoline and water. Paul took us for a propane tank refill and to the local chandlery, Duke's Marine, to buy marine supplies. We were very impressed with all the boat stuff they had in stock, including a copy of the *Cruising Guide to Belize*. Paul took us grocery shopping to two different stores and, most importantly, to the local Traveller's rum distillery.

Shark alley off Caye Caulker

Lunch in San Ignacio – Bill, Roy, Paul, Madeline & Chris

Next day we ventured west almost to the border with Guatemala. We drove through Belmopan, the capital city, which relocated there in the 1980s. Then through a community called Spanish Lookout where Mennonites live. They are hard-working people who contribute to much of the agriculture of Belize. Some still drive horse-drawn carriages though they do have rubber tyres. From Spanish Lookout we crossed a small river on a hand-cranked ferry – a man worked tirelessly to crank the ferry from one side to the other as it had room for only three cars! Our next stop was at a store called British Food Belize [https://

Local produce

The jaguar at Belize Zoo

britishfoodsbelize.com/]. Madeline and Roy were excited to buy some of their favourite foods from home. Next we drove to the town of San Ignacio for lunch and shopping at the fresh vegetable market, and before heading home visited Belize Zoo, where our favourite was the jaguar. When we first saw him he looked like a stuffed animal! Then he moved, and we realised how big he was. His paws were huge.

Our last stop was a tour of Belize City, during which we drove over an unusual swing bridge. Built in 1923, it is the oldest swing bridge in Central America and one of the few manually operated swing bridges in the world still in use. It opens twice a day, early in the morning and again in the evening. There was a fleet of colourful local wooden fishing sailboats anchored just south of it.

Next day it was farewell to Belize, after a month's cruising in one of the Western Caribbean's best kept secrets.

PRACTICALITIES

Customs and Immigration

Foreign yachts clearing into Belize from Honduras or Guatemala can clear in at Punta Gorda. The sequence is: Port Office first, then Immigration (who will stamp your passport), next Belize Agriculture Health Authority, (BAHA, who charge US $10), followed by Customs, and finally back to the Port Office which will issue a 30-day cruising permit. This costs US $50 for the first day and US $2.50 per day thereafter. The maximum initial period is 30 days, after which it can be renewed for a further 30 days, which we did at Dangriga.

Both are day anchorages, suitable in settled weather only. Other places to clear in and out include Big Creek near Placencia, Belize City and San Pedro on Ambergris Caye. There are additional charges at these places – eg. for travel by you to the offices – and other charges may be made by the officials for overtime and visiting your boat etc. Clearing out also incurs charges.

Cruising guide

The only available cruising guide is the *Cruising Guide to Belize and Mexico's Caribbean Coast, including Guatemala's Rio Dulce*, by Freya Rauscher. The third edition, published by Windmill Hill Books in January 2007, includes waypoints and plotted courses. *Belize & Guatemala Cruising Notes* by Curtis Collins (available for Kindle via Amazon but apparently not in a printed version) complement her guide. The websites of Lonely Planet, the Belize Audubon Society and Noonsite provide additional information.

Navigation

We found Navionics' digital charts the most reliable, but even they were not 100% accurate, especially near the reef and the offshore atolls. When used in combination with Rauscher's guide and waypoints, we would often find charts off by quarter to half a mile (400–800m). The best option is to rely on eyeball navigation with a sharp lookout on the bow. Even so, depths of more than 1m are not always readable due to lack of water clarity, particularly in areas near mangroves and rivers.

A typical Belizean sailing fishing boat

A number of sailors who have cruised the area for many years have a list of waypoints that they are often willing to share. Although these should be used with caution, they can be a great help in conjunction with the cruising guide and eyeball navigation.

Weather
Chris Parker's Western Caribbean forecast is broadcast on 8137 MHz and 12350 MHz at 0830 Western Daylight Time (UTC 1430) six days a week. It covers a wide swath of the Western Caribbean from Cuba west to Mexico and Belize and south as far as Colombia. You can subscribe via the website www.mwxc.com, in which case Chris will tailor his forecast to your location. The website also gives a list of times and frequencies for forecasts covering the whole of the Caribbean and the East Coast of the USA.

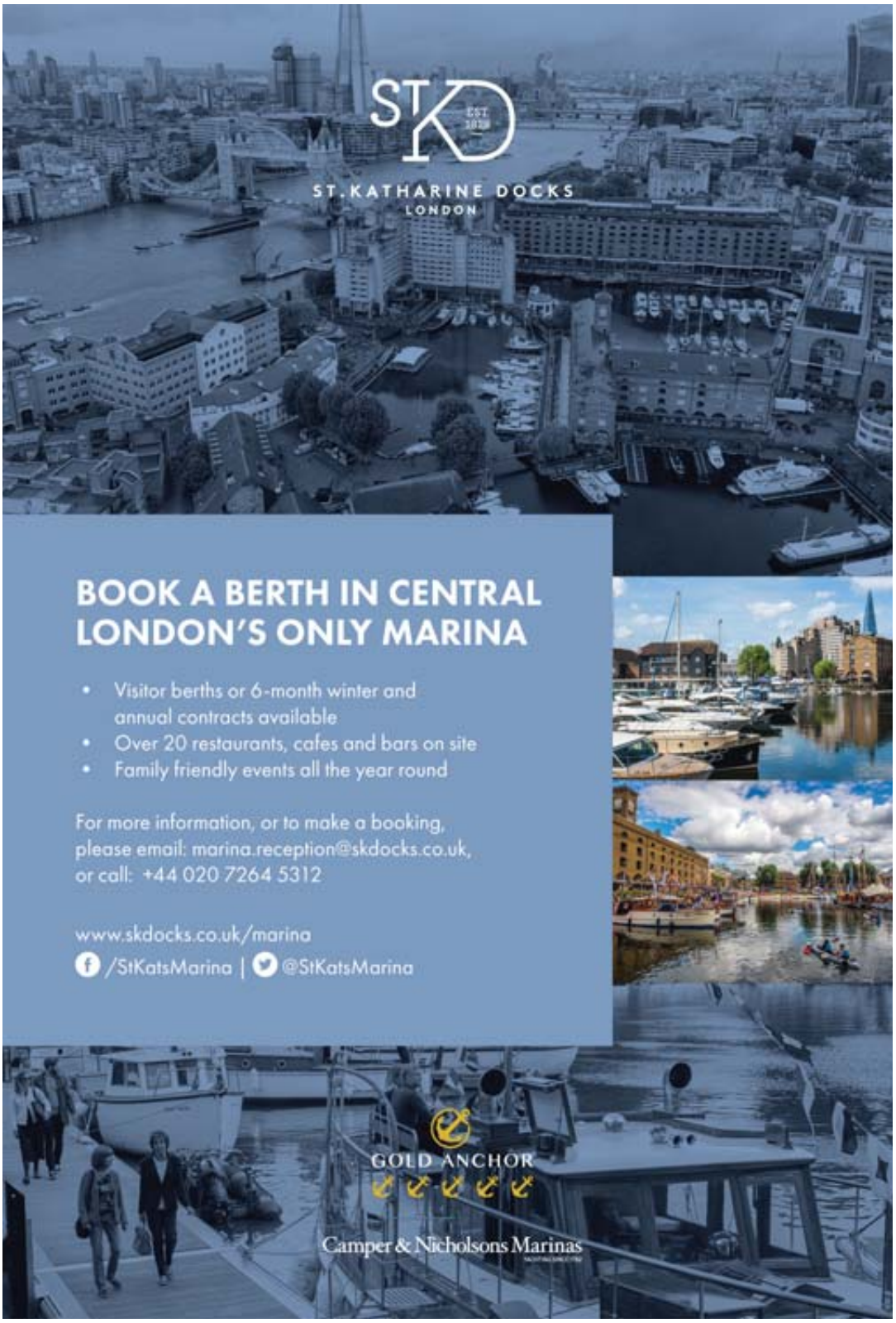
Provisions
Food and alcohol, including local rum, are expensive compared to Guatemala and Mexico. Well-stocked supermarkets are available in most towns, including Placencia, Dangriga, Belize City and Caye Caulker, and carry supplies such as UHT milk, canned goods, snacks, cookies, frozen meat and bottled water. Locally-grown fresh fruits and vegetables are plentiful – papaya, plantain, pineapples, white and sweet potatoes, tomatoes, lettuce, zucchini, oranges, and limes – as are eggs.

Marinas
There are only a few marinas in Belize. The Reserve at Sapodilla Lagoon [thereservebelizemarina.com] is only partially open and in January 2019 was charging an introductory rate of $25 per night. It has a laundry with three commercial washers and dryers costing $1.50 per load in US quarters. Hot showers are available, as are diesel, gasoline and water at 10 cents a gallon. There is a small store on the premises which carries canned goods, snacks, eggs, soft drinks and some frozen meat. We had access to the private Beach Club which serves meals and drinks beach-side. As of January the marina was in some financial difficulties, so check first.

We also spent two nights at the Cucumber Beach Marina [https://www.oldbelize.com/marina/] west of Belize City, one of the few safe places in the city. Rates were $1 per foot but berths were only available when the local charter fleet was out.

Communications
We used a cellphone (mobile) with a Belize SIM card for communications, for local calls and for data on the internet. This worked almost everywhere in Belize except at the atolls outside the barrier reef.

> I am a citizen of the most beautiful nation on earth. A nation whose laws are harsh yet simple, a nation that never cheats, which is immense and without borders, where life is lived in the present. In this limitless nation, this nation of wind, light and peace, there is no other ruler besides the sea.
>
> Bernard Moitessier


ST KD
EST 1828
ST. KATHARINE DOCKS
LONDON
BOOK A BERTH IN CENTRAL LONDON'S ONLY MARINA
• Visitor berths or 6-month winter and annual contracts available
• Over 20 restaurants, cafes and bars on site
• Family friendly events all the year round
For more information, or to make a booking, please email: marina.reception@skdocks.co.uk, or call: +44 020 7264 5312
www.skdocks.co.uk/marina
/StKatsMarina | @StKatsMarina
GOLD ANCHOR
Camper & Nicholsons Marinas

FOX'S
RIGGING
SELDÉN
ADVANCED TECHNICAL INSTALLATIONS

The complete service for all racing and cruising yachts

At **Fox's Marina & Boatyard**, our team is a great mix of experienced cruising/racing sailors and time served engineers and craftsmen. We understand our customer's problems and how to resolve them quickly and cost effectively.

With multiple, inhouse departments including a spray shop, workshops for both modern composite and traditional shipwrighting, rigging, stainless fabrication, marine engineering and electronics, we can offer complete refit solutions for all types of vessel, large or small.

TALK TO US ABOUT PREPARING YOUR YACHT FOR CRUISING – WE HAVE YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

FOX'S
MARINA & BOATYARD
SINCE 1927

Fox's Marina Ipswich Limited
Ipswich, Suffolk, IP2 8SA

+44 (0) 1473 689111
foxs@foxsmarina.com

foxsmarina.com

SAILING THE EASTERN SEABOARD AND NORTH ATLANTIC

Timothy J Cooke

(*Timothy received assistance from the OCC Youth Sponsorship Programme – see https://oceancruisingclub.org/Youth-Sponsorship – to make the passage described below.*)

It was a typical November day, sitting in the lecture hall listening to my professors go on about something that I've mostly forgotten about now. I was daydreaming about sailing, as my boat had been recently pulled out of the water for the winter months. On my computer, I was scouring the internet for a new opportunity in the world of sailing. Enter the OCC Youth Sponsorship Programme. I eagerly applied, and a few weeks later my application was accepted so the hunt for a passage began. After a few months I received an e-mail from Vice Commodore Paul Furniss detailing that a skipper by the name of Steve Brown was interested in taking me on a passage across the Atlantic. I was absolutely beaming with joy.

I'm a 21-year-old Canadian who grew up learning how to sail dinghies on the Great Lakes. I purchased my first boat, a 22ft Tanzee, when I was 17 and still sail this, along with a 31ft Columbia Hughes that has recently entered the family. I also race on a 35ft C&C called *Firewater*. I was keen to make this passage because I wanted to challenge myself, and really figure out if ocean sailing is for me. It is, and I'm already looking for a Pacific crossing! If I were given a sailing wish, it would be to race in the Vendée Globe, not because it's the most notorious singlehanded race, but to become the first Canadian to take part – so far there's been no Canadian in the Vendée Globe.

I first laid eyes on *Novara* in June 2019 in the beautiful little seaside town of Camden, Maine. I was visiting for a few days to get to know the boat and learn how she sails, in preparation for a 22 day voyage up the East Coast to Canada, and then across the Atlantic. Camden is a real sailing town, with a stunning harbour and well-crafted custom boats. There I got a feel for *Novara*, sailing around Penobscot Bay and enjoying what the place has to offer. After leaving Camden I headed home and took my mom sailing around the Great Lakes. When it was time to return for the passage, the excitement set in for what lay ahead.

The pump for the day tank was in the locker, and as junior crewmember it fell to me to top it up. Great fun…

We left Camden for Lunenburg, Nova Scotia on 29th July. It was an easygoing 260 mile passage and helped give me a feel for non-stop sailing. When we arrived we decided to stay a few days to get some repairs done before heading on to St John's, Newfoundland. The four day, 561 mile passage to St John's was a lovely cruise with fair wind and waves, fighting the Labrador Current until we reached port. We ended up making a quick stop in the small village of Fermeuse, a gorgeous fishing settlement with kind people and majestic scenery. After doing an oil change, we set off to make the remaining 42 miles to St John's.

We reached St John's on 6th August and were due to stay a few nights to do some repairs, provision, and welcome Bill Strassberg who was heading back to Camden after spending time in the UK and Greenland. His infectious laughter and larger-than-life personality really made me feel welcomed into the sailing community.

St John's is a beautiful city with pastel-coloured houses lining the steep hillside, and was originally founded by explorer John Cabot in the 15th century. As it turns out, we had sailed in at the best time of year. We were delighted to coincide with the Royal St John's Rowing Regatta, George Street Festival – and warm weather. The locals explained that in the brief summer that they get, this was the time to get out and enjoy what there was to offer. Some minor repairs were made, water tanks filled, and the crew of *Novara* got what would be their last eight-hour sleep in nearly two weeks. We were ready to cross an ocean.

How do you describe a 12-day passage across the North Atlantic? For me, three words come to mind – wet, windy and cold. Boy, was it an experience! How do you describe

Tim grinning at the wheel, with Paul Deakin on the left

Completing a sail change at the forward mast

your idea of a good time? For me, it's getting out on the water and letting the mercy of Mother Nature take you where you want to go. Prior to making the crossing, I often wondered how people find joy in minimal sleep, being confined, and facing nature in its most unforgiving of forms. I wonder no longer now, but rather fully understand and appreciate the challenges that big water sailing has to offer.

Novara left St John's on 9th August for the 1970 mile leg across the North Atlantic. Aboard were Skipper Steve Brown, myself and two fine gentlemen from the UK, Chris and Paul Deakin. Our destination was Cardiff in Wales and the plan was to take a high-latitude rhumb line straight across. What lay ahead of us as we set out was unknown to me, but Steve assured me we would face conditions that many sailors tend to avoid. To me, this sounded like a heavy weather dream of gales and house-sized waves ... exactly what I was eager to experience. I was ready to face the North Atlantic.

We set out in steady 25 knot winds, just a taste of what this ocean had in store for us. On my first watch I nearly hit a whale that popped up in front of the boat – it was so close I could see the barnacles on its side. It was also the first whale I've ever seen up close and personal. But after sailing for another 24 hours it was clear to me that we were out there alone to face whatever was thrown our way. A few days pass and you realise how isolated you've made yourself, how vulnerable you are to the sea. You become self-reliant because you have no other alternative, an idea that's always appealed. Rescue is not an option hundreds of miles offshore, and neither would you want someone else to risk their life trying to save yours. It's all or nothing in the middle of the fierce North Atlantic, a time to focus on the boat and read what the sea is putting down for you.

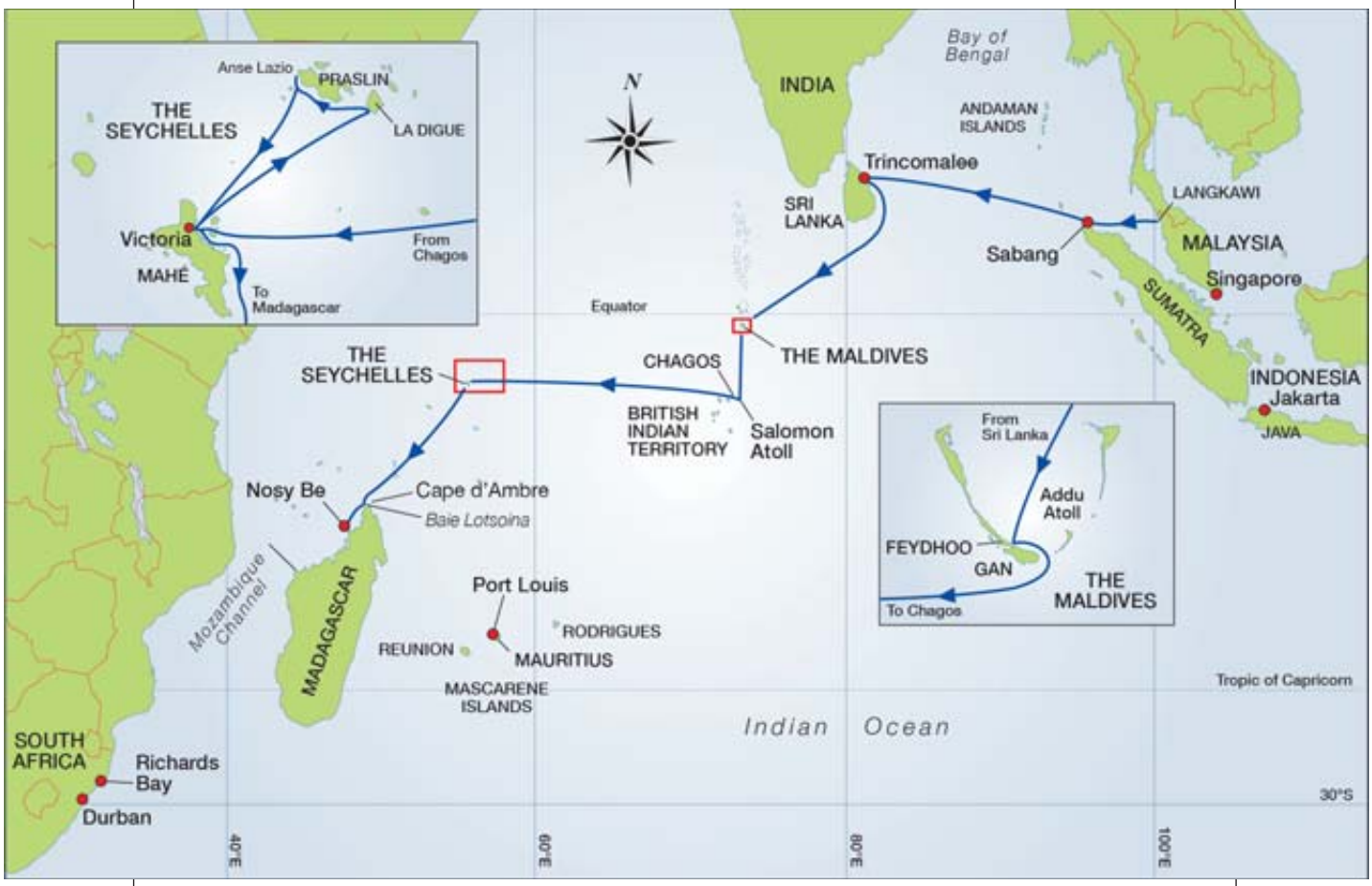
A squall which passed through 150 miles off the coast of Ireland – a beautiful horizon of endless walls of water

The most memorable part of the voyage had to be going through a full gale that lasted two days, feeling like an eternity. Wind gusts of 45 knots and a sea state to match ... this was what I had come to see. The howling of the wind and waves, the rolling of the boat, and the occasional bang that would reverberate through the hull. When the sea state rises to match the wind, you really begin to understand the power and ferocity you face in this part of the world. Feeling that small and vulnerable is a truly humbling experience. I'll never forget the moment that our speed-over-ground read 19 knots as we surfed down a monster of a wave. My eyes widened, and then a slight grin crossed my face as I knew a new speed record had just been set for *Novara*. I was the only one awake, as the crew were trying to catch up on some much needed sleep – or at least closing their eyes before their next watch. There really isn't much sleep to be had on a boat that's being tossed around in the relentless waves – it's a precious commodity in heavy seas.

When the heavy conditions subsided, it was back to 25 knot westerlies until we could see the south coast of Ireland. It was odd to see land after getting accustomed to the sea, but I felt a small sense of accomplishment at what I'd learned along the way. After 2751 miles we had reached Europe. There's much to be said for people like Steve, who have an eagerness to extend the sailing community with open arms and show the ropes to those wanting to seek out the knowledge that comes with the kind of experience he has.

I am truly grateful for what Steve and the Ocean Cruising Club have done for me. The OCC Youth Sponsorship Programme, and especially Paul Furniss, made it all possible. Without all of you I wouldn't have been able to connect with Steve and make my sailing dreams a reality. I hope that one day I will be able to give back to the community in the exact same way. I was happy to see land, but sad to see the open ocean fade away beyond the horizon. The sea is a truly incredible place and I can't wait to cross another ocean and see more of the world under sail.


boot
Düsseldorf
18 – 26.1.2020
boot.com
My passion
starts here.
FOLLOW THE CALL.
Visit the International
boot cruising seminar
on 24 January 2020
in Düsseldorf, Germany
Messe Düsseldorf GmbH
P.O. Box 10 10 06 – 40001 Düsseldorf – Germany
Tel. +49 211 4560 01 – Fax +49 211 4560 668
www.messe-duesseldorf.de
Messe
Düsseldorf


Anse Lazio
PRASLIN
THE SEYCHELLES
LA DIGUE
Victoria
From Chagos
MAHÉ
To Madagascar
N
Bay of Bengal
INDIA
ANDAMAN ISLANDS
Trincomalee
LANGKAWI
SRI LANKA
MALAYSIA
Sabang
Singapore
SUMATRA
Equator
THE SEYCHELLES
CHAGOS
THE MALDIVES
INDONESIA
Jakarta
JAVA
BRITISH INDIAN TERRITORY
Salomon Atoll
From Sri Lanka
Addu Atoll
FEYDHOO
GAN
THE MALDIVES
To Chagos
Nosy Be
Cape d'Ambre
Baie Lotsoina
Mozambique Channel
MADAGASCAR
Port Louis
RODRIGUES
REUNION
MAURITIUS
MASCARENE ISLANDS
Tropic of Capricorn
Indian Ocean
SOUTH AFRICA
Richards Bay
Durban
30°S
40°E
60°E
80°E
100°E

MALAYSIA TO MADAGASCAR
Graham and Avril Johnson

(*Graham and Avril left the UK in 2002 aboard their 44ft cutter* Dream Away *to circumnavigate, largely off the beaten passage. They are prolific* Flying Fish *contributors, writing a near-record 17 times over as many years, most recently in 2017/2 with* Sweet Carolines*, an account of their visit to the Caroline Islands north of New Guinea. We rejoin them on the Malaysian island of Langkawi.*)

The Indian Ocean crossing has a poor reputation amongst the cruising fraternity. Strong winds and confused, high seas feature in many tales – Av was not looking forward to it. This season, several boats made direct for Madagascar from northern Indonesia, but we preferred to take a more leisurely northern route. Sri Lanka was high on our agenda and we wished to visit as many places as viable.

Having checked out from Langkawi we decided to visit Sabang, the northernmost outpost of Indonesia. Arriving in the large, sheltered, scenic bay at the northern end of the island we were directed to the quarantine mooring. A bevy of officials were ferried the 30m from the jetty to our mooring in a large coastguard cutter. Consternation. Were we ill, was there a boat problem? The issue was having put Sri Lanka as the destination on our clearance paper. However, after explaining other cruisers had recommended Sabang and we needed some fresh supplies, everyone was happy.

A hornbill at Av's favourite anchorage in Langkawi

Sabang is a small island, easily travelled around in a day on a motorbike. It is unspoilt, with lush tropical forest, lovely sand beaches, a few low-key tourist resorts and friendly, welcoming people. After a most enjoyable week we left on a favourable morning breeze bound for Trincomalee on the east coast of Sri Lanka, 870 miles distant. The forecast was for light patches in the fading northeast monsoon and we anticipated a slow journey. In the event the wind remained stubbornly ahead of the beam, providing us with a greater apparent wind and a faster passage than expected. The highlight was crossing the 90°E meridian, which marked three-quarters of our circumnavigation. The only significant issue was fleets of fishing vessels trailing nets more than a mile long. Helpfully, the end of the net was usually marked by an AIS beacon whose identification was referenced to the parent vessel.

Sabang jetty. Fishing boats, the coastguard launch and a catamaran on the quarantine mooring

'Trinco' is a military port with a significant naval base, only recently opened to cruising yachts. It is one of the world's largest natural harbours, providing excellent shelter in all conditions. Yachts are required to use an agent to check in, give 48 hours notice, then

24 – with an accurate ETA. After obtaining clearance via our agent, we anchored in company with five other yachts and ventured ashore to buy fresh food. It's a moderate-sized town, comprising three long shopping streets packed with small business enterprises and a couple of reasonable food supermarkets. Alongside the busy, chaotic bus station lies a large fresh produce market, plus a big fish market where the catch is delivered from the boats arriving at the adjacent beach. It's a bustling place, with crowded streets and the inevitable masses of small motorbikes and *tuk-tuk* taxis. Again the locals were friendly and welcoming, making it a fascinating place to visit.

Scenic train ride in Sri Lanka

Confident that *Dream Away* was totally safe and secure in the anchorage, we took advantage of the good bus and rail links to explore the rest of the country. We enjoyed the cool highlands with their extensive tea plantations, scenic railway journeys, a myriad of ancient wonders, and much lovely walking. Sri Lanka boasts numerous national parks, the highlights being the large herds of elephant and a wondrous array of bird life. It is also renowned for its extensive pristine beaches, which are often virtually deserted.

We soon got into the local cuisine, enjoying traditional lunchtime curries and a great range of tasty, spicy foods. We discovered Kotthu – finely-chopped *roti**, vegetables and meat all stir-fried to make a scrumptious, filling meal that is a national dish. The chopping is performed with some ritual – two large blades that beat out a rhythm peculiar to each chef.

* *Roti* are flatbreads made from stoneground wholemeal flour, eaten all over the Indian sub-continent as well as throughout Malaysia and Indonesia. They're also encountered in the Caribbean, often with a curried meat filling.

The great and the small in Minneriya National Park

Our one-month visas expired all too quickly and it was time to head for Gan, the southernmost Maldive. The passage started slowly as we worked the local sea breezes down the east coast and along the south of Sri Lanka, but the voyage was often enlivened by the local fishermen who would pursue us for miles in order to trade fish for cigarettes and a chat. The ideal passage makes good westing towards the Maldives so one can then potter south, either through or alongside the atolls. We were late in the season, however – the northeast monsoon had faded away and the southwest monsoon was picking up with the usual squally and overcast conditions. It became a long slog to windward, but eventually we closed the southern atoll, only to be hit by the strong east-going Equatorial Counter Current. We spent the best part of three days struggling

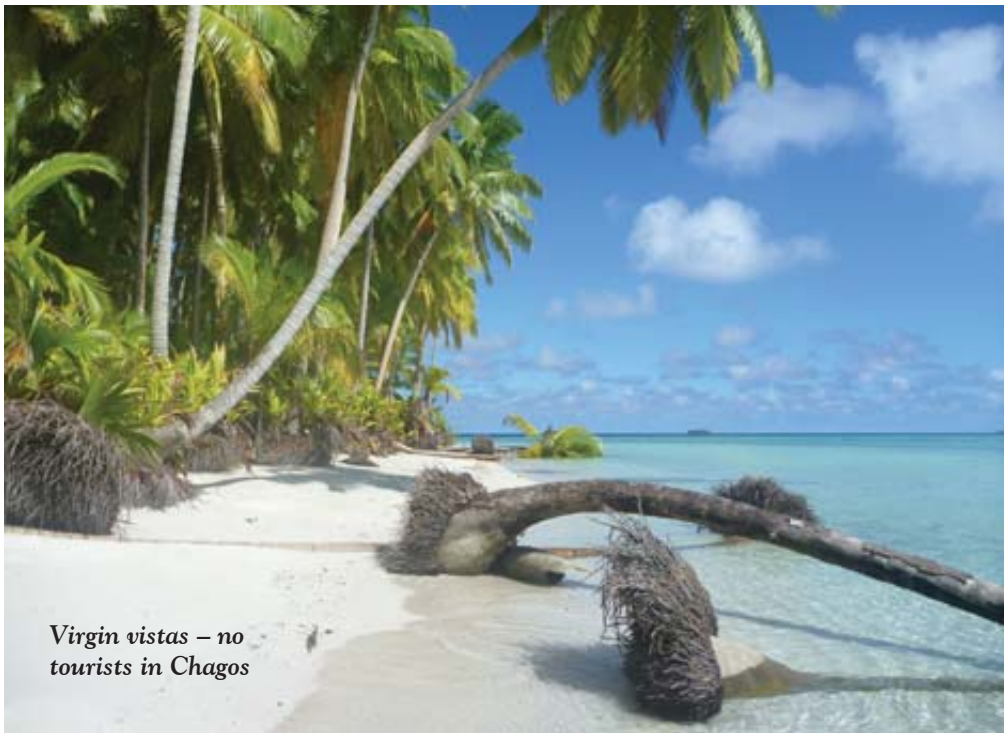
Trading on the high seas

to get into Gan, with one day of almost incessant strong, squally conditions. On the last night we had a real blow, but a favourable wind shift allowed us to make the course. When it all passed by we were only about 15 miles from port, wallowing about in no wind and lumpy seas. On came the engine for the first time on the passage and we headed in, after 13 days and 1053 miles.

Birthday celebration in the Maldives. Av's badge got her free entry to the Hithadhoo Nature Reserve

Gan, one of the several islands of Addu Atoll, was once an RAF base and is the last place to stock up with fresh food before reaching Chagos in the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) where there is nothing except fish and coconuts. We moored in a small lagoon alongside the causeway linking Gan to the adjacent island of Feydhoo. It was a tight anchorage but shallow, which was just as well as our windlass had failed (this was a priority fix). Yachts are required to use an agent to check in and out, but it is possible to check in oneself by saying you are only staying for a couple of days. You can then change your mind and use an agent to check out later. Even so, the charges are outrageous since nothing is provided for the money and there are endless restrictions.

The towns and villages comprise one or two dusty, sandy streets with little shade and a uniformly boring architecture of square concrete-block buildings. The people are very friendly, but life appears pretty tedious as they live under the restrictions of extreme Muslim rule and most of the young folk leave as soon as they can, usually to work abroad. The current president is paranoid about a coup, and fearful of infiltration by subversives aboard yachts. His solution is for all yachts to carry an electronic tracker to enable monitoring to ensure they do not approach any villages, something banned on the cruising permit but previously generally ignored by the cruisers. We needed an agent to check out, so employed a company whose head of operations is our OCC Port Officer in the country. We never met, but he was friendly and helpful on the phone and in e-mails.



Virgin vistas – no tourists in Chagos

Whilst in Gan we had been dogged by rafts of grass clogging up the intake filters, the loo being a particular annoyance. Following a careful check of the engine raw water filter we motored out in virtually windless conditions. After a few hours the engine temperature gauge suddenly went into the red, alarms sounding. The filter was clear but a great wodge of grass had embedded itself in the intake skin fitting. G checked the raw water impeller, which had clearly not enjoyed the experience and had shed a couple of blades. Then followed two hours of clearing the pump, replacing the impeller and getting everything back together, during which G managed to burn the skin off the back of his right hand. This was bad, as his left hand was still recovering from a close encounter with a snatch block which nearly lost him the use of his thumb on the run into Gan.

So a poor start, but we tried the engine which went fine. Later it started overheating again – it transpired that the new issue was a leak behind the fresh water pump, which we assumed to be a gasket problem. By now the wind had picked up so we sailed the rest of the passage to Chagos, thinking we could motor if necessary by simply topping up the fresh water. All went well and we arrived at the entrance to Salomon Atoll at high water after three enjoyable days' sailing. Unfortunately, the wind lightened, veered and blew straight out of the lagoon entrance. Coupled with a now ebbing tide we needed the engine to get in. We fired it up but, disconcertingly, there was no raw water cooling flow through the exhaust – obviously one of the broken impeller blades had worked through to block the flow.

Without a working engine we were in a difficult position, with darkness approaching, a contrary dying wind, strong but uncertain ebbing currents, and surrounded by reefs. We launched the RIB, which was lashed on the foredeck, got the big (15hp) outboard

A nesting red-footed boobie

on and secured it alongside. We were then able to make progress into the pass at about 0·4 knots. The scheme was to find somewhere shallow and anchor, but in a failing light with coral heads around, Av suggested we call on the VHF to see if anyone had a powerful outboard to add to ours to help us in. Amazingly, we got an instant reply from *Ostrika*, a Swiss yacht, offering help. Patrick, Paola and Gaby soon arrived alongside in their RIB with 18hp outboard. With one RIB each side, *Dream Away* was powered into the atoll and duly anchored safely in the lagoon.

Owner/skipper Patrick and his crew had been horrified at the state of Graham's hands, to such an extent that the following morning Patrick and Mauro arrived to clear the debris of the destroyed impeller from the cooling system so we could move the boat if needed. We were indeed fortunate to encounter such a competent, helpful and charming group. A couple of days later Graham removed the water pump, to find the fresh water leak was through a hole in a core plug, not a gasket as originally thought. He fixed it with some epoxy.

Look but don't touch … I'm protected

Following all that excitement we settled down to enjoy the unspoilt paradise of an uninhabited Indian Ocean atoll. A ring of islands and islets around the rim all beckoned for exploration. Unsullied white sand beaches, nesting birds in abundance, particularly red-footed boobies and graceful terns, huge coconut crabs and an abundance of other creatures provided a fascinating environment. We snorkelled across the multicoloured coral reefs seeing giant clams, a colourful collection of reef fish, sharks cruising by and huge manta rays gliding towards us with gaping mouths. The latter slipped effortlessly past, totally unperturbed by our presence as were all the fauna we encountered.

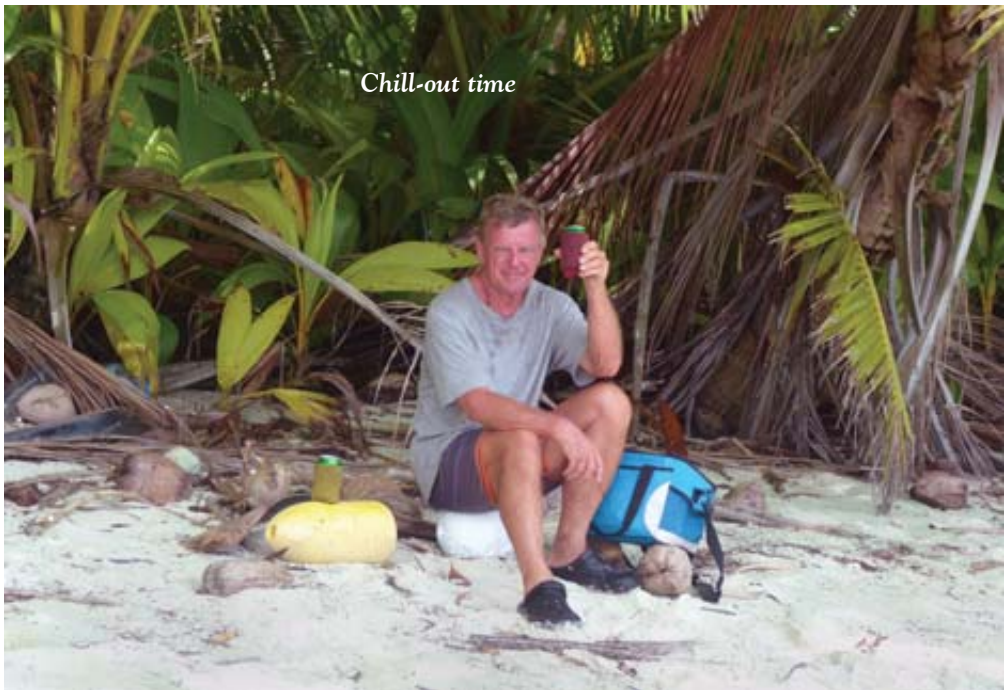
The wildlife getting over-friendly

Chagos is currently administered by the BIOT department of the UK Foreign Office. Cruising yachts can apply for a permit to stay for up to a month at either of two atolls on the grounds of safety and recovery time on the long Indian Ocean crossing. Tourism is not allowed, the permits are expensive, the restrictions onerous, and insurance cover is required for medical evacuation and wreck clearance in the event of an accident. There are no internet, no shops, and no facilities except for a freshwater well dating back to the days when the place was populated. Self-sufficiency is the byword and a well-stocked beer locker and generous wine lake are recommended prerequisites.

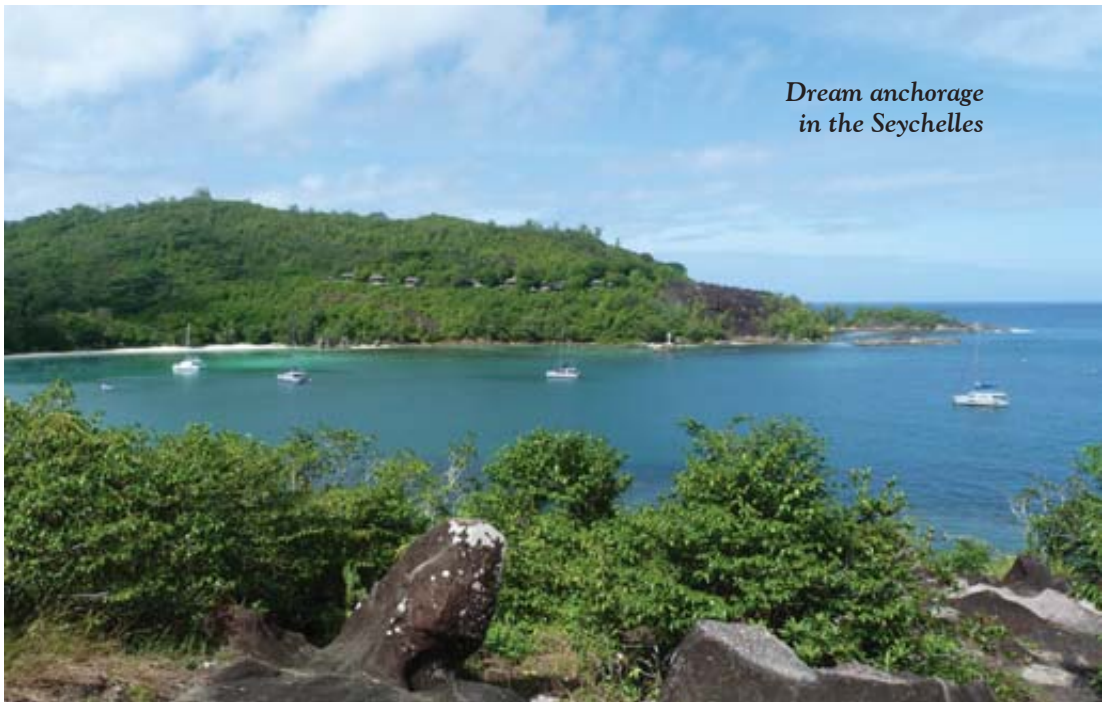
Time passed by and we, along with *Ostrika* and a Chinese couple in a large catamaran, were looking for a weather window to head south to Rodrigues and Mauritius, but the weather to the south of us was vile and getting worse. Our one-month permit was expiring, so we applied to the BIOT authorities in London for an extension which, after communicating with the local patrol vessel, they readily granted. Another week passed and conditions deteriorated further; we all applied for further extensions, which were again granted.

Essential supplies were running low so we looked for a sensible weather pattern for the Seychelles. It's a direct route across the northern part of the Southern Indian Ocean, though far enough south to avoid the strong Equatorial Counter Current, and a slightly more southerly course should find fair winds. We completed the 1084 mile passage in ten days, sailing down to nearly 7°S to keep the wind. We had only two nights under engine, mostly downwind with a few squalls. The main issue is the sea state, which is generally short, steep and confused, and in light winds the constant rolling causes significant wear on both sails and crew.

Unlike the atolls we had recently enjoyed, the Seychelles are a collection of mostly granite islands with mountainous peaks, verdant jungle-clad slopes, and extensive, fine white sand beaches littered with large boulders – all very picture-postcard, with



Chill-out time



Dream anchorage in the Seychelles

extensive areas of marine/national parks dedicated to preserving the unique flora and fauna. The latter range from giant tortoises to the world's smallest frog and the sole remaining flightless birds in the Indian Ocean. The islands have only been inhabited for the past 200 years and remain relatively unspoilt.

The arrival procedure at Victoria, one of the world's smallest capital cities, on the island of Mahé, is to call Port Control and be allocated an anchorage location in their quarantine zone. Following this all the officials are ferried out to clear you in. The 'ferry' trip costs around £200 – an outrageous but unavoidable tariff. Once cleared, you are free to enter the small boat anchorage by the Seychelles Yacht Club. To complete clearance one must visit the Port Captain's lair where a friendly, helpful woman gives you the extensive list of the various charges you will be faced with before you leave.

The Seychelles is not the safest place on the planet, having a bad reputation for piracy and theft. Not quoted in the tourist brochures is the fact that it is a major distribution hub for the drugs trade and has an alarmingly high percentage of heroin addicts. We were assured that at this time of year the seas were too rough for pirates and the water too cold for uninvited guests to swim out to the boat.

We had bounced on the keel going into Gan and wanted an inspection, so *Dream Away* was lifted out on the immense travel-lift at Taylor Smith Boatyard. We had only shaved off some gel coat, but it was good to get her all sealed up. It is not a cheap establishment, but very professional and the workmanship was of a high standard. The boatyard lies in a commercial area to the south of Victoria with an abundance of workshops, chandlers, hardware and all manner of specialist as well as general stores. It is a great place to get things fixed and buy parts – a business opportunity exists for a sailmaker/repairer, as there are none on the island. The local upholsterer is the best bet available for basic sail repairs.

Dream Away dwarfed by the giant travel-lift at Taylor Smith Boatyard

Next it was off to potter around the 'inner islands' group. First you need a permit stating your itinerary, which initially seems an annoyance, but then you remember the troubles they have and understand the need to keep an eye on your safety. The two principal inner islands are La Digue and Praslin, which lie adjacent about 24 miles northeast of Victoria. La Digue is the smaller of the two and offers a step back in time with ox carts, bicycle transport and giant tortoises meandering along the main street. Much of Praslin's coast is designated a marine park and expensive to anchor off, but Anse Lazio at the northwest end offers good shelter from the strong southeast trades in a picturesque location. Around about is a plethora of smaller islands, most with sparkling white sand beaches and often uninhabited. There are also a disturbing number of reefs so one needs to pay attention to the navigation. Returning to Mahé and the yacht club we enjoyed good walking on the many trails developed around the island, which afford splendid views from lofty peaks over the landscape and surrounding waters.

July and August are the time for the strongest southeast trade winds and we were there in late July, looking for a weather window for Madagascar. There is a compression zone on the northern tip of Madagascar that produces fearsome seas, and many yachts making this passage report substantial damage – it is this leg that deters many cruisers from using the northern route. We had rejected a couple of marginal weather windows, but finally found a pattern caused by an aberrant low

An elderly resident of La Digue

Women from an isolated coastal community in Madagascar

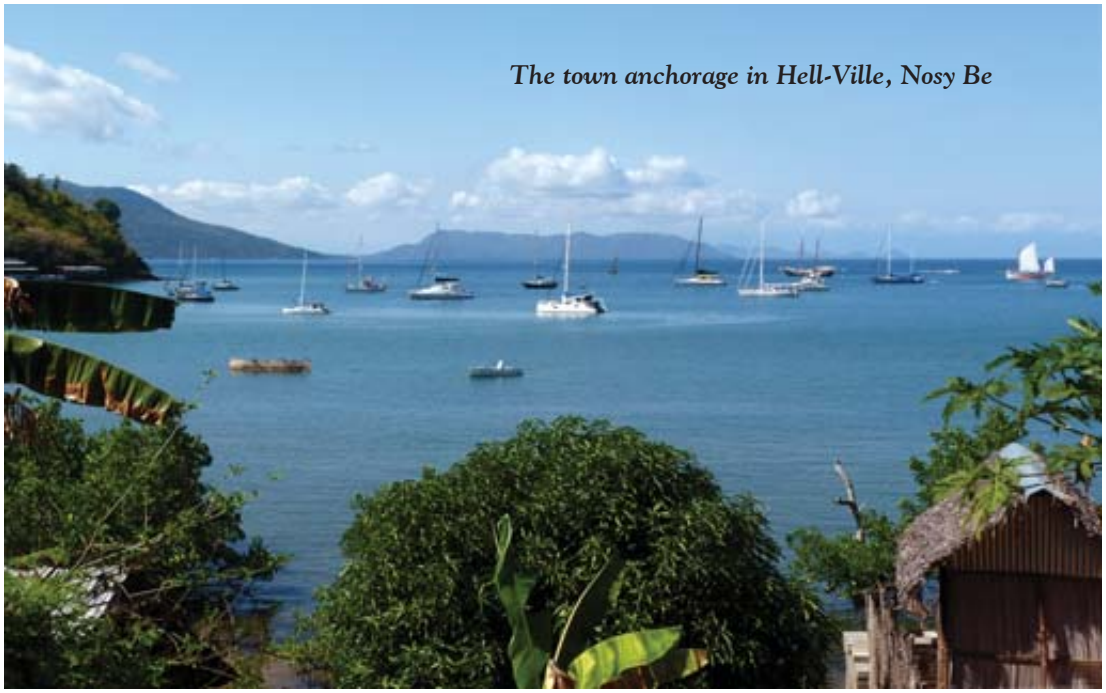
pressure system that would give us a favourable run. We went, along with *Ostrika*, and had a great passage, actually needing to motor near Cape d'Ambre to get in before dark and the stormy forecast for the following day.

The passage ended in Baie Lotsoina, the first deep bay on the northwest side of Madagascar, without incident or breakages, and we heaved a sigh of relief. There followed three wonderful weeks cruising down this beautiful, remote coastline. We anchored off uninhabited islands, and in bays and coves where the locals from the small, isolated villages immediately launched their dugout canoes and came to trade. We spent some intrepid days hiking and were captivated by the magnificent splendour of the region.

Dream Away and Ostrika in Nosy Hara

Classic dhows are handled with superb skill

We write this whilst reclining in Nosy Be with calm seas, light breezes and all manner of civilisation. We have checked in with no issues, extracted money from the ATM, have good quality internet connection, and shops stocked with well-priced food and drink. We still have to cross the Mozambique Channel and round South Africa, so there are challenges ahead, but we have crossed the Indian Ocean and Av is happy.



The town anchorage in Hell-Ville, Nosy Be

FROM THE GALLEY OF ... Leanne Vogel, aboard *Perigee*

(via her *Western Caribbean Cookbook*, see page 3)

Tarte Tatin

This is not an overly sweet or heavy tart. The thing I like about it is that it is pretty hard to mess it up, it looks fabulously rustic and provincial with all those caramelised bits when presented and really heroes the apples. You'll need an ovenproof frying pan, or something round that you can put on the stove top and in the oven.

Ingredients

- 6 Golden Delicious or Royal Gala apples or whatever you have that needs using up
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 200 gms vanilla sugar (or sugar and vanilla essence)
- 30 gms unsalted butter, cubed
- 250 gms puff pastry (which I usually buy and freeze – alternatively use the Simple Pastry recipe below)

Peel and core the apples and cut into quarters. Place in a large bowl and toss in the lemon juice and 100 grams of vanilla sugar. Place the remaining sugar and 2 tbsp of water in an ovenproof frying pan or 25cm Tarte Tatin pan over a low heat, stirring to dissolve the sugar. Increase the heat to medium and cook for about 5 minutes until the sugar caramelises and is a light golden brown. Add the apple, cut-side up, and dot with the butter. Keeping the heat very low, cook for a further 5–6 minutes to partially cook the apple. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool.

Preheat the oven to 190°C (375°F or Gas Mk 5). Roll out the pastry and cut into a circle slightly larger than the pan. Place the pastry over the apple, tucking any excess underneath. Place the pan on a baking tray to catch any juices that may bubble over and bake in the oven for 35 minutes until the pastry is cooked and golden. Remove from oven and allow to rest in the pan for 10 minutes. Carefully turn the tart upside down on to a large plate. Serve with cream or ice cream. You can also use UHT/long-life cream.

Simple Pastry

Ingredients

- 1½ cups of plain flour
- ⅓ of a cup (40gms) of baking powder
- 3 rounded dessertspoons of margarine cut into small pieces
- ⅓ of a cup (75ml) of iced water (approx)
- salt

Sift the flour, baking powder and salt and add in the margarine. Break this with your fingertips when rubbing into the flour mixture until it looks like fine breadcrumbs. Add water and knead it like dough, then roll out on a pastry board until about ½ cm (0·2 in) thick.

DAN BOATER

FOR MEMBERS
+ 24/7 Emergency Hotline
+ Medical Information Line
+ Medevac & Repatriation

FOR TRIPS
+ Medical Coverage
+ Security Evacuation
+ Trip Delay/Cancellation

FOR FIRST AID
+ Kits for any boat size
+ Meet USCG rqmts
+ Waterproof, rugged

DANBOATER.ORG

CÉRÈS THROUGH THE RUSSIAN INLAND WATERWAYS, Part 3

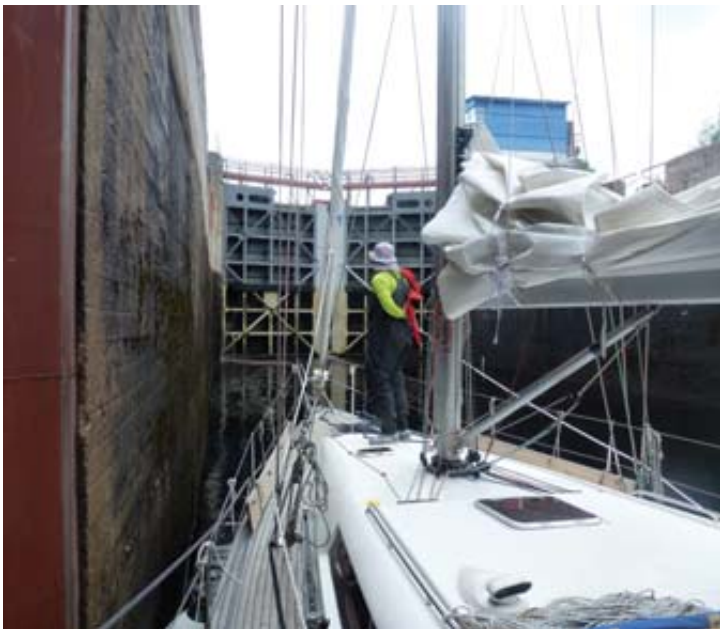
Thierry J-L Courvoisier

(In July 2016 Cérès *and her crew sailed from Helsinki to St Petersburg, before continuing eastward through the Russian inner waterways to the White Sea and the Barents Sea, aiming to reach Tromsø in Norway by early September.*

Flying Fish 2018/1 *documented their voyage as far as Voznesenye on the shores of Lake Onega, and* Flying Fish 2018/2 *saw them reach Povenets at the southern end of the Belomorkanal – also known as the White Sea Canal – where we rejoin them. Both issues are available in the* Flying Fish *Archive at https://oceancruisingclub.org/Flying-Fish-Archive.)*

Approaching the lower gate of a lock is seldom a scenic highlight as one is, by definition, standing beneath the high doors and walls that water will fill until it finally dominates the landscape. Once inside the lock, one feels as if one is at the bottom of a deep, not too clean, can. This was no exception as, on a cold and grey morning in August 2016, we neared the first lock of the Belomorkanal, which connects the Baltic Sea basin to the Arctic Ocean. This was further shadowed by a lurking headache, probably due to the many glasses of vodka absorbed during the long evening at Konstantin's place the day before (see page 174 of *Flying Fish* 2018/2).

The entry to the Belomorkanal is a few miles south of Povenets in the northernmost part of Lake Onega. Passing the lock door meant entering the first element of a canal built in the early part of the 1930s at the cost of tens of thousands of Stalin's prisoners' lives. Every indentation in the rock that we were to see in the following days had been carved by hand, as cost constraints on the building work required that no explosives be used. Every rock and all the earth and trees that needed to be moved or removed to dig the canal had been carried by human muscle, unaided by any motorised device. The lock walls, now in concrete, were originally covered by trunks cut from the surrounding forest.



At the bottom of a lock

The canal was an old idea. The route linking the Arctic Ocean, and therefore the Atlantic, to the Baltic Sea had already been explored by Peter the Great and François Le Fort, the first

The 'rising hooks', an ingenious system

Admiral of the Russian fleet. He grew up in Geneva, brother to one of my ancestors – part of the reason that we were waiting in front of this very lock on that cold and grey morning. Digging the canal had, nonetheless, to wait three centuries following this reconnaissance by the Tsar and the Admiral before Stalin ordered its construction. Even then the result was far from the expectations raised by the strategic importance of the route, as the locks were designed and built to dimensions too small to accommodate 20th century warships. Stalin is said to have been furious when he was taken along the canal for its inauguration in 1933. The weight of this history contributed nothing to lift the spirit of *Cérès*'s crew on this cold morning in August 2016.

The locks are equipped with hooks attached to large steel canisters floating within vertical rails along the walls, which rise and fall with the water level. The only difficulty with this brilliant system is that the distance between them is much too

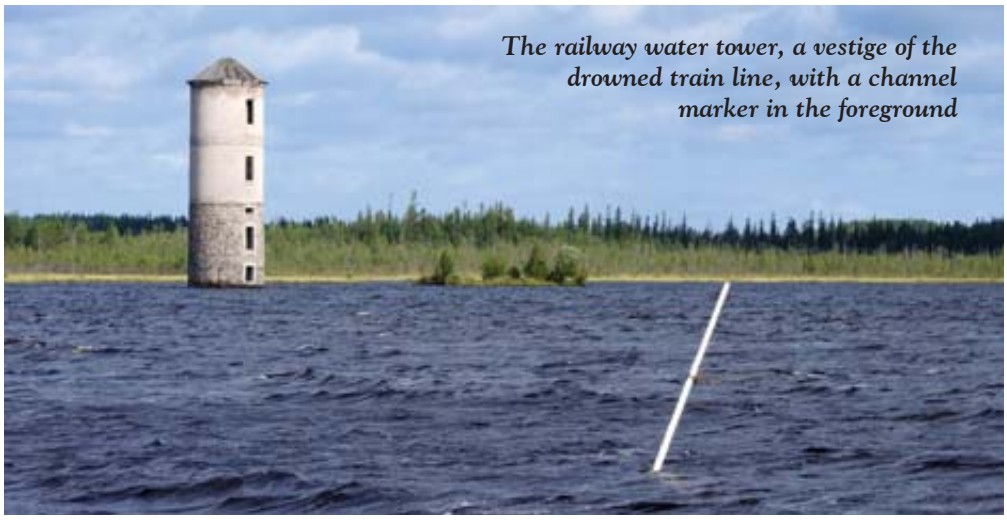
On the Belomorkanal

Crossing an artificial lake on the Belomorkanal

large for yachts, so that we could only attach our mooring lines to a single hook while ascending or descending. We made the mistake in the first one of using a hook in the middle of the lock and leaving too much slack in the lines, and danced uncomfortably against the lock wall while being lifted. In the following locks we used the hindmost rail where much less turbulence prevails, pulled our mooring lines very tight, and had no further problems.

The first section of the canal is dug through rock, followed by a part where land was inundated by building dikes and dams. So first one motors through the dense forest characteristic of northwestern Russia, and then through well-marked channels on wide and shallow artificial lakes won from the same forest. Locks animate the passage, sometimes single, sometimes double, lifting one to slightly over 100m above sea level before descending again. We sailed and motor-sailed some 120 miles in this way, anchoring twice to spend the night at the side of the canal. Lifting the anchor after the first night we heaved up a whole tree trunk complete with roots and branches.

During our transit of the canal we saw one old tug boat, one old cargo ship and, on the eve of our second night, a Russian yacht returning from a two-month circumnavigation of Scandinavia. The crew were so tired and eager to be home that they didn't even take the time to share a drink with us. For the rest, the waters were deserted in the midst of a continuous monotonous forest completely devoid of human settlements. At one point a railway water tower emerged from the surface of the lake, a vestige of the railway line that was inundated with the forest to form that section of the canal. The lonely grey tower emerging from the dark surface of the water in the thick forest creates a landscape that would be an ideal setting for a slightly sinister short story.

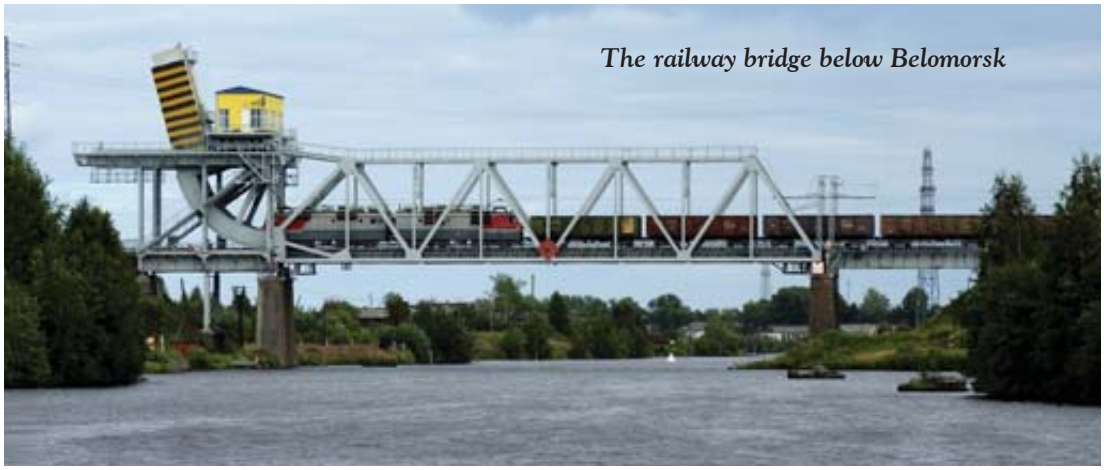


The railway water tower, a vestige of the drowned train line, with a channel marker in the foreground

The lock staff have an excellent view…

There was much wind when we sailed on the lakes – no problem for *Cérès* but some worry for her skipper, who had to manoeuvre cleanly in the locks to reach the desired hook, as no shore help was ever offered. When approaching a lock, Masha, our Russian translator, contacted the staff on the radio. We were then told on which side we should tie, some locks being in such a poor state that one side was derelict and could not be used. As there was no other shipping we never had to wait for the doors to open, which also demonstrated that the staff were aware of our approach well in advance. All locks are guarded by armed men and women and photographs are forbidden, of which we were sternly reminded several times. With no traffic or human activity to be seen along the canal, in the locks, or in the endless surrounding forest, it was difficult to understand the purpose of all these armed men and women pacing up and down the quays.

In the middle of the third day we neared Belomorsk, the city at the northern end of the canal where we were to stop and complete the paperwork required to exit the Russian inner waterways and re-enter the maritime environment. A few miles before the indicated quay, we neared a lock followed by an old railway bridge that the authorities are reluctant to open. The line of which this bridge is part is of vital importance, as it is the sole railway link between the northernmost parts of the region and the city of



The railway bridge below Belomorsk

Murmansk on one side, and Moscow and the rest of Russia on the other – a problem while the bridge is open would certainly cause major disruption in the trans-regional traffic. The bridge is an old steel affair, probably awkward to operate, is only opened when absolutely necessary, and then only between 1600 and 1800 and only when the wind is less than 10 or 12 knots.

Since there is no room to anchor between the lock and the bridge, we wanted to spend the few hours before the possible opening time below the lock, where anchoring looked possible. Permission to do this was, however, denied and we were requested to go through the lock as soon as we arrived. We then asked to wait moored to the quay at the exit of the lock, but that too was refused, despite the complete absence of activity. We were given no choice but to tie to a concrete cube that stood about 3m above water level in a very narrow section of the canal. There was no hook or ring to which we could tie ropes at a height that could be reached from our deck, which the lock staff obviously knew. The guards, complete with weapons and dogs, therefore escorted Nicolas along a path to a shaky walkway that linked the concrete block to the land and left him there while we approached.

Waiting for the bridge to open

The problem was to secure *Cérès* to the rusty iron remains on the top of the block in the fresh breeze blowing, to install a ladder for Nicolas to climb down, and to arrange everything so we could get all our lines back when we were allowed to proceed later that day ... or on the following one, or even later, when the wind had dropped enough for the bridge to be opened. The prospect of spending 24 hours or more between lock and bridge on a deserted stretch of canal was not inviting! Eventually, however, the wind decreased, the staff on both sides of the bridge became active, and an official ordered us by radio to leave our block and pass beneath the bridge – now towering in the air – as fast as possible. I was relieved when the bridge was behind us and only one last lock separated us from the White Sea.

We had to stop in Belomorsk to report to the authorities, and I expected a small town or at least some houses along a quay and some life – we were eager for a meal in a café or restaurant and for a bit of human life. But instead we found a high stone quay alongside a garbage dump, without any house in sight, not to mention a café or restaurant. We were ordered over the radio to walk a few hundred meters down a path to a road, and to look for a blue house where we would find the officer in charge of the formalities. We were to bring our charts of the White Sea as proof that we had the required documentation to sail these waters. As we walked, we noticed the phone number of a taxi painted on a rock alongside the path. We eventually found the blue house beneath a high antenna and the officer sitting at a desk watching television, which we could understand, having measured the density of the traffic. From what

we had seen, the poor lonely man had to deal with at the very most one ship or boat every few days. We filled in numerous papers under the guidance of the officer with Masha translating. The man started by being difficult and unpleasant, but mellowed little by little and was smiling warmly by the end of our encounter, a behaviour we had noticed previously.

Back at the boat we called the phone number seen along the path and indeed got a taxi. When Masha told the driver we wanted to be driven to the town centre, the driver laughed and told us that there was no centre in Belomorsk, and that the only public place was a building serving as a hotel where we could try to obtain a meal. The ride to the 'centre' took us along a derelict road past some buildings in a poor state to a spot next to the river where 50m of dirt had been covered by tar and where two or three cars were parked. A lone young lady was pushing a stroller in which an infant was sleeping. This 'square' was in front of the hotel, where we did indeed obtain a meal, which was even decent. We spent another day in Belomorsk, some of the crew visiting the local museum while I prepared the navigation for the following days. Officers of the FSB (the Russian Federal Security Service) came by in the morning and requested that I sign yet another form which Masha assured me was harmless.

On the morning of 12th August we left the quay early in a bright sunshine to motor to the last lock before the White Sea, with the prospect of a long, cold, but possibly pleasant sail to the Solovetsky archipelago. Attempts to take a last picture of the lock were actively countered by the armed guards. Once through we left the lock to follow a long channel past derelict industrial remains and abandoned quays – Belomorsk is certainly the saddest of the small, semi-abandoned cities we had seen during our passage through the Russian inland waterways. The level of activity in these cities has been decreasing over the last two or three decades and a significant fraction of

The quay in Belomorsk

Under spinnaker on the White Sea, heading for the Solovetsky archipelago

the population has moved away. The abandoned apartments and houses have been left without maintenance, which showed blatantly by the time we passed by. This is not specific to Russia in the last decades – one may read similar fates of villages in southern France in the early parts of the 20th century. Jean Gionno's descriptions of Provence in the 1930s are vivid illustrations in this context. Almost abandoned villages can also be found in southern Italy.

We sailed the 50 miles or so from Belomorsk to the Solovetsky archipelago under spinnaker, alone on the White Sea – a glorious sail with sunshine and a cool, fresh breeze. The Solovetsky archipelago is the ensemble of islands called the Gulag archipelago by Solzhenitsyn when he described the life and death of thousands within its walls during the 1930s. The approach to the archipelago requires some care, as the main island is surrounded by a maze of rocks and islets. The monastery which emerges from the landscape within its walled citadel would probably look impressive were it not shrouded in scaffolding. Works in progress is indeed a *leitmotiv* on the island.

As with other monasteries in northeast Russia, its origins go back to a lone hermit. Later, in the 19th century, the original very simple quarters were transformed into rich and complex buildings attesting the glory of the Orthodox Church. The history of the Solovetsky monastery is, like that of the Oreshek fortress on Lake Ladoga, 'enriched' by a dark episode of Soviet repression. The archipelago served as detention centre and administrative authority for a number of camps in the area during the latter

The Solovetsky archipelago, also known as the Gulag archipelago, where the monastery is undergoing restoration

days of Lenin and the Stalin era. It became known as the Gulag archipelago through Solzhenitsyn's celebrated saga. The works in progress aim at removing all traces of that time and at restoring the monastery to its former, glorious appearance. There is no proper harbour near the monastery, just a derelict quay on which a sturdy-looking Russian sailing boat was tied so we went alongside for a while before anchoring in the bay. The Russian crew came from a forbidden city, the centre of Russian nuclear submarine construction, near Arkhangelsk.

A first tour of the place in the late afternoon made it clear to us that, without a guide, a foreign visitor would have no chance of finding their way around the maze of buildings, but strolling around far from the pilgrims and the tourist crowds gave us the opportunity to get some idea of life on the island. Everyone lives one way or another from the monastery, be it directly from its operation, either as monks or in some other religious function, or from the building work, or to serve the pilgrims, or as support for the other communities as school teachers, traders etc. Our wandering shattered my naive expectation that we would be able to make contact with some of these people, were we to stay for some days. Mariusz Wilk, a Polish journalist, spent several months

in this community and in *The Journals of a White Sea Wolf* describes vividly a number of characters entangled in complex personal lives, lost expectations and large quantities of alcohol – a world I had naively imagined being able to approach, having come all the way on a sailing boat. But here, as elsewhere, people were careful not to notice us. Obviously it takes much more than a few days, and probably a good command of the Russian language, to approach this community.

The guide we hired for the following day was highly competent but remained distant, avoiding any conversation that did not centre on the monastery or citadel and their dependencies, where almost no traces of the Soviet detention facilities are still visible. However, the unrestored buildings and facilities give an idea of the conditions prevalent in the middle of the 20th century. Solzhenitsyn's descriptions, a number of pages from *Stalin's Meteorologist* by Olivier Rolin, some pictures on display and some stories told by our guide did give us an idea of the conditions in the detention camp. Interestingly, our guide was energetic in refuting some of Solzhenitsyn's stories – where he describes, for example, how unruly prisoners were sometimes precipitated down a long and steep staircase with their hands tied in order to die from broken backs and heads – our guide objected that this had certainly not taken place, as the guards would not have been stupid enough to throw prisoners down several hundred steps, as their bodies would then have had to be heaved up again. In the absence of further research on these sordid stories we'll leave doubt as to the veracity of Solzhenitsyn's descriptions open.

While the Bolsheviks destroyed almost all the art on the archipelago, as it belonged to the church they despised, some works were salvaged under the pretext of keeping a few items to show posterity the decadence of the pre-revolutionary epoch. These items are on show in a small but beautiful museum within the monastery.

The weather forecast was grim, with force 7 easterlies due some days hence. Since the route from the Solovetsky archipelago to Arkhangelsk is east-northeast and then southeast, we decided to leave a day earlier than planned. The 14th August thus saw us raise anchor to sail for some 30 hours, hoping to reach Arkhangelsk before the weather turned nasty. The passage was excellent, with the visit of a beluga whale in the afternoon, and fair and cool winds on a manageable sea. On the morning of the second day a military ship kept appearing above the horizon, approaching us to within a few miles, and then disappearing again before reappearing. This game ceased as we approached the channel leading into the city. It is some 25 miles long and starts before the shore becomes visible. It is well marked with massive buoys and is equipped, unusually, with lights on the channel side at each bend, green or red depending on whether the channel bends to starboard or to port.

The radio and telephone became active as we motored up the channel. All sorts of authorities wanted to know where we were. Vladimir Ivankiv, OCC Port Officer Representative for St Petersburg, who had helped us plan and execute our trip had to report our position, and so did we to several authorities, a rather unusual level of administrative activity that kept Masha busy on the VHF and telephone. Approaching the city one sees large quantities of floating wood brought down from the forests upstream and many timber factories in more or less good shape. One large plant, painted bright blue, led us to suspect that a famous Swedish furniture company gets at least part of the wood it uses from this region.

Crossing the White Sea towards Arkhangelsk

We had been instructed to moor at the local yacht club, and to be careful to arrive when the tide was high enough for us to reach the quay safely following a large bend in the river. While there was just enough water for our draught, the expected quay was nowhere to be seen. It seemed that the barge which had served as a mooring place had been moved, and instead a large, ex-military ship was moored against a stone quay. Our only possibility was to secure alongside, but not only was the shape of the ship, broader at deck level than at the waterline, anything but adapted for mooring a sailing yacht, we were told also that they would be leaving in an hour to refuel and would then return. The strong easterly winds had materialised, with heavy, cold rain putting the last touch to a grim arrival. We had no choice but to manoeuvre when required, trying to stay in waters deep enough for us in the decreasing light of a stormy, late summer, arctic day. Eventually manoeuvring came to an end, we were reasonably safely tied, Masha had found her boyfriend and was off to see her mother and, warm and dry inside *Cérès*, we could relax with a large glass of wine, when the phone rang one last time. It was Vladimir telling us that the Russian Northern Fleet had just closed the White Sea and the Russian part of the Barents Sea to all civilian navigation for an unspecified duration.

A true cliff-hanger ending, which will be resolved in *Flying Fish* 2020/1 in the final part of Thierry's account of *Cérès through the Russian Inland Waterways*.

BROKER YOUR BLUE WATER YACHT WITH

John Rodriguez
YACHTS
WWW.JRYACHTS.COM

SPECIALIST BLUE WATER & CRUISING YACHT BROKER

10% DISCOUNT FOR FELLOW OCC MEMBERS

"… a first class brokerage service with standards of excellence rarely found in the industry…"

web: www.jryachts.com e: john@jryachts.com Tel: +44 (0)7505 485 950

Our clients love the adventure.
Luckily, we love the planning.

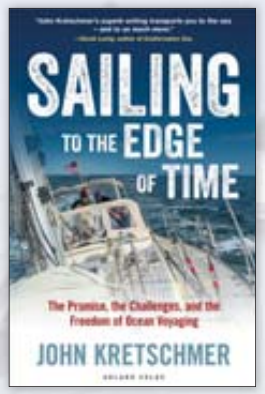
Maritime Medical Solutions, designed and delivered by medical specialists. Who also happen to be sailors.

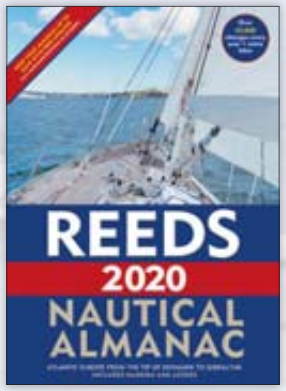
info@redsqauremedical.com
www.redsquaremedical.com

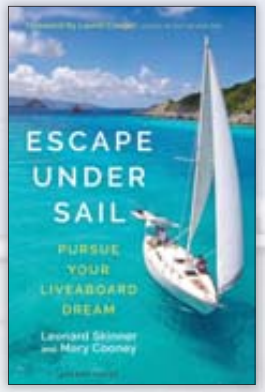
Red Square Medical
Maritime Medical Solutions

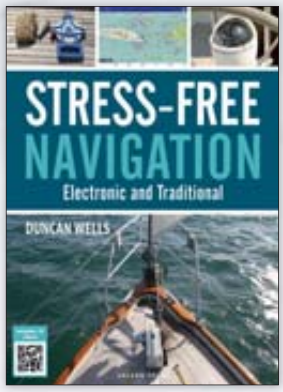
FROM SAILING ESSENTIALS TO INSPIRATIONAL STORIES OF ADVENTURE AND BRAVERY

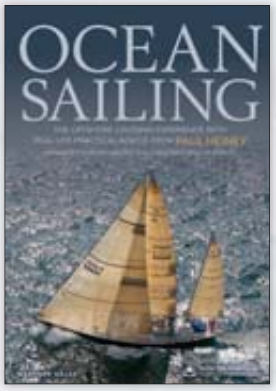
ALL THE BOOKS YOU'LL NEED ON BOARD THIS SEASON

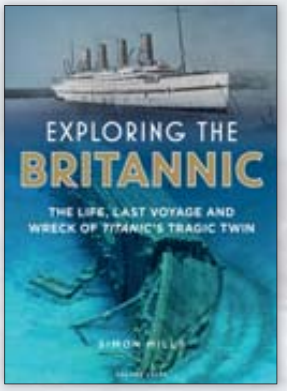












Sign up to our newsletter for exclusive content and special offers

www.adlardcoles.com

ADLARD COLES NAUTICAL

MEDICAL EMERGENCY IN THE CARIBBEAN

Rosemary Brown

(*John and Rosemary own* Arctic Tern, *a Rustler 36. They have sailed her extensively on the west coast of Scotland as well as to the Faroes, the Azores, to Morocco via Brittany, Portugal and Spain. From there they continued to Madeira, the Canaries and the Cape Verde islands before crossing the Atlantic to the Caribbean in 2014. Further voyaging was curtailed by the events described below.*)

We returned to Antigua and *Arctic Tern* just before Easter after a seven-week spell at home, intending to leave English Harbour for St Maarten the following day. We hadn't planned to stop at Jolly Harbour, but after a busy few weeks the prospect of the short trip to anchor for the night suddenly appealed. As things turned out, this was a providential decision.

On the approach to the Jolly Harbour anchorage, with the wind blowing a steady 30 knots, the engine throttle cable broke, forcing us to head towards the marina. With no escort boat available we crept along the channel at 2 knots and in poor visibility, with me at the helm and John below, operating the throttle by hand. Safely alongside an outside berth and with no possibility of getting hold of a replacement cable until after Easter, we settled down for a relaxing weekend. Luckily, there is a well-stocked Budget Marine chandlery at Jolly Harbour. On the evening of Easter Monday, planning to be up early to buy and fit a new cable and resume our interrupted passage to St Maarten, we were in bed, reading. However within minutes of dropping my book and starting to doze off, our world, and our plans, were thrown into chaos. "Rosemary – it's happened again ..." – I will never forget those words.

One morning three years earlier, while preparing to drive to rejoin *Arctic Tern* in Falmouth, John had experienced a sudden massive bleed from the bowel, with absolutely no prior symptoms. Following a couple of weeks in hospital in a high-dependency unit, several transfusions and a process called interventional radiology which succeeded in cauterising the leakage, his consultant had assured us that the likelihood of a reoccurrence was 'vanishingly small'. Furthermore, he gave his blessing to our long-distance sailing plans. We were euphoric.

Now here we were in Antigua and the unthinkable had just happened again. Head spinning, I found the emergency number (999) and got hold of the ambulance service. And then, having looked at our insurance documents, came a further bombshell – "I don't think I'm properly insured". Brushing this news and its implications aside, I pulled on some clothes and ran ashore through the silent and deserted marina buildings, hoping to intercept the ambulance and give directions to the boat. Behind a lit doorway I found one of the night security staff who called the ambulance service again. Within minutes two more security staff appeared and, as my agitation grew, their obvious concern and willingness to help gave me some momentary comfort. When the ambulance (in reality a van with rudimentary medical equipment) eventually arrived, John was stretchered ashore and before long we were being driven off into the Caribbean night, towards an unknown destination and a frighteningly uncertain future.

Half an hour later we arrived at the Mount St John's Medical Centre, but before John could receive any treatment I had to produce proof of insurance, and pay both the ambulance and a deposit of US $1200. Fortunately the clerk sleepily accepted the proffered documentation without comment, although I knew that ultimately we would be faced with a rather large bill. At that moment, however, with John by now barely conscious and losing blood at an alarming rate, insurance – or rather lack of it – was the least of my worries.

The atmosphere in the busy emergency room was frantic and noisy. John lay waiting and ignored, shivering violently. Time seemed to slow down. After much cajoling and pleading by me, a blanket appeared. I later discovered that there was a severe shortage of many necessities, blankets included – and, as we were soon to learn, blood.

The duty surgeon, with no access to John's medical records and with no scans or X-rays, quickly concluded that his only option was to operate without further delay. At the same time, he made us aware that he was far from confident of a successful outcome ... and that there was also a chronic shortage of available blood. And so in the wee small hours, in a few surreal moments outside the operating theatre, John bade me goodbye. He seemed strangely calm; I was numb with disbelief and shock. But four-and-a-half tense hours later, the double doors leading to the theatre suite swung open and John was wheeled out, flanked by the surgeon and the anaesthetist, faces wreathed in smiles.

Later that morning, with John in intensive care, the surgeon told me that he had been given the last unit of blood on the island – but unbeknown to me, our family had already set the wheels in motion. In response to an urgent e-mail appeal for blood donations from our son Simon, initially to the Cruising Association and to Jenny Crickmore-Thompson of the OCC, messages were disseminated via social media, e-mail and the OCC radio net for the Caribbean. At the same time our daughter Melissa contacted the Antigua press and radio stations, both of whom responded instantly. By Thursday of the same week, Melissa was in Antigua. We owe an incalculable debt of gratitude to Jenny for her speedy and efficient response to Simon's appeal, to the stream of donors who came forward in the following days, and to many others whom we have never met and whose names we will never know. And of course most of all to the skill and aftercare of the surgeon, Dr Radhakrishnan, with whom we still keep in touch at Christmas.

Jo Lucas, the general manager at Jolly Harbour, was endlessly thoughtful and supportive with local knowledge and practical advice. Hammer, the driver whose taxi I took on my first trip from the hospital back to the boat, became my regular driver on the daily return trips between hospital and harbour. And as the hospital had no lab, he made sure he was constantly on call to drive me to the various labs in St John's to which blood testing was outsourced. On a couple of occasions he even refused payment. We became friends during those car journeys, and on one return trip to Jolly Harbour he brought his mother and daughters along. I learned that he had spent many years as an electrician working for Cable and Wireless.

For several days, and on one occasion in the middle of the night, I was bombarded with numerous and contradictory telephone calls from different staff at the insurance company, leaving me confused and uncertain about the outcome. My confusion was compounded when I began to receive calls from doctors connected to the

Rosemary and John about to leave Antigua's Mount St John's Medical Centre

company requesting updates on John's condition. On one such call I was advised that arrangements were being made to medivac him to the USA – that would certainly have put paid to the children's inheritance! I subsequently discovered that, although the insurance company had declined to pay, they continued to provide remote medical advice, although this was never made explicit to me. In the end, however, our initial suspicions were confirmed. Because of his age, John's existing cover didn't extend to the Caribbean. In the throes of pre-departure preparations and other distractions, a small oversight had led to potentially life-threatening consequences. Having been reassured that we should put it behind us and get on with our lives, the earlier incident at home had been all but forgotten. How easy it is to take good health for granted! As the well-worn saying goes, the unthinkable will never happen to us – until out of the blue, it does.

By the time Melissa arrived life had assumed a regular routine, with long days spent at the hospital punctuated by trips to labs. While John recovered slowly in intensive care we kept a constant, anxious vigil. We hired a car, and on my birthday – at John's insistence – drove the scenic route to Nelson's Boatyard and English Harbour, where Antigua Week was in full swing. Watching the comings and goings to and from the dinghy pontoon I felt strangely distant from the community of which we had so recently been a part.

Owing to domestic circumstances, our original plan to sail to Suriname, the West Indies and northwards via the Intracoastal Waterway had had to be cancelled. Reluctantly, we had made arrangements to ship *Arctic Tern* back to the UK from St Thomas in the US Virgin Islands, little realising what a fortuitous decision this would turn out to be. But now I needed to find someone to take the boat from Antigua to St Thomas. Jo Lucas recommended local delivery skipper Kevin Moses, who fitted the new throttle cable for me and delivered *Arctic Tern* safely to St Thomas, where she was berthed for a week to await the arrival of the transporter ship. The final leg of her passage home to the Clyde, at the end of May, was entrusted to a UK delivery crew.

Less than two weeks after the fateful night, John was given medical clearance to return to the UK, where he spent the rest of the summer recovering. Since then he has been in excellent health.

There is a happy postscript to this story. We finally joined the OCC and a couple of years later were delighted to meet Jenny Crickmore-Thompson at the Scottish Open House weekend hosted by Commodore Simon Currin and his wife Sally. We are also back aboard, having spent several weeks this summer cruising home waters on the west coast of Scotland, and have recently completed a two-week charter in the Desolation Sound area of British Columbia.

With John Franklin and Jenny Crickmore-Thompson at the Scottish Open House weekend in May

Parasailor

Parasailor – The Passage Maker

A short-handed crew on a long-distance voyage. The big dream. Endless blue water, a moderate following breeze. And the good-natured Parasailor steadily pulls the boat along mile by mile. The autopilot has control. Those on watch can relax as the Parasailor is self-trimming, balancing out wind shifts without the need for crew to steer or trim. The Parasailor can also handle stronger winds. Its opening acts as a safety vent, cushioning gusts and reduces rolling and yawing. Performance drawbacks? None at all! The wing does not only pull upwards but also forwards. And it provides so much stability that a spinnaker pole is not necessary. Invented and developed in Germany, the Parasailor is at home on all downwind legs. In short, the Parasailor is the ideal companion for your sailing passages. It is more forgiving than a conventional spinnaker, and more versatile than an asymmetric. This is not only the opinion of cruising legend Jimmy Cornell who has sailed thousands of miles under Parasailor. In fact many participants of the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers (ARC) choose the wing-integrated downwind sail year on year: about one third of all downwind sails are Parasailors.

ISTEC The Downwind Company

www.istec.ag

Fresh water.
Wherever, whenever.

Whatever your vessel, fitting a watermaker from Mactra makes life onboard a pleasure...

Schenker watermakers are possibly the most energy efficient on the market today. There is a Schenker Watermaker to suit your needs from 30-300 litres in an hour.

Our most popular models.

Smart 30
Makes 30 litres an hour using just 9 amps@ 12V (4.5 amps 24V)

Smart 60 Makes 60 litres an hour using 20amps @ 12V (10 amps 24V)

Schenker Zen
The **NEW** Zen makes 30 litres an hour for 9 amps @ 12V

Schenker 60M12
Makes 60 litres an hour using 20 amps @ 12V (10 amps @ 24V)

Schenker 100M24
Makes 100 litres an hour using 17 amps @ 24V

Schenker 30M12
Makes 35 litres an hour using 8 amps @ 12V (4 amps 24V)

Yacht watermakers and equipment for serious blue water sailors & livaboards

Schenker DISSALATORI WATERMAKERS

MACTRA Marine Equipment

World Cruising Club Corporate Member

Mactra Marine Equipment Unit 13, Worle Industrial Centre, Weston-super-Mare BS22 6BX
Tel: 00 44 (0) 1934 517288 **Email:** info@mactrashop.co.uk **Web:** www.mactramarine.co.uk

Your first stop after Finisterre, a friendly club with full marina facilities including lift-out and fuel. Good restaurant and bar with terrace. Closest yacht club & marina to Santiago de Compostela.
Discount on berths of 25% for all OCC members.

SAILING THE RING OF FIRE, Part 2
Andy and Sue Warman
Roving Rear Commodores

(*In Part 1 of* Sailing the Ring of Fire*, which appeared in* Flying Fish 2019/1*, Andy and Sue described their cruise from Malaysia via Borneo to Yap in the Caroline Islands. We left them as they departed the island for southern Japan, and rejoin them as they make landfall on Okinawa island.*

Spruce *– the second of that name which Andy and Sue have owned – is a Hallberg-Rassy 42 in which they have crossed both Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, and visited New Zealand, Australia and Indonesia.*

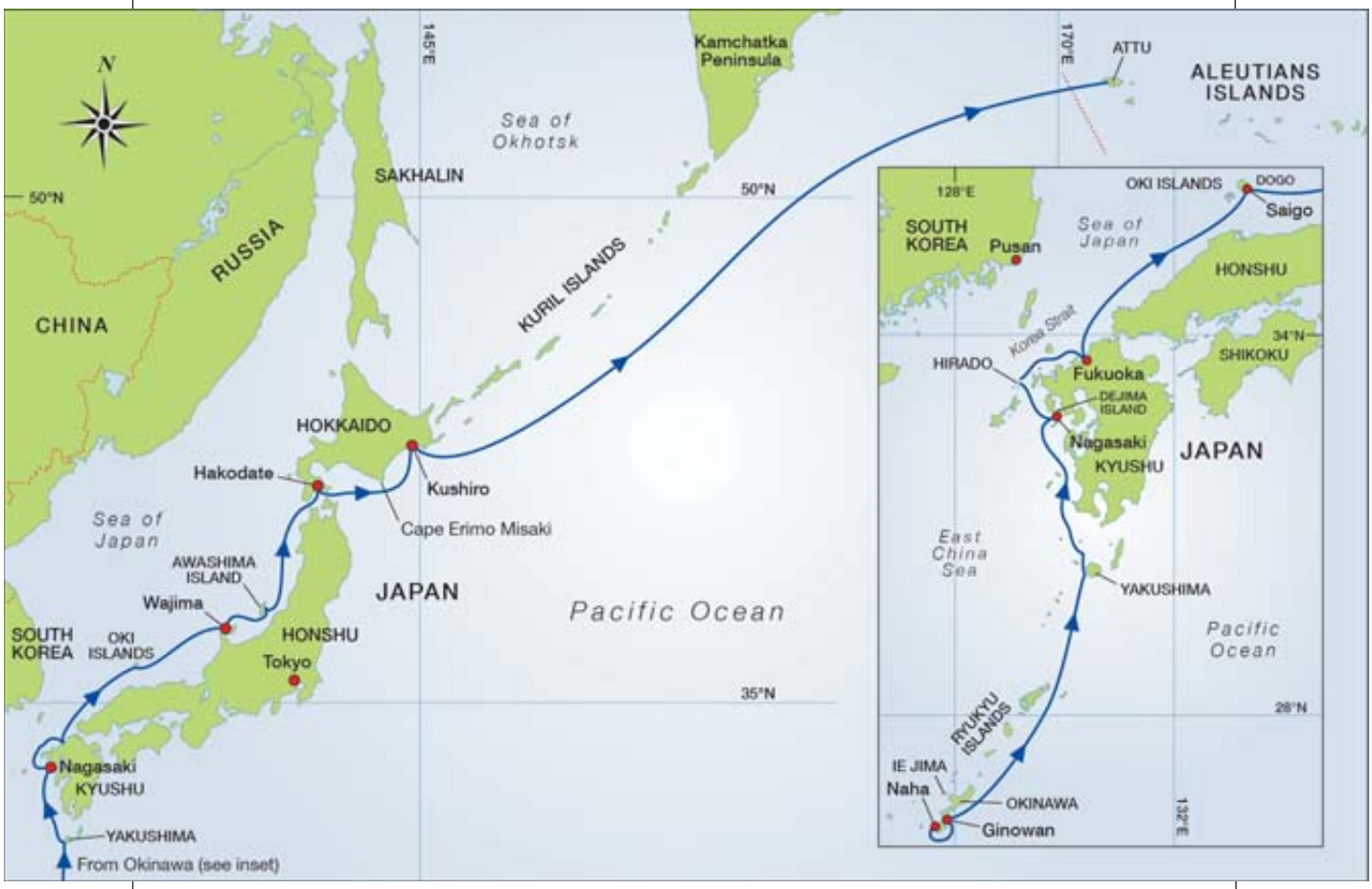
This is the second part of the cruise for which the 2018 Vasey Vase was awarded – see Flying Fish 2019/1 *– and visit their blog at www.sailblogs.com/member/littlegreenboat.*)

Japan

Our initial glimpse of Japan was of indistinct distant lights, twinkling before dawn – the island of Okinawa lay on the horizon after 12 days at sea. Light diffused into the eastern sky to reveal a grey, misty land devoid of colour, altogether more reminiscent of a northern European autumn rather than our sub-tropical latitude of 26°N. Cold, damp maritime air, originally from frozen China and Russia to the north, swung around the Asian winter anticyclone. It was hard to believe that the switch of the monsoon in May would invite humid moist air from the tropics and a procession of summer typhoons to these waters.

The first Japanese vessels we sighted were sleek and low in the water. Long, white hulled, with angular shaped superstructures ... fishing craft. We had not seen this type elsewhere. As we approached land the VHF crackled into life with a call from a Japanese Coast Guard radio station. They had seen our AIS transmission. An advance notification sent from Micronesia via an e-mail to Chi-Chi-Jima coastguard – Okinawa

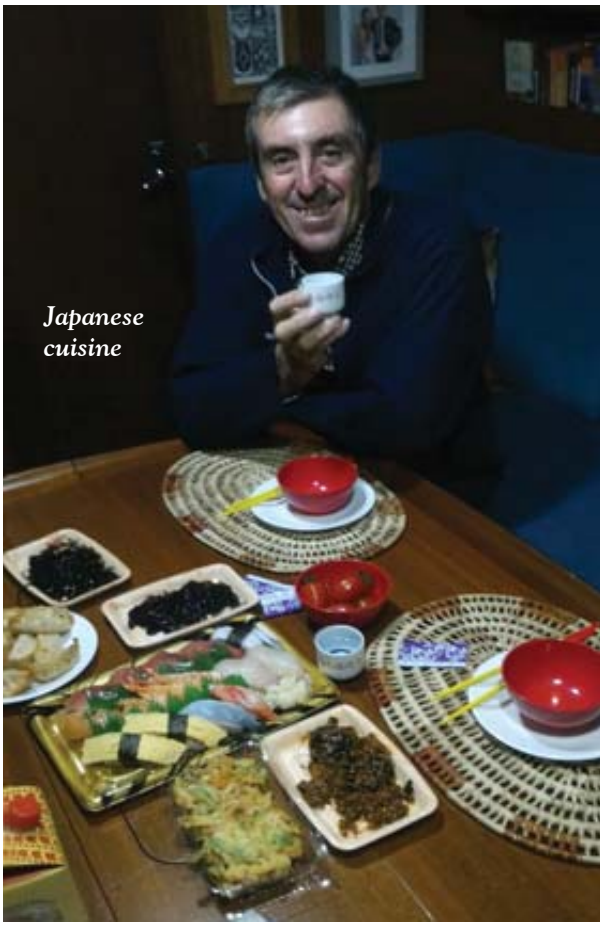
A fishing vessel at Ie Jima


N
145°E
Kamchatka Peninsula
170°E
ATTU
ALEUTIANS ISLANDS
Sea of Okhotsk
SAKHALIN
50°N
50°N
RUSSIA
CHINA
KURIL ISLANDS
HOKKAIDO
Hakodate
Kushiro
Cape Erimo Misaki
Sea of Japan
AWASHIMA ISLAND
Wajima
JAPAN
Pacific Ocean
SOUTH KOREA
OKI ISLANDS
HONSHU
Tokyo
35°N
Nagasaki
KYUSHU
YAKUSHIMA
From Okinawa (see inset)
128°E
OKI ISLANDS
DOGO
Saigo
SOUTH KOREA
Pusan
Sea of Japan
HONSHU
Korea Strait
34°N
SHIKOKU
HIRADO
Fukuoka
DEJIMA ISLAND
Nagasaki
KYUSHU
JAPAN
East China Sea
YAKUSHIMA
Pacific Ocean
28°N
RYUKYU ISLANDS
IE JIMA
Naha
OKINAWA
Ginowan
132°E

Clearing in at Okinawa

only use fax – did arrive, so we were expected. Instructions said proceed to Naha immigration quay, with a particular warning not to hit the reef. Thirteen officials greeted our arrival at the dock. A minor theatrical farce ensued. We threw shore lines towards helpful Coast Guard personnel but the Port Health people immediately insisted they drop them. Our attempt to step ashore and tie on was momentarily thwarted, until we pushed their thermometers out of the way and secured ourselves. Engine still running, standing on the dock, questioning commenced. Temperatures were monitored with IR thermometers. "Where from?" "How long at sea?" "Anybody sick?" We coaxed them on board to sit down. A certificate was issued that stated we were provisionally cleared and if we did not get ill in the next nine days we were *de facto* fully cleared by the Port Health department.

Then came Coast Guard, Customs, Port Control, Immigration and maybe some others – so many faces, so many uniforms. The common factor was that each wanted to complete seemingly the same form by longhand. Surreptitious swabs were taken from various lockers, bulkheads and crew. Immediately bagged in polythene, these samples were rushed to a mobile forensics laboratory parked at the dockside. The officers seemed coy at being questioned on what was happening, though Sue's cheeky "Oh look, they're cleaning the boat for us!" was met with grins by the few who spoke English. After a couple of hours we were finished, save a repeat visit by Coast Guard officers later in the afternoon, now with the correct forms, to change our vessel status from International to Domestic. The upside of this change is not needing to clear with Customs at every port, at the expense of not qualifying for duty free fuel while in Japan. The strangest question fielded was "Have you visited North Korea?" quickly followed by "Do you have a North Korean flag aboard?" Perhaps the latter was a trick question, just in case we fibbed on the first one.



Japanese cuisine

Finally free from officialdom it was time to replenish at the supermarket, always a pleasure when arriving in a culturally different land. However, until we obtained a local SIM card with internet connectivity, and the ability to translate Kanji into English online, shopping was a lucky-dip. Choosing *sashimi**, *sushi* and meat, immaculately presented beneath transparent plastic, was simple – things packaged in opaque wrappers proved more challenging. Unlike previous Asian countries, with familiar letters and bilingual dictionaries, or nations where the language is Latin-based, Japan renders one completely illiterate in the most basic of tasks. Often, guesses at contents based upon usual colour schemes proved wrong. Our tastes in food are broad, so astonishment at discovering unexpected contents was not too ghastly although one slimy, brown seaweed (we think) product left us gagging.

While cruising in Japan, many significant harbour constructions are seen, and even small fishing ports boast substantial fortifications against waves – the awesome power of typhoons is clearly uppermost in the minds of civil engineers. The next day we moved seven miles north to a marina at Ginowan and our first encounter with a particularly tenacious type of floating weed. This introduced us to the art of rapid dives with a serrated knife – the rope-stripper made little impression on a large ball of this plant wrapped around a folding propeller.

The language continued to present difficulties, but the people we met were most gracious in working to achieve comprehension. The generosity of folks was remarkable. An example from Ie Jima: a local fisherman saw us tying to an outer wall where depths were shallow and insisted on bringing us into an inner berth behind his craft. A friend who spoke some English was enlisted to translate. Later a package of freshly-made tempura-coated vegetables arrived. The following morning they insisted on driving us around their island, proudly showing us the sights, and then took us home to meet the family, play traditional musical string instruments and treat us to tea and cakes. This was typical of the people we met in the smaller fishing villages along the Sea of Japan coast.

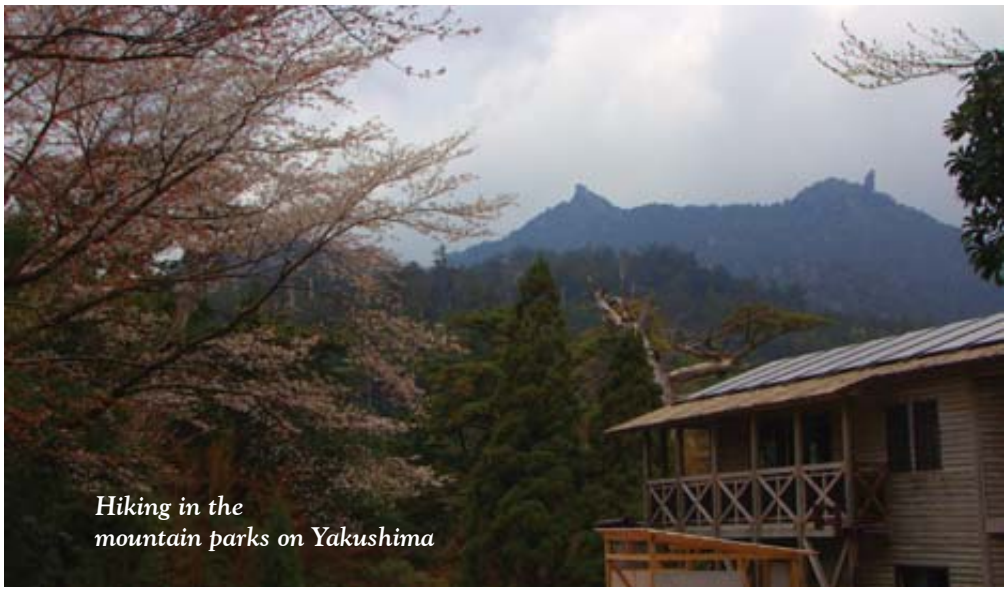
* A Japanese delicacy consisting of raw fish or meat sliced into thin pieces and often eaten with soy sauce. Unlike *sushi*, rice does not normally feature.

Traditional musical instruments, Ie Jima

Clearing the fouled prop at Okinawa

Yakushima, our last island stop before reaching one of the four main islands, offered great hiking, a few glimpses of the almost finished (early this year) cherry blossom and a story of ancestors who logged giant *sugi* (cedar trees). Huge stumps, now camouflaged by undergrowth, hinted at the magnitude of trees once felled. Many of the behemoths still growing were more than a thousand years old.

Further north, beyond Nagasaki, lies Hirado, a town rich in history from the age of European expansion. *Shogun* by James Clavell is set in this era and its central character, the English pilot Anjin San, was a real person – his grave is here. Traders from the UK and Netherlands opened fortified trading warehouses in Hirado and along with them came the usual following of missionaries. The typical story of European takeover and domination might well have unfolded,



Hiking in the mountain parks on Yakushima

but frightening tales of European domination in the Philippines may have reached these shores and the incumbent Shogun chose to limit the scope of foreigners to influence Japanese culture and politics. The foreign traders were evicted from Hirado in 1625 and relocated to Dejima island near Nagasaki, which enabled the Japanese to retain control of trade and cultural intervention within their country. Not until Commodore Perry from the USA steamed into Edo Bay in 1853 with a sample of gunboat diplomacy, and the following year visited Kanagawa and Hakodate, was the status quo disrupted.

Fukuoka was our first large city, a blending of the old and the modern found on Kyushu island. Temples and shrines are situated within compounds encircled by high-rise office buildings. The aesthetic harmony of traditional architecture, manicured gardens, raked pebbles and balanced shapes provided a relaxing sanctuary within modernity. A love of flowers, blossom and nature emanated from the Japanese people we encountered in these locations.

Taking photographs of loved ones dressed in traditional costume alongside cherry blossom, wisteria and a host of other colourful blooms is a widespread leisure pastime.

Traditional costume amongst the cherry blossom

Spruce moored at Hirado

In Fukuoka we met Kirk Patterson and his wife Tsuyuko. Kirk, who originally hails from Canada, is a member of the OCC and a correspondent with the Sailing in Japan Facebook group. He is a superb source of help and information to those cruising these waters.

Hagi, better known today as a ceramics centre, played an important role in Japan opening up to modernisation during the late 19th century. Following centuries of isolationism, contemporary shipbuilding technology from the Netherlands and Russia was adopted – archaeological excavations have recently uncovered the sites of this important shipbuilding history. The Meiji period opened suddenly and the feudalism of the Shogunate era was rapidly abandoned.

Fukuoka Kirk and Tsuyuko

Festival day at the Oki islands

We almost met another OCC vessel in Hagi when we spotted *Brother Wind* arriving in the marina (*Spruce* was alongside in the nearby fishing harbour). We started to head towards them to say hello, but saw a large welcoming committee of officials ready to pounce – evidently Giles and Jo would be busy for some considerable time. Although we travelled much the same route northwards our timing did not coincide again.

The Oki islands, Saigo and Dogo, offshore in the Sea of Japan, gave longer passages with decent sailing breezes. Away from the Honshu mainland in Saigo, a festival at a Shinto temple gave glimpses of Japanese culture as experienced by villagers. It seemed residents are

Historical re-enactment at Hakodate

'required to attend', and a local family invited us to join their picnic in the temple grounds. Limited conversation revealed that this was an event to bless the gods, the ancestors and the temple. Samurai skills and traditions were clearly revered. Big-nosed scary characters, similar to those seen in Bali, made a costumed appearance. Maybe this was another representation of Europeans from first contact centuries ago? Many other varied costumes were sported by dignitaries, clerics and participants. An amazing display of horsemanship was a centrepiece – a galloping stallion ridden by a Samurai who steered with his knees while shooting arrows into targets. He was separated from the thronging crowd by only a thin rope barrier.

Superb sailing on the tail of a departing gale took us on to Wajima, another town desperately trying to invent itself after a former heyday of fishing. The competitive Japanese tourism market is not targeted on international visitors, most of whom remain along the opposite coastline. An ageing and rapidly-reducing population exacerbates the situation as young people leave these rural and coastal communities for the cities. We saw many elderly people working bent double in the rice paddies and fields, but encountered few young fisher-folk. Many small boats lay hauled ashore, grass growing tall around them. We learned that, as the population ages, vessels are abandoned, while a lack of clarity over ownership leaves a legacy of GRP disposal headaches as the older generation pass on.

As we progressed north the temperature continued to reduce, despite summer looming closer – until the monsoon winds switched from northeast to southwest a cold chill continued to be delivered from China and Siberia. At Awashima island resting fishermen huddled around a brazier eating barbecued pork and drinking *sake*. One of the group was part-Filipino and spoke both English and Japanese. He said they would have liked us to stay longer "Next time come slow", but the season was fast moving on and we needed to continue north.

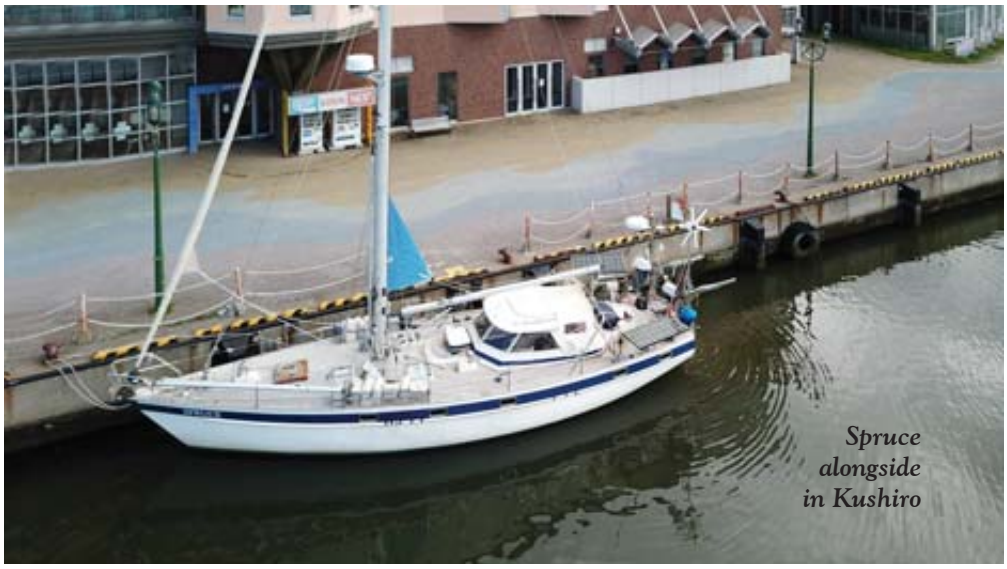
Hakodate is a modern city at the southern tip of Hokkaido, the northernmost island of Japan. Another milestone in the engagement of European powers to subjugate

The Russian Orthodox Church at Hakodate

Japan occurred when Commodore Perry pushed for opening of trade with northern ports, a particularly important location for US whalers in their drive for oil. Our visit coincided with an annual costumed re-enactment of local history. The spectacle involved people in uniform shouting, waving samurai swords and firing cannon, accompanied by an excited voice describing the action over a public address system. All was in Japanese but we got the gist.

The Sailing in Japan group put us in contact with Mizuno San. He is involved with racing at the local yacht club and gave assistance with the authorities in Hokkaido, as the rules in this northern island appear to be applied differently. As thanks we gave him one of Sue's wood-block prints of Fatu Hiva, a place to which he fondly remembered travelling in the 1970s aboard a wooden sailing schooner.

Onwards to Kushiro, passing through a cold ocean boundary as we sailed past Cape Erimo Misaki. The first cold tentacle of an Arctic current displaced the warmer Kuroshio current, deflected out towards the Americas by the big island of Honshu. En route, our rudder snagged an illegal, unmarked, gill net – a line of slim white floating in the wavelets slipped under the bow, seen too late to avoid. It was cut free with a knife lashed to a rod while immersed to hip-level from the stern ladder. The water felt freezing but was around 8°C.



Spruce alongside in Kushiro

In Kushiro we met Seki San, a friend of Mizuno San and another stalwart helper of passing cruisers. He helped us with Customs, Immigration and the formalities necessary to revert our craft to International status, obtain duty free fuel and clear out from Japan. Nobody at the local offices spoke English, and he understood the rules although there was a debate about recent changes. Seki San also took us around to look for a store selling insulated snow-boots, which proved a boon in Alaska.

This was our last port in Japan – *Spruce* now lay poised to make the 1300 mile leap northeastwards to the Aleutian island chain. We expected to reach Dutch Harbor some four to five weeks after departing Kushiro, which required a suitable weather forecast. Not yet June, we might need to wait for some time.

Japan to the Aleutians

To our surprise, a slot of reasonable weather coincided with completion of provisioning and refuelling. A high pressure area built to promise a zone with 10–15 knots of following winds once we had motored 100 miles on our way. On the morning of 27th May we left Kushiro harbour and motored out into a cold adverse current that lazily flowed southwards. Coast Guard warnings of gill net fishing vessels close to shore recommended moving at least six miles offshore, and this we did. Nonetheless, we found the said fishing vessels on our track. A shrill voice screamed over the VHF for us to move nearer to shore, broken English interspersed with excited Japanese. Nightfall was due soon, however, and we refused to close a rocky coastline – and the disputed Russian border lay not so far ahead. Eventually a hesitant voice spoke enough English to respond with a precise position for the inshore end of the nets. Flagged buoys were located and safely rounded, and we motored into the gloaming, still almost five miles offshore. That encounter ended our tag session with menacing nets in water of 5°C. The language of fishing boats babbling on VHF frequencies slowly changed, now Russian, eventually nothing. Only the cold remained, perniciously seeping through the hull and loitering on the cabin sole. Time to deploy the snow boots!

At dawn the promised wind gradually built from the southwest. Sailing wing-a-wing achieved 4 knots, not impressive but easy, gentle sailing compared with our expectation for these latitudes. Venturing on deck chilled one to the bone, and inhaling the cold, dry air into one's nostrils gave a sensation like entering a walk-in freezer store. The sea around us was a dull green-grey colour. Sure, we had cruised coastal waters in winter, but this was a wholly unfamiliar environment – an ocean passage with long summer hours of daylight but water that would soon be only 3°C. The forecast promised dense fog, which arrived after we had already become enveloped in an opaque shroud that accompanied us for four days. Sometimes visibility might extend to a couple of hundred metres, though often only 50m with wraiths of wet air wafting around the pulpit. But still the steady breeze carried us on our route towards the Aleutians.

Ship propellers and engines became audible through the hull, but popping a head outside was met with silence and our eyes were unable to focus properly on the thick blanket of mist. Strangely, signals on AIS presented large numbers of vessels bound either for China or the Panama Canal, some doing 20 knots. Once a contact was at a five mile range we called them on VHF: "Can you see us on AIS and radar?" The immediate response was usually "Stand By!", followed by confirmation that we were 'visible' on both AIS and radar. Sometimes we heard a foghorn. Ships willingly altered

course for us. One UK registered ship asked, "What are you doing up here?" "We're on holiday," we replied cheerily.

Our planning had assumed twelve days to reach Attu, the nearest island in the Aleutian chain, if that proved the most suitable destination, including four periods of gale force winds. The islands further eastwards would take longer to reach and expose us to greater risk of heavy weather. The first gale arrived with several hours of 35–40 knot winds, but from astern. The seas did not build to any appreciable level. The second depression was deeper, moving rapidly southeast from Siberia – we named it 'From Russia With Love'. A sticky anemometer showed 48 knots gusting into the 50s, fortunately also from astern. A small showing of headsail proved too little to pull us downwind so we sailed across the wind for a while. At 0200 the strongest squalls reduced and we took turns to hand-steer downwind. By 0900 the wind had eased to around 40 knots, more sail was presented, and *Spruce* sailed herself beautifully. She gallivanted down the faces of cold, tumbling waves, her stern rearing skywards before each rush forwards. Albatross played in the wind, dipping into troughs to accelerate out of sight before wheeling skywards, an exhilarating exhibition of showy acrobatic prowess. Another gale was forecast for three days later, with easterly winds, but we resolved to reach Attu before that one arrived.

The wind dropped steadily over the next 36 hours and periodically we shook out reefs. As our speed fell we motor-sailed. Finally, just a breath of wind from astern remained and we resigned ourselves to motoring in the reducing seas. A shrieking alarm screamed urgently – but why was the engine overheating? The last thing we checked was the seacock. Normally quite stiff, it was loose – floppy and closed – the cold sea temperature had caused contraction of dissimilar metals. With a restraining strap added and a new impeller installed we were on our way again, still on target to outpace the impending easterly gale.

Fog on passage to the Aleutians

Nearing Attu

The final morning on passage was windless and very cold. Distant snowy mountains peeped above the swell, glowing red in the dawn light. Excruciatingly slowly they grew out of the ocean. As the sun rose, white peaks shone brightly. It was 6th June and we were at the same latitude as southern England, but so much snow. This is what Northern Europe would be like without the balmy Gulf Stream. As we neared Attu a pod of orca appeared on cue and seabirds flew towards land. It was a stunning vista, a completely new cruising experience for *Spruce* and her crew. Cackling geese, shellducks, surf scoters, loons and many others watched as we anchored in Massacre Bay, close to the site of the dismantled Loran station, relieved to have completed the passage north.

maggie and milly and molly and may
went down to the beach (to play one day)
and maggie discovered a shell that sang
so sweetly she couldn't remember her troubles, and
milly befriended a stranded star
whose rays five languid fingers were;
and molly was chased by a horrible thing
which raced sideways while blowing bubbles: and
may came home with a smooth round stone
as small as a world and as large as alone.
for whatever we lose (like a you or a me)
it's always ourselves we find in the sea

e.e. cummings

EXPERT SAIL CARE

WE SERVICE ALL BRANDS OF SAILS

- General Repairs & Recuts
- UV Covers
- Canvas Repairs
- Sail Wash
- Pickup & Delivery
- Installations
- EZ Main System

CHESAPEAKE SAILMAKERS

2240 Bay Ridge Ave. | Annapolis, MD
410.263.4840 | chessailmakers@gmail.com

Exclusive source for: ELVSTRØM SAILS

SOURDOUGH BREAD AND FOCACCIA: Too Difficult for a Ship's Cook?

Tim Bridgen

(*Tim has long been a contributor to the* From the Galley of*... series, for which I still welcome your seagoing recipes. Running a recipe at article-length will remain very much the exception however, so please don't get carried away!*)

Sourdough making is a perfect process for passagemaking as it needs several short periods of attention over 24 hours and lends itself to repetition on a daily cycle. It's all about keeping your sourdough 'starter' fit and well with daily 'feeding', and giving each day's dough batch up to 20 hours of sitting about to develop its delicious taste and elasticity. You don't need worktop space to knead it, which cuts down on floury mess around the galley.

First you'll need the 'starter'. This is what produces the flavour and rise in sourdough bread, rather than the dried commercial yeast you buy in the supermarket. There are four ways to get one – (i) buy it off the web for about £15, (ii) ask your local traditional bakery for some of theirs, (iii) ask a friend who bakes for some of theirs, or (iv) grow your own. I've done all four.

This is how to grow and keep your own:

- ✓ Mix 2 cups of wholemeal flour with tepid water into a thick batter consistency in a lidded container that you have space to keep lying out in the galley or in your 'fridge for the long term. The wholemeal husks in the flour will be covered in wild yeasts, so don't worry about the ocean air being fungus-free if you start mid-passage. Your galley will have its own resident flora too, however clean you keep it!
- ✓ Put the lid on but without making an airtight seal. Open and stir it twice a day. Try to keep it between 15–30°C. If the temperature is below 15°C the growing process will slow down or stop. If it's over 25°C it may produce too much acidic liquid, which isn't dangerous but will stop the good yeasts from growing and doesn't taste nice.
- ✓ On the third day, add a cup of plain white flour and enough tepid water to bring it back to a thick batter. Cover and leave for another two days, stirring twice a day.
- ✓ By day five it should have a very little dark liquid on the top and smell quite beery and lightly of nail varnish (yum!). If it also has plenty of small bubbles in it, you've bred a starter. Otherwise, throw it away and start again.
- ✓ If it's as described, pour half away, add a cup of white flour and enough tepid water to bring it back to a thick batter.
- ✓ On day six, repeat day five's process.
- ✓ By day seven it's ready to use!
- ✓ On a day that you make bread you'll remove half the starter and replace it with a cup of flour and enough water to bring it back to a batter. On days you don't use it,

carry out the same feed process if you're going to bake the next day. Otherwise put it in the fridge, or be prepared to feed it at least every other day. It's a mixture of wild yeasts and lactobacillus (the organism that sours milk and makes cheese) and it needs flour to feed on and fresh water to dilute the by-products of the breeding process and to keep the flavour just right. Heat speeds everything up but can produce excess acid flavour; the cold of a fridge will slow it to a crawl.

Here's mine, four hours after a feed and eight hours after coming out of the fridge. It's ready to make sourdough with.

So here's how. The recipe is extremely simple – success depends on managing the dough's life over the next 24 hours! Stir 100gm of starter into 350ml of tepid water in a mixing bowl. Add 450gm of very strong white bread flour and 50gm of wholemeal flour. Stir until it begins to pull together as a dough, then work it briefly with your hands into a loose ball. It will look like this:

The ball of dough resting before adding salted water

Cover with a tea towel and leave for about 20 minutes for the water to fully hydrate the flour. Dissolve 10gm of table salt in 25ml of tepid water and work it well into the dough using your hands. Then transfer the dough to a loose-lidded container with enough space for the dough to more than double in volume, and preferably translucent so that you can see the bubbles develop (a 2 litre ice-cream tub is ideal). This is the bulk rise process.

Pull one side of the dough up and out of the container and fold it back down. Do this on each of the four sides of the dough twice, like this:

Fit the lid loosely (to allow the gas produced to escape) and leave somewhere that's between 15° and 25°C. Repeat the stretch and fold process three or four times over the next 12 to 18 hours until it looks like this:

The alien-looking bubble is slightly unusual in size – the other smaller ones on the surface are more usual!

It may take longer than 18 hours, in which case give it more time. If it takes less than 12 hours to get this size, put it somewhere cooler and leave it for a total of at least 15 hours. The dough must have enough time to work with the starter for it to become strong and elastic enough to support itself during baking.

To make a traditional farmhouse loaf – which is probably why you wanted to use sourdough in the first place – the final treatment of the dough is critical. You are looking to create folded layers inside the loaf with a smooth stretched surface. This is so the loaf keeps its shape while it rises in the oven.

First, gently work the dough out of the container onto an unfloured surface and let it rest for about 20 minutes. It will spread slightly but should remain thick with a curled, rounded edge. If it spreads into more of a pancake shape with the edges flattening out, the dough hasn't developed enough and you should return it to the container for another few hours. Then dust the top of the dough with flour and loosen it from the surface, working round it with a cupped hand and a dough cutter. This will make the dough circular and reduce its circumference. Here's how it should look:

An embryonic farmhouse loaf…

Flip it over so that it's floured surface down, sticky side up. Take one edge in your hand, stretch it out to at least double its length and fold it two thirds of the way back – like this:

This will make it roughly oblong. Do the same on the other three sides, after which it will look like this:

Folding the first side …

… and the other three …

… to produce a slightly flattened sphere

Flip it back over, so that the folds are on the bottom and work around it with the dough cutter and a cupped hand. This is to stretch the surface until it's tight and smooth and the dough becomes a slightly flattened sphere like this:

To increase the tension in the skin, cup your hands around the side of the ball furthest from you and pull it gently towards you so that the edge nearest you just catches on the work surface. Keep pulling until an inch or two of the skin has been pulled under the edge. Repeat this at least four times, turning the dough ball 90° each time.

It then needs flipping one last time before placing it gently, smooth side down, in a bowl to shape it during the final proving process. I use a traditional wicker bowl for this, but anything of a similar size and shape can be used. The inside of the bowl must be very heavily floured to allow the dough to drop out cleanly when ready, so, if using a metal

The floured bowl of newly-folded dough

or ceramic bowl, you should line it with cloth to hold the flour in place. I like to use a mix of wholemeal and spelt flours for this to add taste and texture to the crust. Here's my floured bowl, holding newly-folded dough, folds uppermost:

Cover with a tea towel and leave somewhere warm for the final rise of three to six hours until it roughly doubles in size again and looks like this (below). **Do not let it over-prove** or it will collapse into a pancake when you turn it out. Doubling in size is a good estimate, but after a few catastrophic mistakes you'll be able to tell the difference between a fully-proved, taut-but-elastic dough and a flabby, puffed-up over-proved dough.

Fully risen and nearly ready to bake

Now to get ready for the bake. You'll need the oven to be as hot as you can get it – ideally 220°C. With a typical bottled-gas marine oven you struggle to achieve that, but turn it right up, let it pre-heat thoroughly, and use the top shelf. To get the best crust you need steam in the oven for the first ten minutes of the bake, so once the oven is hot, put a deep baking tray on the oven floor and half fill it with boiling water.

Bake the dough on a shallow baking tray or, ideally, a pizza stone, which should be pre-heated in the oven. When all is hot, gently turn the dough out onto the stone fold-side down, sprinkle it lightly with a little water for extra steam, and cut a pattern of slits deep enough to split the quite leathery skin which will have formed on the dough. A sharp galley knife will probably not cut cleanly enough – a razor blade or hobby knife works better. These slits are important to allow the loaf to rise and need to be substantial.

Sporting slits, it's ready to go in the oven

Quickly put the dough in the oven – the slits will tend to let the shape sag – and leave for ten minutes with the tray of water producing steam. Then remove the tray and continue baking for a further 20 minutes or so – until the crust has turned a rich, quite dark, brown. If in doubt, cook it longer – the thicker and crisper the crust the better! The classic test of doneness is when the loaf feels light and the bottom sounds hollow when tapped. However, if a sourdough crust is nice and dark, the inside will be cooked.

Et voilà!

After removing from the oven, resist the temptation to cut it open immediately. Leave it to cool for at least 20 minutes for the crust to crisp and to avoid the inside sticking to the knife when cutting. This is what you can expect!

Sourdough foccacia

Sourdough foccacia-making is rather easier – the elaborate folding and shaping for the final rise, and the steam baking for a good crust, are not necessary. It also keeps better and can include toppings to make it a meal in itself for a hungry crew coming off watch. Perfect!

The process is exactly the same up to the end of the first, bulk rise – other than using 500gm of very strong white flour without the wholemeal in the dough. The dough doesn't have to hold its shape so well, so focaccia is more forgiving of less-than-perfect dough development. The dough is turned out of the lidded container directly into a large, deep, baking tray with 2–3tbsp of high-quality olive oil in the bottom, then stretched and flattened out gently until it completely covers the bottom of the tray. Smear another 2–3tbsp of olive oil over the dough and fold one side halfway back on itself. Then fold the opposite side across to meet the other edge. Finish by folding the other two edges the same way to form an olive oil-filled parcel.

Turn the dough parcel over and spread it out again to fill the tray. Cover with a tea towel and leave somewhere warm for three to six hours until it's at least doubled in depth. Gently press a finger into the surface to produce dimples all over the dough, then splash about one tbsp of oil across it.

You're now ready to add the toppings. Olives, rosemary and sea salt are all very traditional, but all kinds of fresh or dried herbs, vegetables in oil (eg. sun-dried tomatoes, artichoke hearts and roasted peppers) are great, as are fresh and hard cheeses (eg.

A sourdough foccacia topped with cherry tomatoes, basil and Parmesan flakes

Parmesan), dried meats and sausages (eg. chorizo, parma ham etc), tuna or anchovies in oil – the list of things you'll have stored under the bunk which will make delicious toppings goes on and on. Just make sure they're liberally coated in olive oil.

Baking is again at 220°C or as hot as you can manage, but without the need for steam. It will take 20–30 minutes until the top is deep golden brown and the edges are crispy. This one is made with fresh cherry tomatoes, fresh basil and Parmesan flakes, but sun-dried tomatoes in oil and dried basil might well have given a stronger flavour!

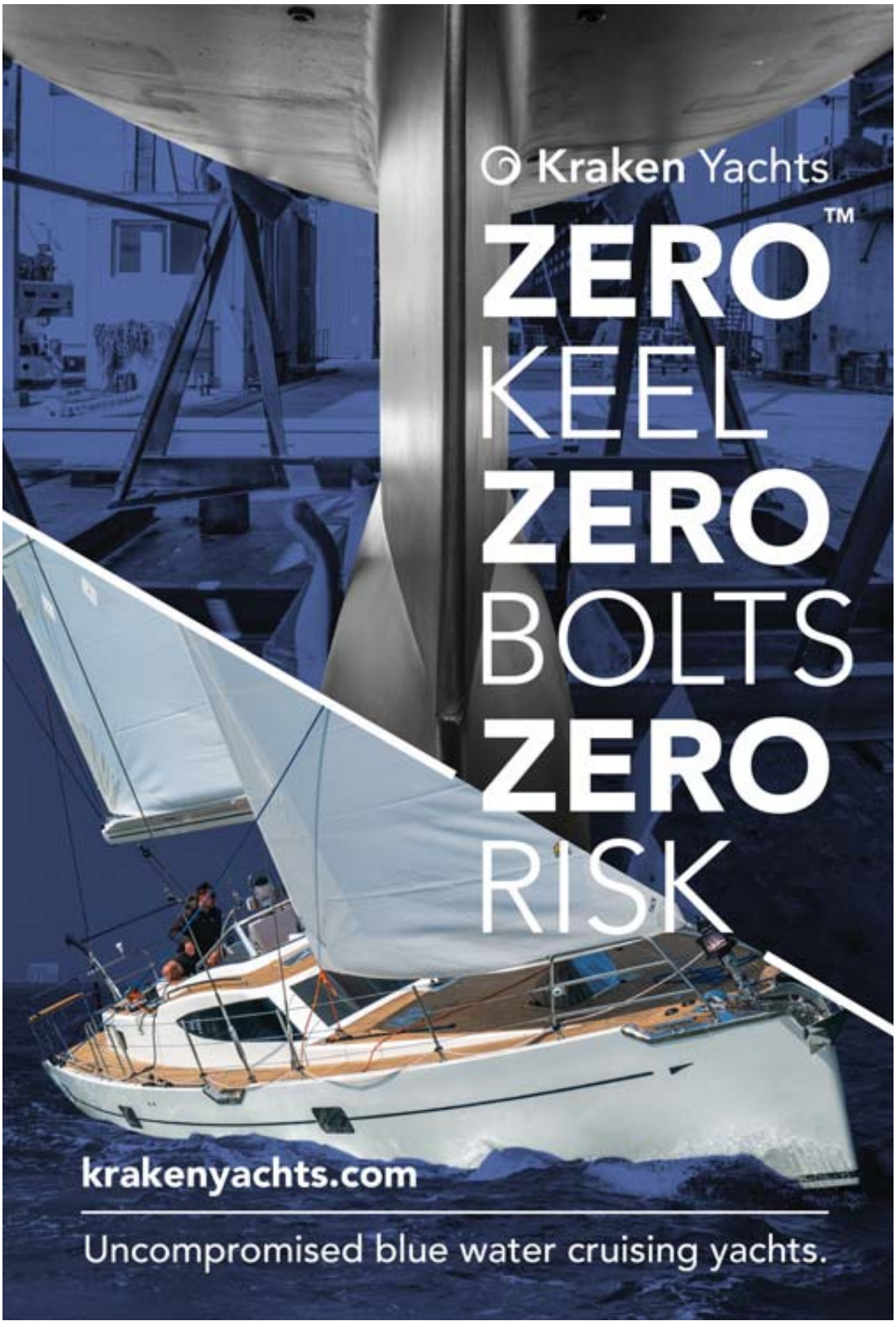
And finally ... a few words on the only four ingredients in the entire sourdough process – flour, salt, water ... and time.

Flour – firstly, for the starter, actually any flour will do. The organisms that are needed to colonise it are everywhere and aren't fussy – wholemeal flour is just most likely to have the most of the right ones from day one. Secondly, don't increase the proportion of wholemeal in the bread beyond the 10% I specify here – it reduces its elasticity and makes the moulded dough more likely to collapse into a pancake.

Salt – we all know that too much salt is unhealthy, but you want to bake sourdough bread because of its flavour. Reducing the salt makes it tasteless, so if you can't tolerate the salt content, don't bake it!

Water – it's a trade-off. The more water you use, the better the potential rise and the bigger those lovely holes, but the more sticky, soft and difficult to manage the dough becomes. This recipe specifies 75% hydration – 500gm of flour to a total of 375ml of added water. That's on the slightly dry side of average, so on a long passage feel free to experiment with more water.

Time – if you are an experienced baker of 'normal' bread you will be used to getting started early in the morning in the tropics and having fresh bread to serve by lunchtime. For sourdough, the same is true – it's just that the lunchtime is on the next day! Don't try to rush it.


Kraken Yachts
ZERO™
KEEL
ZERO
BOLTS
ZERO
RISK
krakenyachts.com
Uncompromised blue water cruising yachts.

CRUISING 'THE ROCK' AT LEISURE
Commodore Simon Currin

(Simon and Sally left Scotland in 2015 aboard Shimshal II*, their 48ft (14·6m) cutter, exploring Iceland and Western Greenland before crossing the Labrador Sea to Newfoundland last year. At the end of this season they hope to leave* Shimshal *to winter in Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia.*

Follow their travels at https://voyagesofshimshal.blogspot.pt/p/blog-page.html.)

Simon departing Hare Bay

June Hiscock, the incredibly helpful Harbour Master in Burgeo, shoots only small moose. She says they taste better and are easier to carry. Having wandered off-piste in the Newfoundland backcountry a few times I can sympathise with the need for easy carriage. Where the moose seem to prosper is amongst the bogs, the bugs and the impenetrable bush. She culls them by canoe and takes them home for the deep freeze and the bits she doesn't freeze she bottles. On the day of our departure from Newfoundland she had promised a bottle of moose, but when we were about to cast off for Nova Scotia she presented us proudly with some other prime

Shimshal in Luke's Arm, Notre Dame Bay

Burgeo

roasting specimen which, she assured us, would be 'really tender'. lt must have been a small and easily portable moose when it was amongst the bugs and the bogs.

June's hospitality was by no means the exception. There are more than two hundred Harbour Masters in Newfoundland and, during the months we have been cruising these pristine northern waters, we have probably come across twenty or more. Mostly they are volunteers but some are students earning some dollars during their vacation. All have been kind, courteous and intensely proud of their island, their harbour and their community.

Reg was the dockhand in Burin who gave us freshly-caught cod all filleted and ready for the pan. He handed it down to us from the dock after we had let go the lines, presumably so that nobody would get to know about his Friday gift, as cod can only be legally fished on Saturday, Sunday and Monday.

Reg's boss, Marguerite, is the queen of Harbour Masters. Trained in bookkeeping, she mentors her two hundred colleagues in the hope that the books are kept and the cash balances. She is a lovely, warm, extrovert personality who enthused, above all, about her CCTV. From her swivel chair she tweaked a joystick and zoomed in on both fishing boats and *Shimshal*. That was her entire domain. When we told her we were climbing Cook's Lookout via the direct route and taking the boardwalk down she almost fainted with dismay – she clearly thought we had gone mad. But we took the steep, direct route that led to yet another of Captain Cook's many stunning panoramic

* Although most famous for his voyages to the Pacific, it was his meticulous surveys of Newfoundland and the entrance to the Saint Lawrence River during the siege of Quebec in 1759 which brought Lieutenant James Cook to the attention of the British Admiralty. This led to his commission in 1766 as commander of HM Bark *Endeavour* for the first of his three Pacific voyages.

Cook's Lookout at Burin

viewpoints*, and we took the boardwalk down, which followed a meandering but equally spectacular route back to town. On the way we met Harrison, the boardwalk builder, who downed tools to chat about boats, boardwalks and his ancestors in England's West Country. Three hundred years on the sounds of Devon, Somerset and Cornwall were all still clear in his accent. A witness to an isolated and untainted community that can trace its roots back to its founders in the 18th century.

Anne took our $6 token harbour dues in McCallum, but she was 'from away' and still had the German accent to prove it. For many years, a long way from the sea in northern Germany, she had, with her husband, laboured to build a fine 38ft steel sailing boat. They launched it in the Baltic and sailed through the myriad of Danish islands only to find, to Anne's horror, that she didn't like being on the sea and the sickness that can accompany it. No matter, they had set their hearts on a new life and soon her husband was crossing the Atlantic by boat and Anne was flying to the house they had bought, via the internet, in McCallum. That was nine years ago when the population was sixty in this tiny outport on Newfoundland's wild south coast. Now the numbers have dwindled to thirty but Anne is still there, collecting the dues and day sailing when the seas are calm.

Although *Shimshal*, our home on the sea, was in Newfoundland for just under a year, for much of that she shivered alone through a harsh and windy winter. We had kept a maximum / minimum thermometer inside the boat and it had gone down to –18°C (–0·4°F). *Shimshal* was safely sandwiched between two super-sized motor boats, but one of her less lucky and less protected neighbours had been blown clean off her stands during one of the winter storms that scour the north coast of Newfoundland.

We returned to Lewisporte in June 2019 to continue the Canadian Maritimes cruising adventure that had begun with our Labrador landfall in July 2018. Finding the boat in good shape, we were soon in the water and were amongst the first as spring had come late this year. For the first few weeks of our summer cruise, clockwise around a large part of Newfoundland, each Harbour Master would say, "You are the first boat to visit this year".

In Seldom Come By – yes, it really is called that – the Harbour Master gave us a

Safely downwind of the motor yachts for the winter

Launch day at Lewisporte – a tight squeeze in the lift

guided tour of the fishing museum she curates and then lent us her car for the day to explore the rest of Fogo Island. "But Anne," we said, "you can't just give us your Ford Explorer for the day. We need to pay for fuel or something". "Don't worry." she replied, "I've got your boat!".

We drove up to the posh hotel that, at $2400 a night, caters to the super-rich keen to experience a luxury version of the wilderness. Local families are employed to provide guides to the Island

Seldom Come By and the fishing museum

Boat sheds at Tilting on Fogo Island

and its fishing history, so the community, the hoteliers and the monied guests all get to benefit from this unique blend of commerce, hospitality and community.

That evening another boat sailed in and tied up opposite us, a hardy Swedish couple pushing speedily north from the Caribbean en route to Greenland, Iceland and an early return to work. From their mast the flying fish burgee fluttered in the breeze. This was the first of the many OCC boats that we encountered in these remote waters, where the icebergs lurk until July and where the fogs and the storms can blight any summer cruise.

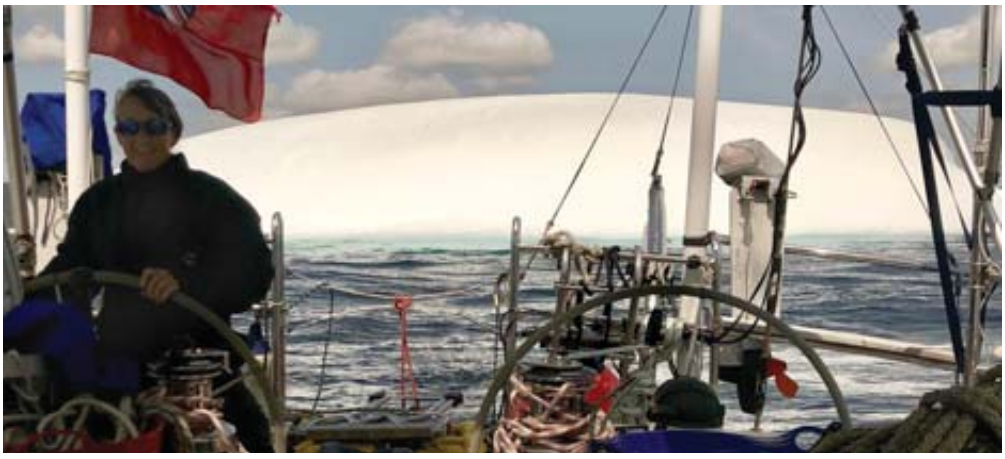
All the OCC boats we met had crews with salt running in their veins. Gustav and Anna had taken a sabbatical for their Atlantic circuit, but Molly and Christopher were squeezing their Newfoundland adventure into an academic vacation. For the crew of *Sila*, an early season cruise in Newfoundland was a little light relief after their earlier family cruise which saw them rounding Cape Horn

The Fogo Inn

Gustav and Anna arrive in Seldom Harbour aboard Muckle Flugga

after cruising Patagonia. From there they went, via the Falklands, to South Georgia for a month before the very long passage from the Southern Ocean to Ireland – no wonder the kids had deserted them this year in favour of summer camp in Vermont!

Mostly it was day sailing, and we used the excuse of icebergs to make sure we were tied up in a harbour or swinging at anchor by dusk. We didn't see an iceberg after Cape Freels, but we enjoyed the pattern so much that we kept it up. Every day a different port, often a walk ashore and then unbroken sleep. Perfect.



Through June there were still plenty of iceberg around

Ted Laurentius, our Port Officer in St John's, said he'd never seen so many OCC boats – he'd counted four in one weekend, which is more than he gets most years. As ever, Ted and Karen were the perfect hosts and we all turned up at Tess and Al's house

Entering French waters on the approach to St Pierre

for an impromptu get-together. The others brought wine and chocolates whereas we brought our dirty laundry, which spun away as we enjoyed the fine food and inspiring company.

The weather didn't turn out quite as expected, but we are definitely not complaining about that. June and July are noted for their fogs but we saw few. Instead we had warm, sunny days with light but mostly contrary winds. A lot of diesel was burned. When the fog did come it added that little spice to the adventure. The day we left St Pierre the fog was so thick that the harbour seemed like a maze of buoys, boats and fog horns. I blew our fog horn every two minutes but, by the time we were out of French waters and safely back in Canadian territory, summer was restored with flat seas, spouting fin whales and exuberant, leaping dolphins.

When the wind did blow we sat it out in harbour. Conveniently, that generally happened in the ports where there was much to do. In St John's the boat was grit-blasted by a minor gale whilst we took tea in The Rooms gazing down at the busy harbour antics. In St Pierre we succumbed to the French cafés, croissants and restaurants and in Burgeo we pedalled our bikes to windward to stroll on beaches in the Sandbanks Provincial Park, wild, remote and sparkling in the summer sunshine.

It was in Burgeo that *Shimshal* was at last reunited with *Alchemy*. We had last shared an anchorage with fellow OCC members Dick and Ginger two years previously

Entering St Pierre

Simon and Sally, with Ginger and Dick from Alchemy

Alchemy arriving in Burgeo

in Greenland. This summer, cruising in opposite directions, our paths crossed again and a supper of Reg's fish was fried up to celebrate.

The first person we met in François (pronounced 'Franzway') was the Harbour Master when we pulled in at the yellow-painted Government Dock ahead of where the daily ferry berths. He sent us to the other Government Dock as the ferry would, he said, most likely "crash into us as it overhangs its own berth". We didn't take much persuading and headed over to the floating dock, also painted yellow. Soon after our arrival George sauntered down to warn us that the paint was still wet and to mind our clothing. He was a charming guy, restoring a dory in readiness for

François (pronounced Franzway)

next year's 'Come Home', when those who have left the Outports to seek fame and fortune return to their town of birth to celebrate, to drink and to feast.

When we finally found the track leading up from the lake above town to Friars Rock, we discovered that George had been hard at work with his left-over Government Dock yellow paint. Every rock and every tree stump along the steep ascent had been daubed with his favourite colour. The narrow path twisted its way up the mountainside,

The waterfront at François

A plague of black fly

allowing us to tread where others had trodden before – a far cry from the previous hour or two that we had spent thigh deep in brush, boulder and bog trying to force our own route up to another peak. Hot work on a summer day with too many clothes on in order to keep the swarms of black fly at bay. George's 'join the dots and yellow' was a delight in comparison.

We didn't cruise all of Newfoundland by boat, but we did the rest by road.

François orchid and pitcher plant

On the summit of Gros Morne

When here in the autumn to fill *Shimshal*'s plumbing with antifreeze we had hired a car and visited the parts we knew we would never have time to reach by sea. Standing on the summit of Gros Morne in autumnal, slanting light, and wandering through the Norse remains at L'Anse aux Meadows, are images that will endure for ever. During that visit we narrowly avoided being 'screeched in' – a curious invention that enables those 'from away' to become honorary Newfoundlanders. On the downside you have to drink enormous amounts of 'screech' and kiss a cod!

This story is really about the people of Newfoundland, the hardy cruisers who sail there and the unbelievable friendliness of all folk that live on 'the Rock' – none more so than in Lewisporte where, for almost a year, we were welcomed with open arms. They took us into their community and loaned us their cars, whilst all the time encouraging us to cruise slowly and enjoy their piece of paradise. Thank you Peter Watkins for that invaluable advice. I hope many more OCC boats will come your way and linger so that they can come to know your beautiful island.

In fancy I listened – in fancy could hear
The thrum of the shrouds and the creak of the gear,
The patter of reef points on the mainsail a-quiver,
The bow-wave that breaks with a gurgle like laughter
And the cry of the seabirds following after,
Over oceans of wonder, by headlands of gleam
To the harbours of fancy on the wind of a dream.

Anon

With thanks to Victor Clarke, who quoted these lines on the title page of his book *On the Wind of a Dream*

Hallberg Rassy 48 “DREAMCATCHER” en route to Lanzarote

© Fintan Walton

Sails by

SANDERS

Stimson 56 “ALCEDO” in the Solent

Recommended by OCC Members

SANDERS
www.sanders-sails.co.uk

SANDERS SAILS | Bath Road, Lymington, Hampshire, England, SO41 3RU
Tel: +44 (0) 1590 673981 | Fax: +44 (0)1590 676026
peter@sanders-sails.co.uk

SOUTH CHINA SEA – Jo Winter. Published in hard covers by Imray Laurie Norie & Wilson [www.imray.com] at £55.00. 328 A4 pages in full colour throughout, ISBN 978-1-8462-3186-5

This excellent cruising guide – subtitled *Singapore to Hong Kong via the Gulf of Thailand, Malaysia, Brunei, the Philippines and Taiwan* – is a timely update for the increasing number of cruisers heading to Japan and those who simply wish to enjoy the delights of southeast Asian cultures. It covers in great detail the available cruising grounds surrounding the South China Sea and reflects the author's obviously extensive experience in these waters. There are those who query the place of cruising guides in the modern internet age, but this one-stop compendium of accurate, well-researched information from seriously experienced sailors answers that question.

The book starts with an introduction covering just about all aspects of the history, culture, weather systems, boat preparations and associated data that one could reasonably expect. There is an informative section on typhoon tactics and a detailed section on medical problems particular to this amazingly diverse and fascinating part of the world. Isolated, 'lost', primitive tribes still exist in parts of Borneo and the Philippines, contrasting with sophisticated high-tech societies in Hong Kong and Taiwan.

The pilotage section opens with the major routes between Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan, including exploration of the Gulf of Thailand. It describes the ideal months for the passages and offers advice on the best routing tactics, all of which seem admirably sensible. The more detailed pilotage is divided into regions, starting in the south with Singapore and the Johor Strait. As with each section it opens with a history and goes on to describe the current situation including formalities, immigration, health, business hours and a range of other useful cruiser-relevant data. All this is supported by clear, annotated chartlets of various scales, as well as high-quality colour photographs. For Singapore it alludes to the draconian penalties meted out for even the most trivial offences – in our experience Singapore has a greater range of 'Prohibited' signs than any other country we have visited. It would be worth mentioning, however, that Sabana Cove Marina is a fresh water berth and a good safe place to leave a boat laid up.

Next follows the east coast of peninsular Malaysia, then the Gulf of Thailand, divided into two sections comprising Thailand and Cambodia. The most popular region with cruisers is the Thailand section of the Gulf and this is covered in detail offering a plethora of attractive, stunning anchorages. The Cambodian coastline is short and the formalities tedious, but the few possible anchorages are well described. Since Vietnam does not welcome yachts there is little to say about it and the pilotage concentrates on the Borneo side. This is divided up between Malaysian Sarawak, Sabah and Brunei. It is

a fascinating area, but the coastline can become dangerous in the strong NE monsoon season when large seas build up at the southern end of the South China Sea.

By far the most extensive section is the detailed coverage of the Philippines. The author opens by expressing amazement that 'this stunningly beautiful archipelago is largely ignored by the yachting community'. Maybe people find the recent slaying of cruisers, kidnapping and piracy, frequent severe typhoons, active volcanoes and storm surges somewhat off-putting. Not everyone wants to spend Christmas Eve stripping off canvas and clearing the decks in preparation for a severe typhoon as we did. Fortunately the worst missed us, but there was devastation in Puerto Galera, largely caused by ferries and local boats breaking free and smashing into moored yachts. However, with the above caveat the Philippines are a beautiful cruising area and the majority of the people are as friendly and welcoming as you could wish for. The extensive platter of exquisite anchorages offered should satisfy the taste of any cruiser, and hopefully will tempt more to explore what is undoubtedly a magnificent cruising ground. The final two sections cover Hong Kong and Taiwan, a particularly useful addition for those on passage to Japan.

The presentation is generally of a high standard, but there are inconsistencies. Some charts show latitude and longitude while others do not. Some of the anchorage descriptions are quite distant from the relevant chart – for example the paragraphs describing the Port Barton area on Palawan lie 14 pages after its chart. Anchorages are referred to either by name or number, and some are single line entries while others have anchoring depths and bottom type though, pleasingly, all include their latitude and longitude.

These criticisms are minor, however, in the context of the overall excellence of the book and its ease of access to all the necessary information to provide a safe and rewarding cruise in one of the world's most exciting, exotic and enjoyable regions. I would unreservedly recommend *South China Sea* to anyone considering sailing in that area.

GMJ

OCEAN SAILING – Paul Heiney. Published in hard covers by Adlard Coles [www.adlardcoles.com] at £35. 288 257mm x 177mm pages in full colour throughout. IBSN 978-1-4729-5539-5

Paul Heiney's well-written, well-illustrated and beautifully presented hard back is, in a single volume, an A-Z of ocean sailing, the clue being in the title. It clearly comes with the benefit of huge experience and a great deal of careful thought, as you would expect from a Commodore of the Royal Cruising Club who, in his time and among other adventures such as the OSTAR, has breezed down to Cape Horn and back, mainly single-handed.

In the early stages it takes a little head-scratching to work out the particular audience for whom the book is intended. It seems to be aimed primarily at sailing couples who may be contemplating chucking in their conventional land-based existences and converting their leisure-time hobby into a completely different and extremely adventurous way of

life, roaming the Seven Seas. A lot of personal detail that needs to be considered by would-be ocean sailors is included, and I found myself fast-forwarding the parts about whether I should sell my home outright, jumping off the property ladder for good, or rent it out to tenants who would not look after it and give me endless headaches during the long years spent cruising exotic islands in the South Pacific.

That said, there is a great deal of useful and interesting information to be found between its covers, even though most fully-fledged OCC members may choose to skip large chunks, given that they are only members at all through having serious ocean passage time under their belts. Aspiring Associate Members will certainly gain a lot from it. As the long-time owner of a Rustler 36 I found myself heartily agreeing with Paul's comments on the characteristics of the most suitable boats for ocean passagemaking, but did not learn much that was new to me in that section. I did, however, learn a lot about some other things – ocean currents in the Pacific, for instance. I also have a better feel now for how to handle medical emergencies, how to plan in advance for disaster, and the intricacies of today's competing communication systems which seem to improve all the time while becoming more complex. There is a lot in this book and much of it worth noting.

Ocean Sailing is not just a textbook by Paul Heiney, however. He has drawn on the experience of individuals and couples, members of the OCC, RCC and Cruising Club of America, who have progressed far beyond the 'armchair dream' stage (presumably a microscopic percentage compared to the people who never get out of their armchairs at all) and have been out there and actually done it, surviving to recount their experiences. These accounts take up about 130 pages, which is quite a lot considering the large number of photos and other illustrations in the remaining 160-odd pages. The third party accounts are interesting and enjoyable, as well as being instructive and very humbling. In one short paragraph they can cover a voyage sweeping up from New Zealand to cruise the high Arctic and the like in a nonchalant manner (in contrast to the over-dramatised accounts of storms on the way to Cherbourg etc which seem to be a recurrent theme in some mainstream sailing magazines). It is rather a shame that these gripping experiences are printed on a dark pink background to differentiate them from the main text. While this is a good idea in principle, given a font which is already quite light it is not that easy to read by the light of a cabin bulb. Younger eyes might have less of a problem.

The message of the book seems to be that, if you plan properly and do everything correctly, you have an excellent chance of surviving the setbacks, enjoying life on the ocean very much, and one day returning safely, having been less at risk than while crossing a busy street in land-based life. Fair enough, but as we all know that is not always the case – for instance, the great Bill Tilman disappeared at sea in unknown circumstances. As well as the lively accounts from a current generation of sailors, there is a brief mention of Eric and Susan Hiscock, a famous and well-loved cruising couple from earlier times, but I was disappointed that there was no reference to Miles and Beryl Smeeton, personal heroes of mine and pioneers of short-handed ocean voyaging when few were doing it. The Smeetons survived some incredible adventures in their *Tzu Hang,* but only just, and their *Once is Enough*, first published in 1959 and still available via Amazon, could usefully be read in conjunction with *Ocean Sailing* to give a more rugged perspective.

BH

THE COMPLETE YACHT SECURITY HANDBOOK FOR SKIPPERS AND CREW – Fritze von Berswordt. Published in hard covers by Adlard Coles [www.adlardcoles.com] at £30. 192 237mm x 162mm pages in full colour throughout. ISBN 978-1-4729-5167-0

Adlard Coles claim that this book is the 'indispensable security handbook for all yacht owners, cruisers and crews'. With the word complete in the title I expected even before opening the covers that it would provide comprehensive coverage of every aspect of this important subject. By the time I finished reading it was very clear to me that Fritze von Berswordt had met this remit. The *Handbook* is based on thorough research which has been carefully analysed, and the results of this analysis are presented in four parts.

Part 1 deals with the threat posed by piracy and criminal attacks, basing his analysis on having researched attacks against more than 250 cruising yachts between 2011 and 2017. For me the most interesting aspect of his analysis in this section was whether crews should resist or submit when faced with attacks by criminals or pirates. His researches show that what he describes as 'resistance with initiative' often succeeded in foiling criminal attacks. That said, he notes that the ability to seize the initiative in these circumstances needs to be based on thorough preparation and training. Much of the remaining contents of the *Handbook* are based on this important premise.

Part 2 deals with risk assessment. In this section he classifies cruising destinations against four threat levels, with Level 4 posing the highest threat of piracy and criminal attack and Level 1 the least. The Level 4 category includes countries such as Somalia and Nigeria, and his clear advice to cruisers is to steer well clear of areas falling within this category. Levels 1 and 2 cover Europe, North America, Australasia and other stable parts of the world such as Japan and Singapore. The level which will be of most interest to cruisers, particularly those engaged in planning or undertaking a circumnavigation, is Level 3, as many interesting cruising destinations in the Caribbean and Indian and Pacific oceans fall into this category.

Part 3 deals with preparation of vessel, equipment and crew, and provides a comprehensive assessment of the security equipment available. Finally, Part 4 covers the strategies required to avoid and/or deflect criminal attacks – what Fritze describes as 'security in action'.

With my background as a career infantry officer with combat experience, as well as being a recent circumnavigator, I consider his advice with regard to the controversial topic of whether to carry firearms on board to be both sound and sensible. He correctly flags up the disadvantages in terms of the significant additional bureaucracy encountered when clearing in and out, the need for ongoing training and shooting practice, and the difficulty of obtaining ammunition overseas. That said, it would be very helpful in the next edition to have an appendix listing those countries in the Level 3 category which do not allow firearms to be kept on board when cruising in their waters, in order to better assist the risk assessment process. In my view, if you follow Fritze's advice to avoid Level 4 areas the significant additional bureaucratic hassle of carrying firearms on board needs to be weighed very carefully against the deterrent effect they provide against potential threats in waters where you are allowed to do so. I also found his coverage of the option of using transport by freighter to circumvent

dangerous areas to be somewhat dismissive and cursory – it is now a popular choice for moving yachts from the Far East to the Mediterranean.

These are minor quibbles, however. Fritze von Berswordt has dealt with this important subject in a clear, logical and comprehensive manner. At £30 it represents good value for money and, were I to embark on another circumnavigation, I would certainly have it on my bookshelf. If you follow the advice in this *Handbook* it should keep you and your yacht safe, secure and out of harm's way.

JSL

ATLANTIC SPAIN AND PORTUGAL – Henry Buchanan, 8th edition. Published in hard covers by Imray Laurie Norie & Wilson [www.imray.com] at £45.00. 352 A4 pages in full colour throughout, ISBN 978-1-8462-3964-9. Also available in Spanish and French, and as a 360 page e-book at £29.25, ISBN 978-1-8462-3966-3

Before we say anything else about this book, we must shout out that it comes with a free one-year subscription to the full set of electronic Imray charts for the region that it covers. Imray has released a new app for iPhone and Android for the display of their charts, and it's pretty interesting. This is a game changer for a book that costs £45.

The guide covers the region from Cabo Ortegal to Gibraltar and is the essential companion for yachts on passage from Northern Europe to the Mediterranean or onwards to the Canaries prior to an Atlantic crossing. It is also vital for yachts closing that coast following an Atlantic crossing from the Americas, and is a comprehensive cruising companion for anyone visiting the delightful cruising grounds found along the Atlantic coast of the Iberian Peninsula.

Atlantic Spain and Portugal is the classic guide to this varied coast which includes the Rías of Galicia, the estuaries of the Douro and Tejo with Lisbon, the Algarve and then the coast of Andalucia down to Gibraltar. It's one of those books that you refer to daily when planning your cruise and while underway.

It is a typical pilot book, with information about the anchorages and marinas but little about the shoreside activities. As happens with any book that has detailed information, it starts to go out-of-date as soon as it is in print and for this reason a free supplement is available online twice a year with updated information. It has fallen prey in a few places to the dreaded predictive text and spellchecker monster, with errors such as substituting 'chartered' for 'charted'. There are also some inconsistencies when it comes to finding information such as which channel a marina monitors, but we took these in our stride given the volume of useful information contained in the book. There are many new photos, and most of the plans incorporate changes accumulated over the four years since the last edition was published, although not as much has changed in the infrastructure over that period.

As mentioned above, the book includes a voucher to download Imray Chart set ID40 for the Imray Navigator app. Once you download the app from Google Play and set up an account, you'll have to navigate to subscriptions in the app to select the charts to

download. Be warned, the two sets of charts contain over 1GB of data and took over an hour to download over wifi and several failed attempts with 4G. Normally each collection of Imray charts for the app costs £22.99 for a one-year subscription.

It's not a perfect world though. Although the digital maps appear to be faithful to the paper ones, there is a glitch in the zoom level when moving between maps. Essentially, the two sets of charts in the two digital downloads for the region don't match up exactly. This often happens with paper charts, but it is not expected nor does it inspire confidence with the digital ones. There are prominent warnings about not using the charts for navigation, of course, but they are still useful as a back-up and to have along in the dinghy. The first version of their app was only launched on 1st June so glitches are to be expected.

Imray notes on Google Play that "The charts in the app do indeed match the paper charts. Our paper chart coverage is drawn at scales most pertinent to the coverage (rather than being seamless across a whole zoom level), which is why you get the jumps in the app. Seamless coverage for the app is being worked on for future versions." They have plans for including tracking, route planning, waypoints, full tidal predictions when used in conjunction with Imray's Tides Planner app, sharing across devices, content from Imray pilot books including marina and anchorage details and sailing directions, and AIS and NMEA integration.

In July this year the 7th edition was on sale from Bluewater Books & Charts in the US for $83.95 (±£67) and on amazon.co.uk for £38.85 secondhand, so at £45 with the free software, the 8th edition is a bargain.

AMB & DOB

NB: The Publisher greatly values feedback from users of this and their other books. This particularly applies to updates and corrections.

STRESS-FREE SAILING and STRESS-FREE NAVIGATION – Duncan Wells. Published in soft covers by Adlard Coles [www.adlardcoles.com] at £16.99 and £17.99 respectively. Both with 160 250mm x 180mm pages in full colour throughout. IBSNs 978-1-4729-0743-1 and 978-1-4729-6234-8

When *Flying Fish* was offered a review copy of *Stress-Free Sailing* following its publication in 2015, I declined on the basis that OCC members already knew how to sail. Unfortunately I overlooked its subtitle, *Single and Short-Handed Techniques*, until a conversation with the author at Southampton Boat Show – by which time I'd already read much of *Stress-Free Navigation* – put me right.

Although a small part of *Stress-Free Sailing* is indeed about the difference between running and reaching, far more is about manoeuvring a variety of boats in tight spaces with small crews – definitely relevant to OCC members, even those with large boats and bow-thrusters. Multihulls receive scant mention, but in all other ways Duncan Wells is admirably comprehensive. Not much point in putting your boat neatly alongside if she's not going to stay there, so he starts with line handling – coiling,

throwing, knotting etc. Leaving and returning to alongside and finger berths occupies the next 47 pages – ahead, astern and sideways; with and without tidal streams, cross winds, boats in the way and sundry other hazards; in both fin and long-keeled boats. Only then do the sails go up. In addition to all the usual sail-handling topics I was particularly glad to see heaving-to covered in some detail. Too many cruisers assume that it's only possible with heavy, long-keel boats, even though, as Duncan says, "By playing with the variables you can get modern, fin-keel boats to heave-to quietly. It is all a question of adjusting the balance". A very useful tactic to cook a meal in bad weather, or simply have a rest, particularly for a short-handed crew if the self-steering (electronic or wind-vane) is struggling.

Stress-Free Navigation initially caught my eye because of its subtitle – *Electronic and Traditional*. Many of today's skippers have largely forgotten what to do if the electronics pack up, as they occasionally do – and are almost certain to if the yacht is struck by lightning – and one occasionally hears horror stories of yachts effectively disabled for this reason. And even without such drama, most of us have gaps in our knowledge – things we've forgotten, things we've never known, or things we've never needed to know because, for example, we've done most of our sailing outside areas with dramatic tidal ranges and streams. *Stress-Free Navigation* will fill in most of these gaps, and could be particularly useful to those visiting British or European waters for the first time.

There's inevitably a bit of overlap between the two books – *Stress-Free Sailing* devotes seven pages to navigation, while *Stress-Free Navigation* includes the basics of sailing. Both cover anchoring, though *Stress-Free Sailing* does so in greater detail, and both conclude with man overboard recovery, a subject obviously close to Duncan's heart. There's a third in the series, *Stress-Free Motorboating* – subtitled *Single and Short-Handed Techniques for Rivers and Coasts* – which might well be of interest to some members but which space constraints rule out covering in more detail here. I'd be amazed if that doesn't feature man overboard recovery too.

Both books (and doubtless the third) are profusely illustrated with descriptively-captioned colour photographs and clearly-labelled line drawings. Those who wish can view action videos on their phone or iPad by scanning the QR codes scattered throughout both books (21 in *Stress-Free Sailing*, 15 in *Stress-Free Navigation*), videos which the rest of us can watch on our computers at westviewsailing.co.uk/stress-free-videos.

As one might expect from their titles, Duncan's writing style in both books is authoritative but relaxed – he's an RYA instructor who runs his own sailing school, and it shows. He is refreshingly clear and logical in his approach, communicating both the joys of sailing and a calm and positive attitude to navigation, even to its more complicated and challenging (and some would say most fun) aspects. There can be few members, however experienced, who would not pick up something from both books, while less experienced crew would learn even more. Recommended.

AOMH

EUROPE'S SEA MAMMALS, Including the Azores, Madeira, the Canary Islands and Cape Verde – Robert Still, Hugh Harrop, Tim Stenton and Luís Dias. Published in soft covers by Princeton University Press [https://press.princeton.edu/

titles/14236.html] at £20 / $24.95. 208 216mm x 152mm pages, in full colour throughout. ISBN 978-0-6911-8216-2

Many times on our Atlantic crossings or sailing along the coast of Europe we've wished we had a reliable guide to help us identify the charming creatures we've encountered. We had a guide for the local waters of Ireland, but nothing for the broader area. We learned later how territorial many of the scientific communities studying cetaceans can be. Cetaceans, of course, don't recognise boundaries.

This hnew visual reference for identifying 39 species of whales, dolphins and porpoises and nine species of seals covers a region that spans the Eastern Atlantic from Iceland to Macaronesia (the Azores, Madeira, Canaries and Cape Verde archipelagos), as well as the Mediterranean, Caspian and Baltic Seas. Produced in co-operation with the marine conservation charity ORCA, the book includes mapping data from a decade of surveys which show both current distribution and changes over time.

Unlike many other reference guides, this is not the work of scientists but rather of a team of professional tour guides with extensive experience identifying and discussing the range, ecology, behaviour and conservation status of each species. Information is presented in very clear, simple terms. Robert Still is publishingt director of WILDGuides and a prolific natural history author. Hugh Harrop is an award-winning photographer and owner of the ecotourism business Shetland Wildlife. Tim Stenton is a widely-travelled whale photographer and the author of *Moray Firth Dolphins*. Luís Dias is an accomplished photographer and former marine research biologist who runs ocean tours from Madeira.

Their library of stunningly beautiful photographs is extensive and complemented by illustrations, maps and charts. The visuals are unparalleled, presenting the animals in various states of swimming, diving and feeding, with tips on distinguishing between species. Maps identify where each mammal can be encountered at different times of the year. It wasn't written specifically for cruisers but the format is ideal. Overall, it's a valuable resource to have aboard.

Appendices include Observation Guidelines and what to do in the case of animal strandings. Also included are legislation summaries for the different jurisdictions and a table of names in other languages. The introduction provides a quick overview of morphological terms used to identify animals and tips on how to observe them.

Europe's Sea Mammals is an essential companion for anyone venturing any distance offshore. Encounters with frolicking dolphins, studious whales, performing porpoises and curious seals are magical and inspirational ... we're so fortunate to be out there to see them in their environment, and now we can tell others all about them in an informed manner.

DOB

VOYAGE OF THE HARRIER: Around the World in the Track of HMS *Beagle* – Julian Musto. Published by the author in soft covers and available via Amazon for £27.37, or £3.99 for Kindle. 290 229mm x 152mm pages, with most illustrations in colour. ISBN 978-1-5151-0589-3

I'm generally sceptical of cruisers who feel the need to 'legitimise' their sailing by giving it a scientific or historical aim. Why not circumnavigate just because you want to? Julian plainly doesn't agree with this philosophy, and makes his case by interweaving *Harrier*'s voyage with that of HMS *Beagle* some 170 years earlier. There is no doubt that this adds considerable extra interest to what might otherwise have been a relatively conventional, albeit highly admirable, circumnavigation. The juxtaposition of his thoughts and discoveries with those of Charles Darwin* as expressed in the latter's diary and correspondence is perhaps a little less successful, though we learn a great deal about both of them along the way.

Post retirement as an architect and seemingly without family commitments, Julian leaves the UK in July 2001 aboard *Harrier of Down*, a 25ft junk-rigged Folksong not dissimilar to *Jester* and, like her, basic in the extreme. Having made two Atlantic crossings in boats of similar size in the 1960s, however, he plainly knows what he's taken on. *Harrier* visits Santiago in the Cape Verde islands before continuing to Brazil, as HMS *Beagle* had done. There Julian remains for more than a year, having been offered a contract and research grant at the Universidade de Brazilia, the first of several lengthy pauses during his eleven year voyage.

Further down the South American coast disaster strikes when *Harrier* grounds on a shingle beach 'at the top of the highest spring tide of the month on the most remote part of the coast of Patagonia'. Despite help from (some) local people she does not survive the experience. Returning to Argentina he buys a fractionally larger (25ft 8in) boat which he again names *Harrier of Down* and, after 18 months' work, resumes his voyage. Though much of his circumnavigation is made singlehanded, for doubling Cape Horn he wisely takes on crew – presumably a success as Stephen Johnson, an American wildlife photographer, rejoins him five years later in Cape Town to sail back to Brazil via St Helena and Ascension.

Once into the Pacific Julian sails north with the intention of visiting the Galapagos to view Darwin's iconic finches, but is frustrated by officialdom – not the only time this happens during his circumnavigation. Thereafter his passage across the Pacific to New Zealand goes according to plan, but an attempt to follow HMS *Beagle*'s track south of Australia proves impossible against the prevailing westerlies. (The tracks of the two vessels form Appendices A and B, unfortunately not on the same page.) Skirting the east and north coasts of Australia goes well, however, despite encounters with potential people traffickers and/or drug smugglers, and the Indian Ocean is remarkable kind – 'My luck with the right weather at the wrong season held', a statement typical of Julian's low-key approach. Describing himself as a 'simple-lifer', financed by 'a modest teacher's pension' and with VHF and GPS but no SSB or EPIRB, he is following squarely in the wake of Slocum – whom he quotes frequently – and other early sailors as well as Darwin and the *Beagle*.

There's the odd error – such as writing May when he obviously means April at the beginning of Chapter 5, but overall I found remarkably few typos, often a major failing

* OCC members will be aware that Darwin circumnavigated aboard HMS *Beagle* in the late 1830s, developing the theories which led to his O*n the Origin of Species*, published in 1859. This followed his *Voyage of the Beagle*, published 20 years earlier which, together with his *Diaries*, was a major source of inspiration to the author.

of self-published books. He also goes off-message a few times, with remarks and opinions which a commercial publisher would have insisted on deleting, but I found nothing too offensive. All too often self-published books stumble where it comes to images, and though many of the photographs in *Voyage of the Harrier* have reproduced well, others – and most of the maps and line drawings – are noticeably fuzzy and/or pixelated.

The twelve appendices are so comprehensive – not least where details of all three vessels are concerned – that I'd suggest reading at least some of them before embarking on the main text, particularly for those unfamiliar with Darwin, HMS *Beagle*, or boats in general. The bibliography and index are also impressive.

I suspect that *Voyage of the Harrier* was written more because the author had a tale he wanted to tell than with an eye to serious commercial sales, but it certainly deserves a wider audience than immediate family and friends. Most cruisers, and all those interested in Darwin and his contribution to the understanding of our world, will both enjoy and learn from it.

AOMH

PRESSURE COOKING EVERY DAY: 80 modern recipes for stovetop pressure cooking – Denise Smart. Published in soft covers by Hamlyn [www.octopusbooks.co.uk] at £7.99. 128 246 mm x 190mm pages in full colour throughout. ISBN 978-0-6006-3578-9

A book entirely about pressure cooking is unusual these days, so when one was reviewed in a national newspaper recently our *Flying Fish* editor agreed that it deserved a second look. Aimed at young people – students? – living in bedsits with a stove-top cooker but no oven, *Pressure Cooking Every Day* is also very relevant to ocean cruising galleys, even though nowadays all but the very smallest boats have an oven. A pressure cooker saves gas by cooking in a third of the time taken by conventional means, and the lid clips on and stays on – very useful on a bouncing yacht, even if the pot isn't under pressure. The large, rather heavy, good quality pan has a variety of uses, from jam making to cooking spaghetti for a crowd, and as a pressure cooker can tenderise tougher cuts of meat – or that octopus that was a gift from friendly locals – and nutrients are retainedh rather than being boiled away by lengthy cooking.

The first section, 'Brunch and Lunch', includes a variety of ideas for snacks and light meals, although the only one I can see myself using is for Caribbean Butternut Squash Soup, which includes coconut milk and lime juice. The recipe for baked beans in tomato sauce seems rather absurd – isn't it far easier to open a can? – but could be useful if you happen to have haricot beans on board and are miles from even a basic shop. 'Midweek Meals' include such staples as chilli con carne using dried kidney beans, lentil and cauliflower curry for vegetarians, as well as more exotic dishes such as Spicy Jambalaya and shredded duck salad with mango and pomegranate. The 'Gatherings' section offers meals for entertaining, including a tasty-sounding recipe for chorizo and squid stew, and Lamb Shawarma, which needs 90 minutes at high pressure but would take four to five hours in the oven.

'Sides and Preserves' has a suggestion for baked sweet potatoes – pressure cook

them whole for 15 minutes, then transfer to a hot oven for five minutes to crisp the skins – much quicker than baking them from scratch. Then there's Mango Chutney – perfect when mangoes come free in the tropics and you've saved all those empty jars. The last chapter, 'Something Sweet', includes a recipe for Sea Salt Chocolate Brownies which got rave reviews from the newspaper reviewer. If you have an oven you'd be unlikely to make brownies this way – food for thought, though! Tempting colour photos accompany most of the recipes, and it would be a useful addition to the bookshelf of any yacht which carries a pressure cooker.

EHMH

When the alarms and excursions of your life are over; when your kids are doctors and your wives have found better things to do, when your enemies have had their comeuppances and your friends all bore you, when obituaries prove interesting and when the prospect of earning even one more dollar appals, then the moment has come to look about for a boat in which to sail around the world. There simply ain't nothing else worth doing.

Anon, but quoted by Julian Mustoe in the foreword to *Voyage of the Harrier*

Sillette Marine Propulsion
Lake Marine Products
LAKE ENGINEERING (Perth) LTD
SILLETTE SONIC Ltd.
MANUFACTURERS OF MARINE PROPULSION SYSTEMS

The SILLETTE GROUP +44(0)20 8337 7543 - sales@sillette.co.uk - www.sillette.co.uk

- 2 & 3 Blade Propellers
- Alloy & Bronze
- Fixed & Folding
- Shafts, Seals & Sterntubes
- Prop Protector Rope Cutter

Gori propeller

ELICHE RADICE

SHAFT SEAL

In-house custom engineering inc. shaft straightening

CUBA – NEVER HAVE A SCHEDULE!
Nicky Barker, Roving Rear Commodore

(*Nicky and Reg Barker left their home in Britain's Channel Islands in 2013 aboard their Rustler 42,* Blue Velvet of Sark. *After four years in the Mediterranean they crossed the Atlantic, and have spent the past two years cruising the Caribbean and the eastern seaboards of the USA and Canada. They were appointed Roving Rear Commodores in June 2019.*

Plans for this winter include the BVIs, the Cayman Islands, the Honduran Bay Islands and Belize, before heading north to Nova Scotia and Newfoundland in summer 2020. Follow their travels on their blog at www.blue-velvet-exploring-the-world.blogspot.com/.)

Cuba – land of salsa and *mojitos**, revolution and romance. When we were planning our time in the Caribbean and North America we agreed that during our second winter season we wanted to visit Cuba before the then US détente brought too much Americana to the country. Little did we foresee the recent clamp-down by the Trump administration. Though, as Brits, the restrictions do not affect us, we're still delighted that we took the opportunity to spend most of February and March 2019 sailing the country's south coast and enjoying the culture and contrasts that Cuba has to offer.

Having spent most of the previous ten days in the Turks and Caicos, we reached Cuba on 31st January. Charlotte, Reg's daughter, was to join us for three weeks, flying into

* A traditional Cuban cocktail, normally of white rum, sugar, lime juice, soda water and mint, though variations exist.

Nicky and Reg, with Blue Velvet of Sark in the background

Santiago de Cuba on 5th February and out from Havana 22 days later. 'Never have a schedule' says the adage, and it's valid. But we hoped that we would have enough time to do the country justice with her. We did, but there's far more that we would like to have done.

Looking south across Ensenada Gaspar.
Blue Velvet (left) anchored off Marina Gorda (out of sight)

Ferry into the centre of Santiago de Cuba

We arrived in Santiago de Cuba well before Charlotte to give us ample time to sort out arrival administration, orientate ourselves with the city – including where to buy fresh food – and carry out some maintenance. The arrival admin was very straightforward, albeit somewhat time-consuming. Marina Gorda is state-run and the marina managers speak excellent English. They pride themselves on giving a full run-down on how the arrival process works and then, if it's your first time in the country, will also brief you on how things work in Cuba, including the two currencies*. We were also warned that Cubans are not allowed on or too close to foreign vessels. Indeed, during our time in the anchorage off the marina, the marina managers would dissuade local holidaymakers from bringing hired rowing boats too close to *Blue Velvet* and other visiting yachts by dint of blowing very loudly on an umpire's whistle.

On our first full day in Santiago we took the ferry into the city to explore and to buy fresh food. Our research on Cuba had highlighted that food shopping can be a problem. Consequently, I had spent a good deal of time in St Martin provisioning comprehensively on the understanding that neither Cuba nor our intended destinations before and after (the Turks and Caicos and the Bahamas) are well-known for inexpensive and wide-ranging provisioning options. As it happens, I needn't have worried. Cubans clearly eat and – other than bread – we had no difficulty in finding all the basics, including butter, fresh and frozen meat, fresh vegetables and, of course, rum – Havana Club in particular. The difficulty is in the time that it takes to buy the food. Most 'supermarkets' stock some items but not all, so you have to visit several different shops to buy all the

* The tourist currency is the CUC, which is worth about 1€. The local currency, which you really need if you are going to buy things in local markets, is the CUP. There are 25 CUP to the CUC. Both currencies can be bought and sold at government-run exchange facilities or *cadecas*, but neither can be taken out of Cuba.

Fresh food market in Niquero

things likely to be on your shopping list. We found that, while the shelves were full, one aisle would be filled with just two items (eg. pasta and tinned tomatoes) with only one brand of each item available. Some items, such as butter, are not displayed but are kept under the counter (in this instance at a filling station shop only) where one has to ask for it specifically.

Fresh food, including fresh meat, is available at markets but there is still a supply continuity problem. On our first day in Santiago we toured the fresh food market and saw pineapples readily available. Two days later there were none for sale but they were available again the day after. Eggs and potatoes we were only ever able to buy from shifty-eyed men who would shuffle furtively over at the market entrance. They'd check around cautiously and then whisper "*Huevos*? *Patatas*?". If I answered in the affirmative, they'd hustle me off to a back room where their wares were hidden and then start the negotiation. Great fun! But, be warned, you need to take your own egg boxes.

The fresh meat was so fresh it was still warm and wobbling, though the butchery departments could do with a hygiene inspection. In all the markets we visited, meat was chopped unceremoniously by machete, shards of bone and flesh flying, on large tree stump blocks. Your meat was then handed to you just as it was – you needed to provide your own plastic bag (available for sale, usually from an old lady, at the market entrance) or, my preferred option, plastic storage boxes. In many places the locals just bought large hunks of pork fat, which gives a fair clue as to their financial situation.

We made several visits to Santiago, either by ferry from a quay close to the anchorage or by local bus. It's a lively city and very different from both Cienfuegos and Havana, both of which we visited later, apparently because of its position in the mountainous east of the country and the relatively high immigrant Haitian population. We enjoyed Santiago for its busy unpretentiousness. There's plenty of interesting architecture but, whilst there are a number of buildings in the very centre that have been renovated, there is still much work to be done and 'shabby chic' is definitely the name of the game. There's also plenty of communist architecture on display, including the fascinating

'Yank-tank' taxi in one of Santiago de Cuba's more restored streets

state ice-cream garden. The narrow streets and the volume of old vehicles belching fumes can make for an eye-watering stroll, but it is like nowhere else.

There are plenty of 1950s American cars and trucks in Santiago but, unlike in Havana, they're not highly polished, brightly coloured near-museum pieces. Rather they are matt-painted, dull-hued working vehicles. We also saw a lot of Russian Ladas and Moskvitchs, a good number of modern lorries emblazoned with 'Sinotruck' badges, numerous horse-drawn carts and, most surprisingly of all, a fairly plentiful supply of very modern European cars in taxi livery.

Grandpappy and his son pressing and rolling cigars in a corner of a coffee house

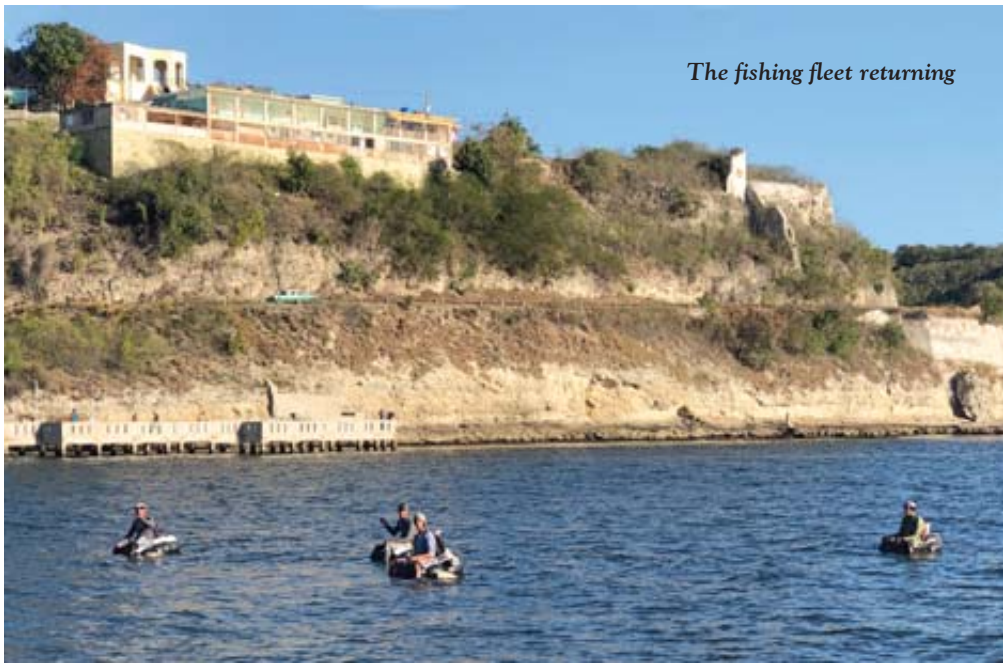
Salsa dancing to live music – and it's only early evening

Santiago de Cuba is in the country's revolutionary heartland and on display in the Plaza de Céspedes in front of the cathedral were then and now photos of revolutionary activists, dating from the 60th anniversary celebrations of the revolution in 2016. And, whilst Cuba as a whole has a vibrant musical scene, Santiago is said to have one of the edgiest and the best. In one coffee house we visited, grandpappy and his middle-aged

Son and Cristal in Santiago de Cuba

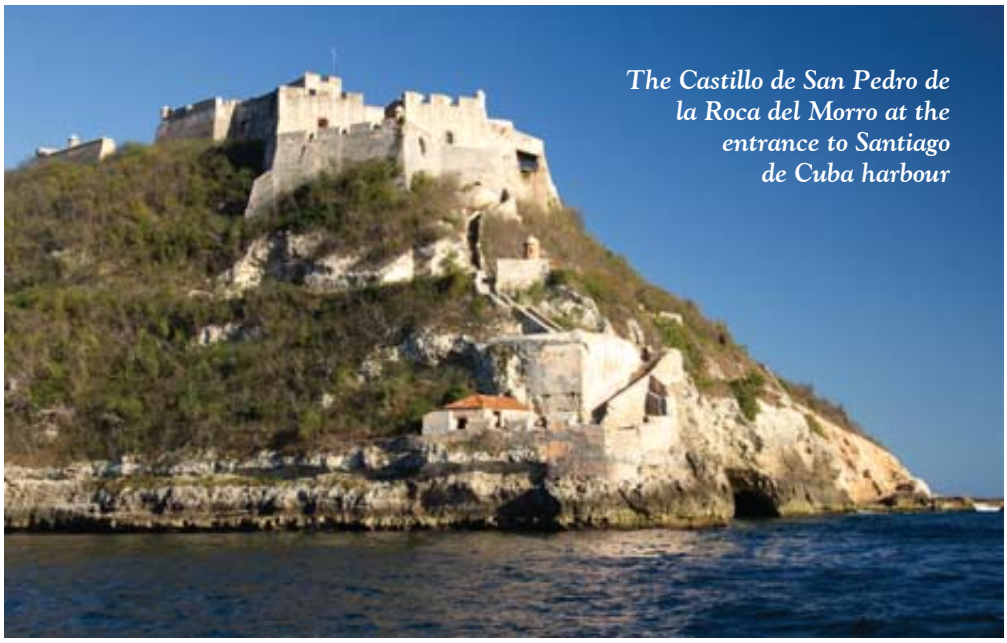
son pressed and rolled cigars in a corner whilst a total stranger tried to teach me to dance the salsa and, given half a chance, would have dragged us off to enrol in dance classes so that we could better appreciate the music.

Later, Charlotte, Reg and I spent a fabulous evening bar-hopping along El Hollandes listening to live music in each place we stopped. The locals sang along with the bands and danced the salsa beautifully and, in one particularly memorable tiny bar, the band sang and played just across the table from us whilst we tapped our feet, clapped in time and drank yet more *mojitos* and Cristal beer. It was a wonderful evening, a true high point on which to leave Santiago, though there was still far more that we could have explored in and around the city – Never have a schedule!



The fishing fleet returning

The next good anchorage west of Santiago is Marea del Portillo. It's a 60 mile passage which we decided to do overnight, leaving at about 1700. Our check-out was completed swiftly and we were soon the proud owners of a *despatcho* authorising us to sail from Santiago de Cuba to Cienfuegos over a period of about three weeks. Using more sign language, we ascertained that we would need to hand the *despatcho* in at the *Guarda Frontera* office wherever we stopped, and then collect it again before we left. As we left harbour we met the local fishing fleet – about twenty fishermen floating on individual truck inner tubes, propelled by what looked like table tennis bats. There's no mothership and it all looks terribly precarious, even in good weather. Having passed the fishing fleet we reached the harbour entrance and the impressive, and beautifully renovated, Castillo de San Pedro de la Roca del Morro (a UNESCO World Heritage Site) which steps down the cliff on the eastern side. We'd not had time to take Charlotte to the castle, unfortunately, but Reg and I had spent an enjoyable afternoon exploring it.



The Castillo de San Pedro de la Roca del Morro at the entrance to Santiago de Cuba harbour

Our passage along the coast was uneventful and marked by a distinct lack of wind – this would not be the only windless passage we would make. We arrived off Marea del Portillo at dawn with a 2m southeasterly swell, but the entrance is wide and well-marked – albeit the red lateral buoys were bleached white by the sun – and the anchorage off the village well-protected being almost totally enclosed by mangroves. Having dropped anchor, we were wondering how we would find the local *Guarda Frontera* officer when he appeared, the passenger in a small, rowed fishing boat. He came aboard, carefully unwrapped his pink spectacles from a piece of kitchen towel, gravely put them on, pulled out a treasured pen and started to write notes about us and *Blue Velvet* on a scrap of paper. We gave him our papers and passports, which answered some of his questions without our needing to speak or understand Spanish, but for a while we were at a total loss with one of his queries. A mixture of sign language and guesswork answered it – he wanted to know the height of the mast. Why?

Formalities complete, he took our paperwork and made clear that he would deliver it back the following morning before our intended departure at 0800. We went ashore to explore the village and found it a huge contrast to Santiago. Most of the 'roads' in Marea del Portillo are unpaved tracks which must be nightmarish when it rains, but through the middle of the village there is one quite large paved road on which we saw just one run-down old vehicle and a horse-drawn cart. The place is obviously very poor, with people scraping a living doing, well, we're not really sure what. But there are two hotels on the other side of the bay so perhaps some of the villagers work there.

Despite the obvious lack of wealth, the houses were well cared for and the gardens tidy and used for growing fruit and vegetables with, sometimes, a small space in which to relax. There were plenty of pigs and chickens wandering the roads (how do they know to whom they belong?) but there was little litter and no piles of rubbish or junk in gardens or on the roadside as we had seen in so many other Caribbean countries and, indeed, back home. This mirrored what we had observed on our motorbike taxi ride to El

Morro, and we later found it to be the case in most places we visited in Cuba. Sometimes there are rubbish dumps on the outskirts of a village but normally it seems that waste is properly disposed of somewhere. We also suspect that many items are recycled several times over, given that it can be very difficult to obtain consumer goods.

The following day, our *Guarda Frontera* friend returned our paperwork – he was as good as his word, turning up at 0700 though I doubt the fisherman thanked us for it – and we set off at the planned time, more out of politeness than necessity as our destination had changed. We had originally planned on spending Saturday moving 40 miles up the coast to Cabo Cruz but the *Lonely Planet Guide* talked about a village-wide *son** and salsa party held every Saturday night at Pilón, just 10 miles west of Marea del Portillo. Keen to experience more Cuban music we headed there, an uneventful motor in very calm conditions. The bay off the town features several shallow reefs but the channels between them, though rather convoluted, are deep. Some of the marks shown on our chart were in place but several were not – nor was the cay that we had intended to anchor behind! I had been a little concerned about surge in the anchorage as there was a 2m southeasterly swell offshore, but the fringing reefs and shallow water broke that completely so the water off Pilón was completely flat.

With the standard check-in completed we went off to explore the town. Like Marea del Portillo, Pilón is very rural, but it has an air of affluence and the people are busy and have a sense of purpose that we found lacking in Marea del Portillo. Part of the way into the centre of Pilón we stumbled upon a reminder of the town's most notable moment in history. A local woman, Celia Sánchez – aka 'The First Lady of the Revolution' – was instrumental in the success of the 1956 revolution. Her house in the town has been

* *Son cubano* is a genre of music and dance mainly derived from African and Spanish origins, which originated in eastern Cuba in the late 19th century.

Houses in Marea del Portillo

Pilón taxi

turned into a museum, with memorabilia and pictures from her life as well as a section on revolutionary fighters. It's a very local, low-key museum, with hand-typed labels for the displays (all of them in Spanish), but still made for a fascinating visit.

That evening we headed ashore again and, following the *Guarda Frontera* officers' instructions, left the dinghy in the fishing boat compound tied up to a rickety dock. Sadly, the music and dancing was not as we had expected. The *Lonely Planet Guide* talks of live bands and people dancing local variations of salsa and rumba, but in Raul Castro's Cuba, where internet access and smartphones provide Cubans with access to global fashions, musical tastes are changing rapidly. Pilón's Saturday night street party

The main square in Pilón

is now more thumping *reggaetón* nightclub than slinky, salsa dancehall, but it was an experience and all the people we met were incredibly friendly, wanting to know where we were from and what we thought of Cuba, the food and, of course, the rum and cigars.

Around midnight we returned to the dinghy, only to find the fishing boat compound securely locked. Climbing through a hole in the fence didn't seem a particularly sensible idea, but happily one of the *Guarda* officers was still up and about and he roused the night sentry to let us through to our dinghy. As the only yacht in the anchorage it was easy to find *Blue Velvet*, though less easy to work our way out through the ruined pilings off the old quay. But we got back unscathed and, as is required by the state, locked the outboard to *Blue Velvet* and lifted the dinghy out of the water, before collapsing into bed in preparation for another prompt start the next morning.

From Pilón we set off for Cabo Cruz, anticipating another motor on an almost windless day. Then, most of the way out through the maze of reefs off Pilón, the engine spluttered and stopped – not good. After sailing slowly for a while in the wrong direction Reg got the engine started again, but we had to run on low revs to keep it from cutting out – it seemed the fuel filters were mostly blocked by fuel bug. A short distance off Cabo Cruz, by which time the wind had built to a heady 7 knots, we completed a full filter change. We also jury-rigged a hose from a jerry can direct to the engine, which we hoped would give us a reliable fuel supply for the passage through the reef and over the shallows to the anchorage off the town. It did, and we breathed a large sigh of relief when we had the anchor well dug-in.

The jury-rigged fuel system. The jerry can was subsequently lashed in place to stabilise it against a slight rolling sea

Before we could begin trying to clean through the fuel system, three very young *Guarda Frontera* officers appeared in a rowing boat, having rowed a good three-quarters of a mile out from the town. One of them had a particularly nasty blister from his oar, so I patched up his palm while answering all the usual questions. Perhaps in gratitude, or perhaps just because they didn't fancy rowing back out in the morning, they stamped us in and out of Cabo Cruz and left us with the paperwork.

The following day, in another flat calm, we nursed the engine north to a small beach off Las Coloradas, close to where Fidel Castro and his band of 80 freedom fighters landed in the *Granma* in 1956. Charlotte and I went ashore to walk to the museum commemorating the event, leaving Reg on board to clean out the fuel tanks as much as possible. (Cuba, certainly the south coast, has relatively little in the way of yacht engineering facilities – you need to be pretty self-sufficient if things go wrong.) Reg had a torrid day of it but Charlotte and I had a fascinating time.

Blue Velvet anchored off Las Coloradas

As we landed we met workers with an ox cart gathering seaweed for field fertiliser. Then we walked through the Cuban equivalent of a Butlins holiday camp to the road which led, a sweaty 2km further on, to the *Granma* landing museum. Here a curator with surprisingly good English gave us a personal tour of the museum, including the life-size reconstruction of the *Granma* and the landing site itself, now reached by a 1km concrete path through dense mangroves. He told us that each year, on the anniversary of the landing, around 3000 people come to watch a re-enactment of the event.

Collecting seaweed by ox cart to use as fertiliser

We scrumped* green coconuts from the roadside trees on our return hike to the dinghy, but didn't get the chance to try them as the three *Guarda Frontera* officers from Cabo Cruz appeared (in a motor boat this time) about two hours before sunset to tell us that we had to move immediately. Reg was still working on the fuel system so I negotiated an hour's delay to get things operating and shipshape(ish). We'd had no plan for such a move, but the chart showed a mangrove cay just west of the town of Niquero which looked as though it would do for a night. It was about an hour's motor north and we squeaked in, very relieved, 30 minutes after sunset. Our coconut cocktails that evening were less sundowners than sun-well-and-truly-setters.

The engine fuel system seemed to be functioning properly but Reg wanted to carry out a check of the generator fuel system. I was concerned that we would run short of fresh fruit and vegetables before we reached Cienfuegos and Charlotte fancied another trip ashore, so on 12th February we moved the four miles to Niquero and Charlotte and I went ashore while Reg continued the clean-up operation. Niquero is almost unique in Cuba in being a provincial town with a working sugar refinery, and as a result the town is quite sizeable, busy and reasonably affluent. We left the dinghy tied to a decrepit quay and ran the normal gauntlet of *Guarda Frontera* questioning. By providing a written summary in Spanish and English of the yacht and crew's details, I managed to bring the check-in process down to a mere 10 minutes – a great improvement!

The back roads of Niquero reminded us of those in Pilón, but in the centre of town we found several bustling streets, a cinema, the statutory state ice-cream house, several small 'supermarkets' and a small fresh produce market. We bought fruit and vegetables

* In British English *scrumping* implies helping oneself to fruit (often windfall apples) without permission. In American English it more often describes something shrivelled or shrunk by cooking.

Niquero Town Hall

and then went on a search for meat, as the market's butchery section had none left. As we left the market we came across a novel way of transporting one's piglet home. All seemed fine whilst the bicycle was stationary, but once the owner started pedalling the piglet set up squealing loud enough to wake the dead. At this point a horse-drawn cart carrying a possible future incarnation of the unfortunate piglet came in the opposite direction, heading for the market. Charlotte and I hightailed it in pursuit and joined the queue for a share of the carcass. I couldn't make myself understood well enough, however, so we ended up selecting something likely from a 'supermarket' freezer. This later turned out to be mince, which I had not expected ... cue immediate menu change.

In the afternoon, I showed Reg the highlights of Niquero (a rush but we needed to move on – Never have a schedule!) before retrieving the *despatcho* and returning to our previous night's anchorage. This made things much easier for our planned early departure next day, for a long passage to Cayo Blanco and the start of our cruise through the mangrove cays of Les Jardines de la Reine.

Charlotte enjoying a green coconut cocktail

And this little pig went squeal, squeal, squeal all the way home!

WatchMate AIS Transponders

XB-6000 | XB-8000 smartAIS

vesper

WatchMate XB-8000 smart AIS Transponder with WiFi and NMEA 2000 Gateway

NEW IN
Starting from
£539.95
*XB-6000 Price

WatchMate XB-8000 is the world's first only black box transponder with built in smartAIS alarms. Get alerted with the external audible alarm included with the XB-8000 that sounds if it detects a risk in case of potential collisions, dragging anchor or man overboard situations. The alarm sounds even if your MFD or mobile device is switched off.




Great choice, fantastic value and expert advice online and in store

Fox's Chandlery opened its doors over 45 years ago, making it one of the oldest and largest chandlery and marine stores of its kind in the UK. Whether you're shopping in our store or from our website, we work hard to offer you great choice, fantastic value, and an after sales service that is second to none.

Our prices are constantly under review and we will always try to match any genuine online price. So if you've seen an item cheaper elsewhere, please call or email us and we'll be pleased to provide you with a personal quote. If you haven't been to see us for a while, we hope to see you soon.

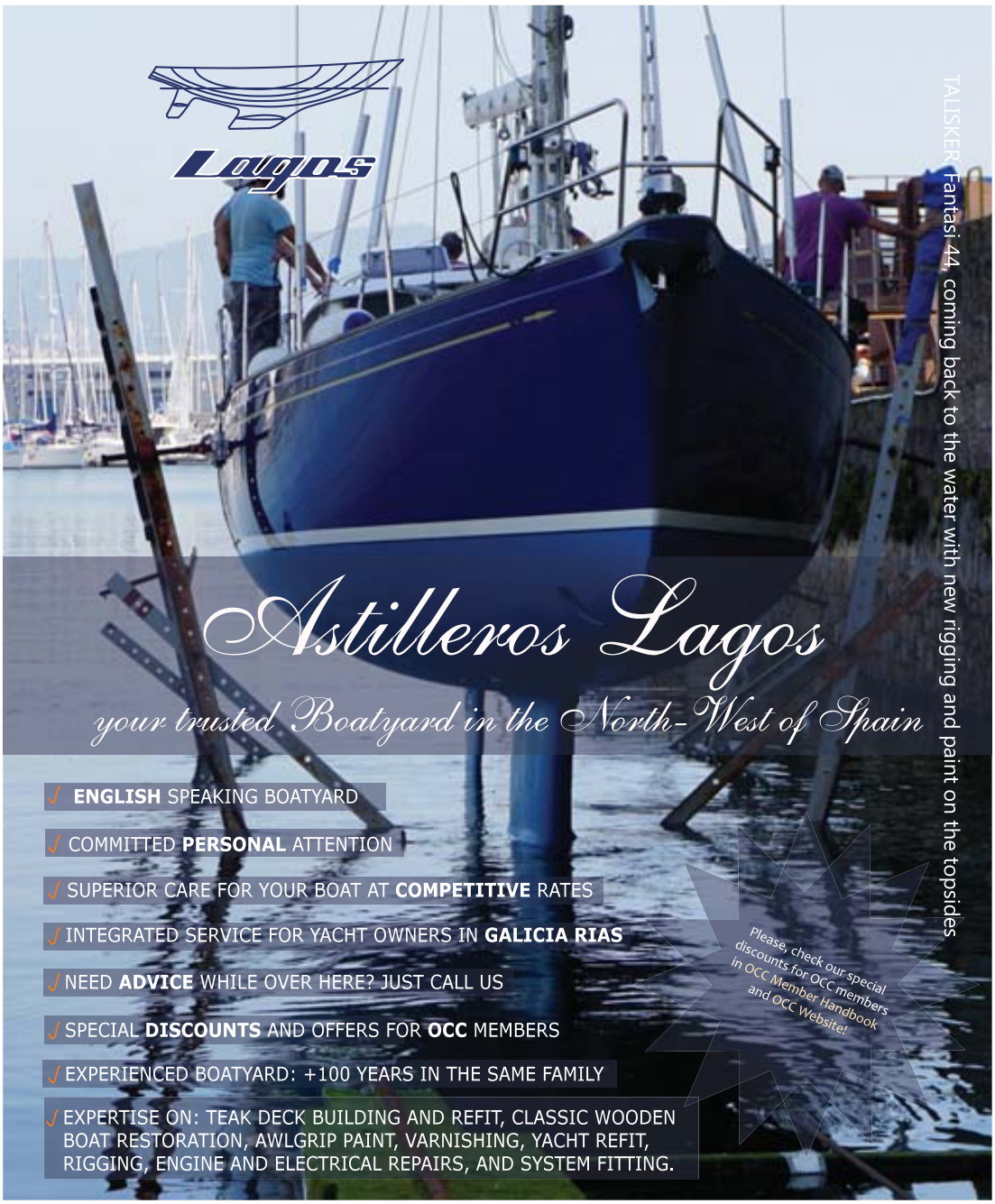
EVERYTHING YOU NEED FOR YOU AND YOUR BOAT IN ONE STORE

FOX'S
CHANDLERY
SINCE 1927

Fox's Chandlery, Fox's Marina
Ipswich, Suffolk, IP2 8NJ

+44 (0) 1473 688431
sales@foxschandlery.com

foxschandlery.com



WWW.ASTILLEROSLAGOS.ES

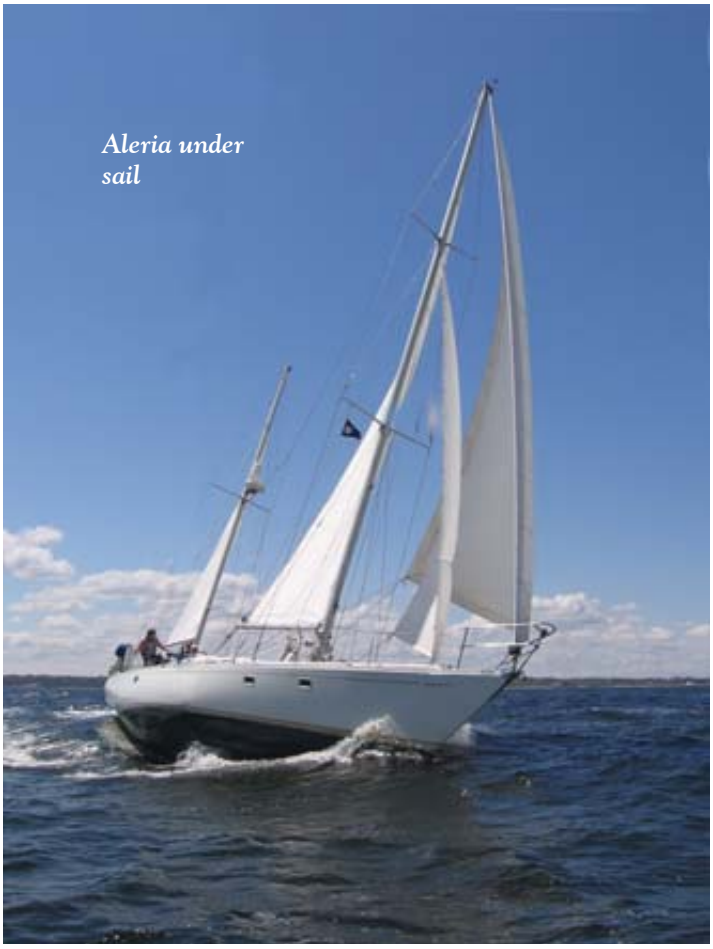
Avda. Eduardo Cabello 2, 36208, **Vigo, Spain**

Telf. **0034 986232626** | Fax: **0034 986291833** | **astillero@astilleroslagos.com**
or contact Alfredo Jr: **alfredo@astilleroslagos.com**, Mob. **0034 680408549**,
or Alberto: **alberto@astilleroslagos.com**, mob: **0034 606840626**

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS
Alex Blackwell
Regional Rear Commodore Ireland

(*Alex and Daria Blackwell live on the west coast of Ireland. They sail their Bowman 57 cutter ketch* Aleria *double-handed, and have crossed the Atlantic three times. They are both very involved with the OCC, and have written two books on sailing subjects as well as novels, a guide to self-publishing and an oyster cookbook. They are frequent contributors to sailing publications on both sides of the Atlantic.*)

Crossing the Bay of Biscay can, by many accounts, be a challenging experience. In my experience it has indeed been 'interesting'. On a recent crossing we sailed from Crosshaven, Ireland to Portosin, Galicia, a distance of over 550 nautical miles, in precisely 72 hours – sails up to anchor down. On our first day we even beat the 200 mile threshold that had always eluded us. The passage was almost entirely on a beam reach, and exhilarating to say the least.



Aleria under sail

On our way back north this past summer, after spending three delightful seasons exploring the Rías Biaxas of Galicia, we stopped off in A Coruña. We had planned a few days to get to know the town, visit museums and, of course, get our last fix of *tapas* and *raxiones**. June/July is the season for the 'great southern migration' and French, Dutch, British, Irish and a scattering of other nationalities arrived in A Coruña daily. Almost all we met said how horrible their passage across Biscay had been.

* *Tapas* are snacks served alongside a drink, whereas *raxiones* (or *raciones*) are meal-sized portions.

After a week of indulgence and meeting fellow OCC members, a weather window showed itself on the GRIBs we downloaded daily. It was time for us to head home to Ireland, in the opposite direction to the general flow of boats and the recent predominantly northerly winds. We would start in northerlies with a bit of east in them. As we progressed, the winds were predicted to clock to the east and then south, before dying altogether for a bit. The next system was to bring southwesterlies, with westerlies following in due course. When it came to the calm spells, we had no worries – we had enough fuel aboard for the whole distance and at least half again.

A day out, close to midnight, we came into the offshore shipping lanes. We crossed the steady stream of northbound ships steaming in a narrow line without incident. Sailing in the separation zone, we could already make out the southbound ships in the distance to port. We continued our beat on a north-northwest heading and at around 0200 the first southbound ships appeared to starboard, heading right at us. It was my watch and I was a little surprised as the southbound lane should still have been about 8 miles to the west. But then, everything always happens during the midnight to 0400 watch.

I bore off onto a reach, bringing our boat speed up to 8 knots in the light wind, and the ships I had seen were soon passing us well astern. Then the actual southbound fleet appeared ahead. As with the northbound ships, there was a steady stream. Upwind, in the distance, I spotted a gap and aimed for the last of a group of ships. Once safely past, I bore up again, back onto course. Then I spotted a line of six ships upwind looking as though they were steaming abreast of one another and a couple miles apart. I bore off again and left them in our wake. Only one of them came within a couple miles of our stern.

Again, I brought us back to sailing hard on the wind, only to see that there were three more ships upwind and to the west. Two were quite far off, but one seemed to be heading right for us. I bore off again, keeping an eye on the oncoming ship. Constant bearing, decreasing range = not good. Finally, at 8 miles out, the ship popped up on AIS. We were in a 'crossing situation'. Realising that I could not outrun it, and as bearing up did not have the 'feel-good' factor, I brought *Aleria* about without releasing the headsails and hove-to, letting the ship pass safely three miles ahead. After about fifteen minutes I completed the turn, gybing back on course to resume our journey.

With the night past and the day brightening we sailed on, spotting the occasional ship. All were far enough in the distance not to cause any concern. It then got a bit hazy and one did pop into view and simultaneously onto our AIS display. Once again, I chose to heave-to to let it pass. Later that day, with 330 miles to go, we sailed into a hole ... no wind. Having plenty of fuel aboard, we started our engine and motored along our rhumb line towards Dingle and the west coast of Ireland. At 0200 (what is it about the 0000–0400 watch?) the engine suddenly revved up a bit, making noises reminiscent of a cement mixer. Daria, who was on watch, quickly cut the throttle and the engine died. We had a good look around but saw nothing amiss and, as there was a bit of wind, decided to sail on and leave the diagnosis until daylight.

In the morning we gave the engine a thorough going over. Being certified for diesel mechanics, Daria grabbed the service manual while I did a visual exam. I removed some parts to look inside but found nothing. The noise could result from air in the fuel, Daria determined. There was indeed some air in each of the fuel filters. We

Alex scans the horizon

started the engine, expecting the worst, but it ran smoothly with some minor noise that did not worry us greatly. We put it in gear and the lever moved on the gearbox as it should, the engine revved, but the shaft did not turn. The grinding noise started again, this time with a vengeance. We quickly shut it down – it was the 'worst case' scenario. The next decision was easy. We would continue under sail – after all, *Aleria* is a sailing boat. The only thing we altered was our course. We would head for Cork Harbour, as that was the most likely place to find a mechanic.

That night we sailed into another hole – a big one. At 0030 the drift began. With little or no steerage I gazed at the stars and watched countless satellites going west to east and east to west. There were also numerous shooting stars. One in particular came down in a wide brushstroke of intensely bright green that momentarily lit up the sky, ending in a bright red ball. And then I saw it. There was a ship on the horizon at a bearing of 150°M. Through the binoculars I clearly made out two vertical white lights, a green starboard and a red portside light – it was heading right for us! Five minutes later I checked again – still 150°M. Constant bearing, decreasing range. We were stationary and it was moving towards us, presumably at the same 12 knots all the other ships had been travelling at.

I reached for the VHF handset and put out a *Securité* alert message stating our position, lack of speed and requesting a wide berth. After another ten minutes the ship appeared closer. I still saw the same light pattern – it had not changed course and was still at 150°M. As it was not yet on our AIS I guestimated a position about 10 miles off. I hailed the oncoming vessel directly. I stated its assumed lat and long and bearing of 330°M, adding that we had no way on and no engine. Again, no reply.

I turned on all external lights to increase our visibility – two sets of navigation

A bird's-eye view of Aleria

lights, anchor and deck lights on both masts, and the steaming light to light up the headsails. I turned on a flood light and aimed it at the ship – a commercial ship's captain had suggested this as a good idea. I hailed it again on VHF. Again, no reply. I went below and fetched the flare canister. I spent a while deciphering the cryptic instructions printed in ultra-small type. (Note to self: this is a really good thing to do *before* bringing the flares on board.)

I turned off most of the lights so I could see exactly where the ship was. A haze I had not noticed before had cleared and I was able to scan the horizon – where was the ship? I went back to look at 150°M again. Nothing. Wait ... there at the top of my field of vision, well above the horizon, was the ship! I saw its lights quite clearly – an atmospheric refraction, perhaps enhanced by my binoculars, of a configuration of stars matching my ship's lights. Same bearing, same range, no threat.

Next day the wind filled in and we made good speed to Cork where Mike Hodder, our Port Officer for Crosshaven, had a top notch mechanic waiting for us on the dock. A few short days later the part arrived and we were soon back underway.

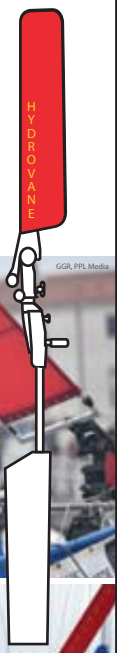
Can any member identify the stars which had Alex so worried from the information given? No prizes, but do e-mail me on flying.fish@oceancruisingclub.org as it would be interesting to know! Editor

www.hydrovane.com

FEEL THE FREEDOM

With a completely independent self-steering windvane AND Emergency rudder... in place and ready to go

- ★ Your best crew member - steers 24/7 with no complaint!
- ★ Full access to your cockpit with main wheel / tiller fixed
- ★ No problem to install off center - keep your davits or platform
- ★ Have confidence in case of main steering or rudder failure




Hallberg Rassy 352


Jeanneau SO 54


Wauquiez PS 40

Winner Jean-Luc Van Den Heede, Rustler 36


Roberts 44


XC 45


Columbia 43


Southerly 135


Allegro 33

ECH$_2$O Tec Watermakers

watt&sea Hydrogenerator

★ ★ ★
HYDROVANE
SINCE 1968

STEERING THE DREAM

noonsite.com

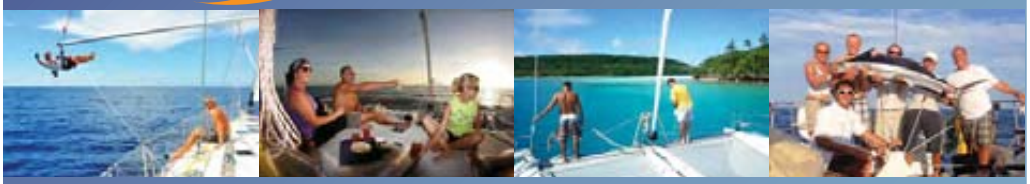
the global site for cruising sailors

noonsite aims to provide a one-stop website featuring essential information on all matters of interest to sailors planning an offshore voyage anywhere in the world, whether already underway or still in the preparatory stages.

• 193 countries • 1785 ports • Clearance Formalities • Visa Requirements • Fees • Repair Facilities • Special Events • Weather • Marine and Shore Services

www.noonsite.com

Ocean Crew Link



Specialising purely in ocean sailing opportunities, OceanCrewLink.com is an online directory of sailors and sailing opportunities, which aims to connect boat owners with offshore sailing crew.

Now with over 4500 sailors signed up and more than 150 opportunities to sail, oceancrewlink.com offers a unique meeting place for those who love ocean sailing.

Find Boats Meet Crew

Create your sailing profile now at...

OceanCrewLink.com

CROSSING THE PACIFIC: COLÓN TO TAHITI

Helena Klocke

(*Continuing on from Helena's account* of Sailing Paradise: Crossing the Caribbean Sea *in* Flying Fish 2019/1. *Helena received assistance from the OCC Youth Sponsorship Programme to make the initial passage, but that wasn't the half of it...*)

On Monday 25th March, Tessa and Paul arrive in Colón, at the Caribbean end of the Panama Canal. Both are from New Zealand and both will stay aboard until we reach Tahiti at the end of May. Our crew is now complete: Tessa, very caring and handy, never misses a good laugh; Paul, also referred to as Uncle Paul, who tells us about the stars in the sky and the fish in the sea and most of the in-betweens; Captain James is, obviously, our skipper – the most generous and relaxed captain, his first priority is that 'everyone has a good time'; my mother Rena, who is also our quite busy boat doctor; and finally me, Helena. I am a 20 year old German girl who had a good portion of luck to be on this beautiful voyage from Saint Martin to Tahiti. It really started in France, where James bought *Kiwa*, his Lagoon 450 catamaran. He will continue to sail her all the way to his home country, New Zealand.

Since James had done the canal transit before, we know roughly what to expect. The boat is measured, the lines and fenders arrive, the fees are paid and so on. When we welcome Julio, our pilot, on board we learn that we will have a monohull tied up each side during the transit – no serious line handling for us! But James will have to drive us all. By the time we get into the first lock everyone but him has got a camera out and gets ready to enjoy. And it is fascinating. The first three locks each take us 9m up, onto the level of the Gatun Lake. In front of us is a huge cargo ship, so we prefer to look behind where the massive doors slowly close. Then the water starts to rise. Maybe it is because of the calmness – no shouting or other noises, or maybe it is because we all know how special and rare this situation is, which most of us will do only once in a lifetime – but whatever it is, the atmosphere is magical. Although

Paul asked me to give a concert during the transit …

A great experience to share with my mom

it feels fast, it actually takes some time to get through all three locks and by the time we reach the lake it is dark.

The next day is not much different. We motor for a few hours to get to the last three locks that will each take us down 9m to the Pacific Ocean. The Pacific Ocean ... that's what we're so excited about. Again we tie up in the middle and enter the first lock, this time with a big cargo ship behind us. It's perfect, we get the perspective that we missed yesterday. Three times we watch the giant doors close in graceful slow motion and the water level sink, until the last door opens again to set us free for the Pacific. Just before sunset we say goodbye to Julio and tie up to a buoy for the night, then spend the evening out in Panama City.

The few days we spend here are mostly about deciding how many Panama hats one needs – in fact I'm the only one who doesn't buy one. We experience the Panamanians as very truthful and kind, always willing to help. The city itself I find very tidy and lively, especially on Sunday night! I love it, but I am even more excited about casting off again.

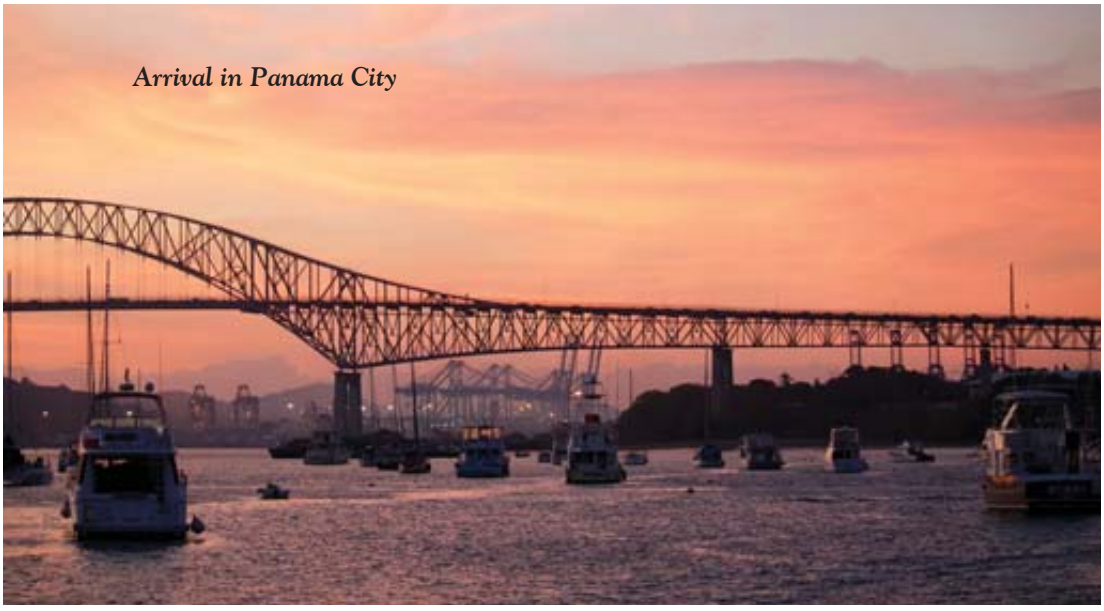
On Monday 1st April, the time has finally come. That is also the day that I book my flight back to Germany for the beginning of June. Two more months. Tessa says it sounds a lot but to me it sounds like the beginning of the end. Slowly but surely we

Mom and Julio, our pilot, on the cabin top as the gates close behind us ...

… and boy are they massive!

leave Panama behind. To each side are dozens of birds migrating further south – the formations they build only inches above the water makes a stunning view. In fact our time in Panama was full of beautiful birds. James picks up his shoes and says, "I'm putting away my shoes and it sure feels good!". It feels great. Soon we get out the spinnaker, 'just for fun'. Once again its beautiful turquoise colour amazes me. All five of us sit down and watch it carry us onwards. It's more meditation than fun if you ask me.

During lunch the next day, our regular get-together, Paul's fishing rod announces its first success. Excited about catching his first fish, he drops his knife and fork and gets ready to land that fish! All of us are excited, but we decide to finish lunch first and then pull in the fish. Paul, who usually takes his time to enjoy his food one mouthful at a time, takes only two minutes to finish and returns to his rod still chewing, which gives me a good laugh. But I hurry too, because I am the unofficial photographer and I want to get some good shots – it must be a huge fish. The first sight makes us think it is a swordfish. It comes up just beneath the water's surface for a second and I can see multiple

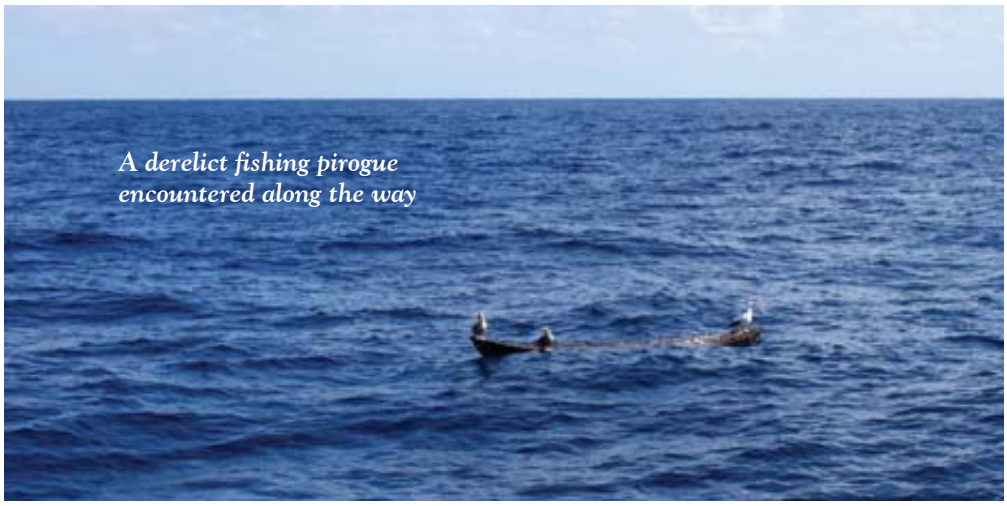


Arrival in Panama City

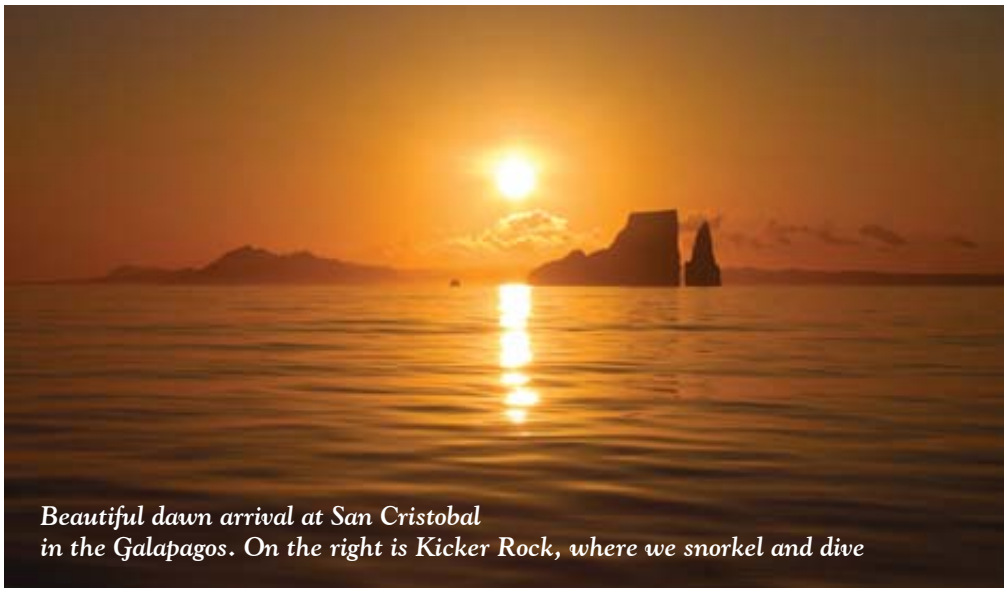
Tessa and the spinnaker en route to the Galapagos

beautiful colours shining on its back, and a long, pointy nose. It looks like a little shark to me, but I don't know much about fish. Whatever it is, it's beautiful, big and determined not to end up as our dinner. But since we don't want to kill what we can't eat, we plan to take it off the hook anyway. He fights us for almost twenty minutes, and has just come close enough when a big snap tells us he's won – the fish is off, and the hook too. I am told that this is the best outcome, since we didn't know how we would have taken the hook out anyway. Now it will rust and fall out ... but I have a hard time feeling good about it.

Funnily enough, just as we sit down for lunch next day the same thing happens again. We get excited, Paul gets ready, I get the camera. This time we can see it's a huge *mahi-mahi* ... but only for a few minutes. Then it, too, pulls off the hook and is gone. So close.



A derelict fishing pirogue encountered along the way



Beautiful dawn arrival at San Cristobal in the Galapagos. On the right is Kicker Rock, where we snorkel and dive

The Galapagos

We reach San Christobal on 4th April. I won't write about all the amazing things we did, but I will sum up the reasons why you should try to visit the Galapagos if you can. We had a fantastic agent, who took a lot of the work off us and left no questions unanswered; the Galapagueños, paid or unpaid, are always truly happy to help and don't look for opportunities to rip you off; and finally the environment itself is just beautiful. The flora and fauna are at least as amazing and diverse as you imagine, and the small towns are generally very tidy and lively. Even though most people work in tourism, and obviously there is a lot of it, the streets are also filled with locals, especially in the evening.

The streets are filled with locals

The Kiwa crew in the Galapagos.
From right to left: James, Paul, Rena (mom), me and Tessa

We visit four of the five inhabited islands and do one or two day tours on each. Though pricey, all of them were definitely worth it. We dive with all kinds of marine life including sharks, seals, rays and plenty of colourful fish, and walk in a labyrinth of

Me with one of the many giant turtles …

… and diving at Kicker Rock

lava tunnels, just a metre above shallow turquoise water that is home to giant turtles, seahorses and more. We walk up one of the six volcanoes on Isla Isabela, ending up in a mystical lava landscape with deadly canyons and cacti that are thousands of years old. Basically, every day is a highlight except the ones we take to sail from one island to another, and they are a much-needed rest from all the action and sun. To sum it up, once arrived it was very uncomplicated and safe – we had a good time, with good food amongst good people.

Our last day is Monday 15th April, and we have a tour booked to see Isla Floreana, a small island where a couple of Germans created their own little paradise back in 1929. Beautiful flora and fauna, as on every island, though a little different every time. A few days before that, snacking on something sweet, I notice my tooth being a little too sensitive. The last thing I want is a toothache for three weeks in the middle of the ocean, but despite all efforts we cannot find a dentist who can see me that day – I will have to hope for the best. Monday comes and we go to Floreana.

About 150 people live there. The little restaurant that provides us with lunch lies along a long street with only one other building, right across the street. I ask our tour guide if she knows of a dentist and a local tells us there is one in the building opposite! Maria, our guide, is just as surprised as I am. But it's true – a few times a year a young dentist from Santa Cruz comes here to care for the teeth on Floreana, for free. She fixes mine and is reluctant to accept a donation from us – what a perfect little incident. And she seems just as happy to have a patient as I am to have found a dentist.

Next day we cast off again, this time for the big crossing, 3059 miles to the Marquesas. Having five people on board obviously adds to the chaos on the boat, but since we all like it nice and clean we include a small daily clean-up in our two-hour shifts. After packing *Kiwa* with as much fresh fruit and veggies as possible, we say goodbye and set our sails for the Marquesas.

As the land shrinks behind us life slows down again. We lie in the sun, or the shade, read our books, nap, and watch the water from the helm. Small waves rock us from the port quarter. Sitting on the bow, watching the deep blue sea, a group of dolphins

On a volcanic caldera. From right to left: Rena, our wonderful guide, James, Tessa, me and Paul. I was glad my mom had bought multiple Panama hats!

shows off how much fun it must be living in the South Pacific. It's a beautiful sight, and the first of many encounters. A few days later we're sitting out front again, in the late afternoon when the sun gives only a mild heat, enjoying its beautiful orange colours. Watching the sea and feeling the warm breeze is pure life. Suddenly, four big,

Playing the ukulele at the helm

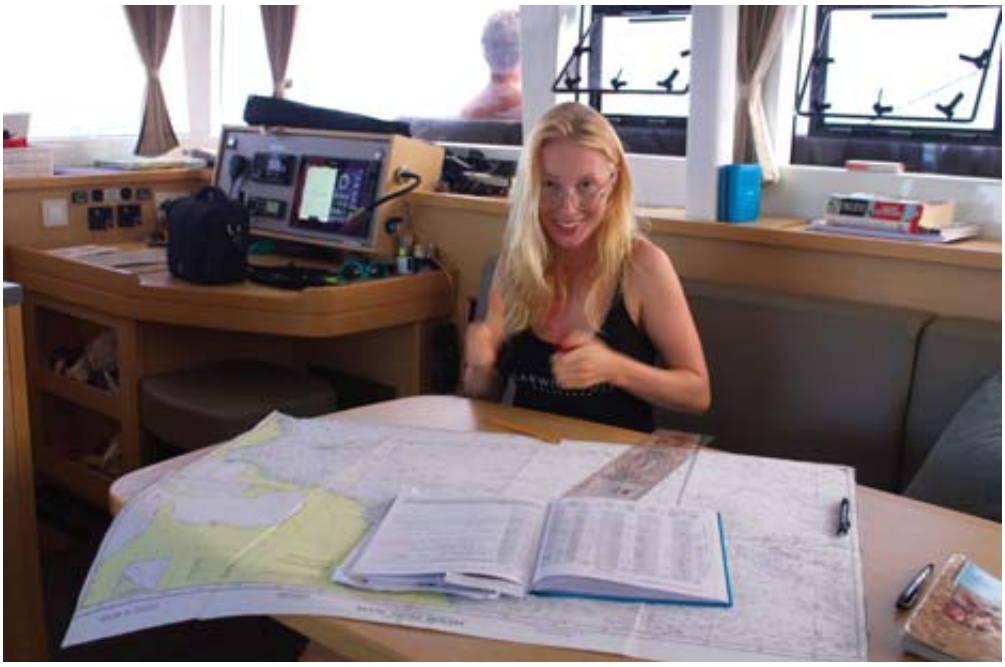
Goodbye Galapagos, next stop French Polynesia

beautiful dolphins appear right beneath the trampoline. I get very excited seeing them so close. These ones are bigger and have white bellies. We watch them play around only a few metres away. I've seen dolphins before, as every sailor surely has hundreds of times, but there's something beautiful about these animals that enthrals us all. We sit there until the stars appear one by one and it's only Paul and me left. While I am simply enjoying these little wonders of space, Paul gets his binoculars and we have a nice little lesson in astronomy, listening to Simon and Garfunkel.

Talking about music, we have a lot of it. And I have a lot of little karaoke dance parties too, because if you don't feel like that while you're sailing from one paradise to the other, then you're either terribly seasick or have an even more serious problem! Unfortunately, I do feel low key sick the first few days – not too much and not all the time, but enough to put on a patch, because I am not going to waste a single minute of this trip.

Monday 22nd is a gloomy day. A thick layer of clouds cover the blue sky and bring a fresh breeze and some rain. I like it a lot, realising that the hot, heavy equatorial sun is a little too much for my fair body. I feel so much better that day. It is also the day we switch our clocks back one hour. We realise that next day we will celebrate halfway, though it feels as if we have only been out at sea for a day or two.

By Monday 29th we've been at sea for 16 days, and other than two limes and a some lettuce our fresh food is gone. In the morning I wake up to the sound of the mainsail being lowered to the second reef. Before I have a chance to have a cup of tea we put the spinnaker up, then sit a while to enjoy it. The minute I decide it is time for some breakfast, a little fountain blows up a few metres to starboard. A beautiful, small whale gently breaks the water's surface and appears, then dives back down again. It is beautiful to watch, and the very first time for me. For a few minutes he continues besides us, then bends to his right and shows us a final blow before he returns to the depths. I finally have some breakfast, but little do I know what else this day holds for us.



I enjoyed the navigation – and yes, I did wear that dress all the time…

Just before lunch we notice a small rip at the spinnaker's starboard edge. We get it down, fix it, put it back up. Minutes after we finished lunch my mother calls, "There's another rip in the sail!". This time it is on the port side, and it's rather major. We get it down and go on motor-sailing under jib. 'It was nice while it lasted' – and it really was. The rest of the day goes by relaxed as always, and at sunset we sit at the bow to enjoy beers and chips (crisps to most Brits), our daily treat. Usually, before the last sunlight disappears, some start going to bed, others choose a movie or sit at the helm to do their watch. Today we all stay as the stars appear. Paul goes to turn off all the lights and returns with another bag of chips and his binoculars. Together we watch the beautifully clear sky full of stars, the Milky Way above our heads and even a neighbouring galaxy, as Paul explains. We identify all the constellations that we know, talk about shooting stars and satellites and all the other things that come to one's mind on a night like this. When I go inside to get a jersey I meet James who shows me the bioluminescence in the water – another thing I never saw before. Like a bunch of marine fireflies, the water behind the boat twinkles and shines in enchanted turquoise colours just underneath the surface. I have a hard time deciding which way to turn my head. Finally I make myself a good cup of tea and go to sleep. What a day.

We reach the Marquesas on 4th May after 18 days at sea, and spend the first few days in the capital, Nuku Hiva. We take a tour around the island, enjoy the singing in church on Sunday, trade clothes for fruit and see traditional dancing for the first time – beautiful, and amazingly different from everything I have seen so far. In addition to that we have good times meeting up with fellow sailors, with good stories, jokes and music. Something I've come to love about sailing is how international it is. You sit with people from all continents of the world and laugh and sing the same songs together. Living on a boat makes people forget about all the borders and differences people often believe in so strongly.

The beauty of the Marquesas

We move on to Ua Pou, Hiva Oa and finally Fatu Hiva, our last stop in the archipelago. On each island we take a tour, eat with the locals and learn about the people – and it doesn't get boring because each island is truly unique. What they all have in common is the kindness of their people. Our tour guides always stop to pick heaps of the fresh fruit which I had missed so much on the last half of our big crossing. Nature and culture are definitely the highlights on the Marquesas and inspire our skipper to get a tattoo

Chilling out in the Marquesas

My Marquesan tattoo

by a local artist. I thought I didn't want any more tattoos after the bad one I got when I was 18, but as I went through a book about Marquesan tattoos and their meanings while James got his one done very well, I decide to get one myself too. It is the symbol of the ear and stands for understanding and the willingness to listen.

It's 17th May and 24 hours ago we left Fatu Hiva for the Tuamotu Islands. We watched the locals practice a *haka*, a traditional dance to the bold rhythm of drums and singing, then returned to the boat in the evening, hoisted the mainsail and jib, and set off for Manihi. It is all very calm with the waves from astern, and I sit at the helm for my shift from 2000 until 2200. The moon is full and shines so bright that I can still see the blue of the sky and a few white clouds. The only sound comes from the water and the breeze is perfectly cool. This is the last little crossing and I try to embrace it as much as I can. We're slowly leaving this little paradise behind, where there are a thousand colours on the land and in the water. Where nature is so lush you could eat fruit ripened in the sun all year long – so much you could never exhaust it. Where some things still can't be bought with money and where the people still hunt to eat their meat.

Exploring in the Tuamotu Archipelago

Our next stop, and the last one before Tahiti, is the Tuamotu Archipelago. The most amazing island we visit is Rangiroa, again unlike anything I've seen before. A family of dolphins including a baby escort us

With James on our way to Tahiti, our last little crossing

into the lagoon, which is surrounded by a circular reef. The water is crystal clear and 30°C, and the underwater landscape of coral inhabited by the most amazing creatures (the fish are painted by a famous modern artist on LSD). Obviously we spend a good amount of time exploring this little paradise. No wonder that, for most Polynesians, paradise is the underwater world. Unfortunately the water temperature is too high for most corals, which die and lose their colour. We spend our days in the Tuamotus cycling, diving and visiting a pearl farm. It is very interesting and a lot of fun. I wish we could stay a little longer but we have to move on to Tahiti.

There we'll have to say goodbye to Paul, Tessa and Mark, who joined us for the past few weeks. I'll miss Paul especially, as he became a great friend these past weeks and taught me a lot of things I enjoyed learning. The day comes. All of a sudden it's only the three of us again, just like in the beginning. There is much more space now and time seems to slow down too, now that it's less busy on the boat. Suddenly I myself have only a few days left aboard *Kiwa*. I realise how much of a home this boat has become, and I realise that it is thanks to James being just the way he is, sharing his boat all the way. Other than cleaning the hulls, we spend our last days together being lazy.

Now I am sitting in a train through France, on my way home. Saying goodbye to the boat, the skipper and my mom was bittersweet. The time I had was simply incredible – what it has done for me I won't even try to explain. The way we loved life and what I learned about it will surely stay with me from now on. I gained a lot, most of all happiness. And that is why I can look forward to home now, too. Therefore my final and biggest thanks go to everyone who supported me with this experience. My family of course, my mother, James, Tessa and 'Uncle' Paul – and the OCC for accepting me for the amazing Youth Sponsorship Programme. Thank you so very much!

FROM THE GALLEY OF ... Anne Hammick, aboard *Wrestler*

CALDO VERDE (serves four)
A winter staple in Portugal, this substantial soup comes in many shapes and forms but all are variations on the following.

Ingredients

- 2 large potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 or 2 garlic cloves, chopped or mashed
- a generous handful of thinly sliced cabbage or kale. Available in every Portuguese *supermercado*, or chop it up yourself
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- chorizo
- salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 litre water (more if it seems a bit thick)

Fry the onion and garlic in the oil until golden, add the potato and about half the water and simmer gently for at least an hour, until they disintegrate. (A blender would speed up the process, but a potato-masher works pretty well.) Add the rest of the water and stir well. This is the 'base', which keeps well in the fridge for several days.

Add the cabbage and bring back to the boil, or scale down – eg. half the base + half the cabbage, etc. Simmer for five or six minutes, add several slices of chorizo per person, check the seasoning and serve.

Don't add the cabbage and chorizo until the reheating stage if intending to keep some of the base for another day.

PACIFIC SAILING WITH NICK LOWES
Sheelagh Lowes and Neva G Sullaway

(Flying Fish *2019/1 featured an obituary of long-term member Nick Lowes, written principally by his old friend and crewmate Martin Walford. Nick's wife Sheelagh and friend Neva Sullaway had additional tales which they wanted to tell, however, and a footnote informed readers: 'It is planned that both Neva's account of sailing with Nick, and Sheelagh's account of voyaging with him in the Pacific, will be published in* Flying Fish *2019/2'.*

It seems logical to place them in chronological order, with Neva's story from 1976 followed by Sheelagh's from 1995.)

Neva's memories

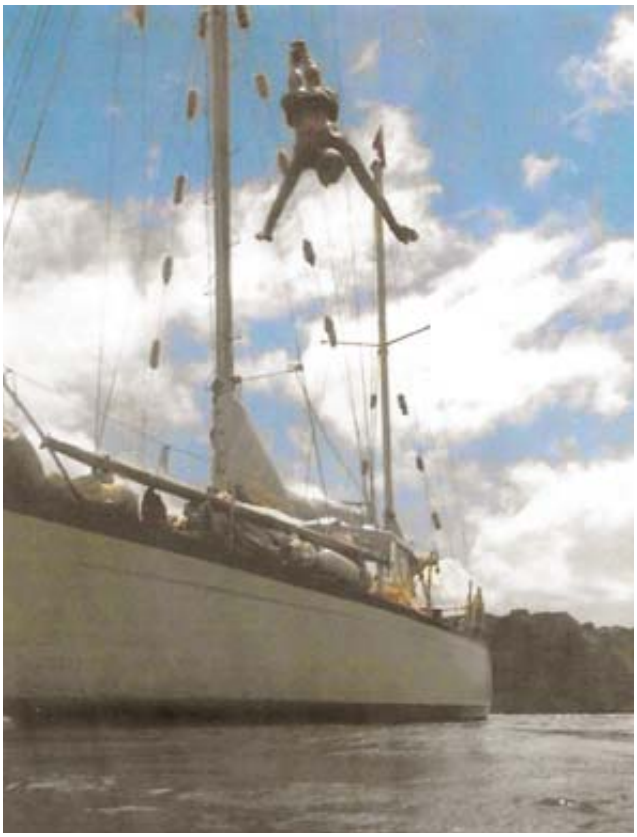
My life might have taken a totally different course if not for Nick, because in 1976 he saved me from prison in French Polynesia. A naïve Yank, I had hoped to sneak through French customs unnoticed even though I had a windsurfer, a surfboard, my dive gear and a huge backpack in tow – I had intended to live in Tahiti. Soon enough, the local *gendarmerie* caught on that I had little money and no return ticket but Nick, skipper of a Nicholson 38 called *Grockle*, spoke fluent French and, thankfully, was able to negotiate my release. I thereby became his crew, joining two Brits who had sailed with him from England.

I began my sailing apprenticeship under Nick and from him learned many skills I would come to depend on during subsequent voyages. He patiently taught me how to navigate by sextant and chronometer – I say 'patiently' because, unlike Nick, I was not quick at mathematical calculations, or content to sit for an hour or more in the heat-soaked saloon trying to make lines straight as waves slapped against our hull. But sailing through the South Pacific, the Cook and Tongan Islands and to Suva, Fiji, was a good proving ground.

Two indelible memories come to mind. First, finding Suvorov (or Suwarrow) Island, a low-lying atoll in mid-Pacific. We had been at sea for some time when Nick rose up from the companionway, drenched in sweat, and sent Andrew forward. He said simply: "Two points off the starboard bow". I was off-watch, but crawled out of my aft-cabin bunk to see what his directions meant. Sure enough, as perfectly as the clock ticked and the compass steadied our direction, the tops of a few wavy palm trees rose from the barren sea. Nick had shown me what navigational perfection looked like, and on Suvorov Island we met Tom Neale, a reclusive legend in his own time.

As we neared Fiji we sailed through the eye of a cyclone and out of the uproarious edge. It was a nerve-wracking 24 to 36 hours of silence, darkness and winds from all directions spinning the boat through 360° degrees. We held fast to our course and were eventually spat out on the other side. While fear and doubt assaulted the crew, Nick stood firm in his reassurances, firm in his calculations and firm in the strength of his boat.

The stories go on, as did our friendship through the years. We would be at opposite ends of the earth and then cross paths in Australia (in 1982, after he had completed a voyage as chief engineer aboard the *Golden Hinde*), and back in the US in 1996, where I had the great pleasure of helping arrange Nick and Sheelagh's wedding



Nick diving from Grockle's rigging in 1976. During his days at Harrow he'd been the best gymnast in the school

aboard the Maritime Museum of San Diego's 1863 barque *Star of India*. It was the perfect setting for two sailors heading off to a married life at sea.

I've written it before in a book and I will put it in writing again – aside from being a great sailor, reminiscent of the likes of Sir Francis Chichester and Bernard Moitessier (whom we had the privilege of meeting in Bora Bora), Nick was a man of great honesty and directness; a compassionate and empathetic man who never put himself above another. He was modest, intelligent and he shored up tremendous strength in a less than sturdy body. He had the uncanny ability to be himself in all situations and to persevere. He never wavered.

My course in life changed, the winds changed, but I will never forget the skipper who saved me from a Tahitian jail and set me on a new course.

Sheelagh recalls

I first met Nick when I was 12 and he was 16 – at that time our families were very close. But then we lost contact until 1995, when he wrote to me from Sydney where he had been living for the previous 13 years. He wondered if I would like to come out to visit him and, if I was willing, sail back with him to the UK to visit family before returning to Australia.

Of course I said yes, but the fact that I had not seen him for so many years worried me, to the point of even sending a telegram saying: "Having second thoughts. Please ring me". But my brother said that if I did not go he would shoot me, so I didn't really have a choice! I had only done 'gentle' sailing with Nick on the River Dart and so was a complete novice, but at least had the advantage that I was never seasick!

Nick had purchased an Australian-built Compass 28 called *Short Time*, which needed a lot of work including restoration of the engine, which was to be our downfall in the end. This was carried out at Birkenhead Point on the Sydney harbour waterfront. While we were in Sydney we met John Maddox, then Rear Commodore Australia, who kindly took us to an OCC dinner and OCC barbecues. We have remained in touch ever since.

Work on the engine took longer than expected and we left Sydney much too late in the year for the favourable winds which we'd hoped would take us north to Queensland, from where we intended to sail direct to the French island of Wallis and be married. We eventually left Moolooba, near the Southern entrance to the Great Barrier Reef, in late May, and paid the price in the form of being pooped followed by a knockdown off Sandy Cape, a true baptism of fire for me.

Sheelagh and Nick aboard Short Time in San Diego in 1996

After 65 days we reached Wallis Island, but our wedding was not to be as the priest needed letters from both our home parishes confirming that we had not been married before*. As we could not wait, we continued on our voyage eastwards. It was all a steep learning curve for me, but Nick was an excellent and experienced skipper having done many voyages with crew or solo. He was also a good teacher, and though I had to learn quickly it was reassuring to be in such good hands.

From Wallis Island we made a 45 day passage to Hawaii, followed by another 45 days from Honolulu to San Diego. Although the winds were light, we had only four days of sunshine during that time. The length of this leg was due to avoiding the Pacific High which, like everything else, seemed to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Our American friends in Honolulu had forgotten to tell us that the hurricane season lasts from May to October, so we were stuck in San Diego for three months, unable to move either north or south.

During our stay in San Diego, our great friend and Nick's former crew member Neva Sullaway not only secured us a mooring at the San Diego Yacht Club, but also arranged for us to be married on board the Maritime Museum of San Diego's

* See Nick's article *Resume*, which appeared in *Flying Fish* 1997/1 and is available online at https://oceancruisingclub.org/Flying-Fish-Archive.

Nick and Sheelagh, following their wedding aboard the Star of India, with Neva and her daughter Genoa on the right

barque *Star of India*, with Nick's brother David (who happened to be on a business trip to America) as best man.

We then continued on our voyage towards England. After continuing problems with the engine – it seemed we had to find an engineer in every port! – and spending ten weeks at sea between Isla Coco and the Gulf of Panama, we gave up the unequal attempt to reach Panama from the west, although we did manage to get within ten miles of the Gulf itself. So we turned back west with the intention of sailing *Short Time* back to Australia via Tahiti, but once again things did not go according to plan.

It was early in the morning, still dark, and we were about ten miles off Suvorov in the Cook Islands when the wind suddenly dropped. We turned the 'iron horse' on, but for some reason no power was forthcoming, leaving us completely at the mercy of the strong currents. Together with the breakers these finally swept *Short Time* onto the reef. Both of us were thrown out, which was probably just as well, and made it safely ashore. The next four months were spent on Anchorage Island where Tom Neale lived, surviving on a diet of fish and coconuts!

We were eventually taken off in July when the harbour master of Rarotonga arrived aboard the *Golden Odyssey*, a large motor yacht belonging to a nephew of King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. They had brought with them the caretaker and her family, who had been taken off for the hurricane season. Although we would have been happy to stay as unpaid caretakers it was not to be, so we left the same day. The crew, who were all from Glasgow, could not have been kinder to us, and at Rarotonga we were met by the Honorary Vice Consul, another Scot.

Nick is sorely missed, but he gave me the opportunity to make an epic voyage, as well as transmitting his love of sailing to me, for which I will always be grateful.

COSTAIN Part of the Costain Group

ONLINE
BOOKING
NOW AVAILABLE!!

ALCAIDESA
MARINA

5 GOLD ANCHORS

The Gateway to the Mediterranean

SPECIAL OFFER

FOR O.C.C. MEMBERS

10% discount
*on our daily berthing tariffs**
Up to a maximum stay of 5 days

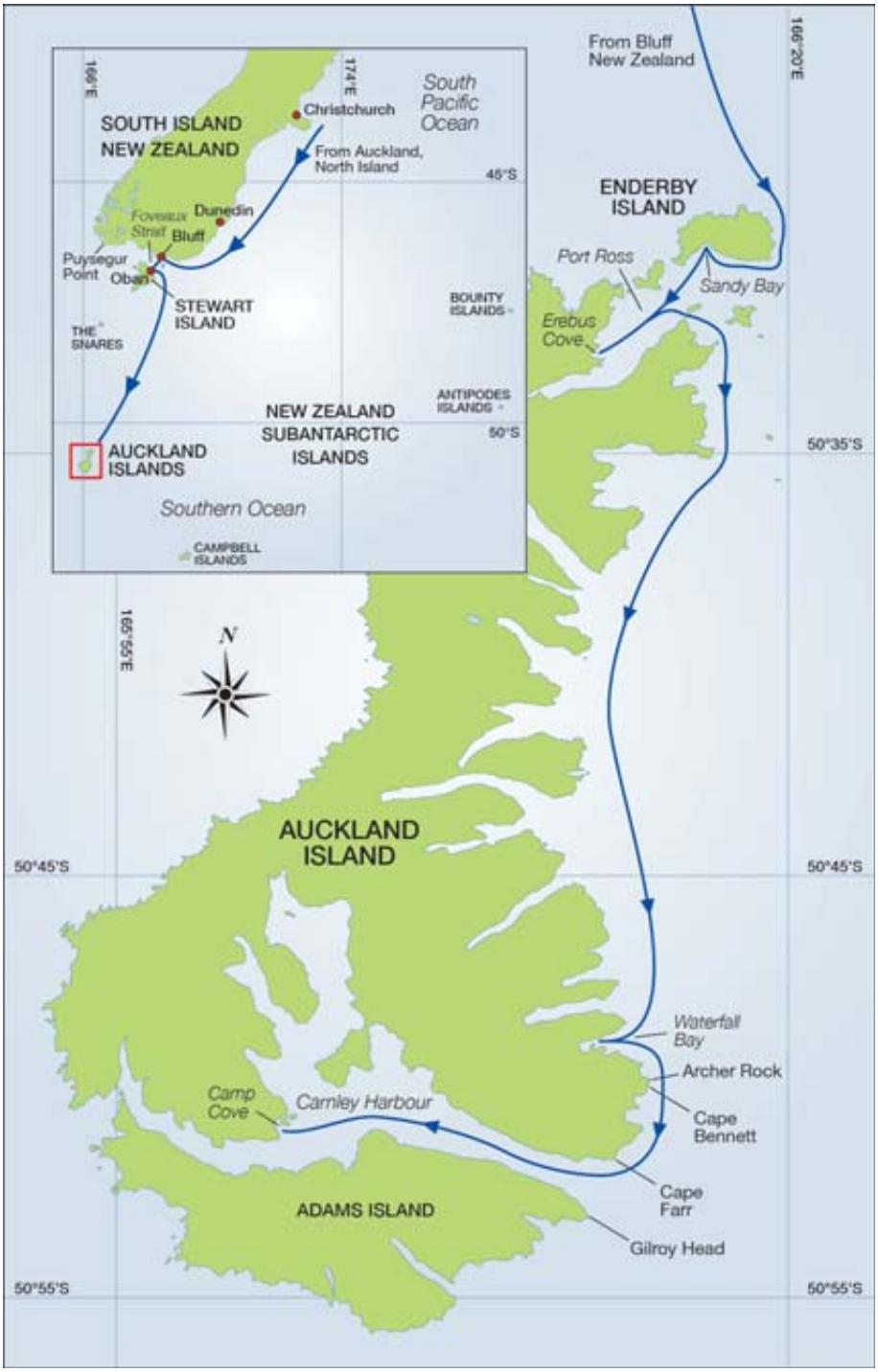
8% discount
*on our annual berthing tariffs**
Eg 12m annual berth approx 3500€ + IVA
Eg 15m annual berth approx 5000€ + IVA

10% discount
*on our boatyard tariffs**

**All Prices available on our website. T's & C's apply*

ALCAIDESA
MARINA

Tel.+34 956 021 660
marina@alcaidesa.com
www.alcaidesamarina.com


From Bluff
New Zealand
166°20'E
166°E
174°E
South
Pacific
Ocean
SOUTH ISLAND
NEW ZEALAND
Christchurch
From Auckland,
North Island
45°S
ENDERBY
ISLAND
Dunedin
Foveaux
Strait
Bluff
Puysegur
Point
Oban
STEWART
ISLAND
Port Ross
Sandy Bay
BOUNTY
ISLANDS
Erebus
Cove
THE
SNARES
ANTIPODES
ISLANDS
NEW ZEALAND
SUBANTARCTIC
ISLANDS
50°S
50°35'S
AUCKLAND
ISLANDS
Southern Ocean
CAMPBELL
ISLANDS
165°55'E
N
AUCKLAND
ISLAND
50°45'S
50°45'S
Waterfall
Bay
Archer Rock
Camp
Cove
Carnley Harbour
Cape
Bennett
Cape
Farr
ADAMS ISLAND
Gilroy Head
50°55'S
50°55'S

THE AUCKLAND ISLANDS
Vicky and Tom Jackson

Reaching with the shipwrecked sailors and the albatross,
Beating with the souls of the survivors and the wings of the sea birds.

(*Vicky and Tom Jackson have lived aboard, cruised and raced their 40ft S&S* Sunstone *200,000 miles since 1981. While working full time in the UK they competed successfully on the offshore racing circuit. In 1997 they departed the UK for an extended world cruise and completed a circumnavigation via the southern capes ten years later. Since then they have sailed two circuits of the Pacific Ocean from New Zealand, as well as in the Round New Zealand Two-Handed Race. They are now based in Nelson on the country's South Island.*
All photos are by Vicky Jackson except where credited.)

There has never been a permanent settlement on the Auckland Islands. There have been Maori and Moriori groups eking out a life at some periods. Shipwrecked sailors survived, some for twenty months. British colonists established the settlement of Hardwicke, lasting for less than three years. Whalers and sealers took their bounty, and a few optimistic farmers gave up. Castaway rescue missions, World War Two coast-watchers and the conservationists came and went. But none lasted more than a few years, none was permanent, even given the expansive desires of the 18th and 19th century explorers. It is too wet and windy, the soil is too poor, and perhaps it is just too isolated. This was the destination for our not-so-summery sailing holiday in 2019.

Although the cruise had begun in Auckland on New Zealand's North Island, our stepping-off point was Stewart Island, across the windy Foveaux Strait from South Island and considered by many Kiwis the country's last outpost. We were to sail to New Zealand territory some 220 miles south of Stewart Island at 50°30'S. Even then we were not going to the farthest outpost – Campbell Island, 320 miles from Stewart Island at 52°30'S, is the last speck of New Zealand

Vicky and Tom walking on Enderby Island. Photo Kevin Beaumont

Overfall waves approaching Enderby Island

territory in the Southern Ocean. Before our sail across that boisterous stretch of ocean, Oban, capital of Stewart Island (population around 400), provided us with a few comforts. First, the Four Square supermarket, to buy some fresher fruit and veggies and add another packet of ginger nuts, a few more bars of dark chocolate and packets of Cup-a-Soup, and second, the South Sea Hotel, the local pub, to drink tap beer, watch some rugby and have our fill of blue cod, chips and salad.

Our Auckland friend Charles Bradfield had been keen to visit the Auckland Islands in his yacht *Vingilot*, a Cavalier 45. We had also hoped to visit these remote islands, but the stringent requirements of the Department of Conservation (DoC) meant that teaming up on a larger yacht, with room for five or six crew, would work much better. So we were aboard *Vingilot*, not *Sunstone*. There was no denying that we were also attracted, in our older age and increasingly sybaritic ways, to comforts such as ducted heating, a very protected cockpit, hot water, a shower, a freezer and a 'fridge. The adventure had been in planning for two years. Prior to the intended visit, Charles had to work with the DoC to seek permission, with two yacht inspections and many forms to complete. There was also a requirement that at least one, and preferably two, crew would remain on the yacht at all times. Shore visits would have to be in rotation.

The Auckland Islands are part of the New Zealand Subantarctic Islands. The other four groups are The Snares, Bounty, Antipodes and Campbell Islands. They have been called a 'seabird capital' hosting over 40 breeding seabird species, comprising around 11% of the world's seabird population. The flora is unique and diverse, with more than 35 plants endemic to the region, several found on only one island group. This could hardly be a better draw for us – rarely visited, thousands of seabirds, unique flora, remote. Long ago we had learnt that to take in all those qualities you may have to suffer some cold, wet, windy and harsh sea conditions. We were not put off. Neither were our companions on board – Charles Bradfield (skipper), Kevin Beaumont (crew), and Simon Mitchell (a previous visitor to the Auckland Islands as DoC volunteer and wreck diver).

After a final inspection by a DoC employee at Bluff on the southern tip of the South Island, we set sail at 1510 on 24th February 2019 – destination Enderby Island, the northern of the Auckland Islands group at 50°30'S 166°20'E. The start was benign, a close reach with a westerly 12–18 knots, but at 1750 Vicky heard something on the VHF that was perfectly normal but thought-provoking ... "sea area Puysegur; storm warning, NW 50–55 knots, high seas ...". Puysegur, South Island's southwest headland, records a gale or storm warning 100 days each year. We rechecked the weather models and pressed on – further south we should not have more than 40 knots.

In the end we had no more than 35 knots and a wet, bouncy 60° reach, with the wind then abating before heading. It was not the weather which was most testing through the night, however, but seeing the targets on the AIS. We had to weave our way through a line of twelve large Russian trawlers, each 80–100m long. These are productive fishing grounds.

The welcome at the eastern tip of Enderby Island, after 270 miles and 42 hours, was a taste of the days ahead. As the waters shallowed, the waves rose. The breaking crests of the overfalls were photogenic and exhilarating to watch, but not so comfortable to experience. Albatross became our constant neighbours, flying alongside *Vingilot*, swooping, soaring and gliding.

The anchor rumbled out on a calm, sunny morning in Sandy Bay, which lived up to its name. Ashore three small buildings stood out – man-made features in an otherwise pristine environment. Through binoculars we spied three figures making their way down to the beach. We had been told that there might be DoC staff living in these huts over the summer months. The calm conditions encouraged Charles to take a quick shore visit with Simon and Kevin. Two hours later, over tea and scones, we were told stories of the programme of sealion population assessment by Andrew, Aditi and Helena. The Sandy Bay anchorage is well protected from the northern sector; but a strong southwesterly was predicted so we stayed only three hours. The first night's anchorage was spent in Erebus Cove, on the western side of Port Ross.

Simon and Charles in the dinghy, Sandy Bay

Vingilot with a background of rata trees, Erebus Cove

The World Heritage Area nomination for 1997 states: 'There are days when these islands are enveloped in an unsurpassed bleakness, and days of bright blue clarity when they are the most invigorating and wild places on earth'. The descriptions of the weather from sailors, settlers and conservationists provide a dismal picture of these specks in the southern ocean – 'strong gales ... strong gales ... gales with hail ... strong gales and rain, hail and snow'. At least the winters are relatively mild, but autumn and spring is filled with rain and gusty, cold winds. Hail in the summer is common place. Rare fine days – or even a few hours – were well appreciated.

That evening we celebrated our arrival, taking in a view that all those before us had described so vividly – sheets of rain, grey scudding clouds, white water just visible across the bay in the full force of the southwesterly gale, and it was cold. But with the heating on, a glass in hand and food in the oven, we felt far more privileged than those early shipwrecked sailors, the failing settlers, the castaways and more recently the DoC staff.

The second day of our stay was cool, showery and windy, with more rain later in the day. Vicky, Tom and Simon donned layers of Merino and Gore-Tex rainwear, plus hats and gloves, to provide some protection, at least for the first couple of hours. Joined by DoC researcher Andrew we tackled the 5½ mile circuit of Enderby Island. Aditi had suggested that we allow six or seven hours as in some sections the tramping is through thigh-high, spiky tussock grass or low unyielding hebe bushes. Returning in five hours, we were wet, cold, challenged but rewarded.

The shoreline provided interest throughout – dramatic cliffs and caves, tiered platforms with columnar boulders and stones, rock pools, sandy coves and beaches, golden and black. Surf and swells pounded the northern cliffs with a near-gale northwesterly, and

Megaherbs and the northern cliffs, Enderby Island

the huge beds of kelp were mesmerising as the forest strands danced – curling, twirling, twisting, jumping – in an ever-changing pattern of movement, colour and texture as surge disturbed the leathery brown tentacles. Blue, turquoise and white water washed over the dancing forest as breakers sped in and the undercurrents pulled out.

Much of the vegetation is endemic to these subantarctic islands. The leaves, stems, flowers and names were new to us. We had never heard the term 'megaherbs' – a group of herbaceous perennial wildflowers that flourish on all the island groups. Mega meaning large, they have evolved to adapt to the harsh weather conditions and reduced sunlight. We were past high summer and into early autumn so the colours on all the plants had faded, but with low light the last of the colours became more obvious, on both blooms and leaves. This was also true of the rata forests* which line much of the coast of the islands with an entangled maze of low-growth trees.

* Rata forest is characterised by lower trunks as well as branches being inclined or even prostrate as a result of wind action.

Dancing kelp

A yellow-eyed penguin hides from us

Currency is not an obvious place to research flora and fauna of far-off destinations. The New Zealand $5 note, however, features a scene from Campbell Island similar to what we also saw on Enderby – *Bulbinella rossii* the yellow Ross lily and purple daisies (both megaherbs) with a curious yellow-eyed penguin (*Megadyptes antipodes* or *hoiho*).

The yellow-eyed are shy penguins. We spied some hiding or sheltering under heavy undergrowth or poking their beaks out from behind rocks. More obvious are the sometimes boisterous and inquisitive New Zealand sealions. They featured on just about all the beaches, coves, rocky foreshores and in grassy swards all over Enderby Island. In one encounter a more determined female sealion followed us for more than half a mile. Followed is perhaps an understatement – it felt more like a chase. Andrew had suggested that a tramping stick was useful not just for the knees and balance, but to fend off any inquisitive sealions. A gentle tap on the nose or whiskers is supposed to see them away.

Along with the sea creatures, visitors are attracted to these remote islands for bird watching. Land birds abound, and we saw banded dotterel, tomtits and pipits and the brightly marked red-crowned parakeets. Seabirds are even more numerous – shag, terns, prions, petrels and, for us, the most majestic of them all, the albatross. We have been fortunate to see these giants in many places while sailing, more often on the wing or floating*. The Auckland Islands were the pinnacle of our sightings, with varied species flying and nesting. On Enderby we could hardly miss the southern royal albatross, sitting on a 'nest' of a few, loose branches – they were dotted over the flat, moor-like plateau, sitting head and shoulders above the low vegetation. We also saw white-capped mollymawks and the Gibson's wandering albatross.

* The cover of *Flying Fish* 2015/1 featured two royal albatross photographed by Vicky at Stewart Island. Admire it on the website at https://oceancruisingclub.org/Flying-Fish-Archive.

A light-mantled sooty albatross in flight

One species that we watched for hours was the elegant, light-mantled sooty albatross. On the northern cliffs we spied an adult sooty. We watched with interest. And as we watched, three grey rocks morphed into three fluffy, grey chicks. It was delightful to watch the caring parent and now larger youngsters, perched dramatically on a tiny ledge, 30m above the foaming southern ocean. If a chick fell that could be the end. They were probably born in December and from two families, and would not be fully fledged until May, another couple of months. With one or two eggs every second year, the parents could have a long wait for another.

Tom, Andrew and Simon eyeing a sealion on our wet walk around Enderby Island

Two sooty albatross chicks on a rocky ledge

Watching the mothering behaviour of the southern royal albatross was special. Albatross are monogamous, with both parents taking turns at incubation and feeding. We saw royals at the incubation stage, nestling the one large, white egg neatly under their body among the warm, soft feathers but avoiding it with their large feet. Feeding is by regurgitation. In turns, one parent flies over the ocean, eating fish. On return this parent will sit near to, or almost over, the tiny, squeaking, white and grey downy bundle. Chick and parent beaks come together in a gentle, nurturing touch. The chick pushes its small beak deep into the throat of its parent and fishy 'baby food' will satisfy the eager youngster. It is easy to be anthropomorphic in these wildlife moments, but the caring, gentle nurturing was obvious. We felt hugely privileged watching these interactions amid the wild splendour of Enderby Island.

A southern royal albatross mother and chick

Hardwicke cemetery

Another day of exploration took us back to Erebus Cove in settled weather. From the anchorage we spied some structures – clearly a place for further investigation. Landing the inflatable on the stony beach we found a boatshed and the collapsed remains of a castaway depot. An obvious track led inland, through the twisted trunks of the southern rata and daisy bush (*olearia*), with tomtits perched on branches. A track must lead somewhere, or so we surmised. Anyway the birds, trees and plants were interesting. After only fifteen minutes the track came to an abrupt end and there was a destination – the Hardwicke Cemetery, which was well-tended by the DoC and free from infiltration by the forest and undergrowth.

The Hardwicke settlement was named after the Earl of Hardwicke, governor of the settlers' whaling company, Samuel Enderby & Sons. It has now returned to nature, with no trace of the thirty houses constructed in 1860 to house the English colonists who had travelled halfway around the globe to make a 'new' life on Auckland Island. For many reasons these settlers lasted only two years and nine months. The hardships were immense, the soil infertile, the reported whales in very small numbers, and the rain, low cloud, wind and dampness incessant. The population peaked at 300. There were five weddings and 16 births – there were also deaths. One of the headstones provides a poignant reminder of all their struggles: 'Isabel Younger, died aged three months, in 1850'. In respect to these hardy souls we read all the inscriptions on the six headstones. Some, of later deaths, were for shipwrecked mariners.

Of the three main islands in the Auckland group, the southern Adams Island is separated from Auckland Island at both the eastern and western ends – though the latter gap is only 100m wide with strong currents. In the middle sections Carnley Harbour is expansive. For the early sailors – explorers, whalers and sealers – it was a place of shelter from ocean swells, and was probably seen too as a more sheltered anchorage. For those sailing in the 19th and 20th century, and for us in the 21st century, this proved more myth than reality.

'Champagne sailing'. Vingilot reaching down the east coast of Auckland Island

"Champagne sailing in the southern ocean!" Charles's voice rang out as we close-reached down the east coast of Auckland Island in sunshine and 15 knots of westerly wind towards Carnley Harbour. *Vingilot* was kicking her heels and the crew were in high spirits. We dipped into Waterfall Bay to check it as a potential anchorage. It seemed protected, although with some kelp, and was a pretty spot, although we would not be able to go ashore as it is not on the DoC approved list. We came out and sailed on past Archer Rock, around Cape Bennett and on towards Gilroy Head, the easternmost tip of Adams Island. At 1630 we approached the eastern entrance to Carnley Harbour. The genoa was furled and we motor-sailed around Cape Farr. Then the wind hit.

The narrow funnel into Carnley Harbour was a mass of white water with short, steep waves, the only expected element being that the wind was from the west. But not the 15 knots outside – we were struggling, beating with the main, assisted by engine, into 45–55 knots. Progress was slow, closing the grey, volcanic cliffs on each shore before tacking as we crawled into the more open section of the harbour. The lay of the land creates katabatic (downslope) winds with *rachas* (gusts) accelerating off the higher hills even when conditions on the open ocean are benign.

The crew were quiet. We were all deep in our own thoughts about the next few hours, wondering whether we would find shelter at Camp Cove, our intended anchorage, or whether we might have to abort and head back to Waterfall Bay or even further north. Spray showered the decks, the wind howled, williwaws hit with more force, blue and white mixed on the water and in the air, the rig shook. Tom and I thought about the next few hours but we also thought about how this would have been on board *Sunstone*. Here we were sheltered within the 'igloo' around the cockpit, we were not getting

Grey cliffs and grey clouds at Carnley Harbour

soaked with every wave, although in habitual anticipation Vicky was turning her head away from big gusts and ducked when a wave hit. Reactions die hard after 38 years!

The *Grafton* experienced even worse in January 1864. Anchored in Carnley Harbour they were slammed by hurricane-force winds, the anchors dragged and the schooner was washed ashore onto the rocks. The five crew struggled ashore. Many books have been written about and by shipwrecked survivors and the stories of the *Grafton* and the *Invercauld*, also wrecked in 1864 on Auckland Island, should be required survival reading. Two shipwrecks, two sets of survivors, one in Carnley Harbour, one in Port Ross, but each unaware of the other. For one group their decisions, actions and co-operation were of the highest standard; for the second the decision-making was poor, there was enmity, contempt and questions of hierarchy. The accounts of these two groups highlight the importance of working together, leadership, ingenuity, perseverance, mental strength, foresight and hope*.

Camp Cove provided the shelter we hoped for. As we pressed on into the more open stretches of Carnley Harbour the wind slowly decreased to 15 knots. Setting the anchor in a small circular bay, the water was flat with just 5–10 knots of westerly and the occasional gust down the valley. The crew started communicating again – the strong winds and thoughts for the next day were discussed. We enjoyed the solitary, if grey, dampness of our harbour on Auckland Island but also the warmth around the saloon table.

The sail out of Carnley was a repeat of the horrendous conditions, except that this time the wind was from behind and it lasted some way up the east coast. The low clouds, the steep cliffs, the spray and spume, gave a picture in black and white, though later the sun peeped through the clouds. There were some struggles in the

* Visit https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grafton_(ship) for information about both vessels.

Sailing out of Carnley Harbour in 50 knots

45–50 knots of wind with waves over *Vingilot*. The less experienced aboard saw the white spume, the water smoking with *rachas* on a sun-drenched cobalt ocean and a bright rainbow growing out of the steep volcanic cliffs, as beautiful and photogenic. The sailors were more contemplative about the rig, the steering, the next sheltered anchorage and the impending northwesterly gale, due later in the afternoon. It seemed almost familiar as we anchored in Sandy Bay again, with limited visibility. The wind was up, the grey was down, but the anchor was well-set in the sand. We were below for the next 24 hours.

We were sailing on a different yacht and with crew, fundamental changes for the *Sunstoners*. *Vingilot* is a far more complex yacht than *Sunstone*, with autopilot, genset, satellite phone and computer navigation in addition to the creature comforts mentioned previously. These additions certainly provide more comfort, but there is also more to go wrong, more time must be spent in maintenance, checking and cleaning, and more spares must be carried. Sailing with more than two people gives more time for conversation, less for personal contemplation. One distinct upside is getting more sleep. Meal preparation takes longer but sitting together over a meal, reliving challenging experiences is another positive feature.

'How long were you there?' was a frequent question on our return to Auckland city, after sailing 3066 miles circumnavigating New Zealand over 41 days. 'In the Auckland Islands, seven days with three shore trips'. 'That was a long way to go for a short time. Was it worth it?' It was a long, cold, windy way to go but 'Yes', it was worth it, it was really worth it. It was amazing to see such wild, remote beauty and feel so close to nature. The best memories are made from hardship and some risk.

PREDICTWIND | THE WORLD LEADER IN WIND FORECASTING

BETTER TOOLS FOR OFFSHORE SAILING

OFFSHORE APP

The Offshore App from PredictWind is the ultimate tool for getting and viewing forecast information offshore.

GRIB FILES

Simple GRIB file selection and download for your passage that can be viewed directly within the Offshore App.

WEATHER ROUTING

Easy to use weather routing tool shows you the quickest or safest route for your next trip, online or via satellite.

SATELLITE IMAGERY

Get the latest satellite imagery for the entire globe, and view directly within the Offshore App.

DEPARTURE PLANNING

Figure out the best day to depart based on the 4 forecast models PWG, PWE, ECMWF, GFS

PREDICTWIND FORECASTS

PredictWind is the only company in the world that runs their own global weather models at an incredible 1km resolution for outstanding accuracy. These forecasts (PWG & PWE) can only be found at PredictWind.

We also offer the highly rated ECMWF and the GFS models for added forecast confidence.

GMDSS

Up to date text forecasts direct to your device via the Offshore App.

PWG PWE GFS ECMWF

GET FREE FORECASTS AND TOOLS NOW AT

WWW.PREDICTWIND.COM

PredictWind.com
THE WORLD LEADER

LYDIA ROUND THE CAPE AND ACROSS THE SOUTH ATLANTIC

Donald Begg

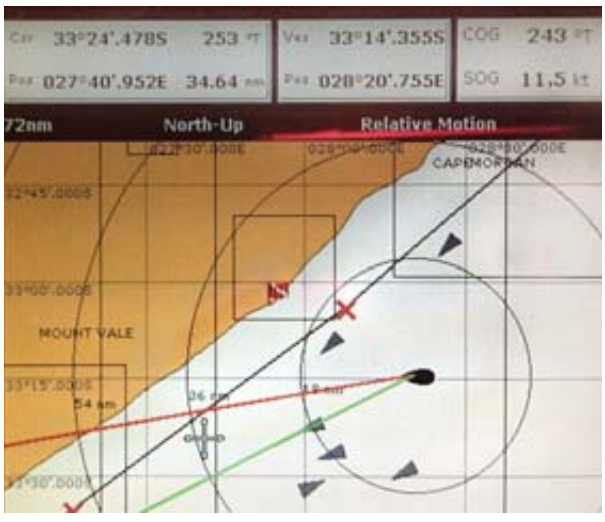
(*Donald and* Lydia*, his Bowman 48, first appeared in the pages of* Flying Fish *in 2018/1 –* Lydia across the Tasman *– and again in 2019/1 –* Lydia across the Indian Ocean*. Now we rejoin them in Richards Bay for the next leg of their five-year circumnavigation. Visit his blog at blog.mailasail.com/yachtlydia to read more.)*

Lydia crossed the Indian Ocean as part of the World ARC fleet, but after arrival at Richards Bay, South Africa the weather turned bad for a week. My wife Nicola was flying into Cape Town from the UK and we were looking forward to a land holiday in SA followed by Christmas at home with the family, so I had to make a decision. That decision was to hand *Lydia* over to the capable Richards Bay boatyard for servicing and maintenance, allow the rest of the fleet to leave without us, and aim to catch them up at a later stage. Nicola and I had our holiday together and I rejoined the boat with her new crew – Graham Stoddart-Stones and Mark Curtis – on 4th January 2019.

South to the Cape

The name of the game for the passage round to Cape Town is to catch the weather windows. There are few ports of refuge and none for the 250 miles between Durban and East London. The weather, meanwhile, is dominated by the regular formation of lows which send the wind whistling up against the 5 knot Agulhas Current, generating waves that will crunch a yacht. The World ARC fleet was already gathered in Cape Town 950 miles away, ready to restart the rally on 9th January. This would inevitably be without us, but the question was, how close behind them could we get?

We were ready to go on Saturday 5th, but inevitably a low was passing through. Des Cason, amateur router and local weather expert*, said Tuesday, maybe Monday if you must. So Monday it was, sailing on the high tide at 0500 and motoring into a contrary but decreasing wind with a lumpy sea. The wind slowly turned northeast as forecast, we found the current, and we part motor-sailed and part sailed, zooming past Durban and later East London, speed over the ground at anything up to 11 knots, midday to midday distance 217 miles on our



Scorching SOG in the Agulhas Current

* Des Cason received the 2018 OCC Award for his service to cruising yachtsmen – see *Flying Fish* 2019/1, page 15.

first day, 186 on our second. After two days and 482 miles the weather window was closing, Mossel Bay looked like a step too far, so it was in Port Elizabeth that we moored on the evening of 9th January. The only problems had been the generator, which ran for 10 minutes and then cut out, and the mainsail which had not been bent on correctly so enjoyed a few moments of freedom before it could be tamed.

The marina at Port Elizabeth was ramshackle, a little grubby, but thoroughly welcoming and friendly. The old Algoa Bay Marina appeared to have gone bankrupt a few months earlier, but the catering facilities had been renamed the Nelson Mandela Yacht Club and the marina itself was being run by local yachtsmen. All good for us, except that the shore power did not generate enough voltage to activate the battery charger. We had an on-site engineer, Frenchman Guy Fabre, look over the generator. The verdict – a loose banjo nut on the fuel line which was sucking in air and, probably more significantly, dodgy fuel, which the engine could cope with, but not the delicate generator. Our only solution was to burn off fuel on the way to Cape Town, and to refill there with fresh.

The weather window again closed in on us. We had arrived on Wednesday and I hoped to sail on the Friday, but no such luck. When it became clear that we would be stuck for the weekend Graham and Mark hired a car and spent an enjoyable day at the Addo Safari Park, which at least meant Graham was able to see something of the classic attractions of South Africa. (Mark had already seen plenty and I had had a lovely few days at Addo with Nicola.) The town itself looks industrial and, from the marina, does not appeal. It is reputed to be unsafe, but in the other direction there is the resort of Summer Strand which is ideal for recreational runs ashore.

We were itching to leave but the wind was whistling up from the wrong direction. Des Cason said that it would start to turn on Monday, so better wait until Tuesday. I said, let's go at 1800 on Sunday and give it a try. That time came and boat and crew were ready, but it was still blowing old boots from the south. Executive decision – we'll have a nice dinner, some sleep, and sail at 0400 on Monday 14th. And so we did, motoring out into a light headwind with a lumpy but navigable sea, not a cloud in the sky, the sunshine in tune with our optimism.

We motor-sailed for a day and a half against light winds. I had hoped for some favourable current, but now that we were round Cape St Francis we had lost the Agulhas and even had a knot or so of the cold Benguela Current against us. By Tuesday

Table Mountain

afternoon an easterly was building and we were sailing. As we approached Cape Agulhas, lost in the mist at first light on Wednesday morning, the wind was up to 30 knots and the sea was rough, but we were making 8 knots in the right direction. We rounded the Cape and *Lydia* was back in the Atlantic after a little under three years. The only wildlife were seals, but lots of them. They lay on their backs on the rough surface apparently asleep, flippers in the air, occasionally lifting an incurious head to watch us go by. Where were the great whites?

Every crew seems to produce a cook who outshines the others – Mark, in our case. He amused us with a touch of finesse, a knob of butter on each plate before dishing up spag bol. Try keeping that on your plate when balancing it on your knee in rough weather!

I had thought that after Cape Agulhas we would get a bit of lee and calmer conditions as we approached Good Hope. Nothing doing – we went scooting up past the 'Cape of Storms' and got no respite till abreast Hout Bay, with the stupendous Table Mountain ahead. We berthed in the V&A marina in Cape Town at 2230 – 434 miles from Port Elizabeth, 916 from Richards Bay.

We didn't want to tarry. The ARC fleet had an eight-day start on us, Mark and I had already done Cape Town, so bad luck Graham. On Thursday 17th we ploughed through the laborious check-out procedure – five sets of documents at four different locations – took on fuel, and left at teatime.

Rough weather north of Cape Town

Northwest to St Helena

The pilot states that this is a straightforward route, but advises sailors to keep a close watch on the weather before leaving the Cape. We weren't inclined to hang around, but in any case the weather looked reasonable on PredictWind and Windy, so we sailed at teatime on Thursday 17th January. A few fishing boats were offshore – one called us on VHF and helpfully guided us around his fishing floats on a dark night. Next day we had 20–30 knots west-southwest, as forecast, and were sailing well with both sails reefed, despite a rough sea. Saturday morning was easier, but then the wind started building and by evening we had 40 knots from the southeast.

Mark, Donald and Graham, wind-swept but plainly happy

The night which followed was clear with a full moon, but with probably the worst conditions I have known on this boat. We ran before the gale with just a patch of mainsail – *Lydia* has in-boom reefing – but even so boat speed was too high, matching that of the waves. If I'd had a drogue prepared I would have streamed it (I do have one, but didn't fancy preparing it in those conditions). In the event *Lydia* was the star of the show. She ran on the autopilot and steered straight as a die, rolling with the waves but never losing it or threatening a broach.

By morning the wind was down to 25 knots and by afternoon it was 20. The sea was still rough, but we were under control – phew! The wind steadied at 20 knots from the southeast, so we rigged the twin headsails and had three days of good if rolly sailing, with daily mileages 175, 171 and 160. On Thursday 24th we crossed the Tropic of Capricorn and on the 25th the Greenwich Meridian, so we'd been round the world

(not an official circumnavigation – for that we needed to recross the equator). On the 26th the wind dropped to 10 knots and backed to the east, but by then we were within 300 miles of St Helena so were prepared to switch on the engine and motor-sail. We continued like this for two days, to pick up a mooring off Jamestown at 1230 on Monday 28th, 1718 miles and just under 11 days out from Cape Town. We'd averaged 6·5 knots, mostly under sail.

And the generator? We had it running for only 45 minutes on the first day and the same again on the third. Then I changed the fuel filter, which had also been done in Richards Bay, and bled the fuel line. On the fourth day I ran the engine for five hours to charge the batteries, got fed up with the noise, switched the engine off, the generator on ... and it ran! My theory is that those five hours of engine burned off some of the dodgy diesel, leaving us with the better quality Cape Town stuff thereafter.

St Helena

From seaward St Helena is a lump of unremittingly grey rock with no sign of greenery, and we approached it under a grey sky with a hint of drizzle. Yes, but ... from the moment we called St Helen Radio to announce our approach, through the time when Port Control guided us to our mooring, our passage through Customs and Immigration, and on in due course to our departure two days later, everything and everyone were unfailingly friendly and welcoming. The officials, especially, were a pleasant contrast to their counterparts in South Africa. Everybody says hello in the street, big smiles, and drivers wave from their cars!

Problems included credit cards not being accepted on the island, so the only way to get cash (pounds sterling, of which we unpreparedly had little on board) is to get to the bank with a debit card before closing time at 3pm. We were lucky, having arrived at 1230 on a weekday – what you do if you arrive mid-afternoon on a Friday I don't know. Plus there's no phone signal for overseas phones so we couldn't phone home, and though wifi is available at a price at a couple of hotels and restaurants, it's only useable there. Finally, there's no place to land from and safely leave a dinghy.

Snorkelling with whale sharks

From the top of Jacob's Ladder

On the plus side there's an hourly water taxi from the moorings to Jamestown, a sleepy but charming little colonial town in the cleft between steep cliffs. Two roads wind out, plus the redoubtable Jacob's Ladder, a long and steep staircase which climbs from the lower town to the upper. Mark and I climbed it (Graham had office work to catch up on) and my legs hurt for days thereafter.

The town itself consists of stone buildings and is reminiscent of Port Isaac or Mevagissey in Cornwall, but without the trippers. There are a handful of hotels, bars and restaurants, all thoroughly welcoming and really good value. We had an excellent tour of the island, driven by Keith Yon, one of two entrepreneurial brothers. It included a walk to Napoleon's tomb, swathed in bougainvillea, and a visit to atmospheric Longwood House where Napoleon was interned; a visit to the controversial airport which cost hundreds of millions but is still restricted to specially-trained pilots on the weekly mid-sized aircraft from Pretoria; a drive around the green landscape at the top of the island which allows a little agriculture and farming; and a visit to the Governor's House to see Jonathan the giant tortoise who, at 180ish, is reputed to be the oldest creature alive.

The undoubted highlight of our stay was snorkelling with whale sharks – yes, whale sharks. These huge creatures, not much smaller than *Lydia*, are harmless and, like basking sharks, feed on plankton. They are particularly beautiful – light blue with white spots, lithe, with a long tail and a fin that often breaks the surface. Craig Yon took us out to their feeding ground in a fast RIB and chucked us overboard into the clear blue water. The experience of putting my head underwater and seeing one of these beasts a few feet away, coming towards me with its mouth wide open, is one that will live in my memory.

More problems: there was no fruit to be had, and little in the way of vegetables – the ARC boats had probably cleaned it out. We'd need a fast passage to Brazil in a race

against scurvy. We were able to get some meat and frozen food, however. The island was also running out of beer, so we might have to halve the ration en route (or drink gin?). But in summary I thought this was a delightful two-day visit, at the top of my list for ARC stop-overs to date.

Across the Atlantic

We sailed from St Helena at teatime on Wednesday 30th January. The pilot says, 'This route is generally a dead down wind run onto the coast of Brazil ... Talking to those who have done this leg to Salvador, they all agreed these were some of the best sailing conditions they had met'. I join the agreers. The sun shone, the wind blew steadily from the east and the worry was that there wouldn't be enough, never that there would be too much. We flew the classic trade wind rig of poled-out headsails, an efficient and unfussy set-up which comes at a price – you roll like a pig! We had no excitements and saw disappointingly little wildlife. We got to know each other's stories, we cooked (mainly Mark), we read, we practised noonsights on the sextant, we became familiar with the Southern Cross, the weather grew warmer.

My previous record for flying twins had been 12 days in the Pacific. We beat that this time – for 13 days we didn't change a sail, we didn't use the engine for propulsion, we didn't use the autopilot (the Hydrovane was in its element), we didn't unroll the mainsail, and we never strayed more than 20 miles from the Great Circle route. The lowest daily mileage was 104, the highest 161. I had high hopes of not furling the twins until we were inside the Baía de Todos os Santos, but no such luck – on the 13th day the wind finally abandoned us and we motored the final 18 hours to the Centro Náutico Marina in Salvador da Bahia, arriving at 1000 on 13th February. The mileage from St Helena to Salvador was 1917 and we arrived in just under 13 days, an average of 6·22 knots. We had caught up with the World ARC fleet ... but first for a *caipirinha**or two and a bit of shore time.

Brazil

Salvador is big, a high-rise, modern city, with a historic colonial centre as befits the original capital of Brazil. We arrived in the run-up to Carnival and our lasting impression will be one of noise and rhythm, with music thumping from 0530 until late at night. Oh, and of heat – well over 30°C and 70% humidity. Somewhere to swim would have been wonderful, but there are no pools close to the marina and the water in the bay is uninviting. Everyone is immune to noise. If the crew of a tripper boat row a dinghy out to their mooring at dawn, their first action on arrival is to switch on the samba. If two men are chatting in the marina and one decides to go to the loo, the conversation continues uninterrupted, just louder so as to cover the extra distance. Opposite the marina is a naval establishment. Call the Hands is at 0600, and throughout the day a number of announcements are made, each preceded by a pipe on a bosun's call.

There is an undercurrent of crime, none actually seen by us but hyped by the numerous admonitions to be careful and the blatant gulf between rich and poor. On

* Brazil's most famous cocktail, consisting of *cachaça*, sugar and lime. *Cachaça* is a spirit made from fermented sugarcane juice and is distilled all over the country.

Arrival Salvador

the plus side, there is clear determination by the authorities to protect tourism and *polícia militar* are everywhere, as are apparently unmolested tourists.

The old city is on top of a cliff facing the marina. One reaches it on the Lacerda Elevator, a public lift which operates frequently and costs 15c (say 4p). We were advised not to use it after sunset, but we did so frequently and had no trouble. The buildings, the churches and the cobbled streets are lovely, but unfortunately some of the squares and monuments had been fenced off in preparation for Carnival. I suppose Notting Hill is not much different in August. The restaurants are mostly excellent, the wine is good, the *caipirinhas* are delicious and the prices modest. The beat of Brazilian music in the evening penetrates the soul. Salvador is a vibrant city and I'm glad I've seen it, but it won't top a list of World ARC favourites.

We cleared formalities at Salvador on the morning of 25th February and left the marina just before midday, heading north. The voyage to Cabadelo took four days, the first three of which were somewhat tedious and uncomfortable, with little wind and what there was on the nose. We motored or motor-sailed, but the chop was quite steep and at times we were slowed to 3 knots despite having revs for 6. On the fourth day the wind veered and picked up, so we regained some honour with a decent sail.

The main characteristic of this route is fishing activity. About 20 miles offshore, at the edge of the continental shelf, depths drop from 50m to several hundred metres in the space of a mile, and this is where the fish congregate. We soon learned that the boats trawl, troll, and lay traps just inboard of the edge. The boats are well lit but the traps are not – a yachtsman's nightmare. At night the edge of the shelf is well marked by the line of lit fishing boats. A mile further out to sea and the sailing is clear.

Cabadelo is the port at the mouth of the Paraíba River. We came up the ship channel on the morning of 1st March, into the river where the water suddenly turns from blue to brown, and then a further three miles up, between mangrove swamps, to the marina in the village of Jacaré. 462 miles in four days – a slow passage.

Carnival in Olinda

Jacaré, which means alligator, is flea-bitten, dirt-streeted, hot and humid, but it has a colourful river frontage with a couple of bars and restaurants, and is a base for the tourist boats that ply the river. During Carnival the place rocks, morning till late at night. Towards sunset a canoe drifts past with a local man playing Ravel's *Bolero* on the saxophone. This romantic interlude is a local tradition which attracts a crowd of holidaymakers, and once it is over the samba thumps again. An American boat at the inboard end of the pontoon gets aggressive and starts blaring Country and Western back at the shore. The locals don't even notice.

The marina is run by two Frenchmen, Francis and Nicolas. It is friendly, apart from when the restaurant is very busy, and it has water and power on the pontoons plus good showers. The majority of visiting boats were French, including one which had just completed a circumnavigation from Jacaré to Jacaré via Good Hope, New Zealand and the Horn. The resort area of João Pessoa consists mainly of high-rise apartments, but it has a long and beautiful beachfront with excellent and reasonable restaurants where we had several dinners. There is a big Carrefour supermarket which is good for re-provisioning.

We took a bus to Olinda, an old colonial town and World Heritage Site near Recife, to witness the press of flesh at Carnival. The crowds, the noise, the colours and the music are breathtaking. There are times when you can't move for the crush of people – just staying on your feet is a challenge. It's all good humoured with no signs of aggro, but I didn't pay sufficient heed to our briefing and this cost me my mobile phone. It went from deep in my pocket to a new life on a Brazilian back street. Next time, I'd welcome a more leisurely sightseeing visit to Olinda – low season would be fine.

Then, suddenly, on 6th March it was Ash Wednesday and the music stopped. Silence came down like a curtain, and as I passed through the village on my morning run kids were going to school with their satchels. The party was clearly over.

And so to the Caribbean

Rather than leaving with the ARC rally fleet on the evening of Thursday 7th March, after a long day of passport and customs clearance, we and three others opted for a final dinner in João Pessoa and sailed at first light on the 8th. Mark had left to continue the ARC on another boat – he had been excellent company and a first-class crew. We headed up to the northeast corner of Brazil and into the ITCZ, commonly known as the doldrums. So, some wind, some calm, numerous squalls of varying intensity, muggy heat, sails up, sails reefed, engine on, engine off. But we had one great advantage – the Guiana Current sets northwest at up to 2 knots. Daily mileages were 185, 175, 170 and similar.

This is an area with a reputation for aggressive fishing boats, not to say piracy. Three of us had therefore decided to sail in company – heavy old *Lydia*, *Pretaixte*, a French X-Yacht 42 and *Aranui*, a Swiss X-Yacht 46. The two lighter boats set a tough pace and we were obliged to sail harder than had been our custom. But drama struck us when Niki, owner of *Aranui*, suffered a bad fall, broke ribs and had to lie still in serious pain. This left Karen, his crew, plus a young and inexperienced godson, to sail the boat. Karen rose to the challenge superbly and *Pretaixte*, whose owners are doctors, helped with medical advice and drugs. The three of us stuck even more closely together to make sure that Karen and Niki had moral support. We stayed well out to sea and encountered only the occasional fishing boat, one of which came in close to have a look but broke off when he saw that we were a group.

We stopped for 24 hours at Île Royale – better known as Devil's Island or Île du Diable – in French Guiana. Not much remains of the old prison buildings but there is a brooding sense of unhappy history. Ghosts notwithstanding, we had an enjoyable stay at this remote location including dinner at the one small hotel/restaurant. ("No euros? A credit card will do nicely".) Then we were into the northeast trades, sailing well on a beam reach, with a good current still helping us along and daily mileages of between 160 and 180. The American catamaran *Cayuse* joined our group, and we had one suspicious approach by a fishing vessel but it was not sustained. Before we knew it we were north of Tobago, approaching Grenada, and into Port Louis Marina on the afternoon of 21st March. Distances were 1382 miles from Jacaré to Île Royale plus a further 726 to Grenada, so 2108 in all. This took 12½ days, so an average of around 7 knots over the ground.

Lydia had crossed her track, circumnavigation complete!

> There is nothing like lying flat on your back on the deck, alone except for the helmsman aft at the wheel, silence except for the lapping of the sea against the side of the ship. At that time you can be equal to Ulysses and brother to him.
>
> Errol Flynn

THE ART OF GOING SOLO
Eugénie Nottebohm

(*Belgian member and gifted artist Eugénie Nottebohm joined the OCC following her singlehanded passage from Falmouth to the Azores last year aboard her Contessa 32,* Guilia. *This article was written for the Contessa 32 Association Yearbook – my thanks to both the CO32 Association and to Linda Lane Thornton for drawing my attention to it.*)

I had this crazy dream – to own my own boat and sail out into the middle of the Atlantic. I would visit my friends who lived on the small island of Flores in the Azores. But of course it was just that, a wild dream. I started like so many others, hitching rides on other people's boats, taking sailing courses, and getting to sea as much as I could. Over the next ten years I built up confidence and, with the support of friends, I started to believe that I really could be the owner and skipper of my own yacht.

Eugénie

First I found the boat. *Guilia* had been the treasured possession of Erik, a one-time boyfriend of mine. I had helped him to refit her so I knew her well, and already had the confidence in her that I now understand is so important. Once *Guilia* was mine I had the much bigger task of getting over my fears of taking charge of her.

Always pushing me on was my vision of the voyage. I sat in the cockpit in the marina dreaming of far-off horizons yet paralysed by my own uncertainty. One day Erik asked me if he should skipper her for me, and I knew then I had to take the leap. With a trembling hand I left the pontoon, and for the first time motored alone in the harbour. When I had calmed down sufficiently I returned her to the berth, a tricky move into a tight space, but I did it! To be on the safe side, I took a three-hour harbour docking manoeuvre course on *Guilia* with a skipper, probably the best investment I have ever made. He helped me understand how she reacts under motor, which has reduced a lot of stress when leaving from and arriving in a harbour.

I was just beginning to get enough self-confidence to dare to leave the dock as skipper and sail with friends on board. Slowly, I realised that I felt comfortable on the water with *Guilia*, and soon she became my best mate. I was still far from fulfilling my

Practising on inland waters

dream of casting off solo when Géry, a neighbour and friend in the marina, challenged me to leave the dock in *Guilia* with him alongside in his boat. I spent a restless night and woke early – here was my chance and I knew I had to do it. An hour later I was sailing alone under foresail on the Veerse Meer, my heart jumping with happiness and disbelief. Yes, I was sailing solo! In the following weeks, every time I felt comfortable with the weather conditions I cast off on the Veerse Meer, each time practising something new – sailing further on the foresail, sailing on the mainsail alone, sailing with both sails, practising mooring.

As my confidence grew the Veerse Meer became too small. However, to access the Oosterschelde I needed to go through the Zandkreek locks – and then one day, there I was in the sunshine in front of the gates when they opened. Without allowing myself to think too hard about it I nudged *Guilia* ahead. Trembling like a leaf I brought her alongside, and after that day my fate was sealed. Over the next weeks *Guilia* took me further and further, at first with other friends sailing their boats nearby, and finally alone for a week on the inner waters of Holland. It was awesome.

The next step was the North Sea and it was a huge one. Did I really want to be alone, just *Guilia*, the sea and me? Then again, did I really just want to sail on the inner waters of the Netherlands for ever? Wasn't my dream to cast off and sail a lot further? Once again I set off and there I was, rounding Walcheren on my next trip, laughing at my fear of being alone at sea as the fog grew thicker. Helped by my paper charts, the little I could see and checking the AIS on the iPad, I rounded the headland under motor. I felt so happy and safe on *Guilia* and was sure that if I prepared properly she could take me further, if only I would let her.

A typical Dutch scene

I took advantage of three days of gale-force winds to prepare for my first solo trip, from Kortgene in Zeeland to

Heading out through the locks

Den Helder in North Holland. I read the nautical instructions and wrote down everything about the routes, departure and arrival harbours, the course, dangers to be avoided and waypoints. I prepared some Plan Bs and did everything to help me visualise each step of the trip so that I could cope with the inevitable unexpected situations that we meet at sea.

The day came that weather and tidal conditions allowed me to leave. And so, early one morning, I cast off, very nervous, to sail into the unknown. Friends came alongside in their 45ft yacht, their laughter and offers of cups of coffee the best remedy for the stress that was building up inside me. The first day to Roompot went smoothly and I was lucky to find two boats that were sailing the same route to Scheveningen the next day. They took my mooring lines in the locks and were on watch on Channel 77 during the passage. This felt reassuring, even though they were faster and I couldn't see them after a heavy downpour. I spent my day trimming the sails as best I could, following my route, spending hours just looking at the sea, painting and enjoying the feeling. It was an amazing first day and confirmed that *Guilia* is an excellent boat to

Looking out to sea…

… and out on open waters at last

sail alone. Stable and easy to handle, she reacts quickly when I reduce the sail. I also realised that my three days of preparation made me feel at ease on the sea, even when it became rougher and I was battered by heavy rain and squalls.

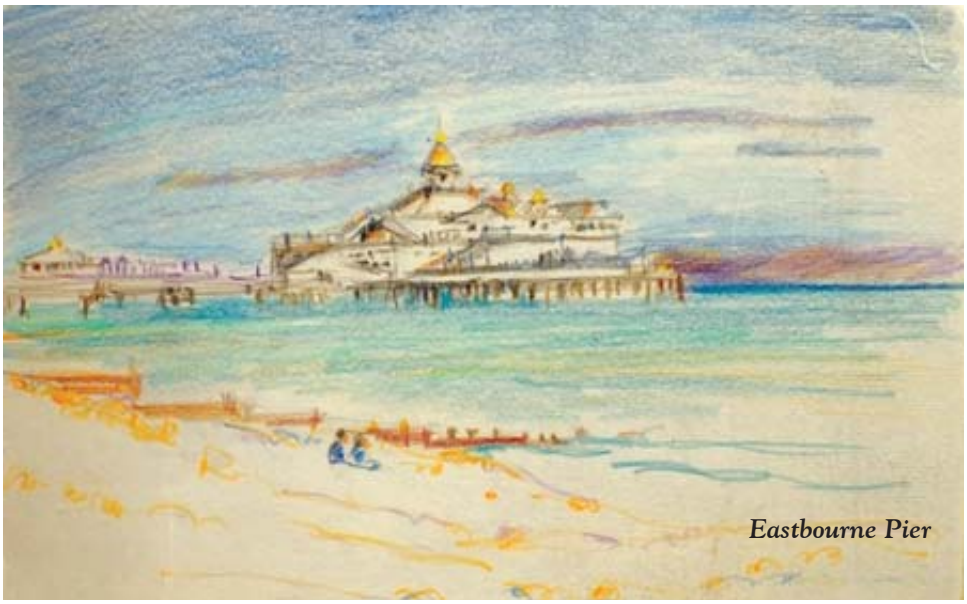
Gaining confidence each time I went out

Arriving at the end of the day in Den Helder it was as if I was sailing into a 17th century Dutch painting; the sun reflecting on the silver and turquoise sea, in the background the deep grey sky highlighted by pink to violet clouds, and in between the shadows of the fishing vessels. Obligingly, the wind veered to the east which simplified lowering the mainsail. I was welcomed by the crew of a boat I had met in Ijmuiden who kindly took all my lines. I felt I was becoming a skipper. What a beautiful feeling.

From there I visited Texel, and over the Wadden to Makkum on the Ijsselmeer and to Amsterdam. I encountered many different weather conditions from sunshine to fog, light winds to stronger winds, warm to cold, as well as leaving in the dark, each time finding new ways to sail, each time pushing myself further, each time getting to know *Guilia* better, each time more confident in the ability of the boat and her captain.

When I moored back in Kortgene after 20 days and around 450 miles sailing alone, I was a happy woman. I could not believe I had done it. I was grateful to all my friends and family who supported me, to the members of the Contessa 32 group on Facebook who reacted so kindly to my posts, and to all the sailors who took my lines in the harbours and locks. I realised how much taking command of *Guilia* is about taking back control of my life after breast cancer. It was the nicest gift life and *Giulia* could have given me.

Less than a year later, the day after my 50th birthday, there we were again, *Guilia* and me, in the Roompot locks. Their gates opened into the dissipating mist. It had taken me all winter to prepare for the journey I had dreamt of for so long. At first I hopped from harbour to harbour as far as Boulogne-sur-Mer. From there I needed to overcome my fear of crossing the Channel. The seas along both coastlines were heavy but the passage across the shipping lanes went smoothly and I put in to Eastbourne before heading to the Solent. Tears ran down my face as I sailed into Lymington, home of the Contessa, where I would enjoy the friendship of fellow Contessa owners and the people at Jeremy Rogers Ltd. When the time came to leave it was hard, but I knew I must push on west and finally the day came for the passage to the Azores.

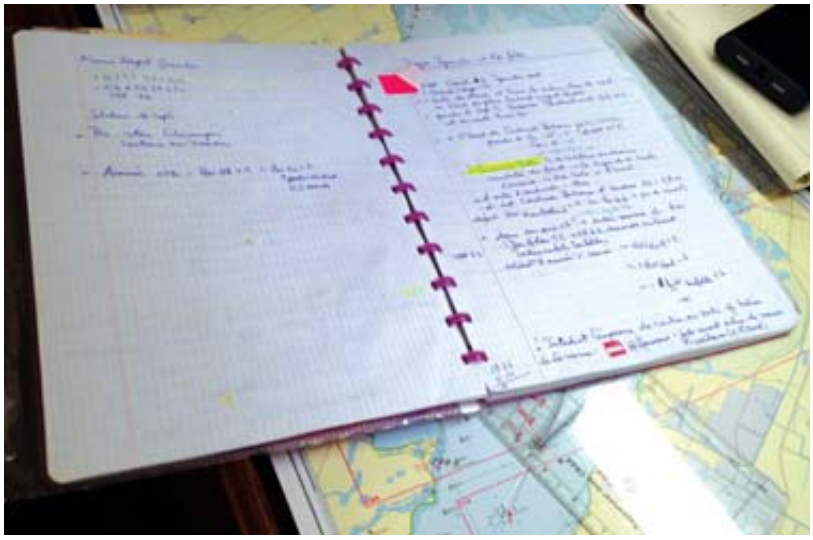


Eastbourne Pier

Hurst Gap and the western Solent

The Needles, which guard the Solent's western entrance

I had never sailed more than 20 hours alone and this passage would take me at least eleven days. Could I really do it? With mixed feelings of great confidence and great fear, I followed the inner voice that kept saying – "You can do this. *Guilia* is ready. Just go for it!". The most difficult part was coping with the dark feelings that bubbled up from far within, tormenting me in the silence of the calms 200 miles from land. "Will I even make it to the Azores? And if I don't make it, will anyone ever find me?". Happily another voice kept answering, "But Eugénie, you *are* achieving it!" And I realised that voice was right.



My log book/journal

Approaching Terceira

I started to be able to interpret the skies and wind shifts, and felt that I had chosen the best route. The ridge of the Azores anticyclone had weakened and bent to the north of Spain, and by taking a more southerly course than I'd originally intended I had avoided Storm *Debbie* and the following depressions. *Guilia* took great care of me, and my knowledge and judgement did the rest. Physically and psychologically I had adapted well to being on my own at sea. I realised that I had learned a lot about sailing and navigating, and this gave me the strength I needed to keep calm.

When I saw land on the last morning of the passage dolphins greeted me, leaping in the sunlight as the water shone like gold and my heart contracted with joy. This was really happening – I was arriving in Terceira, a tiny Azorean island in the middle of the Atlantic. After 13 days and 7 hours I moored in Angra do Heroísmo, with a strange feeling that I had not done it alone. As soon as I could I called my family, crying with relief and pride.

Days later, having sailed on through the beautiful islands of São Jorge, Pico and Faial, *Guilia* and I finally pulled in to the tiny harbour on the island of Flores. How exciting it was to see my friends waving from the dockside. "Yes," I thought, "now the circle is closed". What had began as a wild dream had become a reality. Finally, I was a skipper!

Of course we left our mark in Horta…

FROM THE GALLEY OF ... Marcia Larason, aboard *UJAM'n*

(via the *Western Caribbean Cookbook*, see page 3)

Poblano Corn Chowder

Ingredients

- 5 or 6 large poblano green chillies (to yield 1½ cups when roasted, peeled and chopped). You can use any type of mild green Mexican pepper
- 3 tbsp butter
- 2 medium onions, diced (about 2½ cups)
- 2 ribs celery, diced (about ¾ cup)
- 1 clove garlic, minced (1 tsp)
- 2 medium (10–12 oz) Yukon gold, or any yellow potato, peeled and cut into 1in chunks
- 4 cups of sweetcorn
- 5 cups chicken stock
- 2 bay leaves
- 1 tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp dried oregano
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 2 limes (or substitute with lemon juice)

Roast the chillies and, when they've cooled down enough to touch, use your fingers or a dampened paper towel to strip off the charred bits. Cut open, remove and discard the stem, seed pod and inside veins. Chop roughly and set aside.

Melt the butter in a large, heavy-bottomed pot on medium/high heat. Add the onions and celery and cook for 8–10 minutes, lowering the heat to medium, until softened and beginning to brown. Add the garlic and cook for a minute more.

Add the potatoes and the stock, then the bay leaves, cumin, oregano, salt and pepper. Bring back to a simmer and cook for a further 8–10 minutes until the potatoes are just cooked through. Add the corn kernels and cook for another 4–5 minutes until cooked through, then the roasted and chopped chillies. Remove the bay leaves, stir in the cream, and season to taste. At this point, if you want a thicker base for your chowder, use an immersion blender to puree about a third of the soup.

Make lime curls with peel for garnish, then sprinkle with a little fresh lime juice (which will brighten the chowder) and serve with the lime curls on top. Do not add lime juice while cooking or the acid may curdle the cream.

Kilrush Marina, run by sailors, your Irish west coast cruising base and overwintering stop over. Fully protected and sheltered 120 berth full service Marina with all boatyard facilities and lift out up to 40 tons.

Easy access to Shannon Airport 40 minutes by road, and situated in the heart of the award winning market town of Kilrush on the Shannon Estuary.

Contact us at info@kilrushmarina.ie or visit our website www.kilrushmarina.ie

Telephone 00353 65 9052072 or 00353 86 2313870

MID ATLANTIC YACHT SERVICES

PT-9900-144 HORTA / FAIAL

AZORES

TEL. +351 292 391616
mays@mail.telepac.pt
www.midatlanticyachtservices.com

Providing all vital services to Trans-Atlantic Yachts!

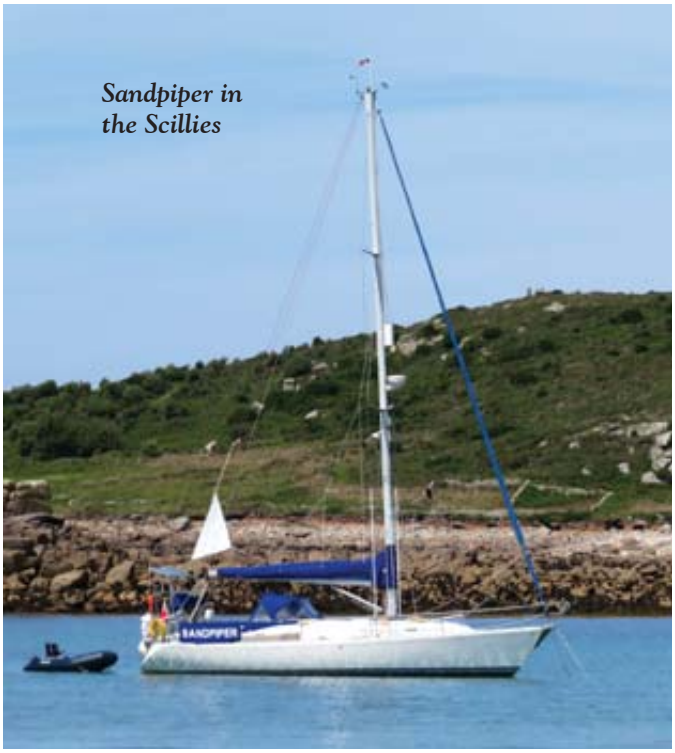
Raymarine-Service Agent/Repairs of all Yacht Systems
(Rigging, Engines, Generators, AC-DC systems etc.)
Chandlery, Charts, Books etc.
Mail Holding
VAT/EC importation assistance & guidance

LEFT OR RIGHT AT BARDSEY ISLAND?
Stephanie Connor & Martin Fuller

(*Martin and Stephanie left their home port of Pwllheli in North Wales in late April 2019 aboard* Sandpiper, *their Sadler Starlight 39. The Bardsey Island of the title lies about 20 miles west of the harbour, off the tip of the Llŷn Peninsula.*

Following the cruise described below, they continued south to Madeira and by late September were in the Canaries, intending to visit the Cape Verdes before crossing to the Caribbean. Plans for 2020 include the US East Coast and Greenland, either returning direct from the latter or heading south again next September. As Martin says on our website, cruising is all about keeping one's options open!)

Left or right at Bardsey? That question was not resolved until a few weeks before we departed Pwllheli for an extended cruise of up to two years. Why the dilemma? Simply because we wanted to visit the high latitudes and Greenland on a circuit of the North Atlantic, but were also drawn to the warmth of the tropics after a long winter. It was the Royal Cruising Club's Galicia Rally that broke the impasse, and we departed Pwllheli on 31st April 2019 to go clockwise around the North Atlantic. In fact we ended up going straight on at Bardsey Island, as we decided to go to the Baltimore Fiddle Festival in County Cork en route. After a leisurely crossing to Arklow and a port-hopping cruise to Baltimore we had a memorable few days at Baltimore and Clear Island enjoying great traditional fiddle music – a highly recommended event for traditional music lovers.



Sandpiper in the Scillies

Our next stop was due to be the Isles of Scilly, but several days of south-easterlies almost saw us going straight to the Azores – not a direct route to Galicia, admittedly, but it would have been a good sail. The wind finally changed however, and we had a smooth passage followed by an enjoyable and sunny time exploring the Scillies. We stayed for just over a week, which was fortunate as we had arranged for Imray to send us the new edition of Henry Buchanan's *Atlantic Spain & Portugal**. Unknown to all of us, it seems that

* Reviewed on page 129 of this issue.

couriered items often sit in a warehouse on the mainland, waiting for a full load of parcels to be shipped out on the island ferry once a week. Our book arrived the day before we were due to leave and ten days after Imray sent it!

We had planned to reach Camaret in time to explore the Rade de Brest and surrounding area, but unfortunately our plans fell apart shortly after completing the crossing from the Scillies and mooring on a visitors' buoy in the Baie du Stiff on Ouessant. Having secured to one of the four large white visitors' moorings inside the harbour, we went ashore for lunch and to stretch our legs. The weather was sunny and winds not too strong – only force 3 with occasional stronger gusts off the land – and we had a pleasant stroll and lunch. But, on returning to the harbour three hours later, we had one of those heart-stopping 'What the heck has happened?' moments as *Sandpiper* was missing! After a moment we saw her burgee flying above the harbour wall and it looked as though she had been moved outside – perhaps we'd mistakenly moored on a private mooring and the kind-hearted owner had moved us? Strangely, though, we could not see our mooring buoy.

A rapid dinghy ride revealed the truth. As we approached there was clear damage to *Sandpiper*'s bow and it transpired that she had come free from her mooring and drifted onto the steep rocks that surround the harbour. Fortunately for us, the captain of the island ferry *Fromveur II* had seen her loose and despatched his rescue boat to investigate. They'd reached her just after she had struck the rocks, but were able to tow her to a secure ferry mooring outside the harbour before she was holed.

Subsequent investigations failed to find our original mooring, nor the reason why she had come loose. The original lines were on the bow (neither broken nor cut) and we can only speculate that the chain securing the buoy in 8m of water had parted from it allowing our lines to come free. We will never know, but are thankful

Dropping the keel in Brest

The Battle of the Atlantic Museum at Camaret

for the prompt action of the ferry captain. Lesson learnt – treat untested/unknown moorings with suspicion, and consider applying a little reverse pressure – as with anchoring – before leaving the boat unattended.

A close internal examination revealed no leaks or rudder/propeller damage, and we decided our best option was to motor to Brest and have *Sandpiper* lifted out to check for external damage. Marina Moulin Blanc proved to be an ideal place to do this, and we soon discovered there was significant but not catastrophic damage to the bow and port side below the waterline along with some keel damage. So we decided, following the advice of local Port Officer Damian Likely – who just happens to be a yacht surveyor – to drop the keel just in case.

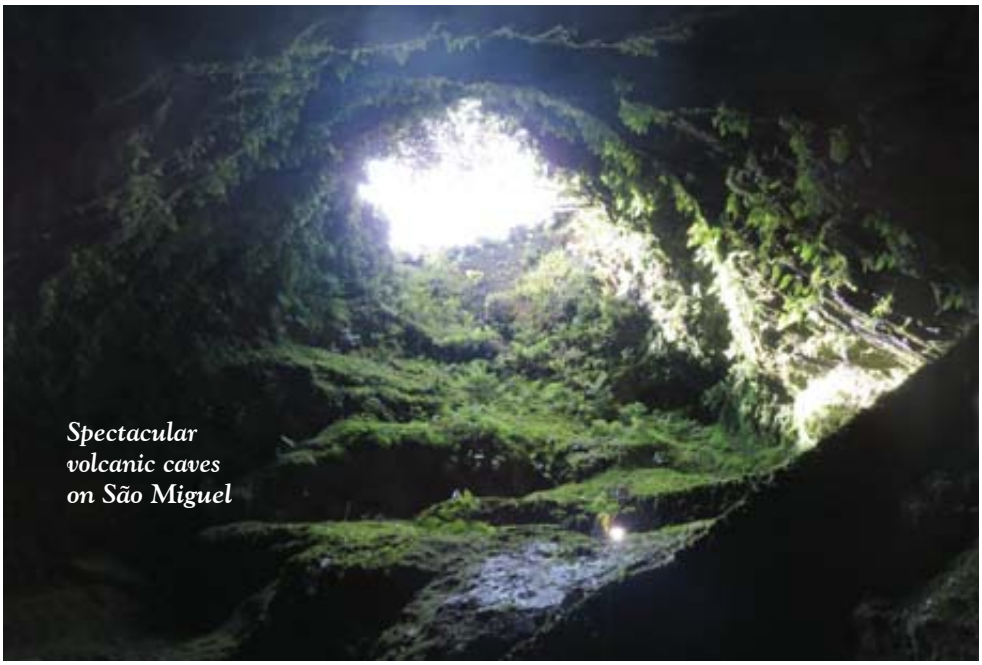
Our plans to sail to the Camaret meet were scuppered, but being the designated photographers we had to get there! So we hired a small camper van, not only to join in the meet but also to use our time ashore to explore the area we had hoped to sail around – and what an interesting area it proved to be. The meet lived up to expectations, despite the weather's attempt to hamper our visit to the Battle of the Atlantic Museum, and the camper van came into its own as an impromptu taxi.

So despite a disrupted start to our cruise we did manage to make the Camaret meet and, after receiving great help from the Moulin Blanc Marina and KVK boatyard team, we were almost back on the water four days before the Coruña dinner on 22nd June. All was not lost and we just needed a weather window to cross the Bay of Biscay. Then, having actually read the instructions on the tin of Coppercoat antifouling, we discovered that it is a water-based epoxy and *must* have a minimum of four or ideally five days to cure, as otherwise it will simply wash off! The best laid plans of mice and sailors etc etc. But *c'est la vie*, and even so we hoped to catch up with the Galicia Rally before it finished in Baiona. This we achieved, and we enjoyed some great cruising in the *rías* in the company of both RCC and OCC members – a great sailing fraternity!

The throttle lever wrenched from the steering column

After Galicia we were set on visiting the Azores and, with a steady force 4–5 northeasterly, headed west from Porto on Wednesday 21st August. We anticipated a 6–8 day crossing, and our first 24 hour sail of 180 miles (a record for us) gave us real hope for a fast passage. Foolish optimists! By the third day the wind had eased and on the fourth it turned into a westerly. Three days of long tacks finally saw us closing with São Miguel, but not without a slight drama. One thing I now realise is that if a skipper claims never to have a problem with his or her boat it's probably because they never leave the marina! In this case it was the main sheet that caught the throttle lever and wrenched it off. Of course we had sails, so no real problem ... until we needed to berth. By the time we reached Ponta Delgada we had rigged up a neat pulley system to operate the throttle, but changing gear proved more problematic. Fortunately we found a finger pontoon with a head-to-wind approach – drama over! Thomas Dargel, of Boat & Sail Service, lived up to his reputation for helpfulness and we were soon fully mobile again.

The islands are well known for their whale-watching, and our first experience came during our approach to São Miguel. As dawn was breaking we were joined by a large school of acrobatic dolphins, a display of flying fish with their beautiful colours and fairy-like wings, and then a family of four sperm whales bobbing about in the light swell 50m from the boat. What a welcome!



Spectacular volcanic caves on São Miguel

At the Gorreana tea factory on São Miguel

Our aim was to get a good feel for all the islands rather than to spend time exploring just one in detail, so we hoped to visit all nine during our four to five week visit, exploring the interiors, where practical, by car. The geology, topography and flora of all these volcanic islands are stunning. The people are invariably friendly and the weather in August, with a couple of minor exceptions, was very comfortable. Each island has its own character, and all seem to have a full and regular programme of festivals to entertain visitors and locals alike.

On São Miguel we enjoyed wonderful drives through lush forests and dramatic ravine-riven mountains, tasted fresh tea at the Gorreana tea plantation in Maia and local (not cheap) wine in the vineyards, as well as bathing in the various hot springs and sea pools. One thing we did find a little strange on all the islands was the time their evening festivals and musical events started – almost invariably as late as 11.30pm, with many going on well into the early hours. When do they sleep?

Terceira holds a famous gastronomic festival in August, and we arrived in Praia da Vitória mid-festival. Its small marina and good anchorage were overlooked by two large stages hosting loud music concerts – which finished at 5am! The night-long heavy beat was a little too much and we only stayed one night before moving round to Angra do Heroísmo. The pilot* correctly points out the problems of swell in Angra Marina – don't ignore the warning and, if possible, secure an inner berth despite the limited manoeuvring room. In future we would choose to anchor in the sheltered bay rather than strain the lines and cleats with the constant movement. The island was full of delights, including spectacular displays of horsemanship in the bull ring (not for everyone) and local bull running through the village streets, gastronomic specialities like the seafood soup-in-a-loaf served at the Hotel Beira Mar above Angra beach. The OCC Port Officers are a real treasure and we would like to thank Terceira Port Officer Linda Lane Thornton for her help and hospitality. What a great team our port officers are!

* *Atlantic Islands*, researched and written by your editor in the late 1980s and approaching its 7th edition. The Azores section is now in the hands of OCC member Linda Lane Thornton – lindalanethornton@gmail.com – who would be delighted to receive your feedback (Stephanie and Martin were outstanding in this respect). Periodic updates can be downloaded gratis from https://rccpf.org.uk/pilots/133/Atlantic-Islands.

Bull running in Terceira

Vila de Praia on the island of Graciosa is definitely not a marina, but despite this the small and busy fishing harbour found space for us, and a few other yachts, on the inside of their breakwater. Of note is the tidal range and swell which has the potential to strain cleats and damage fairleads – we speak from experience! Once more we arrived in time for a religious festival in the main town of Santa Cruz, where the streets were decorated with multicoloured rugs hung from first floor windows and balconies. We also took the opportunity to check out the ongoing work on a large breakwater to shelter a new marina at Cais da Barra. There are hopes that it will be completed for next season, but this seems optimistic.

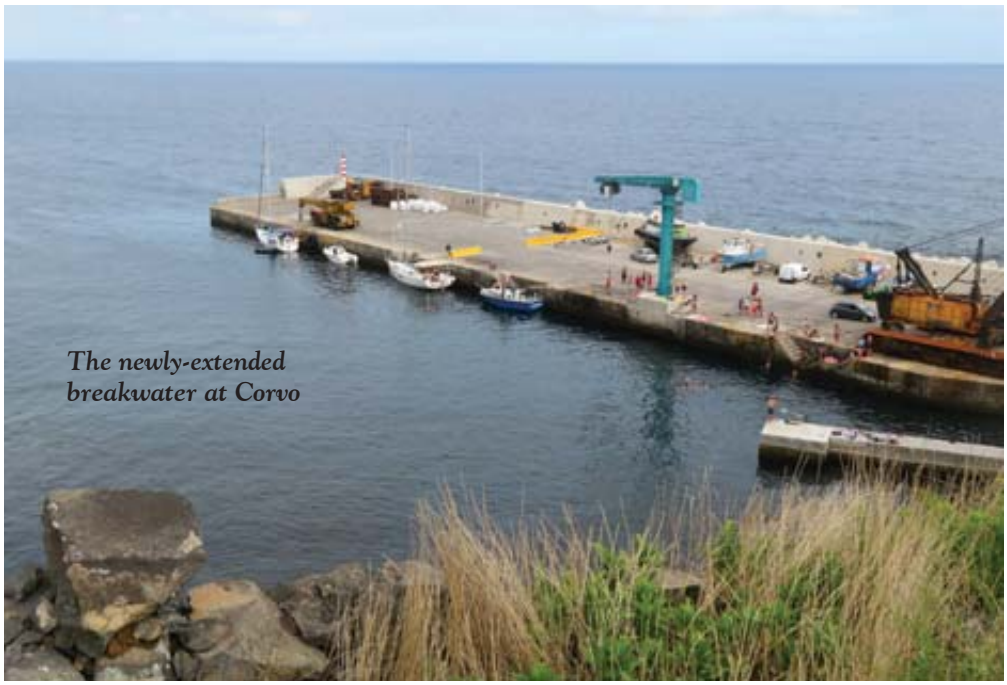
Our next port of call was Flores and, after an overnight sail and a beat into the westerlies, we were met with an interesting entry to the small marina at Lajes as the entrance, already narrow, was further constricted by a large section of the breakwater that had collapsed during winter storms. Despite this the marina welcomes visiting yachts, with space either on the breakwater or on the short (5m) finger pontoons. There is limited room once inside the harbour, however, especially when big cats are in. That said, they now have showers, toilets and laundry on the slipway and very welcoming officials. We decided not to explore the interior of the island and instead settled for a sail around the

A religious procession in Santa Maria, Graciosa

The challenging entrance to Lajes das Flores

coast as our weather window for getting back to the central island group was quite short. The sailor's perspective is certainly dramatic along this mountainous coast, with spectacular cliffs, waterfalls, lava flows and isolated settlements looming around every headland – capped by the small island of Monchique, Europe's westernmost point and equidistant between Portugal and Newfoundland.

Corvo, some 10 miles north of Flores, is the smallest of the nine islands. There is no marina, but the old breakwater has recently been extended and now offers real shelter



The newly-extended breakwater at Corvo

Portuguese men-o'-war washed up on the beach

for alongside berthing in most winds. Thankfully the distance between the huge bollards has been shortened (previously it was 25m) and there is no longer a need for very long lines. We were met by the local police and immigration officer who cleared us in quickly and advised us on upcoming festivities and the best places to eat! The restaurant next to the airport terminal proved to be excellent, as did the moving, lantern-lit religious procession commemorating lost sailors ... in contrast to the loud, disco-style concert that followed into the small hours. As with most of the Azores the water was very clean and surprisingly warm, so much so that it was difficult to find an excuse not to swim – but only after a careful check for Portuguese men-o'-war, as these jellyfish were evident in quite large numbers on all the islands except for Santa Maria, which one harbour master put down to the apparent rise in sea temperatures of as much as 2°C.

Horta, on Faial, was our next port, and after a quick passage with a following wind we rounded the headland of Ponta do Cavalo (labelled on some charts as Ponta da Espalamaca) with its interesting tidal eddies to enter the large and busy marina. There are surprisingly few visitors' berths* and we ended up on the inner breakwater. There is ample space for safe anchoring in the outer harbour, however, and the busy harbour master assured us there had been 50 yachts anchored there at the height of the season! Peter Café Sport is a traditional watering hole for Atlantic ocean sailors and a must visit. OCC Port Officer José Azevedo, Peter's son and the current owner, continues to fill the same role for visiting yachtsmen as his ancestors and has been honoured by featuring on one of the archipelago's stamps! The scrimshaw museum in the rooms above the café should be on everyone's visit list, and if José happens to be around his tour brings it beautifully to life.

During our stay we decided to sort out a new problem that had emerged with our Raymarine chartplotter, on which the touch screen facility had decided to stop working. OCC member Duncan Sweet of Mid Atlantic Yacht Service responded quickly to our plea for help and confirmed that the unit needed replacing. Fortunately it was only just over two years since installation, and although the warranty if self-fitted is two years we were relieved to see that it had a three-year warranty if agent-fitted, as ours had been. For once we benefited from the small print!

* There are actually many visitors' berths – the problem is that there are generally even more visiting yachts!

The summit of Pico, an iconic sight

From Horta we visited Pico, a 20 minute ferry ride across the Faial Channel. There, a large breakwater encloses a sheltered harbour with limited yacht anchorage near the old inner harbour, where two pontoons are mainly used by dive and whale-watching boats. However, the harbour, though accommodating regular commercial traffic, also has ample room for visiting yachts, albeit without shoreside facilities. We took the unusual decision to book overnight accommodation so we could attend a folklore festival which ended after the last ferry back – a decision that not only gave us our first

The old inner harbour at Madalena, with an anchored yacht in the background

night in a proper bed for over four months, but also let us enjoy a fascinating insight into the Azorean folklore, music, dance and traditions.

The breakwater at Vila das Velas on São Jorge has been extended significantly in the past few years and now provides excellent shelter in all but easterlies. Apparently the busy season had just ended, but the very helpful marina manager, José Dias, who is also our Port Officer, told us it had been very full until the week before. Calling ahead is highly recommended therefore, as is the case in all marinas in the Azores. With a period of calm approaching we decided not to linger, and after an overnight stop in this friendly and charming marina we pushed on to Santa Maria, our last island in the group.

Vila do Porto on Santa Maria, nestled beneath a high cliff and fort, was our favourite port of call. It has ample space and excellent facilities, a convenient and good *Clube naval* bar and restaurant, good diving facilities and of course the ever-helpful officials. We regretted not being able to stay longer. Exploring Santa Maria was the only time we experienced heavy rain, notable in that it created major hazards on the roads with many closed for several hours due to fallen trees or landslides, turning the steeper ones into dangerous torrents and creating dramatic waterfalls in several places.

Storm damage in Santa Maria

All good things come to an end, sadly, and before long we were looking for a weather window for the 480 mile passage south to Madeira. We hope to return to the Azores one day and, having visited all the islands, can definitely recommend them as more than just a refuelling and restocking stop-over en route from the Americas.

SHOW YOUR COLOURS

OCC UK Regalia & Merchandise Shop now expanded on the website

New items in stock

Traditional bunting and now nylon burgees and flags
Clothing includes polo shirts for men and women,
fleeces, body warmers and more

These and other products can be viewed online with full descriptions

View and select items by logging in to
www.oceancruisingclub.org
and visiting the UK Regalia section

Order through Club Secretary Rachelle Turk
at secretary@oceancruisingclub.org

Pay via secure credit or debit card online
Prices include postage and packing

OBITUARIES & APPRECIATIONS

Dave (Skaffie) Beard

Long-time OCC member Skaffie Beard passed away on 22nd April 2019. He had joined the OCC in 1956, not long after the club's foundation, having been proposed for membership by Founder Members John and Bonnie Staniland of *Carina*. He was very proud of his membership and, right to the end of his life, waited with great anticipation for the next edition of *Flying Fish* to arrive in his mailbox.

Skaffie began sailing on England's Norfolk Broads aged 14, in a 16ft destroyer's gig purchased from Navy Disposals for £10. At 16 he joined the Merchant Navy as a deck boy, working up to the position of First Mate. In 1955 he and school friend Gordon crossed the Atlantic in *Skaffie*, a 20ft sloop (hence David's nickname), and while in New Zealand the following year he met two New Zealanders who needed a navigator for a voyage to Australia.

A youthful Skaffie reads his sextant

David's life in Australia revolved around the sea. He owned and operated cruises on the Gippsland Lakes in Victoria and skippered the *Nuniong* as mothership for the 1959 Sydney Hobart Race. In Tasmania he fished for salmon and in Queensland waters worked on Lighthouse Service vessels. He was master of the Australian Institute of Marine Science research vessel *Lady Basten* for 15 years, and frequently skippered the 33m sail training vessel *South Passage* along the Queensland coast, carrying 25 trainees.

Between 1974 and 1977 David and his first wife Jo, together with their two young children,circumnavigated the globe in *Nerisha*, a 39ft sloop which he had built in his back yard in Brisbane. Then in 1990 he became the first person to circumnavigate Australia singlehanded and non-stop, a distance of 7000 miles in 68½ days, for which he received both the 1991 Rose Medal and the 1991 Australian Trophy. This epic voyage was entered in the Australian Guinness Book of Records under 'Transport', and recounted in his book, *I Can Sail Circles*. Due to his intimate knowledge of the Great Barrier Reef gained whilst sailing the *Lady Basten* it was achieved without the aid of a GPS.

David made his second global circumnavigation between 1997 and 2000 with his second wife, Kerry, in *Skaffies Romance*, and was again awarded the Australian Trophy. Then in 2001–2 he sailed to the Antarctic aboard the *Sir Hubert Wilkins*, on an expedition to inspect and work on Mawson's Hut* and to dismantle and remove McIntyre's Hut.

He served the Club as Regional Rear Commodore Australia from 2009 to 2010 and was OCC Port Officer for Brisbane for many years. His contributions to *Flying Fish* will be found in 1991/1, 2001/2 and 2005/2.

Nick Halsey

* Erected and occupied by the Australasian Antarctic Expedition of 1911–1914, led by geologist and explorer Sir Douglas Mawson.

Sail repairs following a knockdown off Cuba in 2000, during his second circumnavigation

Skaffie in his element at the helm of Matuki

Major William Wemyss (Willy) Ker

When I passed on news of the death of a friend to the Commodore of the Royal Cruising Club his comment was, 'Another of the greats has gone'. Willy Ker in a quiet and understated way was just that, so understated that newer members may not have heard of him though he was well known to those of us of some years' standing, especially to those with an exploratory bent. Though the death of a friend is always a sadness, he died aged 93 so any sadness is tinged with respect and perhaps relief that he passed away quietly after such a long innings.

Willy making a point – or simply describing an Icelandic cod?

Willy was my mentor for Arctic and Antarctic voyages. He was perhaps the first to follow in the wake of Bill Tilman, sailing to remote places to explore, though not to climb. I followed the example of them both and did climb as well, initially briefed and encouraged by Willy. I remember that multi-drawered cabinet in a lobby on his farm, full to the brim with charts of Greenland and Baffin and

Willy and Assent off Sisimiut, West Greenland

Assent (Willy Ker) and Dodo's Delight (Bob Shepton) alongside in Upernavik, West Greenland

Iceland along with other places. Of course he lent me some to see me on my way, with his neat pencilled notes dotted around here and there, and always gave sound advice about possible passages, places and ice. His charts are still being lent around amongst those venturing to Greenland and Iceland even today, still with the pencilled comments here and there.

A big difference was that Willy nearly always sailed *singlehanded* across the Atlantic and around Greenland, or up to Iceland, in his Contessa 32 *Assent*, a boat considered quite small even in those days. Only much later did his wife Veronica insist he have a crew, very often a grandson. I asked him about this one day, "Well, it's easier that way," he said. I think he meant not having to organise and look after crew, but he was always generous if he had anybody else on board and there was always a joke in the background. I remember helping him sail back to Plymouth from Beaulieu one September. Passing Start Point with its tides he asked, "Would you like a gin and tonic?" "Well that would be nice, Willy." It was duly received and enjoyed. Half an hour later, another gin and tonic surreptitiously slipped into the cockpit unasked and unannounced! When we were away on our separate expeditions our wives would phone each other to commiserate and compare notes on how hopeless their

Willy and Bob enjoy a wee dram together in Sisimiut, West Greenland

husbands were, leaving them like that. But such was their loyalty that they never actually upbraided us when we returned!

It was his prodigious and meticulous explorations that marked him out, however, and made him so respected. In many ways he opened up the Arctic to yachts, particularly through his pilot book *Faroes, Iceland and Greenland*, better known as *FIG*. He had been educated at Wellington, joined the army and was sent to the 'forgotten war' (his phrase) in India and Burma, became an army surveyor, and led a survey expedition with the army in a remote part of Canada. It was this expertise that he transferred to his pilotage with accurate plotting, bearings and distances. I once got a rocket for submitting a sketch of a possible anchorage in Greenland without a proper chart of the distances involved!

FIG was excellent in itself, both innovative and informative, and has now been incorporated into the equally excellent *Arctic and Northern Waters*, edited by Andrew Wilkes and published by Imray and the RCCPF. It meant we had a basis from which to work when we set out exploring and climbing in remote places. And Willy's Antarctic explorations, still in his Contessa 32, showed it was possible to go even there in a small fibreglass boat, in those halcyon days before crippling regulations set in. Of course *Assent* had been the only boat in her class to finish the disastrous Fastnet Race of 1979, though it was his son Alan skippering her on that occasion.

When one of the greats moves on we often feel that it is an end of an era. Willy's passing certainly marks one – an era when we were free to roam the seas and explore remote lands and icecaps without the stringent regulations, often sapping initiative and daring, prevalent today. Some of us mourn the passing of that free era, I mourn the passing of my friend Willy especially.

Reverend Bob Shepton

A version of this obituary first appeared in the October 2019 issue of *Sailing Today*, and is reprinted here with their kind permission.

Peter Morgan

Everyone who knew Peter agreed about the sort of man he was – warm, friendly, calm, kind, encouraging, competitive, with an impish sense of humour yet always a gentleman. He invariably opened doors for people, while his family were aware of details such as never enjoying breakfast without his particular teaspoon for the marmalade and his 'ship's measures' when pouring a drink. Of course, the sea was a major part of his life; a passion inherited from his father and channelled by his studies at Elizabeth College on Guernsey where he trained with the Combined Cadet Force. Growing up by the sea probably helped, of course.

Peter was a man with salt water in his veins, although he preferred to be on the water rather than in it. When he left school in the late 1950s he went to Warsash Maritime Academy (then called the Southampton School of Navigation) to train as a Merchant Navy cadet, before joining the Blue Funnel Line. It was during this time that he met Catherine, and they were married in 1966. Many times she had to persevere

Peter with Harry, his younger grandson, about ten years ago

on sailing trips in apparently 'calm' waters, which for him was anything less than gale-force winds.

Befitting someone with briny blood, to say sailing was his hobby is a distinct understatement. From windsurfers, sailing dinghies, catamarans and cruisers to 50ft multi-masted yachts, he took trips on whatever vessel he could get his hands on, travelling all over the globe, from coral reefs in the Middle East to the hidden coves and creeks around the Cornish coast where he encouraged his crew of friends, nieces, nephews and grandchildren to swim. Following retirement as a Master Mariner, qualified to command any vessel in any part of the world, he enjoyed a successful shore-based career as port operations manager in several international container ports. He later downsized to run a successful sailing school, teaching practical courses aboard his 29ft Westerly Konsort *Saffron of Kernow* as well as evening classes in navigation. Peter joined the OCC in 2006, citing a passage from Falmouth to Madeira aboard *Safeena* made nine years previously. He soon became a valued *Flying Fish* book reviewer, particularly on navigation and other technical subjects.

Peter carried this passion for sailing and navigation, including astro, right into his later life, enjoying holiday cruises and sailing to the Azores long after his family had told him that maybe he should be taking it a bit easier. Some thought their advice fell on deaf ears, but it was probably because he wasn't wearing his hearing aids.

His competitive nature was always simmering underneath, whether playing badminton in the garden, or football and boules on the beach with his grandchildren. He always tried hard not to show how much he wanted to win, not always successfully. One example was the Grandads' rowing race at the Durgan Regatta near his home in Cornwall, when he shot off in a completely different direction to everyone else, making the watchers think he'd either gone the wrong way or seriously misjudged the course. We should have known better from a man of the sea – he'd obviously been checking the currents prior to the race and finished far ahead of the field.

Competing in the grandads' rowing race at Durgan Regatta

Peter with Sir Robin Knox-Johnston. Photo Hugh Hastings

Peter capitalised on the skills acquired throughout his working life when he became an efficient and highly respected Honorary Secretary of the Royal Cornwall Yacht Club before being elected Commodore in April this year. He was universally liked by RCYC members, despite showing his mischievous streak now and then – something he had developed on Guernsey terrorising tourist footpaths in his youth.

Family always meant a lot to Peter and he drove many miles to visit his sons in Kent and Scotland, his sister in Norfolk, and family members in Exeter, Preston, Cambridge, Buckinghamshire, as well as many friends ... quite frankly everywhere! He planned trips meticulously with schedules, timings and stop-offs, and was always more than happy to host the family whenever they came down to visit him in Cornwall, giving pocket money to the younger members in his somewhat 'secret' handshakes.

By the time of his sudden death at the age of 78 he had managed to live what seemed like two lifetimes' worth of adventures in his time with us.

Andrew Morgan

My memories of Peter

I had known Peter for years as we strode across the marina car park both bent on important business, but our real friendship started when he began attending the West Country Meets, enjoying the dinner and the raft-up even more. I joined his astro navigation class for an update and found him tolerant and sympathetic towards my chemo brain-induced schoolboy mistakes! Sue and I joined Peter and Louise at the Henley and Bristol AGMs, during which we saw the 2018 Horta Rally developing, and in 2017 he joined *Tyrian* in Brittany for a week's shakedown cruise. This went well, and we decided that it would be both fun and practical to take a young crew aided by the Club's Youth Sponsorship programme. That winter we considered the applications, before enrolling an apprentice from Pendennis Shipyard for the passage down to the Azores and one of Peter's Sea Cadets for the return. Both had been students of his.

In the run up to departure he assisted with the correction of small survey defects and together we stored up (he made marmalade for the voyage). Bread-making on passage wasn't allowed to interrupt his one-to-one daily astro nav tuition. We were forced to motor much of the way to Horta due to lack of wind, but were joined on arrival by

Louise and Sue and the week's partying made up for it. Then we all enjoyed a ten-day cruise of the central islands before departing for the return motor!

Earlier this year Peter, by then Commodore, welcomed Sir Robin Knox-Johnston to the Royal Cornwall Yacht Club, using the same steps that Sir Robin had climbed following his completion of the Golden Globe Race 50 years ago. Having waved the Azores and Back Race yachts off on 1st June, the fleet were returning when he collapsed. He had so much more to give both his sailing clubs and we hoped to share future voyages in *Tyrian*. A fine sailor and ideal shipmate.

Peter Flutter

John G Bailey

John was born in Ghent, Belgium on 9th October 1952 and passed away peacefully on 31st May 2019.

He was an experienced and resilient businessman who worked as an international executive across Europe, Scandinavia, the Middle East and India. Two posts he particularly enjoyed were as Managing Director / General Manager of Qanbar Ready Mix, a concrete company in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Head of Business Expansion RMX (India) with the Holcim Group. Prior to these appointments he had established his own company, Bailey Rawlinson Materials, later holding a number of Executive Directorships with various English aggregate companies.

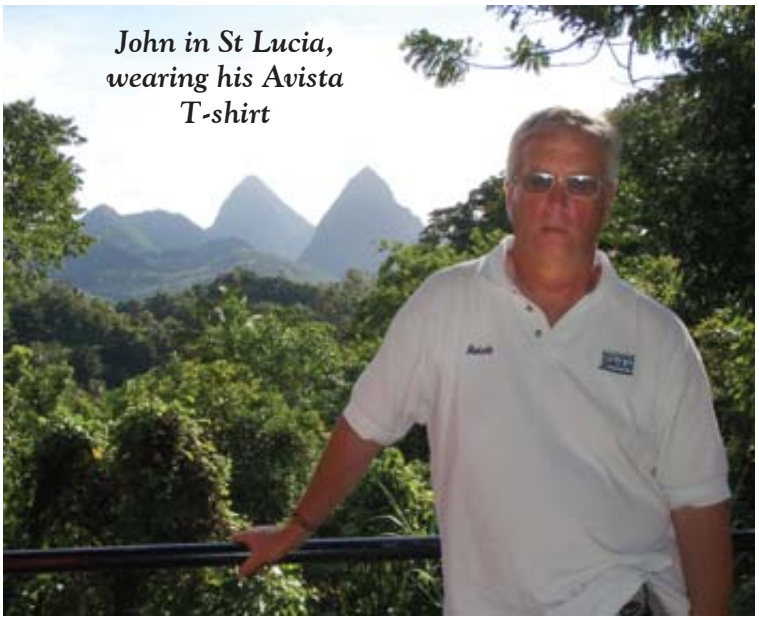
John began sailing as a child in Norfolk under the watchful eye of Frank Dye, who sailed a Wayfarer to Iceland and Norway on two separate occasions. As a youth he raced Fireballs and was involved with the Icarus sailing speed trials. For over forty years John and I sailed a range of yachts, in addition, for fourteen years spending Spring Bank Holiday week in May sailing a vintage Wayfarer (No 303) with friends in similar-aged boats in the Solent. We always completed the week with a non-stop 60 mile circumnavigation of the Isle of Wight armed with a flask of coffee, a few sandwiches, two suits of sails and no outboard engine, just relying on the tides to assist our passage. It was interesting sailing through the Needles and across the adjacent overfalls and, lasting for up to twelve hours, a real test for both dinghy and crew. They were fun times, experiencing all points of sail and weather conditions as the little boat plugged her way around the island.

Crossing the Atlantic aboard Gilly B in the 2008 ARC

Avista racing in the Little Britain Challenge Cup

A modest but very accomplished sailor, John was passionate about all his yachts, which were always in immaculate working order. His last, *Avista*, a Nautor Swan 411 built in 1977, was his pride and joy. Over the course of twenty years John spent many hours restoring her and transforming her for short-handed sailing, but always mindful that she was a classic yacht. He often sailed her with friends, but also undertook many singlehanded trips. See the YouTube recording he made with Dick Durham of *Yachting Monthly* some years ago – YouTube Swan 411 Avista – if you'd like to know more.

John was a member of many clubs, including the Royal Thames YC, the Royal Bombay YC, Harwich Ports YC and of course the OCC. He was also a past International Chairman of the Sparkman & Stephens Association. On a number of occasions he had the pleasure of being in the company of the late Olin J Stephens II, an Honorary Life Member of the S&S Association. He much enjoyed the opportunity to discuss yacht design with such a great designer.



John in St Lucia, wearing his Avista T-shirt

John inspired so many young sailors who still speak fondly about their trips aboard his various yachts. Sadly, his untimely death cheated them of more and John of his ambition to take *Avista* on a world cruise. Time and tide go by, but love always stays.

Helen Bailey

ADVERTISERS IN FLYING FISH

Please support advertisers by giving consideration to their products or services, and mention the OCC and *Flying Fish* when replying to advertisements. Details of advertising rates and deadlines will be found overleaf.

ADVERTISEMENTS

RATES

Advertising is sold on a two consecutive issues basis

Inside pages

Full page colour .....£280 (for two issues)
Half page colour.....£170 (for two issues)

Cover pages

Inside covers colour..... £525 (for two issues)
Outside back cover colour..... £840 (for two issues)

A 10% discount is available to OCC members

COPY

Copy should be supplied as a high res PDF, JPEG or EPS file,
at a resolution of 300 dpi (118 dpcm) at finished size

Full page : 188 x 120mm (type area); 214 x 145mm (including 2mm bleed area)
Half page : 94 x 120mm (type area); 107 x 145mm (including 2mm bleed area)
(NB: full page adverts must be in portrait mode, half-pages in landscape)

DEADLINES

Advertisements are accepted for inclusion on a 'first come, first served' basis.
Space may not permit all advertisements to be accepted, but please try!
Latest dates by which orders **must** be confirmed are:

14 March 2020 for *Flying Fish* 2020/1
14 October 2020 for *Flying Fish* 2020/2

ENQUIRIES AND ORDERS

e-mail: advertising@oceancruisingclub.org

Printed by **Hobbs the Printers Ltd**, Brunel Road,
Totton, Hants SO40 3WX, UK. *Tel*: 023 8066 4800,
Fax: 023 8066 4801, www.hobbs.uk.com

MIX
Paper from responsible sources
FSC® C020438

We make the world smaller

Plan your yacht's transportation

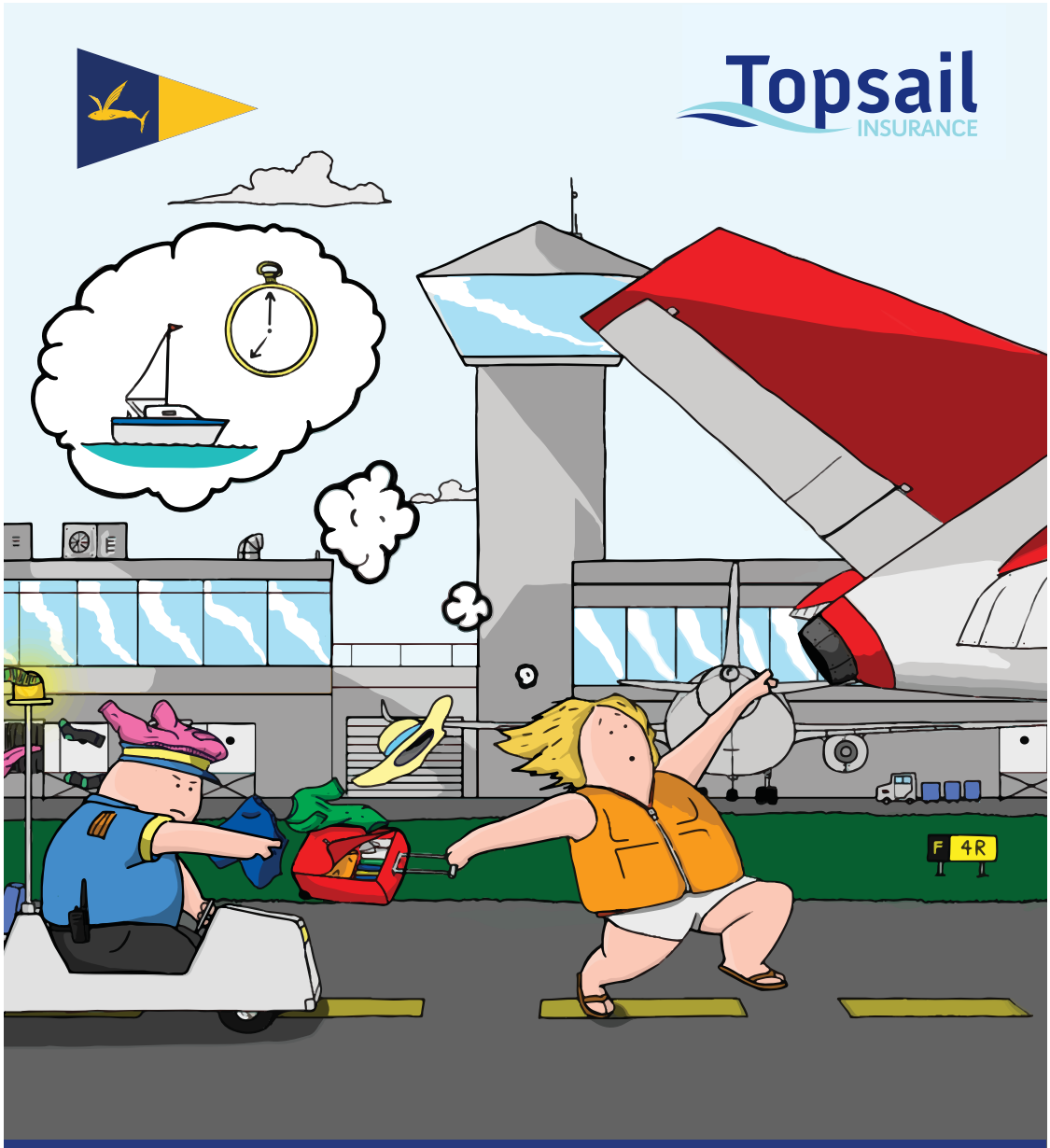
Seasonal sailings from Auckland - Newcastle - Hong Kong - Singapore - Phuket - Male to Fethiye - Tivat - Genoa & Southampton in **March, April & May.**

Our global spread of destinations provides access to the world's premier ports and cruising grounds. Next to the above, we can provide a customized travel itinerary or offer one of our other sailings.

Sevenstar Yacht Transport
Head Office Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Phone + 31 20 448 8590
welcome@sevenstar-yacht-transport.com
sevenstar-yacht-transport.com

SEVENSTAR YACHT TRANSPORT

MEMBER OF SPLIETHOFF GROUP



Sail the world with Topsail Insurance and our comprehensive Boat and Travel Insurance products.

Visit our website for your exclusive OCC benefits.

www.topsailinsurance.com/occ

+44 (0) 1273573727 | enquiries@topsailinsurance.com