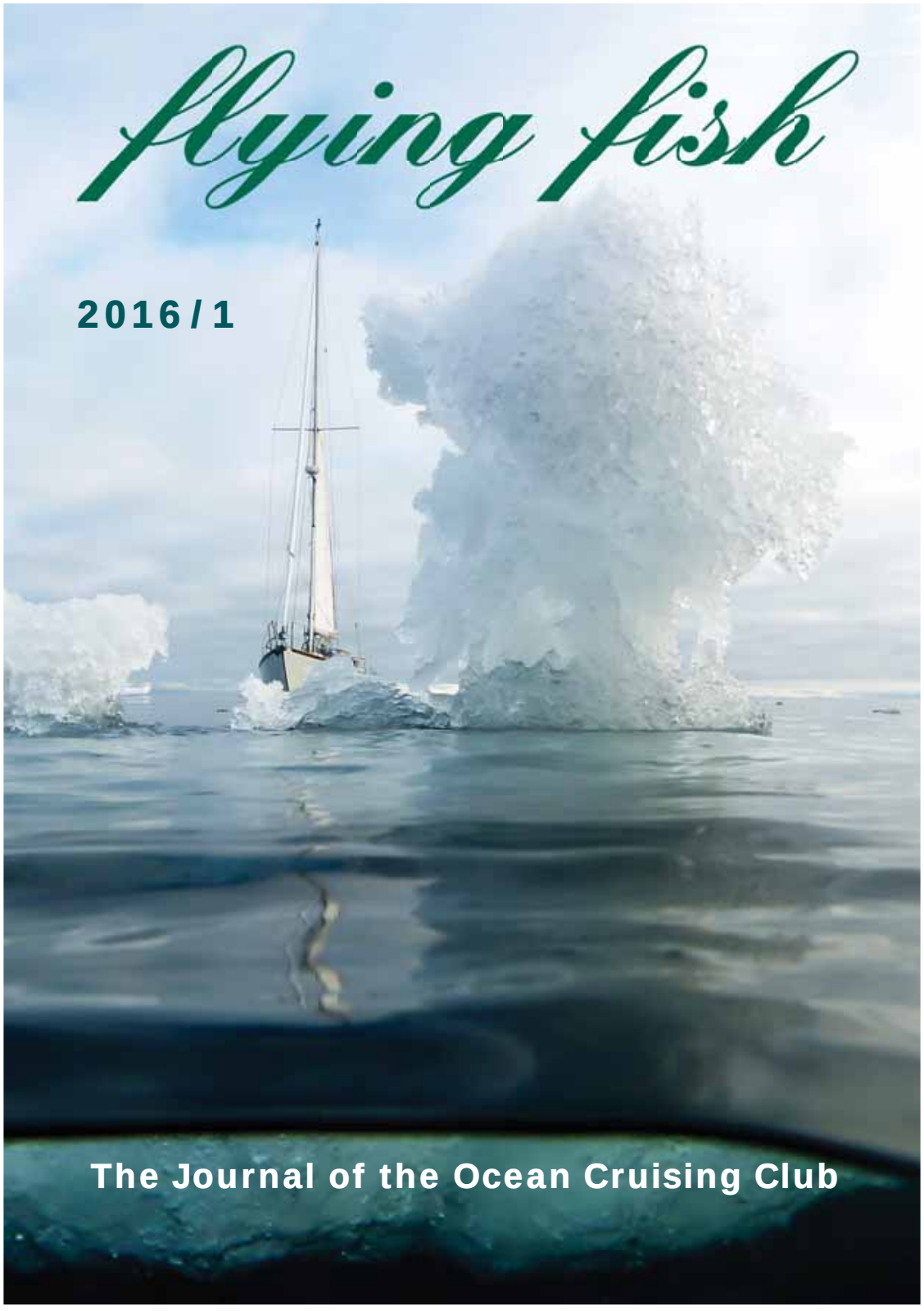
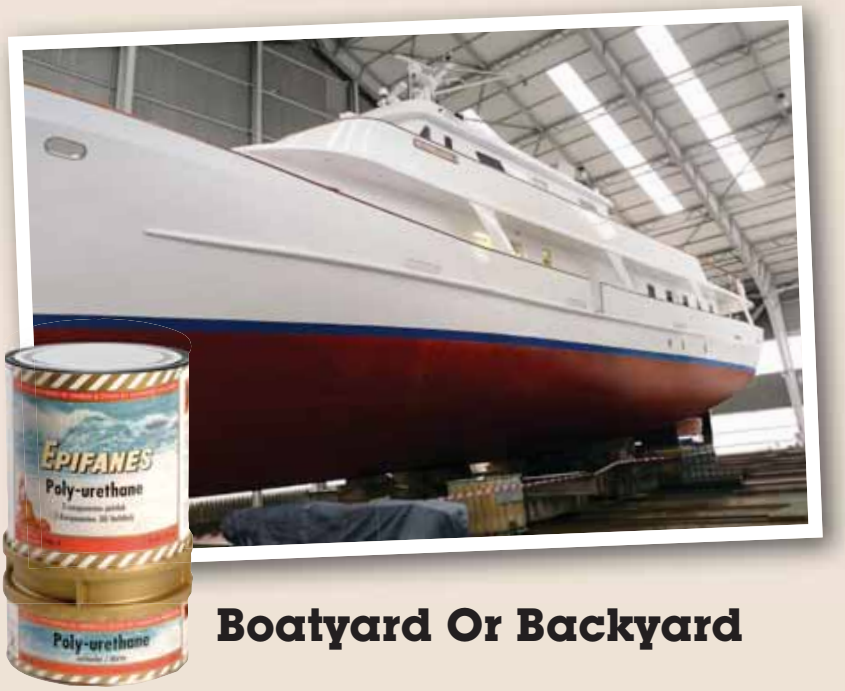
flying fish

2016/1



The Journal of the Ocean Cruising Club



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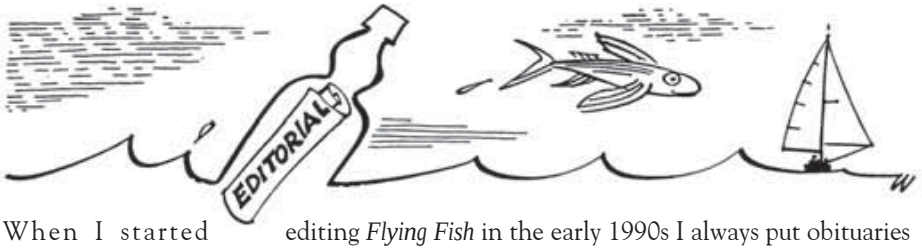

When I started editing *Flying Fish* in the early 1990s I always put obituaries at the front as a mark of respect – until Mary Barton, who was Commodore at that time, said she found it depressing and how about putting them at the end? I was hesitant, therefore, about leading off this issue with the fascinating account of her own life which begins on page 5. But really, where else was appropriate? Admiral Mary was unique in the history of our Club, and it's fair to say that without her leadership nearly 30 years ago the OCC might well not have survived. Do read her life story, whether you're an old stager or a recent joiner – and once again my thanks to all who contributed.

Now back to the prosaic: several members have reported problems in despatching articles from more remote parts of the world – despite appearing to depart safely, their message never reaches me. So if you send something and don't hear back within a week or so please check that you have the address correct and try again ... and if that doesn't work, send it to Rachelle at secretary@oceancruisingclub.org with a request that she forwards it on.

Still on the subject of sending things, rather than attaching multiple photos to multiple e-mails do try a great little (free) program called WeTransfer [www.wetransfer.com]. It could hardly be simpler, and has the great advantage (over Dropbox, for instance) that you receive an e-mail saying your files have been sent, and another when the recipient has downloaded them. Brilliant! Even so, it's always wise to send an e-mail as well, of course.

For those whose writing is on a more ambitious scale than the occasional *Flying Fish* article, we review eight or ten books in the average issue, many of which are by members. So if you've written either a how-to sailing book, or a novel with a sailing background, please drop me a line and we'll take it from there. Regretfully *Flying Fish* does not have space to carry reviews of non-sailing novels, however gripping.

A couple of pleas: several of my valued team of proof-readers have retired over the past year, so members with sharp eyes for errors of all kinds – grammatical, typos, mis-spelt place names, etc – are invited to apply! Secondly, my larder of recipes is almost empty, so do share some of your favourites, whether sophisticated 'marina party' items or creative combinations easy to knock together in bad weather or from depleted supplies near the end of a long passage. Many thanks indeed.

Finally, the usual reminder – the **DEADLINE** for submissions to *Flying Fish* **2016/2** is **Tuesday 1 October**, but as always it's wise not to leave it until the last moment. If you've not written before please take time to read *Sending Submissions to Flying Fish* on page 101, and e-mail me, Anne Hammick, on flying.fish@oceancruisingclub.org if you have any queries.

Cover Photo: Celeste and sea ice near Barrow – see Voyaging to the Top of America, page 42). Photo Ellen Massey Leonard

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ADMIRAL MARY: A LIFE TO CELEBRATE

(*As members will be aware, Admiral and Past Commodore Mary Barton passed away on 1 December 2015, days before her 96th birthday. Three years earlier she had recounted the story of her life to circumnavigator and past member Mrs Pam Moore, to whom we are all indebted for transcribing these recollections and making them available within the Club. Many others also wished to contribute their memories of Mary, and I would like both to thank Erik Vischer for his help in collating these, and to apologise to anyone whose words have been edited or omitted due to pressure of space.*)

Mary Barton (née Danby) was born on 8 December 1920 in Rochester, Kent – her father was commander of the Royal Naval barracks at nearby Chatham at the time. Her first sea passage was at the age of two, when her mother, Phyllis, took Mary and her two older brothers to Melbourne on the SS *Diogenes* to join their father (now a captain) who had been posted to Australia. Mary's mother came from an Australian family, so they had relations waiting for them in Sydney. Three years later the family returned to Chatham.

In 1929 Captain Danby was promoted and posted to Malta for two years, and Mary and her mother joined him there, the boys remaining at school in England. This was a happy time for Mary, now aged 8, attending school in Sliema in the mornings, and Brownies, dancing classes or taking walks with her father in the afternoons. The family lived in a house which had been built in the 16th century for the Knights of St John, following their eviction from Rhodes. More than 80 years later Mary still remembered the knights' shields which decorated the dining room walls, and an 11th century chapel in the garden. The house was built on the highest level of Fort St Angelo, overlooking Grand Harbour, with wonderful views from the flat roof. When the Mediterranean Fleet went out, her parents always gave a party so that others could also enjoy the spectacle.

> Founder Member **Ian Nicolson** recalls Mary telling him about her school days in Malta: 'She went to a school on the other side of Grand Harbour, and to get there she walked with her nanny down a set of harbour steps to where a Royal Navy picket boat would be waiting for her – her and her nanny and no-one else. This elegant, narrow, teak-planked vessel was a steam-driven picket boat under the command of a midshipman or possibly a junior sub-lieutenant. After school the return journey would be made in the same vessel – again with just the Captain's daughter and her nanny as the only passengers. This was typical of the times. (I remember doing Cowes Week in 1932, and when it was calm these single-screw steam picket boats off the guardship – a battleship, naturally – towed engineless racing boats to the start, often against the tide, and collected them and took them back to the moorings at the end of racing if the breeze was uncertain.)'

The summer holidays of 1929, spent in the company of her brothers, were a happy

time for Mary, but soon after they left Malta to return to school Phyllis Danby went into hospital for a minor operation on her nose. Tragically she died from internal bleeding which went unnoticed during the night, a terrible shock to all the family but a particularly cruel blow to Mary to be left motherless at such a young age.

> **Penelope Curtis** tells of an amazing co-incidence dating back to those days: 'My husband George has been a member of the OCC since the 1950s, but didn't become really involved until long after retirement. Even so, one May we were in our boat in the Beaulieu River with my parents, Admiral Sir John and Lady Martin, so we went to the Gin's Farm meeting. We went to introduce ourselves to Mary, who took one look at my father and said "Hullo John, we last met as children on the beach in Malta!" and when we got home Pa indeed found a photo of them together on the beach. (My grandfather was a Surgeon Admiral in charge of the hospital in Malta.) Years later, during the 2004 British Columbia Rally, Mary told me that her mother had died when she was very young and that my grandmother had taken her under her wing, so I always felt a special bond with her.'

Mary and her father stayed on in Malta until the end of his two-year posting, then returned to the house in Rochester which had been rented out. Mary went back to her old school in Chatham, and lived for the holidays when her brothers returned from boarding school. From the age of 12 she boarded at an Anglican convent school in East Grinstead, completing her formal education with a domestic science course, as so many girls did at that time.

In 1937 Mary went to work as secretary to the matron at Luton Children's Hospital, determined that she should earn her keep despite her father's wish for her to remain at Chatham. She was still there two years later when the Second World War broke out. She then decided to become a nurse, and in 1940 began training at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital, but had to give it up when poor diet combined with appalling living conditions in her digs led to failing health.

After time spent recuperating with family friends in Somerset, Mary returned to Chatham and joined the WRNS as a typist, working in the Commodore's office. Despite the War she enjoyed being back in Chatham where she had many friends, and enthusiastically joined in any number of sporting activities including tennis, squash and swimming – but as yet no sailing. Being in the naval dockyard, her father's house suffered its fair share of damage, including a bomb landing in the back garden which shattered all the downstairs windows and uprooted a rather fine oak tree.

So life continued until the Commodore's secretary, for whom Mary was working, insisted she apply for a commission in the WRNS. Mary was reluctant at first, but finally agreed to apply. She was accepted on the same course at Greenwich Naval College as her great friend Betty Blunt, and both qualified five weeks later. During this time her father was relieved at Chatham Dockyard and remarried. He and his new bride went to live in Kent, and Mary's life at Chatham came to an end.

Following postings at the submarine base in Gosport and then at nearby Fort Southwick, Mary started to look for a more exciting life and applied for an overseas

Mary in her WRNS uniform, November 1942

posting. In December 1942 she sailed for the Indian Ocean port of Mombasa, Kenya. During her time there she met Peter Edwards, some thirty years her senior, who was to become instrumental in her meeting her future husband, Humphrey Barton, many years later. After six months in Mombasa as a cipher officer, Mary was posted to Trincomalee in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). This second posting proved a happy one for her, working in a team with three other WRNS officers, among whom Mary swiftly gained the reputation of never giving up on a signal which proved difficult to decipher. When not on duty the WRNS had access to sailing dinghies on Trincomalee harbour. She was also able to meet up from time to time with her two brothers, who were on active service in Malaya and India, and attended her brother Brian's wedding in Bangalore together with their other brother, Anthony.

Sailing in Trincomalee harbour, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka)

Mary returned to England in 1945. With the war now over and her father remarried, Mary went to work as practice secretary for her brother Anthony, a GP in Lyndhurst, Hampshire. But within a few years she felt in need of a change of scene and returned to Australia, working as a practice secretary in Sydney. She was able to meet up with her mother's family again, and her mother's sister helped her greatly during the three years she was there.

Back home again in 1951 Mary resumed her job with her brother in Lyndhurst, but she needed more fun than Lyndhurst could provide and decided to move to London, where she got a job as secretary to the senior partner of a firm of stockbrokers in the City. But Mary's life wasn't just about work – she had met up with Peter Edwards again, his son having married one of her cousins. Peter kept his small Harrison Butler-designed *Selamat* in Malta, and he and Margaret, his crew, invited Mary to sail with them. This she did, and enjoyed it so much that she spent many other holidays with

them in the Mediterranean. When Margaret was no longer able to sail, Mary stepped in as chief crew.

During the winter of 1968/9 Mary was on board *Selamat* in Malta when Peter introduced her to Humphrey Barton, founder of the OCC. Hum had a reputation for being a tough, forthright skipper and Mary stood in considerable awe of him. On getting to know him better, however, she found him extremely pleasant and amusing company. Later on that year she gave up her job in London and signed on as crew on a yacht sailing from the UK to Grenada.

Martin Holden takes up the story: 'In May 1969 I had just completed my final exams and was keen to do some more ocean sailing. I answered an advertisement in *Yachting World* – 'Yacht Owner seeks crew for voyage from Gibraltar to West Indies and back to UK via Bermuda & Azores' – met owner Tom Southern at Southampton Boat Show, and soon received a ticket to fly to Gibraltar. The yacht was a 51ft Hillyard ketch named *Aguila*, and the other crew were Jenny, who was just going as far as Grenada, and Mary, who was signed up for the whole trip.

We left Gibraltar in early November, and sailed to Madeira to provision before the Atlantic passage. *Aguila* had a versatile rig and was well-equipped for downwind sailing. She trundled along at a sedate 5 knots and we settled into a relaxing and undemanding routine of two hours on watch and six off. Cooking and routine chores were shared between the three crew, whilst Tom looked after the navigation. The crew had afternoon tea in the cockpit, followed by 'Pooh Time' when we enjoyed reading stories from *Winnie the Pooh*. This was followed by our one alcoholic drink of the day before dinner.

Aguila, the 51ft Hillyard in which Mary made the first of her seven Atlantic crossings

Mary (right) aboard Aguila

In mid-Atlantic the trades disappeared, the engine gear box seized up, and for ten days we just drifted. It became very hot on deck and stifling below. We reached Grenada around 17 December after more than 30 days at sea, and set about enjoying the Caribbean for Christmas. There were plenty of parties, and we socialised with the crews of other yachts including the legendary solo sailor Hum Barton. Hum was practically blind with cataracts, and it amazed us that he had just crossed the Atlantic on his own. Mary took Hum under her wing and made sure he ate properly, and generally looked after him while we were out of the water over Christmas to scrub and anti-foul. Then we sailed down to Tobago for a week, where we joined the locals in a wild New Year's Eve party at Man O' War Bay.

Returning to Grenada in early January we only intended to stop for a couple of days, but as we were about to leave for our cruise up the islands Mary dropped a bombshell – she was jumping ship to stay in Grenada and marry Hum Barton. The rest, as they say, is history!'

Rose Rambler, Hum and Mary's home throughout the 1970s

Hum and Mary were married in Grenada on 15 January 1970. His right eye was operated on four days later, and he always maintained that he was not disappointed when he was able to see his new bride properly for the first time! She recalled how, when describing his many Atlantic crossings, Hum used to say that 'he was sailing around the north Atlantic looking for Mary'. At last he had found her, and together they made another six Atlantic crossings in *Rose Rambler*, a 35ft Laurent Giles-designed Bermudan sloop, before returning to the

Mediterranean for some gentler cruising. This brought Mary's tally of Atlantic crossings to seven and Hum's to an amazing 25.

Jilly Baty adds: 'I qualified by sailing with Hum and Robert Wingate on *Rose Rambler*'s maiden voyage from Barcelona to Grenada in 1963. A decade or so later I met Hum and Mary again in Antigua – at that stage they were planning to sail back to the Mediterranean and enjoy semi-retirement. Mary was a grand sailing partner to Hum, and later came into her own creating peace and leadership at a time of friction in the centre of the OCC. Her example made the club what it is today.'

Lin and Larry Pardey also met Hum and Mary early on: 'We met Mary during a short visit to Malta in the summer of 1975 as we were headed north from Tunisia toward Italy aboard *Seraffyn*. We were thinking of wintering in Malta, so stopped to check it out. Mary immediately invited us on board and insisted we join the OCC. She and Hum wouldn't let us leave Malta until we did. When we were preparing to leave for Italy, Mary asked us to do her a favour. Among her favourite people in Malta were a couple who ran a local café. The husband was Maltese, but his wife was from Italy and hated the local pasta. Mary gave us the equivalent of £20 and asked that, when we returned, we bring as much Italian pasta as possible. Four months later we returned with two 15 kilo boxes of assorted

Mary and Hum with the Kennett family (Jonathan, Janet and Sue) aboard Rose Rambler, Boxing Day 1975. Photo Doug Kennett

Hum and Mary aboard Rose Rambler in Malta in 1975. Photo Lin Pardey

pasta (we'd added a bit to Mary's sum as we liked the food at that café). Result – one of the most raucous, sea-story filled café dinners I can remember, plus immediate Maltese friends to help us settle in for the winter. Yes, Mary had a way of making friends and keeping them.'

Past Commodore **Tony & Jill Vasey** recall: 'We first met Mary and Hum in Malta in 1976. A sailing friend asked if we would like to meet them, and as Tony had been a member of the OCC since 1974 we knew much about them and were delighted that they were wintering in Malta. Tony was the RAF Station Commander at Luqa and we lived there for two years. On one visit to *Rose Rambler* there were four pilots on board, three of them from the First World War – Hum, Batchy Carr, Charlie Nicholson and, of course, Tony.'

Rozanne Barton, married to Mary's step-son **Peter**, describes sailing with Mary: 'Peter and I admired her more than we can say, and have such happy memories of her on the many voyages she made with us – as well as of our first with her and Hum in *Rose Rambler* in the Cyclades in 1978. Mary was never, ever a passenger – she always played a full role on board, and she taught me so much about long voyages and attitudes to them. Before she sailed with us to the Canaries from Plymouth, when we were caught in the 1987 October hurricane, I had only sailed cross-channel as a child with my parents and then with Peter. Nothing seemed to faze Mary, and I will never forget the eye of the hurricane when we rolled around in huge seas but no wind before it came screaming in again from the other direction. Peter is a calm chap, but it was Mary's example and fearlessness that amazed me, and after that I knew I could face anything.

She had such a wonderful twinkle and sense of humour, and would frequently have us in stitches of laughter – she was such a fun person to be with. She was elegant, poised and yet so down to earth – and so wise. When we sailed with her and Hum in the Greek Islands she would send us off every morning after breakfast to explore, complete with a little potted history of whichever island we were about to visit. Later

she joined us in Antigua, New Zealand, Australia and Thailand, and was a constant inspiration and such a good friend. We walked her up mountains, on occasion fearing we might be expecting too much of her, but she always insisted on pushing herself to the limit. On one occasion we did find her Achilles heel, however, when she froze on a narrow ledge and we had to help and coax her on! She was human after all.'

Sadly Hum and Mary's time together was a relatively short one, as Hum died in 1980. Mary moved ashore to settle in Sway, Hampshire, near the family of her step-daughter Pat Pocock, and soon became deeply involved with numerous village activities, many of which she kept up for decades – including delivering Meals on Wheels until she was well into her 80s. She continued to sail whenever she had the opportunity, however, and became active in the OCC. In 1981 she flew out to Horta – where she and Hum had become great friends with the late 'Peter' Azevedo of the Café Sport, as well as local member João Carlos Fraga – to welcome yachts finishing the OCC Azores Pursuit Race. With her she brought the Barton Cup, recently presented by Peter Barton and Pat Pocock in memory of their father, which all agreed should go to Wendy Moore for her passage from Northern Ireland in a 27-footer. The Cup duly handed over, Mary sailed home with Rachel Hayward aboard *Loiwing*.

Mary with João Carlos Fraga, a friend to all OCC members passing through Horta for nearly four decades

A few years later Mary was persuaded to join the Committee, where her good judgement and common sense soon won respect, and when the Club hit difficult times during the winter of 1987/8, culminating in the resignation of Commodore John Foot, fellow Committee members considered Mary to be the only person with a realistic chance of re-uniting it (see Chapter 12 of *The First Fifty Years* for the full story). Despite a counter-challenge she was elected Commodore, a post she filled with distinction for the next six years. Mary always stressed, however, that it was only due to the dedication, hard work and business acumen of the new Secretary, Lt Col Jeremy Knox (ably assisted by his wife, Caroline), and the support of her flag officers and committee, that she was able to put the club back onto an even keel during her time as Commodore. She travelled widely

at her own expense, visiting Australia as well as making several trips to America, to reassure the Club's overseas members that all was now well. She became particularly good friends with Marji and Den Bancroft, and a regular at their annual parties at Smith's Cove, forerunner of today's Maine Rally.

> **Michael Taylor-Jones** recalls: 'I got to know Mary when I was Treasurer of the Club and she was Commodore. Her low key but effective diplomacy and charm saved the club. Jeremy Knox as Club Secretary re-instated proper membership records and got the subscriptions in, Mary Falk as a solicitor and I as a professional accountant provided some expertise, but it was Mary's unswerving common sense and determination to find solutions, without alienating some of the more disruptive elements in the Club, that enabled us to win through. I treasure her memory.'

> **Graham and Avril Johnson** smile when they remember Mary: 'It was 1991 and we hadn't long taken up our role as Membership Secretaries, but as college lecturers we got nearly two precious months' holiday every summer and we wanted to go sailing. Mary, as Commodore, was unhappy about the office being unmanned for that length of time, and volunteered to drive the 60 mile round-trip every few days to collect the incoming mail and send a postcard explaining the situation to each sender. On one occasion she was met at the front door by a large, frenzied, barking dog which a relative had dumped in our house whilst going shopping. How did Mary react? Well, of course, she found a lead and took Tammy for a walk! Tammy had never accepted the concept of walking to heel and used to pull relentlessly at the lead. Afterwards Mary left us a cryptic message saying someone ought to teach the animal the col regs: 'The towing vessel should never exceed the maximum speed of the vessel under tow'.'

Graham and Avril were not the only ones to take holidays, however. As **Tony and Jill Vasey** recount: 'After Hum died Mary became our regular crew aboard *Shiant*, our Rival 41. In early 1989 she was sailing with us in the Caribbean when we called in at St George's, Grenada – Mary pointed out the church on the hill where she and Hum had been married, and told us that it was their anniversary! Tom and Donna Lemm in *Papillon* were already at anchor so we decided to have a celebratory supper. Just then another boat sailed in, but up-sun so we could not see who it was. When they rounded up it turned out to be Mike and Pat Pocock with *Blackjack*, so they too joined us in our celebrations. An amazing coincidence.'

In addition to being Commodore, Mary was also involved in the day-to-day running of the club, including co-organising the first Annual Dinners to be held outside London. The first, held at the Royal Lymington Yacht Club, was something of an experiment, but was so successful that for a number of years alternating between London and Lymington – later Southampton – became the norm. It was for the first of these that the 'table burgees' were made. Mary had remained friends with Eleanor Hammick (mother

of current Commodore Anne and her sister Liz) from their days as WRNS officers in Trincomalee, and joined them for some hilarious sessions cutting and sewing the flags (the hilarity stemmed from the tall tales told!). The 'giant burgee' which traditionally forms a backdrop for awards presentations was also very familiar to Mary – when the Annual Dinner was held in Lymington she always hosted a drinks party the following morning, during which it proudly flew from a tree outside her home in Sway.

On completing her second term as Commodore in 1994, and following the death of Sir Alec Rose, Mary was elected Admiral – the third in the OCC's history, following Hum and Sir Alec. Tony Vasey, who succeeded her as Commodore, was heard to remark that he'd never before had the chance to kiss an Admiral! Mary was presented with a glass rose bowl engraved with a picture of *Rose Rambler*, and in return presented the Club with a silver christening mug to be awarded for the most ambitious or arduous qualifying voyage made the previous year.

Over the following years Mary continued to sail whenever and wherever the opportunity offered, including large parts of the Commodore's Millennium Cruise in early 2000, exploring the Baltic with Eve and Michael Bonham Cozens aboard *Gemervescence* later that year, joining Erik Vischer aboard *Cheeky Monkey* in the Azores, and cruising with Mike and Pat Pocock aboard *Blackjack* on many occasions. She also travelled extensively by air, visiting Australia for her brother Brian's 90th birthday. And wherever she went, she made sure to visit local OCC members.

Admiral Mary with Anthea Cornell, Club Secretary from 1998 to 2004 at the Maine Millennium Rally

John Maddox takes up the story: 'Mary's brother Brian lived in Portsea, Melbourne, and when she came to Australia to visit him in the late 1990s she always wrote to me to find out if there was a dinner or other event that she could attend. In May 1998 Mary came to Sydney for an OCC barbecue at the home of the late Patricia Wall. We had a very windy sail from Mosman to Clontarf where Pat lived, and the rough weather meant we could not land Mary on the shore near Pat's house. Instead Mary and I had to climb up rocks a considerable distance away, and ended up trespassing through someone's private garden before walking along the road to Pat's

Sailing in the Baltic in June 2000 with Eve and Michael Bonham Cozens in Gemervescence of London

house. Meanwhile Tony and Charles Davis moored the yacht in a safe place. Mary took it all in her stride and enjoyed the barbecue, writing to me afterwards that arriving by sea was far superior to arriving by land!'

A few years later and another hemisphere, and **Flor Long** wrote that: 'I always think fondly of our time on the Azores Rally back in 2003, when Mary represented the OCC at every dinner, looking outstanding on every occasion. She was always wonderfully pleasant to my wife Brenda, and said exactly the right things to my daughter Caroline after the catamaran she was crewing on capsized in its way back to the UK (Club Secretary Anthea Cornell was also among the crew, losing a number of completed application forms in the accident, though fortunately no crewmember was hurt.) A year or two later, when we were walking back to the hotel with Mary after a dinner in Dublin, Brenda commented that the Irish are always last to leave a party, to which Mary replied, "some of the best evenings of my life have been with the Irish".'

Further north yet, **Vladimir Ivankiv,** OCC Port Officer Representative for St Petersburg, recalls meeting Mary and a friend of hers in August 2002 at the Tortuga Restaurant in St Petersburg's Central River Yacht Club. Vladimir says that: 'It was Mary Barton whose reference helped me get the title of the OCC Port Officer Representative, which I am very proud of.'

Admiral Mary with Vladimir Ivankiv, POR for St Petersburg on a visit to the city in August 2002

Past Vice Commodore Erik Vischer – wearing the Club's 50th Anniversary T-shirt – with Admiral Mary in 2004

Alan Taylor, who took over as Commodore in 2002, confirms Mary's involvement: 'My lasting memory of Mary is how supportive and interested in the well-being of the Club she was whilst I was Commodore. She also loved to be afloat. On the 2004 British Columbia Rally, Jenny and I sailed with Mary from Vancouver Island back to Vancouver. We were on a fast reach, keeping a look-out for floating dead-head logs – ie telegraph pole-sized logs floating vertically with their heads just bobbing above the water – and Mary was at the helm. We noticed that once her hands were clasped to the wheel it was not easy to prise her off it, she was enjoying it so much. She was 84 at the time. It was a pleasure and a privilege to be associated with Mary on our various OCC events.'

Mary's seeming imperviousness to the passing years impressed everyone, including **Doug and Dale Bruce**. Writing to Erik Vischer they recalled that:

'It was in August 2008 that we first met both you and Mary. You had very generously agreed to bring Mary to Maine for the first Maine Rally we had organised, and we considered it, and still do, an enormous honour to have had you both in our midst.

At that point Mary was 88 and we could only guess how frail she might be. We installed a hand-rail on the stairs up to her room. I laugh out loud about that now – Mary turned out to be incredibly fit and agile, and as sharp as a tack. You and Mary arrived in Maine on Friday afternoon, driving up from Boston with John and Jenny and getting to Rockport Boat Club at 7pm (midnight your time) looking as fresh and rested as could be. You both greeted every possible soul who wanted a word with you, and shared in a picnic atmosphere. We brought you back home at 9pm – 2am your time – both still going strong!

Next day contained a tour of our local art museum, lunch at a local restaurant, a brief sail aboard Phil Brooks's boat and a tour of nearby

Mary (at left, in red jacket and white trousers) at the Maine Rally in 2008

Rockport Marine. Then Mary had a very short rest before returning to Rockport Boat Club for the Rally. Everyone considered having our Admiral with us to be an enormous and special treat, and everyone wanted some time with her. But Mary was up to the task – she continued to charm all, speaking fondly and kindly of her good friends the Bancrofts who had run the Rally for many years in Smith's Cove. She had been there on several occasions, and remembered the events well. It was another long day.

On Sunday Mary was the guest of honour at a lunch given by good friends of ours, and she continued to charm everyone she met. One of the guests, Anne Montgomery, presented her with a Camden Yacht Club flag which Mary took back to Lymington – several weeks later, Anne received a Royal Lymington Yacht Club flag which is now hanging at CYC. Bill and Alice Caldwell, old friends of Mary's from the Chesapeake, came calling later that day. They loved having the opportunity to reconnect. You left the following morning, but not before I had taken Mary on a bit of a tour of the area – up Mount Battie for the view of the harbour, before hiking up one of our favourite hills to another stunning vista. And I had put up a hand rail for this woman ... how ridiculous is that! I think of her every time I use it, and smile.

Mary was one of those rare people who made everyone she met feel like they are special, and a good friend. We feel blessed to have known her.'

Bill and Jane McLaren met Mary the following year. Bill writes: 'We didn't really know Mary until I became Commodore, so before the 2009 AGM Jane and I went to call on her for tea at her home in Sway before going into Southampton. It felt a bit like a junior officer calling at Admiralty House in some far flung naval base. 'Is he one of us?' was the question which hung in the air as we enjoyed a game of verbal tennis. Mary served with stories of her war time WRNS service and talked of her father the Vice Admiral. I returned service with tales of my Grandfather, the deputy Governor General of the Sudan. And so it went on, but I never had the courage to ask Mary what she meant by her comment that she 'particularly enjoyed submariners in Trincomalee'.

Admiral Mary aboard Vagrant of Clyde in 2010, a few months before her 90th birthday

I think Mary's last major expedition was a Scottish cruise aboard *Vagrant* in 2010, when she joined Jane and me to take part in an OCC rally and to attend the Clyde Cruising Club's centenary celebrations. All the leading cruising clubs were there – everybody knew Mary and Mary knew everyone. *Vagrant* had a constant stream of visitors and almost sank under the weight of the well-wishers. She had chosen to travel up on the night sleeper to Glasgow and then on to Oban, arriving onboard about lunchtime – enough to finish someone half her age. But she held court until late, and then helped with the cooking and washing up before going to bed about midnight. And so it went on, going for walks in the rain and climbing over rocky foreshores – our fears about keeping an old lady safe onboard vanished quickly.

She outlasted Jane and me at the partying and was just great fun. When she left she announced that she hadn't managed to book a sleeper back to London and would be sitting up all night. I said she couldn't do that at her age, and she replied that she had had such fun that arriving home exhausted didn't matter at all. I suggested that she should do the little old lady act and throw herself on the goodwill of the train guard, who would be bound to have an empty berth somewhere. Mary thought that was a good idea and claimed that she was really good at the little old lady act, even forcing out a tear in extremis. She did and it worked!'

December 2010 and Mary receives her 'birthday pennant' from then Commodore Bill McLaren

Admiral Mary with the five Commodores who succeeded her. Left to right: Mike Pocock, Bill McLaren, Alan Taylor, Martin Thomas and Tony Vasey. Photo Peter Haden

Later that year the Club held a 90th birthday lunch for Mary at the Royal Yacht Squadron, attended by five current and past Commodores and some 35 other members. A high point was the presentation of a 'birthday pennant', now in the possession of Mary's family. Her last Annual Dinner was in March 2011, when it was held at the Royal Southampton Yacht Club, not too far from her home. By the following year she no longer felt up to attending evening events, but joined members for lunch at the Royal Yacht Squadron earlier in the day of the Dinner and, as always, charmed everyone.

A year or so later Mary took the sensible decision to move into residential care, where she soon became much loved and respected by the staff. She continued to take a keen interest in the club, and spent her last few years surrounded by pictures, photos, trophies, books and papers, all pointing to a life full of interest, dedication and, above all, a great sense of fun and love of life itself.

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THE 2015 AWARDS

A new and very successful departure in April 2016 was to hold the AGM, Annual Dinner and Awards presentations at Greenlands, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire, a conference centre housed in a magnificent Grade II listed building. Many members chose to stay for the weekend – see the report in the June *Newsletter*. We were joined at the Dinner by Robert Stevens, Managing Director of Topsail Insurance Ltd, whose company generously assisted towards the cost of the event.

Master of Ceremonies was Canadian member John van-Schalkwyk, and many of the details about the Awards recipients which follow were based on information compiled by van-S (as he's always known) and Webmaster Daria Blackwell. The latter also produced an impressive slide show about the Awards presentation and the recipients – if you've not seen it, seek it out at www.oceancruisingclub.org, followed by ABOUT THE OCC and Awards. The handsome wooden plaques presented to all awardees were created by Past Commodore John Franklin.

MC John van-Schalkwyk

Nominations for the 2016 Awards are already open – follow the links above, or e-mail awardsnominations@oceancruisingclub.org. Note, however, that only full members can make nominations, and that nominated passages must have been completed after 30 June 2015 (ie. no more than 18 months prior to the 30 December 2016 closing date).

The 2015 Awards were presented in three groups between the main courses of the meal, and are taken here in the order in which they were announced. Photographs taken at the event are by Kathy Mansfield [www.kathymansfieldphotos.com] and Alex Blackwell [www.whiteseahorse.ie].

THE DAVID WALLIS TROPHY

For the 'most outstanding, valuable or enjoyable contribution to *Flying Fish*', as nominated by the Editorial Sub-Committee.

In 2004, to mark the Club's 50th anniversary, Past Commodore Tony Vasey researched and wrote up the Club's history as *The First Fifty Years*. Ten years on, Past Commodore and Club Historian **Bill McLaren** offered to bring it up-to-date – an offer he began to regret when he realised the amount of work involved. Nevertheless he stuck at the task, consulting all the major players, re-reading *Flying Fish*, *Newsletters* and *Minutes*, and putting it all together to produce the highly readable *Diamond Supplement* for *Flying Fish* 2015/1.

This was by no means Bill's first venture into print. His first *Flying Fish* article,

Past Commodore Bill McLaren holds up the David Wallis Trophy and his commemorative plaque

Vagrant's Voyages, appeared way back in 1997, to be followed by eight more as he, Jane and their Bowman 40 *Vagrant of Clyde* ranged around the Atlantic and Pacific, from south to north, concluding with a figure of eight circumnavigation of New Zealand, a passage across the south Pacific to Chile and on to the Falklands, followed by the long voyage to the Azores and then home. After his return Bill served as Commodore between 2009 and 2012, before taking on the role of Club Historian just in time for the Club's Diamond Jubilee.

The Diamond Supplement fulfilled all the criteria for the David Wallis Trophy, but whereas many previous winners have been selected primarily for being 'enjoyable', Bill's is not only that, but will be of immense value to OCC historians in future years.

THE OCC AWARD OF MERIT

One or more awards, open to members or non-members who have performed some outstanding voyage, achievement or service to the sailing community.

This year the OCC Award of Merit, which may recognise either members or non-members, was shared among multiple members and the local Port Officer Representatives, all of whom made exceptional efforts to assist the people of Vanuatu after the devastation caused by Cyclone *Pam* in March 2015. In alphabetical order the recipients were: **Sam and Jess Bell**, PORs Vanuatu; **Martin and Elizabeth Bevan** of *Caduceus*; **Dennis and Sherry Day** of *Trillium*; **Graham and Avril Johnson** of *Dream Away*; **Tom Partridge and Susie Plume** of *Adina*; **Jonathan and Donna Robinson** of *Chez Nous*; and **Brian Wallace and Sue Dracott** of *Darramy*.

On 13 March last year Cyclone *Pam*, a category 5 hurricane with wind gusts up to 200mph, swept through Vanuatu killing 16 and destroying or seriously damaging 90% of the buildings in the capital, Port Vila. Even so, it became a gathering point for yachts wanting to help. Port Officer Representatives **Sam and Jess Bell** quickly realised that

4000 litres of water and 50 cases of tuna delivered to local people in Vanuatu

information and logistics were the two largest challenges that yachts could help address, and formed a network to share information and deliver goods and services to the more remote islands. They helped establish Wita Aid [www.witaaid.org] which enlisted three volunteer superyachts, OCC boats and others to deliver fresh water to hard hit communities – 2 million litres so far. As Jess Bell puts it:

> "It was quite remarkable to see how the yachts could help. There were many large aid organizations here but they were really struggling to get accurate information and the delivery of items was very expensive. The yachts were valuable because the same sets of eyes were looking at different places so assessments of which areas were in the most desperate state could be submitted. We could then suggest to other yachts where to visit and what could be taken that would be of most use.
>
> The other great value of the yachts was that the help continued over months. When a disaster hits, the recovery period is very long. Even now, one year post *Pam*, many villages still are without roofs, gutters, and crops. We hope many more yachts will come this year, to cruise our beautiful country and also to give a hand where needed."

Dr Elizabeth Bevan treats an infected wound as Martin looks on

Roving Rear Commodores **Martin and Elizabeth Bevan** were in New Zealand, halfway though their circumnavigation aboard *Caduceus*, their Amel 54, when Cyclone *Pam* hit Vanuatu. As well as donations of money they were given many much-needed items by family, friends and organizations. These they loaded aboard

Caduceus together with medical supplies, food, building equipment, water tanks and even seeds for planting, and reached Vanuatu in late May, in time to make two five-week round trips to the outer islands which had been ignored by the emergency response.

Elizabeth is a retired GP, and after dealing with a good deal of red tape she was finally accredited by the Vanuatu Ministry of Health to practice medicine in the islands. This allowed them to top up their supplies from the various NGOs and charities, as well as from the central pharmacy at the hospital. They set up and ran clinics, and did school medical inspections to report on the general health of the children.

See the September 2015 *Newsletter*, and *Project Vanuatu* in *Flying Fish* 2015/2, for the full story.

Dennis and Sherry Day arrived aboard *Trillium*, their Halberg Rassy 48, towards the end of June. During an earlier season in the islands they had become involved with one particular village, and following Cyclone *Pam* they returned to that village with aid, materials and skills. In a two month period they helped restore water catchment systems in the primary school, installed solar lighting in the church, distributed food, clothing, housewares, school supplies, tools and petrol. They even provided clean drinking water from their watermaker.

The school needed a computer, so they bought one and Sherry taught people how to use it. She also started 'Dresses for Dignity' to raise matching funds to buy new Mother Hubbard dresses and other clothing for women and teenagers.

Graham and Avril Johnson, our Membership Secretaries for ten years in the 1990s and later Roving Rear Commodores for seven years, have a wide network of friends in New Zealand which ensured a flood of relief aid goods arriving aboard their Peterson 44, *Dream Away*. They reached Vanuatu at the beginning of July and voyaged through the entire island chain, visiting many remote locations and villages where aid was needed. Help ranged from supplying clinics with baby clothes to providing building materials and designs for new cyclone shelters. Graham, a retired engineer, repaired and rebuilt power systems, equipped local people with tools and skills, and generally fixed a range of things from computers to ancient sewing machines. Avril's IT expertise produced great promotional materials for future events and ventures. They wrote that:

> "People didn't 'expect' anything from us. There was a quiet dignity in the

Avril and Graham Johnson a few years ago while in cooler climes

way they asked for a tool or some expertise that they needed, but they expected to reciprocate in whatever way they could – usually giving away their only commodity, the fresh vegetables they were only beginning to be able to grow again, and apologising that they could not give us fruit as these crops take much longer to re-start. We always 'gratefully received' the minimum we could get away with."

Adina, a Hylas 46, was on the hard in Vanuatu when the cyclone hit. **Tom Partridge and Susie Plume** returned from New Zealand, launched their boat – which, fortunately, was undamaged – and immediately began co-ordinating the efforts of OCC boats and other members of the Pacific sailing community. They helped raise funds, and were then able to provide and distribute everything from building materials to first aid supplies and clothes to the outlying islands. Susie herself ran a first aid clinic. Tom and Susie wrote:

Tom Partridge and Susie Plume

"We think the OCC deserves a big compliment for the role they played in liaising with the press and utilising the OCC website to provide updates which helped the many yachts that travelled to Vanuatu to provide support."

Jonathon and Donna Robinson left Fiji aboard their Leopard 40 *Chez Nous* and arrived in Vanuatu at the end of April, staying until the beginning of September. *Chez Nous* joined *Sea Mercy* [www.seamercy.org], a floating healthcare clinic, even though she was a non-medical boat. Jonathon and Donna delivered food and aid, and backed up the medical boats. They then worked with Vanuatu and NGO officials to try to improve the procedures for distributing aid to the smaller out islands.

Donna Robinson holds out the Sea Mercy flag

Brian Wallace and Sue Dracott in *Darramy*, a Beneteau First 405, also joined Sea Mercy, arriving in mid May and staying until early September. She was loaded to the gunwales with aid, much of which had been donated from Australia and New Zealand, and ferried supplies to the out islands. Once there they found the greatest need

Brian Wallace and Sue Dracott

was to repair water collection systems, and by the time they left they had provided water storage for over 200,000 litres. They also helped repair several community fishing boats.

Many other vessels, including several superyachts, assisted in the aid effort to Vanuatu following the devastation caused by Cyclone *Pam*, as did various NGOs including Sea Mercy and the Butterfly Trust [www.butterflytrust.org]. Some of the cruisers – from Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, the UK and USA and other countries – stayed for several months, while other yachts gave assistance as they were passing through. The cruising community stepped up to the plate when they were needed – indicative of the special breed of people who make up this unique worldwide fellowship. Visit the OCC website [www.oceancruisingclub.org] for more details of the non-OCC yachts and aid agencies involved in the relief effort.

THE GEOFF PACK MEMORIAL AWARD

Presented in memory of the late Geoff Pack, Editor of *Yachting Monthly* magazine and OCC Rear Commodore 1993–97, for the person (member or non-member) who, by his or her writing, has done most to foster and encourage ocean cruising in yachts or other small craft.

In addition to co-authoring her first book, *Voyaging with Kids: A guide to family life afloat*, very favourably reviewed in *Flying Fish* 2015/2, **Behan Gifford** also writes an informative and entertaining blog about the world-wide travels of

The Gifford family in Papua New Guinea, 2012

her family – husband Jamie and children Niall, Mairen and Siobhan – aboard their Stevens 47 *Totem* at www.sailingtotem.com.

At the time the family sailed out of Puget Sound on 21 August 2008, their children were aged 9, 6, and 4. Since then they've explored the Pacific, spent time in Australia – so their normally home-schooled kids could experience the 'real thing' – become immersed in the different languages, histories and cultures of dozens of countries, and made hundreds of friends, both aboard other yachts and ashore. Behan describes and discusses their experiences with a fine eye for detail and humour, but also with detachment regarding decisions and (occasionally) worries. *Voyaging with Kids* tackles everything from choosing a suitable boat through what to bring along, how to stay safe and healthy, provisioning in faraway places, and activities to pass the time or introduce young crew members to new experiences. Prospective cruising parents will find the chapter on boat schooling particularly valuable, with more information on the topic on the blog. Also valuable are the insights from more than 65 other cruising families which provide varied first-hand perspectives from both parents and kids enjoying similar lifestyles. The book concludes with interviews and letters contributed by former cruising kids, about the great experiences they remember and how those experiences shaped their future lives.

Behan Gifford, recipient of the 2015 Geoff Pack Memorial Award

Both book and blog are generously illustrated, often with photographs of kids doing interesting things in exotic places, and the appendices are comprehensive, including 13 pages of resources and references used in researching material. *Flying Fish*'s reviewer predicted that *Voyaging with Kids* was 'destined to be a best-seller in the sailing books category ... the parenting bible for the cruising family'.

THE QUALIFIERS' MUG

Awarded for the most ambitious or arduous qualifying voyage by a new member or members, as submitted for publication in *Flying Fish* or the *Newsletter*.

Competition for the 2015 Qualifier's Mug – or in this instance Qualifiers' Mug – was of a particularly high standard, with **Debi Dennis and Jack Markin** very worthy winners for their passage across the North Atlantic aboard their 1969-built Ohlson 38, *Iroquois*. For the full story, turn to page 55 of this issue and read how they started sailing in dinghies on the Great Lakes, then progressing to cruising after buying *Iroquois* in 2010. Their decision to cross the North Atlantic to Scotland – without insurance due to

Jack Markin and Debi Dennis were presented with the 2015 Qualifier's Mug

their lack of experience – was based on the 'because it's there' principle ... "We did the passage simply because we could, in the sense that we had the boat and we had the knowledge, we had the desire and we had the persistence, if not the normally requisite experience".

Overcoming initial seasickness, Debi and Jack left from Shelburne, Nova Scotia on 17 June 2015 and made landfall at Oban, Scotland on 19 July after 32 days at sea. During that time they experienced everything from seven days of very light winds ('miserable, difficult and frustrating'), to 36 hours of winds in the 50–60 knot range ('too much, all you can do is whatever you can, while you wait and hope for it to stop'). All were met with quiet competence and practised teamwork in a well-chosen and well-equipped boat. Their descriptions of life at sea are often lyrical, doubtless partly due to the newness of it all, but the sheer physical challenge of hand-steering 90 minute shifts in winds gusting above 60 knots is not overlooked. Visit www.sailblogs.com/member/debiandjack for more details and their movements since.

☆ ★ ☆ ★ ☆

THE RAMBLER MEDAL

For the most challenging short voyage made by a member or members. (The definition of 'short' became somewhat elastic over the years, so is now defined as a voyage of three weeks or less and covering no more than 1000 miles, though this may form part of a longer cruise.)

Although it's little more than 600 miles from Bermuda across the Gulf Stream to Newport, RI, they can be a particularly unpleasant 600 miles, as experienced by **Peter McCrea and Doug Theobolds** in August last year.

Panacea, Peter's Freedom 32 cat sloop in which he has logged over 70,000 sea miles, had been left in St George's earlier in the year when a moped accident rendered Peter and his son John unable to sail her home. On recovery, and after careful thought, Peter asked his old friend Doug Theobalds to stand in – an excellent choice, as became clear. Despite missing their usual weather briefing they decided to sail on the morning of Thursday 6 August, in initially benign conditions. Next morning, however, Florida-based weather guru Chris Parker predicted that 'a massive, energetic system akin to a nor'easter

would create untenable sea states in the region of the Gulf Stream for which *Panacea* was heading', and despite altering course and reefing to cut speed they were unable to avoid the edge of it.

At about 0300 on Sunday morning *Panacea* was knocked flat by an outsize wave, leading to not just water and chaos below, but also an incipient electrical fire. Their actions in the aftermath – coping with immediate problems, jury-rigging power to the autopilot, stove and other essentials, and completing the passage to Newport without assistance – turned a potentially dangerous situation into a successful passage, and it was for this demonstration of resourcefulness, resilience and self-sufficiency that the Award was made. See *Fetching Panacea* on page **137** of this issue for the full story.

Doug Theobolds accepts Rambler Medal plaques for himself and Peter McCrea from newly elected Commodore Anne Hammick

All those present at the Awards presentation were delighted that Doug Theobalds was able to attend to receive both his and Peter's awards.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THE AUSTRALIAN TROPHY

Donated by the late Sid Jaffe, twice Rear Commodore Australia, the Australian Trophy is awarded for the most challenging voyage made by an Australian member or members which either starts or ends in Australia. It is decided by ballot of the Australian membership.

Mark Morwood (left) receives the Australian Trophy plaque from Nick Halsey, Regional Rear Commodore for North East Australia

Mark Morwood (Australian) and **Marta Portoles** (Spanish), winners of the 2015 Australian Trophy, met in Boston in 1990. Twenty-two years later, and after six years' work on their Catana 48 catamaran *Por Dos*, they left to sail the world with 12-year-old twins Alec and Roan. From Massachusetts they sailed south to the Bahamas, across the Pond to the Med, back to the Caribbean, and continued through the Panama Canal to the Galapagos. From there their course took them to the Marquesas, followed by the coconut milk run through the South Pacific to Tahiti, on to Suwarrow, Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu and finally New Caledonia. There they sold *Por Dos*, but stayed aboard to assist the new owners as they sailed her the 790 miles to Brisbane. They are now settled ashore – at least until the boys finish their final three years of high school.

Their sailing experiences are recounted on their blog at www.sailblogs.com/member/pordos.

THE VERTUE AWARD

For the North American member who best represents the spirit of OCC Founder Humphrey Barton, through sailing achievements or service to the club and cruising community. It was presented, and is decided, by the North American Regional Rear Commodores.

The 2015 Vertue Award went to **Sid and Rebecca Shaw**, as reported in the March 2016 *Newsletter*.

Both joined the OCC in 1996. Sid cited a 1965 passage from the Galapagos Islands to Hiva Oa, Marquesas in a 35ft Piver-designed trimaran, Cygnus-A as his qualifying voyage – see *The World's First Cruising Boat Solar Panel* in *Flying Fish* 2014/2. Rebecca's passage was a slightly more modest Beaufort, North Carolina to Virgin Gorda, BVI in the couple's 33ft Korora, but dated back nearly as far, to 1972 – see *The Small World of the Vast Oceans*, *Flying Fish* 2014/1. Between 2000 and 2009 they covered some 18,000 miles aboard their Halberg Rassy 352, *Dovka*, mostly in the eastern Mediterranean, though taking time out to crew from Fiji to Sydney in the 65ft cutter, *Van Diemen III* – see www.dovka.com.

Sid and Rebecca Shaw were presented with the Vertue Award in the United States last October

Even before returning full time to their home near Washington DC they had taken on the role of joint Regional Rear Commodores for the USA South East region, remaining in post from 2008 until 2014 and working hard to ensure the Club thrived in their area. Their cruises-in-company and parties became a high point for many members, and the citation included particular praise for having been 'extraordinarily generous with their time and talents, and for playing hosts to so many members from around the globe'.

THE ROSE MEDAL

For the most challenging short-handed voyage made by a member or members.

The 2015 Rose Medal was awarded to Roving Rear Commodores **Chris Cromey and Suzanne Hills** of *Whanake*, for sailing – not motoring – the 1200 miles north through the Chilean channels from the Beagle Channel north to Valdivia, as recounted in *Flying Fish* 2014/2 – *Uphill Through The Chilean Channels*. The common knowledge is that sailing north is not possible. Even the *Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego Nautical Guide* states that, 'Calms or strong north or northwest winds are the only two possibilities in the Chilean Channels', but Chris and Suzanne were not to be deterred. Their answer was to 'take plenty of time, allowing at least four months to complete the channels' (in the event they took seven). 'This length of time means that the majority of passages can be done under sail in force 3–5 winds, supplemented with efficient motoring in the calms and quiet weather'.

Chris Cromey and Suzanne Hills' Whanake sits out a williwaw in Caleta Mousse during their transit of the Chilean channels

This strategy served them well. On an average day they would make about 15 miles progress – though 25 miles or more through the water – in winds gusting up to 25 knots. At night they moored to trees, using very long lines. It was cold and wet and sometimes uncomfortable, but it was not always upwind – on several occasions they enjoyed good winds, including a run of southeast and south winds for several days. As Suzanne added in a subsequent e-mail, "Our whole aim was to sail the channels and so we avoided unpleasant conditions. Often it was pleasant, occasionally it was unpleasant, but mostly it was not unpleasant. We are advocates for sailing ... people heading north are much more likely to encounter unpleasant conditions by motoring or motor-sailing, because they push on in marginal conditions. We feel very fortunate that in the 21st century there remain wild and undeveloped sailing regions".

Turn to page 63 for the next leg of Chris and Suzanne's voyage – *5000 Miles in 'The Variables'*.

THE OCC PORT OFFICER MEDAL

Instituted in 2008, the Port Officer Medal is awarded to one or more Port Officer(s) or Port Officer Representative(s) who has/have provided outstanding service to the Club and the wider sailing community by developing and promoting their port, harbour or area.

Our Port Officers give remarkable service – they fix things, they make things work – and if they can't, they invariably 'know a man who can'. As in previous years, two candidates stood out amongst the many nominations.

Donal McClement has recently retired as our Port Officer in Crosshaven, Ireland, after more than 20 years of consistent and stalwart service. He is an experienced sailor, who started almost 70 years ago in Cadet dinghies and has since embraced everything from 505s to offshore racers, not to mention a great number of cruising boats.

As well as representing Ireland, the UK and Switzerland at international regattas, Donal skippered the RAF Sailing Association's UFO 34 *Black Arrow* to win Class IV in the infamous 1979 Fastnet Race. Between 1986 and 2004 he was heavily involved in setting up and developing Cork Week and racing classic yachts in the Med, as well as skippering six transatlantic passages and sailing 'half a circumnavigation'. On retiring from the RAF, in which he was a Navigator, Donal returned to live in Cork where he set up the Crosshaven Boatyard and Brokerage Service. As Port Officer, his experience and local knowledge were a great asset to visiting sailors. The role of Port Officer Crosshaven has now been handed on to Mike Hodder.

Oliver Solanas Heinrichs, our Port Officer in Fuerteventura, Canary Islands, comes from a strong family sailing tradition – his father lived aboard for many years, while his uncle completed a circumnavigation – and he has sailed the Canary Islands and Madeira mostly singlehanded. He is currently Vice President of ANAVRE, *La Asociación de Navegantes de Recreo* (the Spanish Cruising Association), and representative for several international associations on Fuerteventura in addition to the OCC.

Oliver was praised for his enthusiastic determination to meet every boat and his attitude that 'nothing is ever too much trouble'. He works with maritime conferences and boat shows, as a safety officer, and as the Spanish press contact for the ARC. He is currently editing *The Best*

Oliver Solanas Heinrichs, Port Officer Representative for Fuerteventura, Canary Islands, recipient of one of the two Port Officer medals for 2015

of Cruising Canary Islands with editor Mike Westin, intended not only as a cruising guide but also to advise on shoreside facilities and attractions.

Oliver summed up his approach as: "For me, it is very important that sailors belong to an association helping the sailing community, not to mention how useful it is to arrive at an unknown island or city and have already a contact there, a friend". It would be hard to describe the role of an OCC Port Officer more aptly.

THE VASEY VASE

Presented by past Commodore Tony Vasey and his wife Jill, the Vasey Vase is awarded for a 'voyage of an unusual or exploratory nature' made by a member or members.

The 2015 Vasey Vase was awarded to Australian doctor **John Vallentine** for a series of interesting and challenging voyages over a ten year period aboard his 1973-built Peterson 46 *Tainui*. During this time he has devoted six months of each year to providing medical services to remote Aboriginal outstations in the western Australian deserts, and the other six months to sailing – mostly to cold climates and rugged, isolated locations.

John Vallentine, winner of the Vasey Vase for a succession of challenging passages

In 2005 *Tainui* sailed from Hobart to New Zealand's sub-antarctic islands, re-crossed the Tasman Sea and returned to Sydney via Nelson and Lord Howe Island. The following year she revisited New Zealand en route to the Chatham Islands and on across the Southern Ocean to spend two years cruising Patagonia. After sailing north up the Atlantic John visited the North American East Coast, before continuing to Scotland via Iceland, the Faroes and the Shetlands. In 2011 and 2012 he cruised the Baltic Sea, wintering *Tainui* ashore at Tromsø in Arctic Norway.

From there *Tainui* made the passage round North Cape to the Barents and White Seas, and in 2013 became only the second foreign yacht – and the first not to be flying the Russian flag – to voyage from the White Sea through Russia and Ukraine to the Black Sea via the Volga and Don Rivers. See *Following the Volga Vikings* in *Flying Fish* 2013/2.

Maxine Maters accepted the Vasey Vase on behalf of her skipper, John Vallentine

John's crew for the voyage was Maxine Maters, a Dutch national with 20 years' experience of living in Russia, whose command of the language was invaluable. They are currently working on a guide book to the route to be published later this year – visit www.sailinginrussia.org and www.tainui.org for more details.

As John was on passage in the Pacific at the time of the Awards presentations, Maxine attended to accept it in his place.

THE JESTER MEDAL

Donated by the Jester Trust in 2006 as a way to perpetuate the spirit and ideals epitomised by Blondie Hasler and Mike Richey aboard *Jester*, and open to both members and non-members, the Jester Medal is presented for a noteworthy singlehanded voyage in a boat of 30ft or less overall, or for an outstanding contribution to the art of singlehanded sailing.

Rory McDougall is a man who follows his dreams. At the age of 19 his dream was to circumnavigate aboard the smallest multihull ever, so in 1991 he started to build *Cooking Fat*, a 21ft Wharram-designed Tiki catamaran, in a barn near Totnes, Devon. It took him a year to sail his bright red boat to New Zealand, where he remained for four years. Continuing on around the world, singlehanded for about half the voyage, he finally returned to Dartmouth in 1997 almost exactly six years after departing. *Cooking Fat* had indeed

Rory McDougall with the Jester Medal and accompanying plaque

become – and remains – the smallest catamaran ever to circumnavigate. Visit www.roryandcookie.com for more details.

Thirteen years later it was time to test the Rory and *Cookie* partnership again, so he entered the 2010 Jester Challenge from Plymouth to Newport (see www.jesterinfo.org and www.roryandcookie.blogspot.co.uk). After 34 days of upwind struggle, *Cookie* was pipped to the post by just two hours – she is believed to be the smallest catamaran ever to sail the upwind route across the North Atlantic – after which it took Rory only 22 days to return to England, again singlehanded. Of that return passage he wrote, "A slow start for the first three days, then we had a weather front pass over and we were off, riding southwest winds the whole way for the next 19 days. I got bored and read five paperbacks in all...".

Cooking Fat at the start of the 2010 Jester Challenge

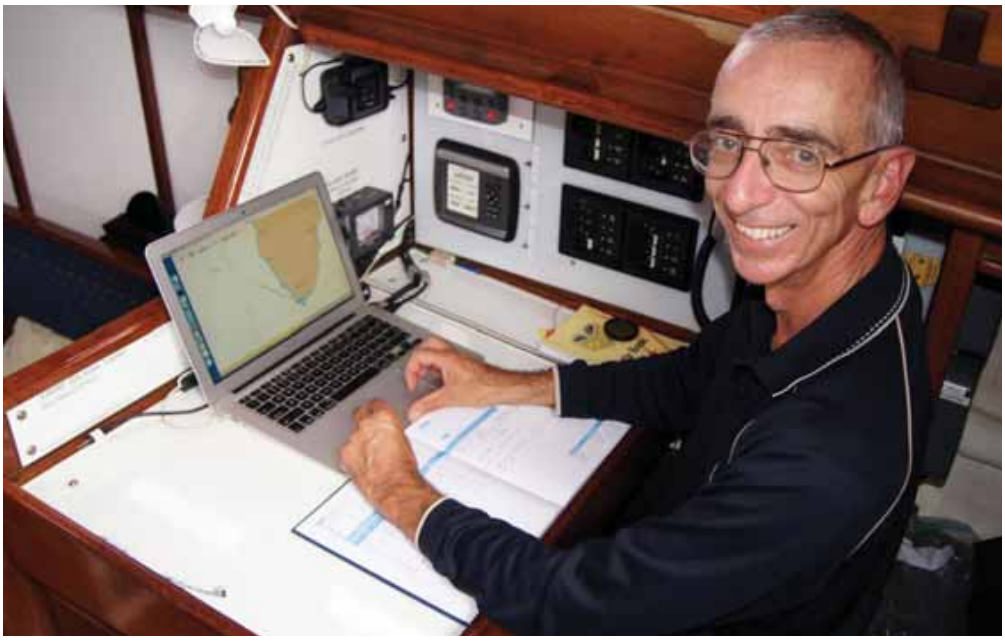
THE WATER MUSIC TROPHY

Awarded to the member or members who has/have contributed most to the OCC by way of providing cruising, navigation or pilotage information.

This year the Water Music Trophy goes to Australian member **Mike Reynolds** of *Zen Again*, a sailor and consultant in electronic engineering. He has created a repository of KAP charts and promoted the use of SEAiq software in a package for iPad so that KAP files can be used in real time with live NMEA data shared by wifi aboard. (In plain English for the rest of us, that means that one can now overlay a satellite picture from Google Earth on a chart from OpenCPN.)

Mike and his wife Nicki are currently on passage to the UK from New Zealand, and on learning that he had been awarded the Water Music Trophy Mark wrote:

> "I sincerely thank the OCC for this award which came as a complete surprise. To be recognized in this way is very pleasing.
>
> KAP libraries of GoogleEarth imagery for marine navigation would



Mike Reynolds at his chart table aboard Zen Again

not be happening without the free software created by Paul Higgins. His GE2KAP software initiated all which has followed. If you use KAP files I ask you to go to Paul's web site at www.gdayii.ca and click on the Donate button. My part was simply to gather all the KAP files I could find, create others I needed, organize them all into geographical areas, and make them freely available on the internet. Additionally, I provided tips for safe use of KAP files.

One wonders how long it will be before we can download real-time high-resolution imagery at sea. We'd know who's in that anchorage around the point before getting there! AIS with pictures. Suddenly cloudy England seems like a nice place to cruise!"

☆ ★ ☆ ★ ☆

THE OCC SEAMANSHIP AWARD

Presented by Past Commodore John Franklin and his wife Jenny in 2014, and open to both members and non-members, it is intended to recognise exceptional feats or acts of seamanship.

This Award recognises **Bob and Mona Jankowski** of *Continuum*, for the heroic rescue of Randy and Dawn Ortiz from *Nirvana Now*, which was taking on water in the Pacific. They motored for more than 40 hours into strong winds and rough seas, standing two-hour watches in order to maintain radio contact with the stricken vessel. The situation was critical when *Continuum* arrived on the scene, but a safe transfer was achieved by dinghy thanks to the seamanship of the crew.

It all started on 6 April 2015 with news via the SSB Pacific Seafarers Net that another

Bob and Mona Jankowski receive the OCC Seamanship Award plaque from Nina Kiff (centre), Past Regional Rear Commodore New Zealand

yacht about 200 miles distant was having problems. Bob and Mona were asked to contact her direct, and learned that her forestay had separated from the deck and she was having steering difficulties. Both boats were about 1200 miles from land. By the following morning the gap had narrowed to 137 miles, but *Nirvana Now* had lost her steering, was taking on water through the rudder post, and was taking breaking seas over her bow having deployed a sea anchor. The two yachts agreed to stay in radio contact every two hours, and Bob and Mona now began standing two-hour watches, motor-sailing to increase their speed.

Every two hours Bob plotted *Nirvana Now*'s set and drift in case they lost radio contact. By dawn on 8 April they were 10 miles apart, but there was still no AIS signal or VHF contact, just SSB radio. *Continuum* was still motor-sailing hard to windward, into seas averaging 3–4m. With 5 miles to go they gained visual contact. Owners Randy and Dawn managed to launch their aluminium dinghy from the pitching foredeck, mount the outboard, and throw in some salvaged belongings. As they left *Nirvana Now*'s side, *Continuum*, with Mona at the wheel, took up station about 40m astern. Randy and Dawn approached their port quarter, handed up their rescued possessions and scrambled aboard via the sugar-scoop stern. Soon *Continuum*'s cockpit was filled with smiles and an air of relief. By this time *Nirvana Now* was low in the water – still floating, but with just a few hours remaining. The rescue had been carried out with no time to spare.

Bob and Mona aboard Continuum in Auckland

THE OCC AWARD

Made to the member or members who has/have done most to 'foster and encourage ocean cruising in small craft and the practice of seamanship and navigation in all branches'.

The OCC Award was presented to Tom and Vicky Jackson of *Sunstone* for their many cruising and racing achievements over 34 years and almost 200,000 miles, aboard their 40ft Sparkman & Stephens sloop. In 2007 they received the Barton Cup for their 80,000 mile circumnavigation, which included rounding of the five great capes – see *The Accidental Circumnavigation*, *Flying Fish* 2008/1. In early 2015 they were chosen to receive the Cruising Club of America's prestigious Blue Water Medal.

Tom and Vicky Jackson were presented with the OCC Award in New York in March, by then Commodore John Franklin

Tom and Vicky both learned to sail as children, met while crewing on a Fastnet Race, became engaged during a cruise from Spain to England, and married in 1972. Six years later they moved aboard a Rustler 31, and then bought *Sunstone*, their 1965 varnished S&S sloop in 1981. Nevertheless *Sunstone* proved competitive racing offshore, winning the 1985 Channel Race overall and her class in four of the eight Fastnet Races she completed with Tom and Vicky. She was twice a member of the English team in the RORC Commodores' Cup, including the winning team in 1996.

In 1997 Tom took early retirement as Principal of Portsmouth College and Vicky as Assistant Dean of Faculty at Southampton Solent University. Two weeks later they sailed away to begin world cruising. They have crossed the Atlantic twice and the Pacific Ocean six times, five of those between New Zealand and Alaska, visiting the more remote Fijian islands, Guam, Japan, the Aleutian islands, Alaska, Vancouver, Hawaii and Western Samoa. Their six-year circumnavigation was eastward, taking in the five great southern capes, but also reaching 61°N and 57°S. They have continued to race, competing in the Bermuda Race and winning their divisions in the Sydney-Hobart and Swiftsure Races, the latter organised by Canada's Royal Victoria Yacht Club. After returning to New Zealand in 2008 they won the Round North Island Two-Handed Race, and completed the Round New Zealand Two-Handed Race in 2012, for which they were awarded the Royal Cruising Club's Challenge Cup. They finally

settled ashore in New Zealand in 2013, after 35 years of living permanently aboard.

Their praise of the OCC rings very true:

> "We joined the Ocean Cruising Club nearly 20 years ago just before we departed from the UK to start world cruising. Before that our sailing community had been purely that of offshore racing. It was a revelation to us that there was an organisation that set out to serve the needs of the only truly global village, that of long-distance cruising sailors. The longer we have been members the more we have gained. Much of this has been from other individual members or Port Officers, or indeed from members we have never met but whose accounts we have read in *Flying Fish*. There are even members we have never met, with whom we have exchanged regular emails and consider friends when separated by 180° of longitude. That is the nature of the global village that the OCC serves so well."

Tom and Vicky aboard Sunstone

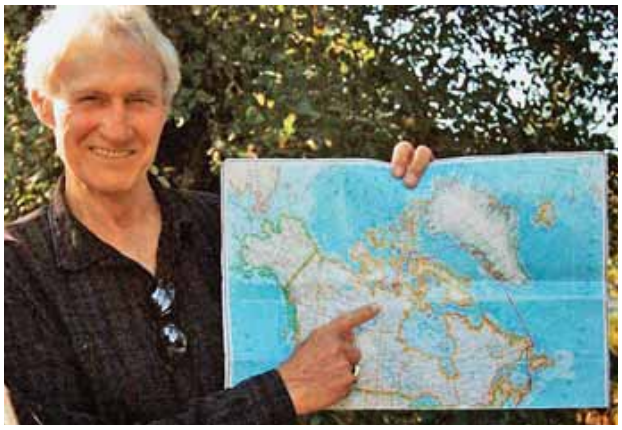
Tom and Vicky have done more than their share to contribute to this pool of knowledge, first contributing to *Flying Fish* back in 1999, with fourteen further articles – all illustrated by Vicky's striking photographs – to date. Their latest, *Alone on the Ocean ~ Passage Making*, will be found on page 145 of this issue. The Award presentation was made in New York in March 2015 by then Commodore John Franklin.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

THE BARTON CUP

The OCC's premier award, recognising the most challenging voyage made by a member or members.

Winner of the 2015 Barton Cup was **Michael Johnson** for his two-year transit of the Northwest Passage from the Chesapeake Bay to Alaska aboard his 44ft staysail schooner *Gitana*, as described in *Flying Fish* 2015/1 – see *The Northwest Passage: Two Difficult Ice*



Michael Johnson indicates Gitana's route through the Northwest Passage

Years, page 119. The transit took place during a period that was particularly challenging due to ice conditions, which caused many vessels to turn back. From crossing the Arctic Circle northbound off Greenland on 13 August 2013 to recrossing it southbound on 9 September 2014 *Gitana* sailed some 4200 miles, as well as enduring temperatures of minus 56°C (minus 68°F) while laid up ashore at Cambridge Bay.

Michael was born in Virginia in 1944, and served in the US Army as a paratrooper with training in Arctic warfare. Later he earned a doctorate from the College of William & Mary in Virginia. He has sailed for much of his adult life, in a wide variety of craft including oyster skipjacks on the Chesapeake Bay, STA schooners, square-rigged barquentines, East African dhows and Javanese *phinisis*, as well as small yachts of all kinds. On these vessels he has served as captain, navigator, expedition leader, boatswain, commercial fisherman and crew, though by way of a change he has also paddled a dugout solo down the May and Sepik Rivers of New Guinea. He is particularly partial to schooners, and has owned and sailed *Gitana* for the past 16 years, covering more than 125,000 miles.

Michael Johnson, winner of the Barton Cup for the second time

Michael previously received the Barton Cup in 1990 for his east-west rounding of Cape Horn in 85 days in an engineless 32ft cutter. In August 1994 he completed a 5½ year east-west circumnavigation south of the five great southern capes, sending accounts of some parts of the voyage to *Flying Fish*. These appeared between 1990 and 1995, and are all available on the OCC website.

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VOYAGING TO THE TOP OF AMERICA: A TWO-SEASON CRUISE TO ARCTIC ALASKA

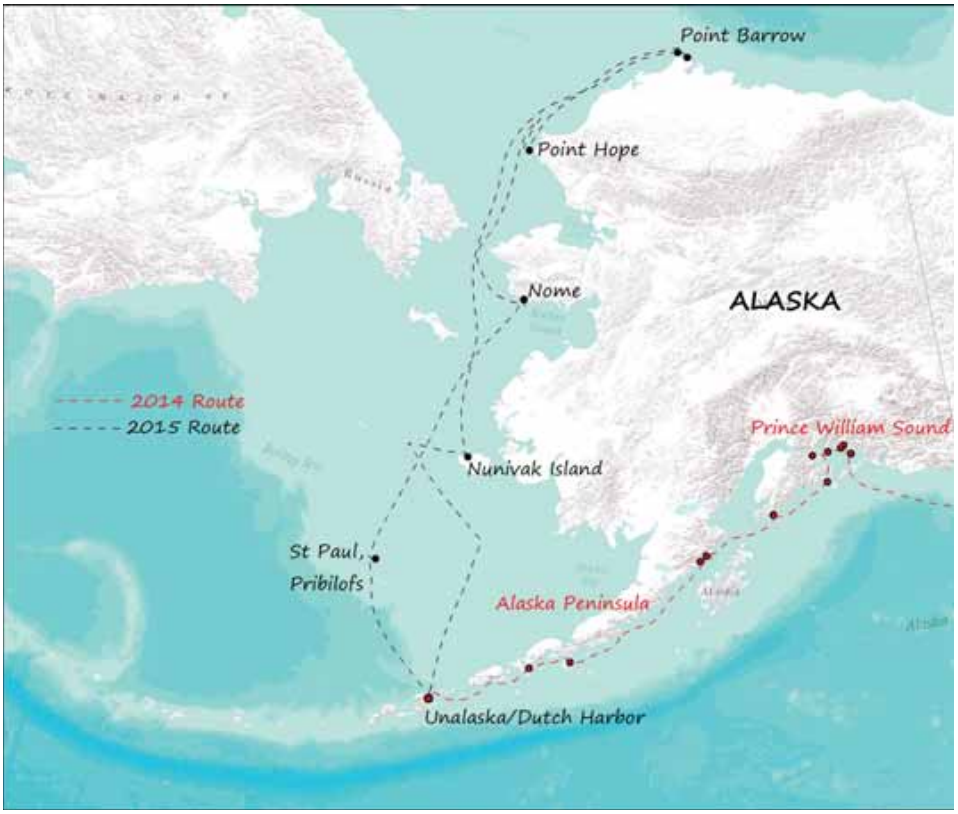
Ellen Massey Leonard

(*Crossing an ocean had been a dream of Ellen's since childhood until, in 2006 at age 20, she set sail on a circumnavigation with her then boyfriend, now husband, Seth Leonard. Despite moving to landlocked Switzerland soon after completing their voyage in 2010, they've continued to cruise every summer. The two-year voyage described here covered some 6500 miles.*

Celeste *is a 40ft custom cold-moulded 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.*

*Ellen's photograph of '*Celeste *and sea ice near Barrow' appears on the front cover of this issue. To admire more of her stunning photographs, visit Ellen and Seth's fascinating and highly-recommended blog at www.GoneFloatabout.com.*)

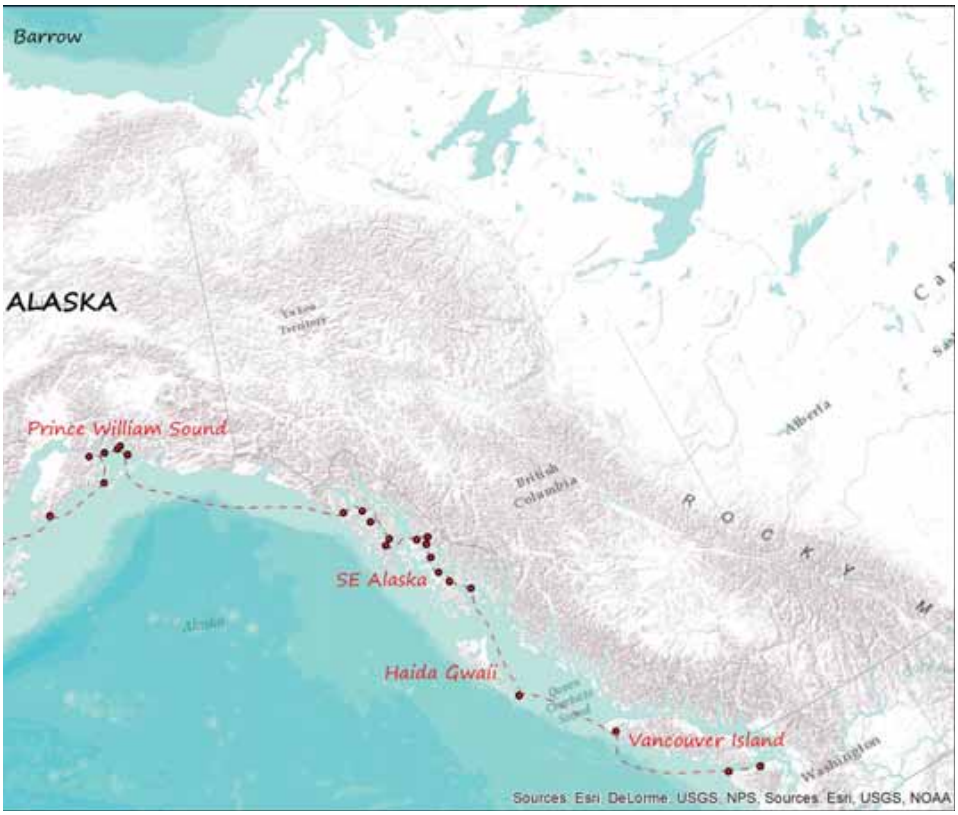
One of the best things about cruising, for me anyway, is that the more one does, the more one wants to do. Fairly early during our circumnavigation my husband – then boyfriend



– Seth and I started discussing other potential voyages. These weren't serious discussions, more like musings, because of course we were focused on the journey at hand. But the seed of an idea was there, and over the last two summers that idea became reality.

In 2013 Seth and I cruised my childhood waters of British Columbia aboard our new-to-us yacht, *Celeste*. (We'd sold our previous boat after completing our circumnavigation.) Although *Celeste* was fit and sound for temperate waters, we decided to go ahead with a full '25-year refit' before embarking again in 2014. Our destination was the Arctic, not a place we particularly wanted to be doing unexpected yacht restoration on the fly. So over the winter, *Celeste* was treated to a new barrier coat, engine, heater, wiring, batteries, plumbing, radar and her first GPS ever. There were also myriad smaller projects, as there always are.

We launched on 20 June 2014 and headed down the Strait of Juan de Fuca to the Pacific. We'd intended to make a straight shot to Alaska, but the one item we hadn't replaced – our sails – caused an unplanned stop in Winter Harbor on Vancouver Island's west coast. It took us about thirty seconds to be thrilled we'd put in there. Bald eagles and ospreys soared overhead, sea otters floated on their backs cracking open shellfish, and a family of black bears grazed in the tall grass. We repaired the blown-out genoa, but then we invented more projects, just so we could stay a little longer. A 24 hour weather window was too good to pass up, however, so *Celeste* was soon flying downwind to the Haida Gwaii islands, where we rode out a gale at anchor – interpreting our emergency Canadian clearance rather loosely – before pressing on to Ketchikan.



Celeste in Chatham Strait, Southeast Alaska

North of the touristic Ketchikan, Southeast Alaska was everything it's reputed to be – fast sailing in protected channels, serrated peaks soaring above the canneries of Petersburg, scoter sea ducks flying in flocks just above the water, sea lions barking at us from bell buoys, waterfalls tumbling hundreds of feet to the sea. Seth and I hiked through lush rainforest on the mainland and soaked in the hot springs on Baranof Island. We walked the boardwalks of Elfin Cove and glimpsed the snow-capped mountains behind Glacier Bay. We navigated fog and currents, high winds and calms, deep anchorages and crab pots. And just like on Vancouver Island, our most memorable experiences had to do with wildlife.

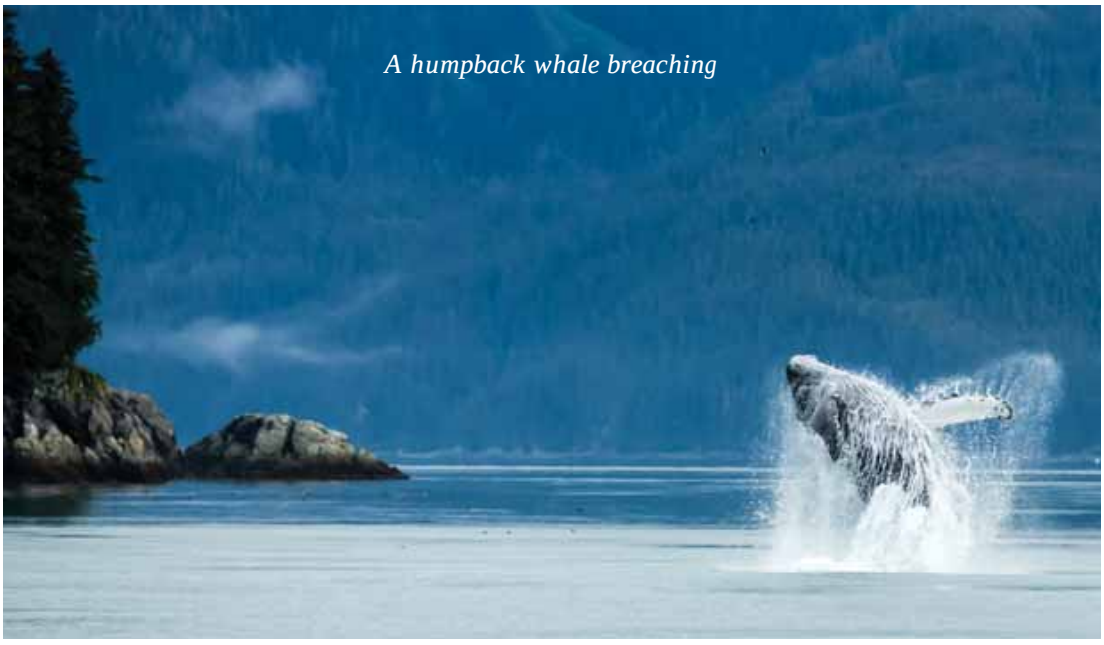
On leaving Thomas Bay north of Petersburg, I steered *Celeste* into Frederick Sound, intending to sail the whole 50 miles to Baranof Warm Springs that day. Then Seth saw a spout, and another, and another. *Celeste* was surrounded by humpback whales! I didn't know which way to look – a pod was bubble-net feeding close to shore, in the distance was the splash and boom of a whale breaching, and right next to *Celeste*'s starboard side were two placid giants, lazily spouting and diving, and then coming up again on the port side! We didn't make 50 miles that day – we barely made five.

A few days later we anchored off Admiralty Island in a bay headed by a lagoon. Rowing against the tide into the lagoon wasn't easy, even with each of us on an oar, but Seth and I were rewarded by a wilderness even more pristine and quiet than Winter Harbor's. Spruce and hemlock grew thick on all sides, their reflections turning the water a deep green. An eagle with a nest high above us shed a feather which drifted down to float on the calm surface. Spawning dog salmon teemed around the dinghy whenever we dipped our oars. Three or four harbour seals kept popping their heads up, alternately looking at us and hunting the salmon. And then, as we rode the tide out, back to *Celeste*, a juvenile brown bear came out of the underbrush and stood watching us, eyes wide, atop a fallen log.

During our stop in Winter Harbor we had decided to slow down our Arctic voyage from one summer to at least two, so as to spend more time in our ports of call along the way. Three weeks of this idyllic cruising certainly confirmed our decision. Still, we did want to continue onward, and as if Neptune smiled on our plans, a once-in-a-lifetime weather window for the Gulf of Alaska opened up just when we needed it. For three days the sun shone and a light breeze nudged us towards Prince William Sound. Black-footed albatross circled *Celeste*, and the 18,000ft peaks of the St Elias Range gleamed white between sea and sky. Everything changed at Hinchinbrook Entrance with a sudden fierce gale (genoa and full main quickly gave way to staysail), and for two weeks the wind blew strong and the clouds and rain persisted.

Nonetheless, Seth and I enjoyed nosing around this emerald of the Alaskan coast. The gale drove us to seek shelter closer to the head of the Sound than we'd intended for our first night, which positioned us well for a foray to Columbia Glacier. Friends from Unalaska in the Aleutians (better known as Dutch Harbor) had told us not to expect much – the glacier has retreated significantly, so they advised us to spend our time in College Fjord. That was our plan, but we thought we'd poke our bow into Columbia Bay en route. We were glad we did. Our day there was the best we had in the Sound – after that fog and torrential rain shut down any possibility of navigating safely among icebergs. So Columbia was the only tidewater glacier we got to see up close and, despite its retreat, it certainly impressed us. Great blue icebergs, twisted into fantastic shapes, floated down the bay to ground on the 60ft deep underwater moraine. Growlers and bergy bits dotted the water everywhere, tongues of glacier swept down from the 10,000ft tops of the mountains surrounding us, and the terminal face of the main glacier was just as jagged and blue as we'd hoped.

Due to the deteriorating visibility, the rest of our time in the Sound was spent exploring nooks and crannies – anchorages so snug we had to stern-tie despite being the only boat, bays surrounded by taiga forest, coves headed by waterfalls and populated by otters. Nothing to complain of!



A humpback whale breaching

Mt Shishaldin smokes at sunset, Unimak Island, Aleutians

Time was running out, though, so we sadly missed all of the Kenai Fjords save for one wilderness bay. The first moment the wind let us lay our course we were off to the Alaska Peninsula. We made the overnight passage in fog, which lifted to a spectacular dawn and one of the most stunning landfalls we've made in 40,000 miles of voyaging. Immense glaciated peaks reared up from the ocean, dusted in alpenglow and seeming to hover above the last layer of fog. As the sun rose, and *Celeste* reached across Shelikof Strait in a light westerly, we saw that forested Alaska had given way to the vast splendour of tundra Alaska. We hoisted the 'chute – a rare event for this part

Brown bears fish for salmon, Alaska Peninsula

of the world – to sail into Kukak Bay. By the time we dropped anchor off a river delta criss-crossed with bear and wolf prints, we could almost see the woolly mammoths that used to roam these hills.

The primordial Alaska Peninsula was arguably our favourite part of the whole 2014 voyage. The sailing itself could have dampened our enthusiasm – winds consistently 35 knots, and one full day of 45–50 knot headwinds – but the anchorages can't be beat. In one bay we spent five days watching brown bears around a salmon run until we could identify individual bears. There was the young flirting pair, the mother with two unruly cubs, the mother with three rather more dutiful cubs, the mother digging for clams with her yearling. There was the huge male that stalked the stream, and a leaner male who charged our dinghy when he came out from behind tall grass and saw us. I'm not sure who was more surprised, but I bet we were the most frightened.

Thousands of nesting puffins greeted us as we approached another port, and in our last shelter before embarking for the Aleutians we climbed a ridge to views spanning the Pacific, the Bering Sea, the smoking volcanoes of the Peninsula, and the green chain of islands for which we were bound. Fortunately our last two-day passage of the year, to Dutch Harbor/Unalaska, was uneventful. There we winterized *Celeste* and put her into the care of voyaging friends who live there. *Celeste* was to brave the Bering Sea winter with them while we returned to work.

Seth and I flew back to Dutch Harbor/Unalaska in early June 2015, just as the snow was retreating from the mountains and the wildflowers were opening their colourful buds. Unalaska Island gets short shrift among sailors – what sailors there are, anyway, coming from Japan or heading north to the Arctic – and I've heard it dismissed as

Celeste on a rare tranquil morning, Kukak Bay, Alaska Peninsula

uninteresting and merely a provisioning stop. For Seth and me that couldn't have been further from the truth. The deep inlets and towering green volcanoes reminded me, believe it or not, of the Marquesas, and the hiking trails – climbing to an eagle rookery, skirting hidden waterfalls, crossing chortling streams, and weaving through a carpet of lupine and avens – are paradise. We could have stayed there all summer and never set sail at all.

Sail we did, though, first on a two-day passage to the Pribilof Islands, once almost a penal colony of Russians and enslaved Aleut natives annihilating the northern fur seal population for their fur. Fortunately that's long since stopped and we were able not only to see beaches covered in seals, but to celebrate 4th of July with the modern Aleut community. Today the Pribilofs are best known to birders for their cliffs full of nesting puffins, auklets, murres, red-faced cormorants, northern fulmars, and the famed – in bird nerd circles – red-legged kittiwake with legs as red as Twizzler candy. Seth and I spent hours lying in the grass above the cliffs, cameras and binoculars poised.

All too soon it was time to push north again, this time on a four-day passage to Nome. Nome's slogan is 'There's no place like Nome' and isn't that the truth! Founded in 1899 thanks to the discovery of gold literally lying on the beaches, the area around the town is still mined today. The most common method is by dredger – homemade pontoon boats sporting enormous vacuum hoses that look a lot like what comes out of a clothes dryer. Divers take the hose down to the seabed and vacuum up the rocks, which go through a sluice on the boat. These vessels have all kinds of wonderful names like *Honey Pot* and *Moose Gold*. The village itself is dominated by saloons, as it always has been, although it also sports two upscale coffee shops selling muffins and lattes ... an incongruity I certainly hadn't expected.

A crested auklet, St Paul Island, Bering Sea

Two incredibly generous people – Pat and Sue – absolutely made our stay in Nome. Pat was involved in the voyages of Arctic scholar John Bockstoce in an Eskimo *umiak* and regaled us with his tales while we devoured Sue's baked salmon and oatmeal

A musk-ox, a creature supremely adapted for the Arctic, in the wilds outside Nome

cookies. They loaned us books about the places to which we were headed, and bicycles on which to explore the vast Seward Peninsula. As it was nesting season we saw red-throated loons patrolling their ponds, Arctic terns diving from telephone lines, and a mother merganser feeding her newborn flock. Best of all, though, were the four herds of muskoxen we observed, one quite close up. Muskoxen are a relic from before the last ice age, a truly prehistoric-looking creature with big horns and long, fragrant guard-hair (hence the name muskox) covering the warmest downy fur on earth. Despite appearing to be a kind of Arctic bovine, their closest living relative is in fact a Himalayan antelope.

With the summer fleeing and many miles still to cover, Seth and I set out from Nome in worse conditions than we'd have liked. We beat against strong westerlies to get around Sledge Island and into the Bering Strait. The Strait's ripping currents then helped us on our way north, but added to the already sickening motion of high winds in 100ft (30m) deep water. On top of that, we were enveloped in pea-soup fog in 30 knot winds!

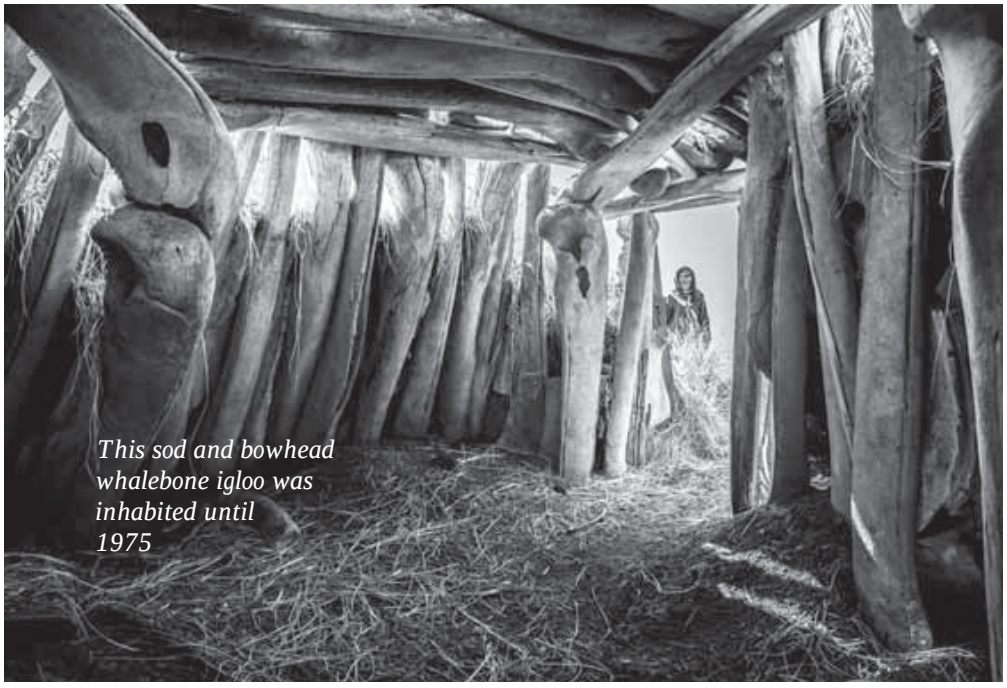
Conditions didn't improve for three days until the wind clocked into the north. At first this was great, but the forecast called for it to build, reaching 40 knots two days later. We didn't want to beat into that, especially in the short, nasty chop of shallow Alaskan Arctic waters. But there's nowhere to hide up there. The coast has no shelter until the lagoon at Point Barrow. The only place was 50 miles behind us – Point Hope, a low peninsula that would block the waves if not the wind.

Celeste waited there for a week while the north wind blew and the sun never set. The whole time Seth and I were thinking what a great wind this would be for our return trip ... if it could only have come later! Meanwhile, however, we discovered what an

A snowy owl, unworried by the midnight sun, North Slope

incredible place is Point Hope. At first glance it is flat and bleak, dust swirling through the newly-built, modern Inupiaq village. But looking closer one sees the vibrant life of the tundra – the wildflowers, the ground squirrels hiding from the huge and regal snowy owl, the thousands of gulls and terns, the spotted seals hunting salmon, the belugas and gray whales in the clear blue water.

Seth and I also got to know some of the villagers, who showed us the deep human history of the place. Point Hope has been continuously inhabited longer than anywhere else in North America, and the modern residents have retained a traditional way of life. The last person to move out of her sod and whalebone igloo did so in 1975, and many people still use permafrost cellars to keep their whale meat cold in summer. Racks of drying salmon lined the beach and even smartphone-wielding teenagers described the spring whale hunt – in sealskin *umiaks* propelled by wooden paddles – with enthusiasm.



This sod and bowhead whalebone igloo was inhabited until 1975

Celeste approaches the polar pack ice in the Beaufort Sea

Although Point Hope was probably our favourite place on the 2015 voyage, we were less than 400 miles from Point Barrow – the northernmost tip of the United States at 71·4°N – so when the wind went into the south, off we went. That passage wasn't much fun, but the wind moderated on the last day, a real blessing since we couldn't have entered Barrow's lagoon otherwise.

Point Hope's apparent bleakness was nothing to Barrow's. On Point Hope one can see the Brooks Range in the distance; in Barrow nothing but flat tundra stretches for mile upon mile. The wind blows strong on Point Hope; Barrow gets the full blast of every low pressure sweeping over from Wrangell Island north of Siberia. The sea ice melts a little later and freeze-up comes a little earlier around Barrow, too. It had all melted by the time we rounded the point, but it wasn't far away and on two excursions we found ourselves sailing amongst bergs and growlers.

The first was intentional – we sailed a few miles north to the ice edge to look for walrus. Unfortunately we didn't find any, but we did experience that feeling of vastness, loneliness and emptiness that only comes from being in the middle of an ocean. We were out of sight of land – easy to do in the flat Alaskan Arctic – and the only reminder of human beings on this earth were each other and *Celeste*. Any blue water sailor has experienced this, and I thought I was fully familiar with it. But somehow the ice made the impression that much stronger. It made it lonelier, harsher, and, frankly, surreal. At a distance it looks like landfall, but as you approach the polar pack ice you remember that this is ocean – that this frozen water, flat in places, twisted into strange uplifted shapes in others, stretches all the way across the pole, over to Greenland, Siberia and Svalbard. I felt very small.

Ellen and Seth on Point Barrow, with Celeste at anchor behind

The other ice experience was unintentional: we sailed 50 miles east along the coast, scanning the barrier islands for the polar bears that had been reported in the area. We were unlucky with the bears, but we did see the huge bergs that had broken off the pack ice there – just a week earlier this area had been impassable. On our way back to Barrow we stopped at Cooper Island, where scientist George Divoky has been studying seabirds for more than 40 years.

Ellen speeds around Point Hope's tundra on an ATV

Although we also had a great time making friends, playing on ATVs*, and running with a dog team, much of our time in Barrow had to do with birds. Thousands pass through on their migrations. As we saw eiders lose their breeding plumage, and black brants and oldsquaws gather before fleeing south, Seth and I thought this was a sure indication that we should be doing the same, especially given the fierce reputation of the Chukvchi and Bering Seas in autumn.

We departed in the best weather we could get. We'd waited and waited and here, finally, was a northwesterly (we were headed southwest.) Let's just say our passage back to Dutch Harbor was unpleasant. It's 1200 miles and it took 18 days. On three of them we averaged 8 knots on our course (*Celeste* has a 28ft waterline). On one of them we drifted 160° to our course while hove-to. On four of them we stood anchor watches in a bay on Nunivak Island in 45 knot winds and 5ft seas (*in* the bay). On one of them we made 7–8 knots 90° to our course in order to be able to lay Dutch Harbor when the next fierce southwesterly came. It did come. And on the last day, as if to welcome us back, we sat in the cockpit in sunshine, reading and watching the birds and whales.

* All terrain vehicles, generally known as quad bikes in the UK and four-wheelers in most of the southern hemisphere.

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FROM NOVA SCOTIA TO SCOTLAND, OUR OCC QUALIFYING VOYAGE

Debi Dennis and Jack Markin

(*Debi and Jack were awarded the 2015 Qualifier's Mug – or in this case the Qualifiers' Mug – for the following account of their introduction to ocean sailing.* *See page 27.*)

We bought *Iroquois*, an Ohlson 38, in 2010. She was the kind of boat we had grown up dreaming of owning – fibreglass, but built like a wooden boat with classic lines. The Ohlson 38 was designed by Einar Ohlson, and the hull built by the Tyler Boat Company in England in 1969 under the supervision of Lloyd's, before being taken to Sweden for completion by Ohlson Brothers. In our minds this was the most seaworthy boat we could buy, and its integrity gave us confidence to venture further and further afield.

In the summer of 2015 we sailed the northern route from Maine to Scotland. Sailing allows one's world to shrink to just the area of the boat, where everything matters a lot and the rest of the world doesn't. It's extreme mindfulness. At sea our position never changes. We are always in the centre of a disc, with the horizon always the same distance in every direction. The delight is that within the stationary there is constant movement and change. We are moving and so is everything around us. The direction, size and shape

Iroquois, our Ohlson 38, ready to go

of the waves are never the same, even the rivulets and ripples on the water surface are in constant flux. The light, the wind, the colour of the water and the sky continually vary. A camera cannot begin to capture the image or the changes.

A small boat is like an island. It's got that fixed horizon thing. But it's an island that moves, sort of, generally, in the direction you want. There are some directions you can't go. Some directions are too uncomfortable to go. And then, there is the direction that you want and can go to. Sailing the ocean in a small boat is an act of faith, but it's not blind faith.

We had confidence that we could sail from Maine to Scotland, but we also prepared for it. Having both grown up in the Great Lakes we had sailed on and off throughout childhood. Jack learned how to sail over many seasons of dinghy sailing, including 'frostbite' racing in Chicago. But our adult sailing experience started with a 19ft Lightning in Montrose Harbor in Chicago in the early 1980s. We bought our first sailing book, *Fundamentals of Sailing, Racing and Cruising* by Steve Colgate, and Jack read it at least ten times, but the real learning happened on the water. Every time we took the boat out and had to sail through the moorings area to get in and out of the harbour our sailing improved. We learned to turn when we needed to, not when we wanted to.

When we bought *Iroquois* in 2010 we took to buying used books from Amazon at a furious pace, ultimately building a new sailing library which takes up almost 7ft of shelf and contains around 75 titles. As we read more, and met more voyagers, we began to think about crossing the Atlantic.

Working as teachers allowed us most of the summer to sail. The first year we had Iroquois we sailed 100–200 miles out of Milwaukee, and the next summer 200–300 miles, with some passages across Lake Michigan. Year three we covered 400–500 miles with many nights at anchor in the North Channel of Lake Huron. Our last summer in Milwaukee we again sailed some 300–400 miles, made a couple of lake crossings ... and raced, just the two of us against fully-crewed boats. We never won and only twice didn't finish last, but we learned a lot. In the spring of 2014 we trucked the boat to Maine and sailed about 1000 miles, including our first offshore passage, four days from Falmouth Foreside, Maine to Halifax, Nova Scotia. And all the time we read, and talked to people everywhere, in order to deepen our understanding of what it might be like to cross an ocean.

Planning and training for an Atlantic crossing began to occupy all of our lives outside work. The boat took every dollar and every hour. A key aspect of our preparation was working on her, and we got to know her intimately from bow to stern, inside and out. Over time we rebuilt or replaced every system on the boat – water, electric, engine, instruments, navigation and eventually rigging and sails. All winter we worked on *Iroquois* and dreamed of sailing.

In 2014 we were taken by the romantic idea of sailing the northern route to Scotland, which was difficult to dislodge. We shopped the winter sales for long underwear, wool socks, fleece pants and hats. We studied weather. We combined all the provisioning lists we could find into one master list, then pared it down to what we thought we would use. We did the same with the medical kit. Lacking offshore experience we weren't a good insurance risk, but Pantaenius UK agreed to insure us once we arrived within the 12 mile territorial limit, but not for any damage which occurred during the passage. That was one thing we did not share with our nervous friends and relatives!

We left Maine on 11 June 2015 and fought our way, wind against water, for the first day. That, and our excitement and the stress of departure, led to both of us ending up pretty seasick, which we had rarely experienced before. There are some missing log entries from this time. When you are too seasick to write in the log you are too seasick to sail attentively. Debi took Meclizine but it wasn't helpful. Jack didn't take anything as we had been told at our 'Safety at Sea' seminar that, like most large-boat sailors who are men and age 50–60, he should not take seasickness medication. At any rate our first good decision of the passage was heaving-to, sleeping in shifts for six hours, and then making for Shelburne, Nova Scotia, to regroup. As it turned out, neither of us was seasick again for the rest of the passage.

We picked up a mooring in Shelburne about 0030 local time, called to clear customs, cleaned up the decks and slept soundly until daylight. We wouldn't have gone in after dark if we had not been there the year before, but it's a straightforward approach and the weather was calm so we felt comfortable finding our way with the help of radar, the chartplotter and memory. We stayed in Shelburne until 17 June making repairs, resting, waiting for a change in weather and meeting people. We made some new friends on a boat next to us who used Scopolamine patches and kindly shared some with Debi. We also met some Canadians, originally from Scotland, who had such enthusiasm for our adventure that any unease we had from our inauspicious start was dispelled. We left with chart packs riddled with pencilled-in recommendations and routes around Scotland.

For the first few days we had light winds, but made some progress southward. Our goal was to get to 41° or 40°S and then head east to skirt the ice field. The calm weather made for good whale watching, and we were also visited by porpoises for the first time. We were mesmerised by the way they circled the boat and were comforted by their frequent visits regardless of the conditions.

Debi used half a Scopolamine patch and had never felt so good while sailing. The patch was her new best friend. It must have been good to displace her former best friend, which was the windvane self-steering. We have a Monitor gear with lines that run along the starboard side of the cockpit to the wheel. Saying we sailed across the Atlantic is giving ourselves perhaps too much credit – what we really did was set the sails so the Monitor could sail us across the Atlantic. With a crew of two there was no way we could hand-steer the whole passage. In fact we only hand-steered about 20 hours over the 31 days.

Within two days the water temperature had risen from 59° to 67° and the colour had changed to a lighter blue – we were in the Gulf Stream. On 21 June we turned east and ran into three days of intermittent squalls. The winds were steady at 25–35 knots, with gusts into the 40s. This was our first heavy weather, and the first time we saw waves big enough to have foamy white rivulets running down their fronts. We ran off under storm jib alone, but even so, a few things got broken. The most serious was the attachment point holding the block for the Monitor control lines which pulled out of the cockpit coaming, but we used a cordless drill to make new holes and through bolt it while hand steering in 35 knots and drenching rain. We also lost our Windex and radar reflector.

After the weather calmed down we headed north to get out of the Gulf Stream before the next gale, which arrived on Saturday 27th. We hove-to for the first 12

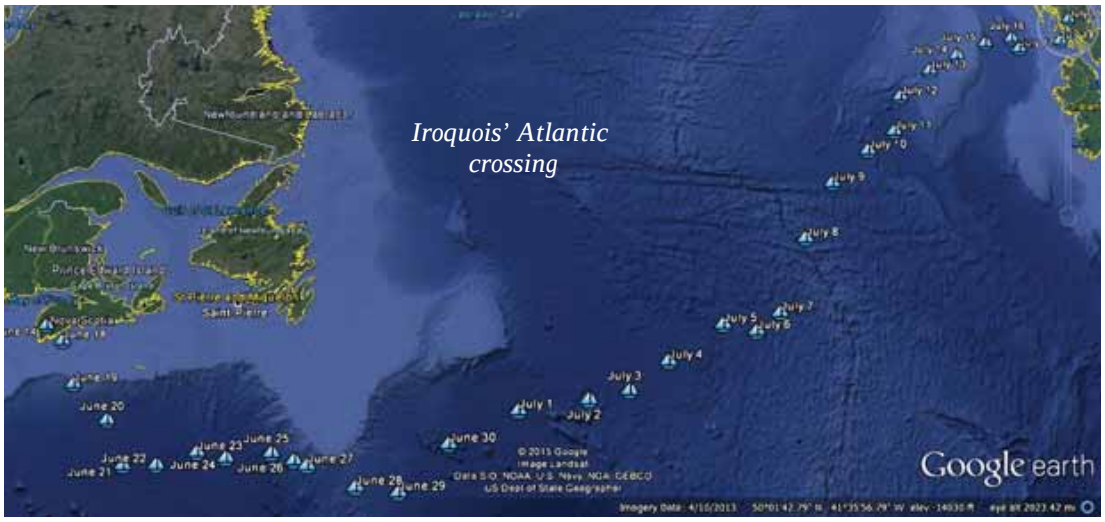
hours of it, then jumped on the tail and made some good progress east. In fact, from this point until the last storm we were able to head east and north with the wind and waves. It was still cold and rainy most of the time, but at least we were heading in the right direction. It became routine to get through 2–3 days of heavy wind and waves with minimal sail, then sit between low pressure systems in no wind for a few hours until the next system hit.

A summary of our passage:

Number of days	Beaufort Scale	How it felt to us
7	Beaufort 1–2 (light air to light breeze 1–6 knots)	miserable difficult and frustrating
7	Beaufort 3–5 (gentle to fresh breeze 7–21 knots)	glorious fine sailing
5	Beaufort 6–7 (strong breeze to near gale 17–33 knots)	challenging but gets you there
5	Beaufort 8 (gale 33–40 knots)	possible, but not pleasant
5½	Beaufort 9 (strong gale 41–47 knots)	just at the edge of and just past hanging on, you wish it would moderate
1½	Beaufort 10-11 (storm to violent storm 48–63 knots)	too much, all you can do is whatever you can, while you wait and hope for it to stop

Our watch schedule dogged each day and consisted of three four-hour watches between 0500 and 1700 and four three-hour watches between 1700 and 0500. Night watches ran the gamut from lyrical to hellish. Sailing at night is based on hearing the sounds

The view astern



and feeling the motion of the boat. The boat, the sails, the water, the rigging, the self-steering windvane – all speak and interact with one another to provide a picture of what needs adjustment and what is happening and, more importantly, what is about to happen. The result is a sublime feeling of movement, a dance between the surroundings, the boat and you.

Some experiences are so sublime they seem imagined, like the evening we saw some movement in the distance and thought maybe the porpoises were coming for one of their visits. As we watched them come closer there were more and more of them, first two, then six or eight, and then suddenly there were twenty or thirty of them spread out behind the boat. As they came closer it became obvious that they were not the white-bellied animals we were used to seeing. These guys were all grey and had squarer, bulbous, snouts and big blowholes. Some were really big, probably as big as the boat, but they were all different sizes, including some obvious babies. They slowly caught up to us and surrounded *Iroquois*, and for about an hour we swam along in a whale world, just cruising together. They moved majestically and rhythmically in a synchronised dance, and appeared to maintain the same order within the group. At some point our white-bellied porpoise friends appeared, zipping in and out in a flash. And we were all moving together – one big mixed up family. Then suddenly they were gone. Just like that.

In contrast, when the wind is gusting 25–40 knots and you are running downwind in the dark under a fragment of headsail, the dance becomes a dervish of which you are part but only partially, if at all, in control. It feels like a roller-coaster operated by a deranged carnie*, drinking beer and putting the moves on a teenager. In these conditions the wind and its interaction with anything that can vibrate could provide the soundtrack to a horror film.

All sailing stories seem to have the same ending – once in sight of land the wind either dies or blows from the wrong direction, the protagonist suffers, but then gratefully makes landfall. We were no exception. We were about 100 miles offshore when we were hit with a low out of the northeast, a big system circling round from Greenland.

* American slang for a travelling carnival employee. Thank you, Wikipedia!

Land in sight at long last

We were dead centre in its path with no escape options, so decided to heave-to until the wind stopped blowing us away from Scotland. Unfortunately, our triple-reefed mainsail could not hold up to the forces and in the middle of the night the top slide broke free. Fearing the loss of more slides we took it down, then had no choice but to turn and run under bare poles. We took 1½ hour shifts, hand-steering for six hours in winds of 40–50 knots gusting into the 60s. Finally, the wind shifted to the southwest and moderated to 20–30 knots, we were able to set some sail, and the windvane could steer. We made good time after that, and when it got light we could see islands through the fog and mist. We were soon surrounded by a storybook scene of rugged green hills running into the sea and peaks in the clouds. It felt like a dream.

We arrived at Oban Marina on 19 July. The story's real ending is the four days of work it took to convert *Iroquois* from a state acceptable in storm on passage to acceptable at anchor near shore. We had managed to keep our bunks relatively dry, but almost everything else was damp and mildewed, not to mention messy. Luckily there were a few hours of sun and the marina has great electric clothes dryers which we could use.

A little tired, we arrive in Oban

Before we left and after we returned, people asked us why we chose to sail across an ocean. We did the passage simply because we could, in the sense that we had the boat and we had the knowledge, we had the desire and we had the persistence, if not the normally requisite experience. We tried to be informed. We worked on the skills required even if we did not qualify for insurance. Yet no amount of day sailing, short coastal cruising, books or YouTube videos is the same as blue water day after day after day. That experience for us came by doing, and we are delighted that it did. People also ask, 'Would you do it again?' That has an easy answer – 'YES'.

Much of this account was taken from our daily blog, which can be found at http://www.sailblogs.com/member/debiandjack/.

The hollow winds begin to blow,
The clouds look black, the glass is low;
Last night the sun went pale to bed,
The moon in haloes hid her head.
Look out, my lads, a wicked gale
With heavy rain will soon assail

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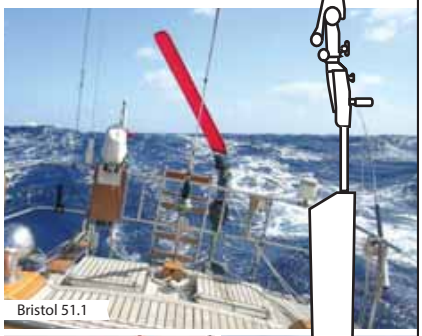
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STEERING THE DREAM

5000 MILES IN 'THE VARIABLES'
Suzanne Hills and Chris Cromey
Roving Rear Commodores

(*Suzanne and Chris are long-term cruisers aboard their 42ft cutter Whanake, having left the UK in 2009 to head for Suzanne's native New Zealand – but by a somewhat roundabout route. Previous articles have described cruising Scandinavia, Brazil, the Falkland Islands and the Chilean Channels, for which they were awarded the 2015 Rose Medal – see page 31.*)

It is actually on record in Flying Fish 2014/2: '...we have earned a downhill ride across the South Pacific in the South East Trades'. Well that turned out to be pure fantasy, because on leaving Valdivia on the Chilean coast it took 5000 miles of sailing in the Variables across the eastern South Pacific before we found those elusive south east trades at Tahiti. We didn't help our cause by taking a higher latitude route at around 25°S; but sailing west along this latitude we were able to visit the eastern South Pacific islands of Robinson Crusoe, Easter Island and Pitcairn Island. The temptation on leaving Valdivia was to head due north, both to escape the bad weather of Patagonia and to reach the trades as quickly as possible, but this would have meant missing out on these island gems.

From the Chilean coast until we reached Pitcairn Island we experienced wind shifts on a repeating 5 to 7 day cycle of a constantly backing wind with a background 2–6m southwesterly ground-swell generated from far away southern ocean lows. The wind would start in the northeast with an approaching front, back to the northwest and blow for about 24 hours, then slowly back west, west-southwest, southwest and south until it was southeast off a high; then it would creep east as the high moved off until it was back at northeast with the next approaching front. We hove-to six times in the northwest or west winds of approaching fronts – usually for 24 hours, once for two days – as there seemed little point bashing into it when free winds were behind it. This wind cycle is undoubtedly related to the time of year we did the passage (late June to mid August) – if we had left Chile when most other cruisers do, at around February/March time, we would probably have experienced more stable high pressure weather with light easterly winds.

All these variable winds meant a confused sea, and northeast wind against southwest swell turned the sea from confused to utterly demented. There were bad days – times of far too much cursing that we'd give it all up and trade it in for a land life with a vegetable garden. Our newly shipped kitten would go pure wild crazy several times a day, and we played frenzied childish games with her to release her pent-up madness – hers and ours. Promises of frolicking one day in green grass were made to the cat, and it's what we dreamt of as well.

The great circle route from Valdivia, Chile to Pitcairn is just under 3000 miles, but we ended up doing 800 miles more on a reverse great circle, with our track curving up to the Equator rather than down to the pole. The reason for this was firstly to gain a bit of northing to get some distance from the fronts, secondly to ride the top of the highs and avoid wallowing in the centre of them, and thirdly to keep both the southwest

swell and west-southwest wind on the beam as both were too violent forward of the beam. It was better to be well off the swell and wind for more comfortable sailing, even if it did wreak havoc with our rhumb line.

We were surprised by the number of times we sailed with three reefs in the main – these incidences were not gales, just strong winds but in confused seas with ground-swell. When hove-to in winds of more than 30 knots we found it was better to have our trysail set, as there was much less leeway compared with our triple-reefed main. We also used our trysail in light beam winds with heavy swell – the main would be slamming and slatting uncontrollably in the wave troughs, but our loose-footed trysail worked well and had enough sail area to keep us trundling along. For the periods of downwind sailing in light easterly quarter-winds there was far too much swell to use our cruising chute, and even our poled-out lightweight genoa would often slam in the swell and give the rig a horrible shake. A flying jib, we think, is the answer for these conditions.

We saved our diesel for motoring in the dead calms following a blow, when the big swell made wallowing around very rolly and being hove-to no longer worked. If we had 24 hours of calm the sea would decay quite quickly just leaving the southwesterly ground-swell, and when the wind filled in again there was a period of nice sailing for a few hours before the sea became lumpy and then confused again. But it was well worth persevering with those endless variables to reach the southeast South Pacific islands, and sailing away from Valdivia on the Chilean coast everything did flip fast – the rain suddenly stopped and water became like gold; we quickly shed our clothes and looked at our thermal clothing in utter disbelief that it could have ever been needed; bad weather only came one out of five days rather than four out of five; sun-seeking stopped and we started sun-avoidance measures ... there really wasn't any in between.

Before leaving Chile we took on an (irresistible) stray kitten that we had found (or rather she found us) in Patagonia, and she became ship's cat. Yanmara – named after her appreciative purr which rumbles like our Yanmar engine – made it officially as ship's cat on catching her first flying fish. But even with the flying fish, with Yanmara on board we

Ship's cat Yanmara claims yet another flying fish

It's a cat's life at sea…

had to do some serious fishing. The South Pacific did not disappoint, with some huge mahimahi, bonitos and, on one lucky, day a yellowfin tuna. So sailing across the Pacific made perfect sense to Yanmara – it was simply all about catching and eating fresh fish across the hunting ground of the ocean. She found her sea legs without ever losing her lunch, and in the quiet waters of the Chilean canals we had taught her to use the heads. Out in the big Pacific swells this heads use became a real challenge for her – precariously balancing on the edge of a toilet seat over a sloshing bowl of sea water is a nervous undertaking for a cat, so we would always go in with her to hold her paw for moral support, or sometimes physical support to stop her slipping mid-act. Apart from

Mahimahi of the South Pacific

Alexander Selkirk's plaque on Robinson Crusoe Island

the toilet arrangements she really took to life at sea and was great for morale on the long ocean passages of the Pacific.

The first island we reached was the lovely misty isle of Robinson Crusoe, part of the Juan Fernández archipelago, 475 miles off the Chilean coast. It amused us to read that the Scot, Alexander Selkirk, survived off goat meat during his four-year exile on the island because he didn't like fish – not an uncommon Scottish trait to this day. We only managed three days there before an approaching front with strong northwest winds meant we had to head back to sea. The main anchorage, Cumberland Bay, is open to the northwest, and it's a catch-22 with the alternative anchorage on the southwest side being exposed to the southwest swell. On the last day the local fishermen were paying their annual tribute to San Pedro, the patron saint of fisherman, and we joined a local fishing boat to tour part of the island

Honouring San Pedro at Robinson Crusoe Island

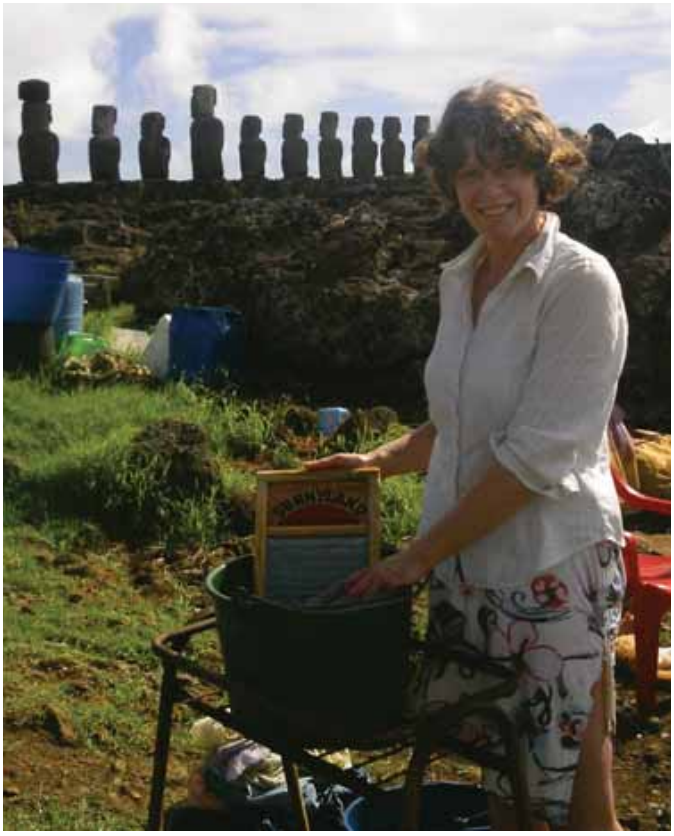
A moody Houtitu Bay, Easter Island

and sing tributes. The priest on board blessed all the fishing boats and fishermen, and the yachts and sailors, so we departed on the long passage to Easter Island with abundant karma, having been blessed.

Six days out from Robinson Crusoe we actually had to change course to avoid hitting Emily Rock (ED 1869) – one of only three rocks, all 'Existence Doubtful', in a vast area of the empty southeast South Pacific. Existence doubtful or not we didn't want to take any chances, and passed within 5 miles along a safe line of latitude south of it. It is good to know that some mysteries of our planet remain, and even all-seeing Google Earth doesn't know if Emily Rock exists or not. But somebody must have seen something back in 1869 for it to be named and charted.

Twenty-three days and 1995 miles later we arrived at Easter Island with settled weather for a few days, giving us time for plenty of Moai (statue) sightseeing. Then a very slow moving front arrived with very strong northwest winds so we had three days rolling around in the anchorage, but far better than being hove-to out at sea for three days. We anchored on the southeast side of the island, in a bay with good holding on a sand bottom and well sheltered from northwest winds, but predictably rolly as it is an open roadstead off a small island in a very big ocean.

A very scenic spot for doing the laundry



Approaching tiny Pitcairn Island

We left after the front had passed and the wind backed to west-southwest – the oceanic forecast was for 15–20 knots of south-southwest winds backing to south-southeast, with 6–10m SW swell. Leaving on this forecast might seem a bit foolish given the size of the seas, but we couldn't believe they were this large in the immediate area as observed by the size of the swell coming into the anchorage. Fortunately we were proved right and encountered about 4–5m of southwesterly swell, which, as we were heading north-northwest for Pitcairn Island, was perfectly manageable.

From Easter Island we made landfall at Pitcairn Island after 1298 miles and 13 days. Pitcairn is a tiny – 1 km x 3·5 km – cliff-lined island at 27°S, just outside the tropics and in the track of passing winter lows, which presents a challenge for both safe anchorage and actually being able to land. But we were in luck, as our arrival timed with a few

The patch of sand for anchoring in Bounty Bay, Pitcairn Island

The weird mid-ocean North Minerva Reef

days of post-front settled weather. The anchorage of Bounty Bay is surprisingly good, with a large patch of sand which is free of coral heads and in a not-too-deep depth of 11m. And the island is just big enough to give some protection from the southwest swell. It was still rolly, but in Pitcairn Island's Bounty Bay we enjoyed our best night's sleep since leaving mainland Chile seven weeks earlier.

West of Pitcairn we reached the realm of mainly easterly-sector winds, mostly south-southeast through to north, but it wasn't until we reached Tahiti that the plain sailing really started with fairly consistent southeast or east trade winds across the South Pacific to Minerva Reef. From Pitcairn we sailed via the Gambiers, the Austral islands of Raivavae and Tubuai, the Society Islands, Niue and North Minerva Reef. From Minerva Reef to New Zealand we had a few more days of southeast or easterly trades before being back in the Variables. Then after a couple of days of obligatory headwinds to gain the New Zealand coast, we made landfall at Opua.

New Zealand landfall – a joyous sight for a long lost Kiwi

All these variable winds in the South Pacific certainly show that an east-going passage across to Chile is quite feasible at around 25-30°S, especially in the winter months. With so many fronts coming up to these latitudes it would seem a matter of picking one's latitude for a ride across that could take in the Austral Islands and the Gambiers of French Polynesia, and then Pitcairn, Easter Island and Juan Fernández, followed by a downwind sail of the Chilean Channels and into the Atlantic.

FORUM FEAR:
IT'S EASIER THAN YOU MIGHT THINK!
Simon Currin, Moderator, OCC Forum

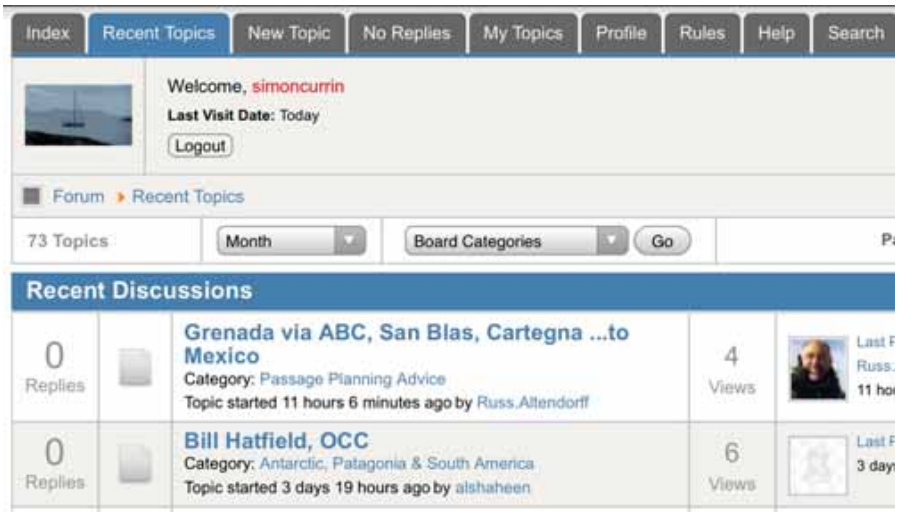
The OCC Forum is now five years old and, thanks to the enthusiastic and informed posts of our members, has become a treasure trove of information. There's a vast and growing amount of pilotage and technical information in there, all of which can be searched using the search tab within the Forum.

This spring a new group of users were tempted to post for the first time when the Forum was used to host the election platform for our two candidates for Commodore. Some needed a little hand-holding as they were nervous about making their first post, but they very soon got the hang of things and it was great to convert self-confessed technophobes into confident contributors. Their hesitancy has prompted this brief introduction to the Forum in the hope that we can tempt more users to contribute their knowledge and experience to the many discussions within it. For it is the abundance of experience within our ranks that makes the Forum such a valuable resource.

Some people condemn the Forum as Facebook's poor imitation. It is, in fact, a very different animal, designed to complement Facebook and not compete with it. The Forum provides a permanent and searchable record of discussions, whereas Facebook lives in the present and, however interesting the thread, it gets lost in time. Also, the Forum has some basic architecture which makes it possible to navigate to information nuggets, whereas Facebook is delightfully random. Both have their place, and both are invaluable resources for our members.

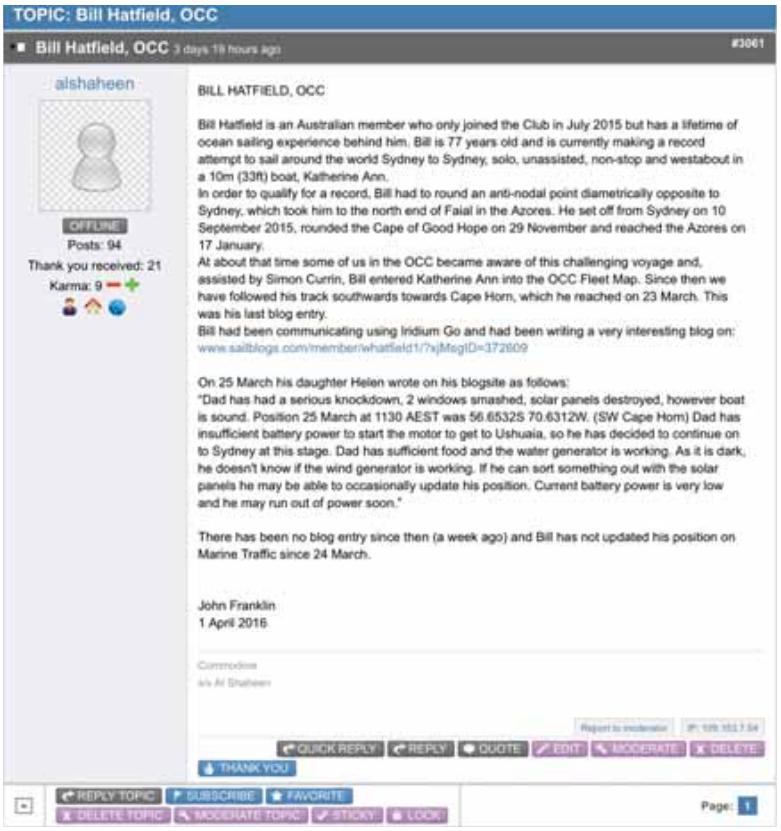
Here are some facts and hints to help you join in the discussions:

1. Have no fear. There is nothing that you can do to screw it all up. In case of doubt just drop me a line at simon@medex.org.uk and I can move, edit or delete your post. I really am very keen to help!
2. Choose a topic or discussion you would like to contribute to. If you want to start a new topic then e-mail me and I'll add it.
3. The Forum is fully integrated with the rest of the OCC website so you can browse your way to it using the navigation menus on the Club's Homepage, www.oceancruisingclub.org. Click on **OCC Forum** in the list on the left.
4. Use the tabs to navigate and search. At the top of the Forum there are self-explanatory tabs – for instance, the **Recent Topics** tab will bring up the most recent discussions (spelling errors and all!) – see screen-grabs opposite. Other tabs will display the structure of the Forum.
5. Enter your website log-in details. Most of the Forum can be read without logging in, but some crucial bits require it, and to make a post you must be logged in. If you don't have a username or password then e-mail Club Secretary Rachelle Turk on secretary@oceancruisingclub.org for assistance. The log-in details you need are the same as those required to access the rest of the website – see opposite.



6. Drill down. Within each topic you can, by clicking, drill down to read the discussions within it.

7. Post away without a care. Once you have found a discussion you would like to contribute to then just hit the **Reply** button at bottom right. A new window will

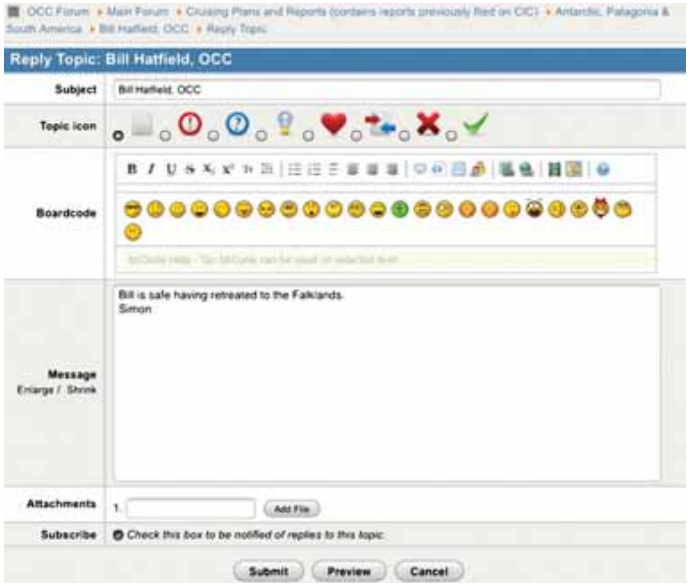


open, into which you can type your reply. There are all manner of formatting buttons within that window, but save these for when you are an enthusiast! Alternatively create your post in your normal text program and then paste it into the window.

8. Save what you have done. At the bottom of the window you will see the all-important **Submit** button. Hit that and you have made your first post.

9. Start a new discussion. If you have some nugget you want to share, or a question to which you want an answer, but you can't find where to put it, then hit the **New Topic** discussion and away you go. Don't be alarmed if I move it later to a more appropriate place to fit it within the overall structure.

10. **Attachments and pictures**: When creating your post you will see the **Add File** button which enables you to insert attachments. The size of each attachment is limited to 10MB, and documents should be in PDF format. One of the commonest queries I get arises from people trying to attach a Word or Excel document. These formats are not allowed as they can be edited.



11. Read the full discussion. The number of posts displayed at any one time is limited, so use the **Page** button at bottom right to browse through a topic with scores of responses.

12. The sky's the limit. There are many functions within the Forum that you will never need to use, but don't hesitate to ask if you are struggling.

13. **Housekeeping:** Keeping the content fresh is the hardest task, and I need your help with this. Send me a link when you find something that needs to be deleted and I will do the deed. For instance, if you've advertised something as **For Sale**, please let me know when it is sold.

The Forum really is very easy to use and every new post adds to the archive of useful information at our finger tips, so please take the plunge and get posting. Every corner of the OCC world is in there, whether it's sharing information about a favourite anchorage, selling your superyacht, solving a technical problem, or a visa issue in Vanuatu. Please add your experience to the mix for everyone's benefit. Thank you, and welcome to the OCC Forum!

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THE LOSS OF RAMPRASAD
Sam Coles

(Sam bought Ramprasad*, a 37ft 6in ferro-cement Hartley Golden Cowrie, as an unfinished project in 1985 and finally launched her at Shoreham, England, eleven years later. He crossed the Atlantic four times between 1998 and 2001, then after a further five transatlantic passages headed through into the Pacific in 2008.*

Sam's first major sailing exploit, in 1980/2, had been very different – sailing an old Indian fishing boat from Diu on the northwest coast of India to Darwin, Australia via Thailand, Singapore and Indonesia. The passage, nearly all of which was sailed singlehanded, covered more than 4500 miles.)

On 27 September 2015 *Ramprasad* grounded on a reef in northern Madagascar. She became badly holed within a couple of minutes, was taking in water at an uncontrollable rate from a 6in diameter hole about 3ft below the waterline midships on the starboard side, and filled within half an hour or so. The circumstances which led to the grounding may be of interest to members.

We had arrived in the waters of northern Madagascar two days earlier from Mauritius, rounding Cap d'Ambre at about 0830 on 25 September. I had checked in with the 6646kHz yachtsman's net run by Kerstin Siebrech aboard *Lopto* and that night anchored in the Baie d'Ambarata, at 12°17'·9S 49°4'E. This is an area of many islands and reefs,

Ramprasad before departure from the Customs Steps, Port Louis, Mauritius


48°45'E
49°E
From Mauritius
Cap d'Ambre
12°S
N
Mozambique Channel
Grand Recif
Diego Suarez
Baie d'Ambarata
Marulexa Point
NOSY VALIHA
NOSY TONGA
MANTAZONA
12°30'S
MADAGASCAR
NOSY ANTALY
Baie Ampamonty
NOSY VORY
Banc Ampamonty
ANTSIRANANA
NOSY MITZIO
13°S
TANZANIA
MOZAMBIQUE
COMOROS
45°E
50°E
Indian Ocean
15°S
Mozambique Channel
MADAGASCAR
MAURITIUS
REUNION
Tropic of Capricorn
25°S
35°E

and it was during a period of quite strong southeasterly winds in the morning (typically southeast force 6–7) which moderated to variable northwesterlies in the afternoon.

I was navigating principally with Navionics charts running on an iPad, making use of the iPad's GPS to plot our position – a method which I had been using for about five years and which is quite similar to using a chart-plotter. On the iPad one can change the scale in which the vector charts are displayed seamlessly by stretching and squeezing with finger and thumb, and it depends on the scale in use as to how much detail is displayed. The other electronic navigation system which I used was displaying C-Map charts on a PC laptop using the Cmwfw program, but was only indirectly linked to a GPS via paper and pencil. I had largely discontinued my use of paper charts due to the better detail available with the electronic systems, especially in remote areas. Both of these systems rely on the accuracy of the electronic charts, but at least they are from independent sources.

Next day, 26 September, we left Baie d'Ambarata in a good breeze – about force 6 from south-southeast – unrolled a bit of genoa, turned off the engine and hoisted the mainsail with three reefs. We had shoals to avoid extending out from the land on our port side, and then the large Grand Recif and a couple of smaller ones south of it on our starboard side. By this stage we had the earlier-than-expected wind change to northwest 2–3, so I turned the engine back on and rolled up the genoa, and we motor-sailed to pass inside Nosy Valiha off Marulexa Point. Here my hitherto totally reliable new Yanmar failed, so we unrolled the genoa and hoisted full main to pass inside both Nosy Tonga and Mantazona. The new engine had done only 300 hours, but though I had done engine oil and oil filter changes I had neglected to change the fuel filters, and it was these that I suspected to be the cause of the engine failure.

After passing inside Mantazona island we were going slow, so I restarted the engine. Then we had another wind change to south-southeast force 4, and with Nosy Mitzio too far away to reach in daylight I decided we should head for Baie Ampamonty under double-reefed main and partially rolled genoa. The engine stopped again so we did a bit of tacking with various sail

Dao at the Customs Steps, Port Louis, Mauritius

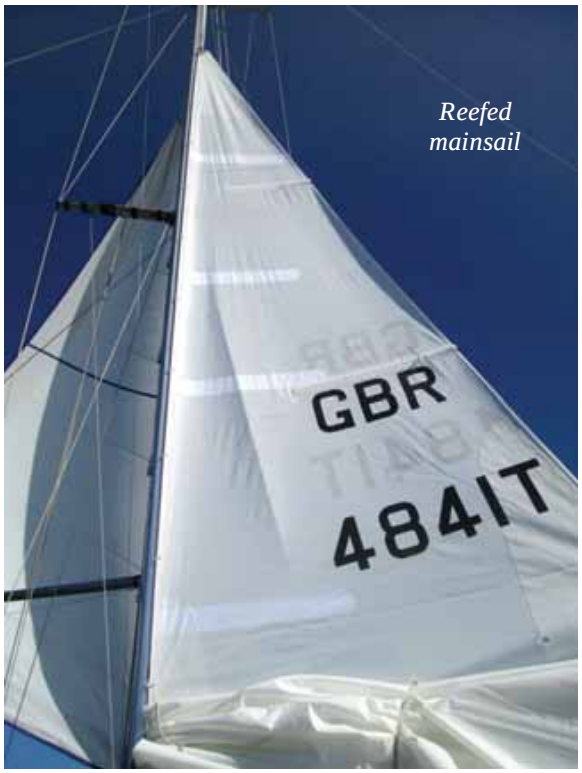
Sam in the cockpit

combinations, then motor-sailed inshore, where the engine stopped again. After more tacking off the bay as it got dark I judged that we had a clear run in, and that sufficient time had passed for enough fuel to get through the blocked filters, so restarted the engine and rolled up the genoa. We motored in avoiding rocks and reef, to anchor in a well-sheltered position and good depth at 12°34'·2S 48°51'·7E, next to Nosy Antaly. I find this kind of sailing more tiring than passage making. Dao made supper and we slept well.

In the morning I changed the fuel filters and, after doing the rather simple bleeding routine, started the engine and raised the anchor, Dao steering to my directions as I operated the manual windlass on the foredeck. With the usual strong morning breeze (east-southeast force 6–7) we got the mainsail up with two reefs and unrolled a bit of genoa to less than working jib size. I turned off the engine, applied the prop-shaft brake, and took a turn at steering to get us safely past Nosy Vory – it was hard to get the Wind-Pilot to steer in such gusty conditions.

I had the iPad running the Navionics chart positioned above the companionway in its usual position for pilotage, but remembered that there was an island – Antsiranana – on the way to Nosy Mitzio, so told Dao to steer for it. I had no recollection of any dangerous reef on the way. I went below to do some tidying, since a few things had fallen out of their places in the lively sailing so far, then returned to the cockpit and almost immediately we hit the reef!

Dao was steering for Antsiranana as instructed, and hadn't noticed the reef, Banc Ampamonty, which the Navionics chart showed as land and NOT as reef – I looked at the iPad chart and realised the error. I tried to steer downwind to



Reefed mainsail

get off it, but we bumped some more and then stopped. I went down below, but within a minute or two a serious hole opened about midships on ***Ramprasad***'s starboard side, a fountain of water breaking the storeroom door off its hinges. I put out a distress call on VHF 'MAYDAY MAYDAY MAYDAY!' but got no answer – the water had flooded the batteries, beneath the cabin sole on either side of the engine – so I put on my lifejacket and made sure Dao had hers. The position where we had struck the reef was close to 12°38'·1S 48°49'·5E.

The partially-deflated dinghy was on the foredeck, so we turned it over and found the pump in the lazarette. I set Dao to pumping while I tried to launch the liferaft, but it was out of service and did not work. We launched the dinghy – by this stage the foredeck was almost awash – and gathered a few things from the cabin – passports, EPIRB, dinghy anchor ... anything that floated up. I put some petrol into the outboard and fitted it to the dinghy – there was more petrol under the cockpit aft but by now this was inaccessible. We put the stuff into the dinghy plus some water cans from the cockpit – by this stage waves were breaking over the foredeck and the cabin was easily 5ft deep, so I judged any attempt to rescue stuff from inside to be perilous. We got into the dinghy, after several attempts I got the outboard running, and we let go – all within about half an hour of hitting the reef. We hadn't got much petrol in the outboard and I didn't know how far it would get us. I didn't get one or two of the waves quite right and on at least one occasion we came close to capsizing.

As we got close to Nosy Vory we could see that the beach didn't look very nice – black boulders a bit bigger than footballs – but with the fuel situation as it was we went for it, and successfully landed and unloaded the dinghy and pulled it up a bit. There were oyster shells on the rocks, and Dao had no shoes and me just one. Then we spotted a fishing boat and I got Dao to wave a yellow jacket at them. They saw us and came closer. Two of the fishermen jumped out and swam ashore, and we walked with them along the beach to their fishing camp – a few thatched huts. Their boat was a heavily-built carvel open boat about 30ft long with 15hp outboard, short mast and lateen sail. They must have been to our wreck shortly after we left, and had salvaged four solar panels, the kedge anchor, the spare outboard, the liferaft and three cans of diesel. I spoke to them in French and they asked me if there was an echo sounder (yes) and would I like to go back to the wreck (yes).

I returned with them, leaving Dao in charge of drying things out. By this stage the deck was about 6ft under the waves but the sails were still set – perhaps the boat was still bumping to a deeper part of the reef. We picked up a long mooring line and two of them jumped in, wanting to drop the sails to stop the wreck's progress into deeper water. They succeeded with the mainsail but not with the unrolled genoa – the foredeck was too far under to pull on the sail from the right angle. They swam to the chart table and recovered two drowned GPS sets, the Nasamarine barograph, two drowned mobile phones and two bottles – it was a bit hard to direct their efforts and I decided it would be ineffective and dangerous for me to jump in to try to help.

We returned to the fishing camp, ate some rice and boiled fish, and then began our journey with them to civilisation. After a couple of stops we arrived next morning at their fishing village in Baie d'Ambarata – we hadn't spotted it from our anchorage of a couple of nights earlier since it is well hidden by the mangroves. They unloaded the boat as the tide ebbed and prepared a meal – rice and fish again. We were led to expect that a taxi might come, but it did not arrive so we started to walk with Rousi and his brother and discovered why there was no taxi – there's no road for the first half of the hour-long walk to the village. Clearly this was a more important place, as Rousi and his brother made a report about us to two ladies in uniform in an office next to the *Mairie* (village hall). Then we got into a waiting *taxi brousse* – a covered pick-up – which got ridiculously crowded and over-loaded as it made its journey along bumpy roads to Diego Suarez. We arrived in the early afternoon and were met by Rousi's father, who took us by *tuk-tuk* taxi to a bank so I could get money from the ATM.

Next we attempted to check in with the Immigration Police. Our arrival in the country was, of course, rather unorthodox, so the procedure was not straightforward. The officials we saw that afternoon kept our passports and told us which hotel they wanted us to stay in. At least my iPad still had some charge, and I was able to use the hotel wifi to inform friends and family of our safety, the loss of *Ramprasad* and the dangers of Banc Ampamonty. Next morning I met the policemen detailed to look after us, but Dao stayed at the hotel since she'd lost all her clothes apart from a nightdress and a jacket – what she'd been wearing the previous day. I accompanied the policemen to an office, where one of them typed a report based on what I told him (there was a computer in the office but it didn't work!) and that afternoon we got our passports back with 15 day permits to stay in Madagascar. I also gave Rousi's brother and father money to pay for 100 litres of petrol, to replace the fuel that they used while helping us.

That was not the end of our dealings with local bureaucracy, however. We were taken by the policemen to make a report to the Harbour Master's department in the person of M Jaona Ramanantsoa, Maritime Inspector of Antsiranana, who spoke very good English. He criticised the fact that we did not have seaman's books, to which I replied that I had never been required to have a seaman's book* despite having travelled on my yacht to many countries. M Jaona then took our passports and filed them with some Seaman's books which he had shown us, but when I protested that we had only just got our passports back from the Immigration Police he returned them to us, saying that he'd put them in his filing cabinet as an oversight. I had not brought my iPad to this meeting, assuming that I'd provided sufficient explanation to the officers that morning, but I agreed to provide M Jaona with a written report next day. Then we were free to go.

I have written this account of our unorthodox arrival in Madagascar partly for me, and partly to share what I learned with others and allow them to learn from mistakes that I may have made.

- I would strongly encourage navigators to prepare a proper pilotage plan, and to be aware of any dangers in their vicinity and their anticipated vicinities. I would encourage them to check this plan against an independent navigational source – had I looked on my C-Map charts I might well have noticed the discrepancy between the two charts and the dangerous nature of Banc Ampamonty.

- In these days of electronic navigation I would like to make navigators aware of the risks involved in seamless scale-changing, as I am used to doing on the vector charts that I display on my iPad.

- Some years earlier I had enquired about servicing the liferaft, but I had had it serviced twice before and it seemed that I would have to buy a new one – something which at that time I could barely afford. In this situation we were almost certainly better off in the dinghy.

* Under UK law, a 'seaman's book' is required for merchant seamen and those employed aboard yachts, but not for unpaid skippers or crew.

- After the boat was holed we didn't have much time, and I think we used that time fairly effectively – some important things were saved by good luck but many things forgotten and lost, including the flares, the YB tracker (satellite communicator) and the VHF hand-held. I did remember the EPIRB, and its signal alerted Falmouth Coastguard to our situation, but since Madagascar has no lifeboat service or SAR organisation nothing could be done beyond informing my sisters in England.
- It was the fishermen who helped us reach civilisation. As they explained to me, they were quite poor, and I hope they felt suitably rewarded for their assistance. I am glad that the fellowship of seafarers still seems to count for something.

I am grateful to have been able to discuss these events with other sailing friends, and very glad that both of us came through this disastrous experience alive and uninjured – things might so easily not have turned out that way.

Sam sent a draft copy of the above to Navionics for their response, and received the following reply from Giuseppe Carnevali, President of the company. It has been edited to omit repetition and non-relevant information, but otherwise remains unchanged.

Dear Mr Coles

First and foremost, let me thank you, as I thanked the skipper of Team *Vestas* (who grounded on a reef off Mauritius during the Volvo Ocean Race while using C-Map) and

others, for coming out and publicly sharing a terrible experience in order to help others avoid the same. All of us boaters and mariners must be grateful for your words, 'I have written this account ... for others to learn from mistakes that I may have made'.

From your report I understand that a series of incidents and errors combined with heavy fatigue and possibly even some panic, conjured into a perfect storm*, leading even a very expert and seasoned mariner such as you into the ultimate error of deciding that since a land area reported in the chart was not visible, it was okay to instruct your mate to navigate through it. In hindsight it is easy to criticise your obvious mistake, but, as the proverb says 'those at sea navigate while those on land judge'. It is much too easy to sit on safe land and judge, after the fact and in total calm, the actions taken during a perfect storm.

Coming to the specifics of the charts, it is important to be aware that all charts have errors, whether paper, raster or vector, independent of who published them. By common practice a product is considered very good when it has 99% accuracy. A product with 99.999% accuracy is considered closer to science fiction than to reality. With a database like Navionics', which contains over a billion objects such as rocks, navigation aids, wrecks, etc, 99.999% accuracy still leaves room for 10,000 errors! No chart, whether made by Navionics or its competitors, or any Hydrographic Office, can avoid this simple mathematical rule.

We have double checked all the official charts for the area from SHOM (the French S*ervice Hydrographique et Océanographique de la Marine*) and the UK and Indian Hydrographic Offices, in addition to our competitors. Our chart is a correct reproduction of the official SHOM chart, but others represent the reef as a drying area, as a rock that covers and uncovers, or as a rock surrounded by an obstruction line, while others show nothing at all. A review of the best available satellite imagery shows that without doubt there is a large reef, but whether the best way to portray it is as land, as drying land, or as a cluster of rocks, could be debatable**. From the Volvo Ocean Race incident, as an example, we have learned that it is best to 'exaggerate' hazards, lest they go unnoticed by the navigator, a practice that is routinely done by hydrographic offices, and again we have faithfully reproduced what was done by SHOM.

So I can only agree with your words that proper planning and comparison of multiple sources of information, including sonar and good lookout, would have avoided the accident, though I appreciate that this is easily said but not so easily done. I am glad that no-one was injured, and once again thank you for sharing your experience.

Giuseppe Carnevali
President, Navionics

* This does not accord with Sam's statements on page 77 that 'we slept well', and that he went below 'to do some tidying'. The reference to a 'perfect storm' is probably not intended to be taken literally, since the Beaufort Scale defines force 6–7 as a 'strong breeze'.

** Members may have their own opinions regarding this statement. A topic for the Forum, perhaps?

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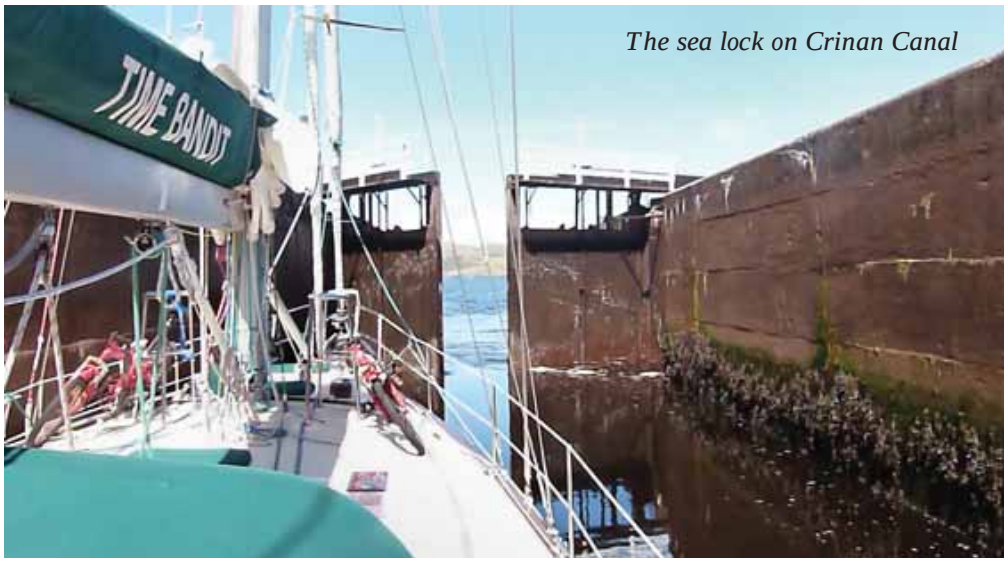
WINTER SUN TO MIDNIGHT SUN, Part 2
Stuart Letton

(Flying Fish 2015/2 *carried the story of* Time Bandit*'s passage home from the Mediterranean to Largs on the southwest coast of Scotland, with the excitement of force 10–11 (55 knot) winds south of Ireland. After just two weeks' rest Stuart and his crew were ready to push on...*

Members who still have Flying Fish 2014/1 *on their shelves will be able to follow much of this cruise on the chartlet page 217.*)

A great spell of Scottish weather – other than the layer of hail on the deck at Tarbert – saw us tick off the west coast at speed, using the Crinan Canal to save some days waiting on weather to get around Sir Paul McCartney's Mull of Kintyre. The Caledonian Canal gave us the next shortcut. The Caledonian is staffed by some of the most helpful and friendly people you will meet on a cruise in Scotland. On a transit a couple of years earlier we'd fished one of the keepers out the drink after she took a header into the sea lock, and so were enjoying this passage with the compliments of the British Waterways Board. The lock keepers kept us moving through the Canal, which we finally exited at Inverness, poised for a quick passage up the North Sea via Orkney and Shetland.

So, there we were, trying to catch up a day or two lost to gales and happily en route from Inverness to Kirkwall in Orkney, when one of our many alarms went off. Given there was no smell of gas, no fire down below, no one had fallen overboard and the bilge was dry, it could only mean one thing – the engine had overheated. We hadn't heard that alarm for five years so it took a few minutes to identify. Having done so, our plans went out the window and, as we were just off Wick, we headed in to sort things out. After imagining the worst (such are my powers of diesel engine troubleshooting) the problem turned out to be a hole in the hose feeding the hot water tank, although it still took all day to find and fix it. At 1800 we finally left again, heading for Orkney and Kirkwall.



The sea lock on Crinan Canal

Lerwick Harbour

This route crosses the Pentland Firth, home to some of the UK's fastest-running tides, overfalls and other terrors of the deep. Following the pilot we set a plot leaving the Skerries 6 miles to the west and, with Mike and Diane in charge, Anne and I headed below for a snooze. An hour or two later the deck crew were a bit bemused as to why there was a line of breakers to our left in the middle of nowhere. All that was missing was the surfers.

These standing waves were about a metre plus, maybe 4–5ft in old money, ranked five or six deep. The only option was take them head on, which we did. A fair bit of bows leaping in the air and crashing ensued. Down below in her bunk, Anne barely stirred.

Our plan to tour Orkney was nearly scuppered by Folk Week – the island was mobbed, with not a room or, more importantly, a hire car to be had. Into the breech stepped Mike Cooper, PO for Orkney, who generously lent us his car for the day.

We then made another overnight dash, this time to Lerwick, to catch both the crews' flights home and more music in the famous Lounge. On Wednesday nights and weekends local musicians gather in the pub to play the night away on fiddles,


Ålesund

accordions, piano and assorted other instruments, each player a virtuoso in their own right. For me, Lerwick seemed like the culmination of all our efforts to get north since leaving Spain months and thousands of miles ago. Capsized boats, storms, rain, cold, broken engines – Lerwick seemed like paradise and, even better, it was bathed in sunshine. What's more, I was completely *disjaskit** (as they say in Shetland).

However, one does have to press on ... can't be hanging around marinas and harbours enjoying oneself, oh no! Instead we took off into the night to blast our way across the North Sea in freezing temperatures, with only the warmth from the seemingly dozens of oil rig flares to keep us from going blue with cold. The forecast was great for 48 hours, but then due to veer northeast which would scupper our plans of laying the Lofotens. Teasing us, it gave us a great night's sail, heading north and averaging 7·5 knots, only to have the wind die and veer putting both the Lofotens and our fallback objective, Ålesund, off the agenda. Not really having a fixed plan, and with a forecast of light, contrary winds for the next few days, we decided to make for somewhere interesting on the Norwegian coast. Anywhere was better than motoring 700 miles.

On the gjestbrygge (guest pontoon) at Smaever

'Anywhere' turned out to be Måløy, where we discovered we were about a month too early for the Norwegians to either come out of hibernation or go on vacation. Not a mouse stirred. The streets, shops, cafés and pubs were dead. At £5.50 for a coffee and over £12 for a pint I can understand the cafés and pubs being closed, but where was everybody? It was a few weeks and late June before signs of life began to show. My theory is that they're all so busy working to pay for their ruinously expensive shops and pubs they stay indoors until their holidays.

* exhausted, worn out

Ålesund, our next stop is a pretty town. Big Brother was watching – well actually Son No.2, who spotted us on the harbour webcam and texted to check it was us on the pontoon. No escape! From Ålesund we were off into the inner routes, weaving amongst the exceedingly well-marked rocks and skerries. Our first passage was through the 'intricate etc ... Stoplane Passage', but all routes are well marked and, especially if you have a plotter, it is (with apologies to purists) just a case of joining the dots in your carefully way-marked route. We had been told that C-Map was the package to use, but throughout Norway we found that Navionics was spot on.

A succession of *Gjestbrygge* (guest pontoons) for £10 to £25 per night, and sheltered anchorages nestling amongst the jagged mountain scenery, took us to the foot of Europe's second largest glacier, the Svartisen at the end of the Holandsfjord. Onward and northward, in now 24 hour daylight, we stopped every night in ever more stunning settings, often the only boat in town. Finally, three weeks after leaving Lerwick, it was midsummer's night. At 0200 Anne insisted we get up to see the sun not go down. Standing in the cockpit in her skimpy night attire, Anne ooh'd and aah'd at the spectacle, only spotting as she headed back down below the 20 or 30 locals ooh'ing and ahh'ing as well. I presume it was at the midnight sun.

The next day we romped across the Vestfjord, which separates mainland Norway from the Lofotens, landing in Svolvaer which was to be our base for the next few days' cruising north and south to visit the fjords and secluded anchorages of the Lofotens.

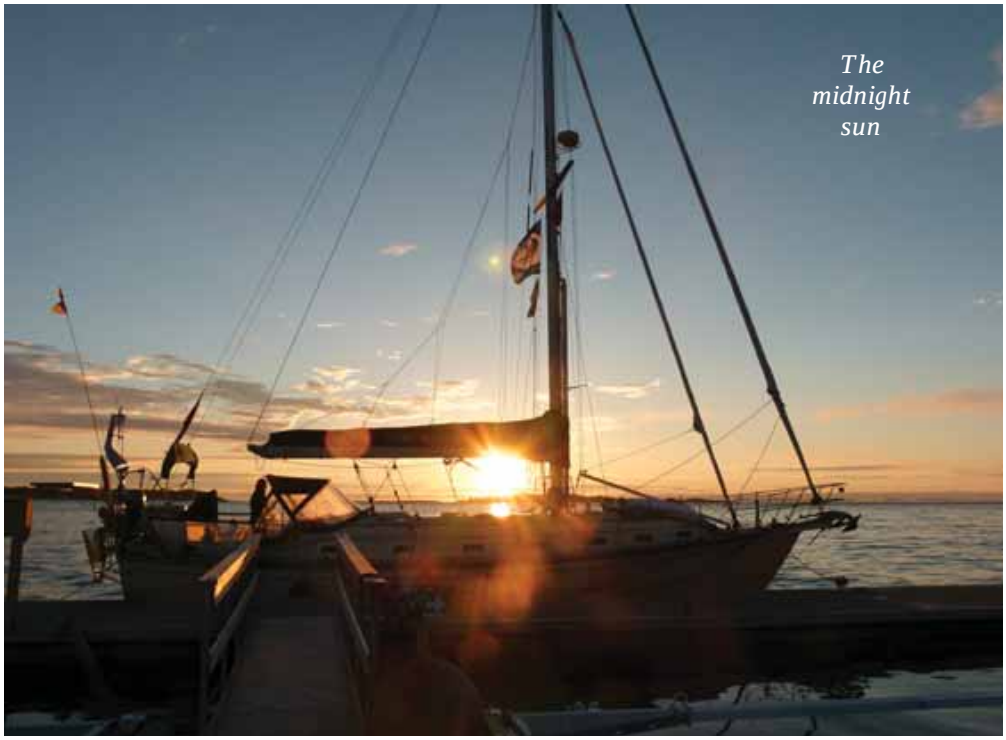
Much of the way north I had been teasing Anne that Norway was pretty much like the west coast of Scotland, and that it was a long and cold way to come and see what we'd sailed and climbed amongst all our lives. However, the reality is that

Svartisin Glacier

Stunning scenery all around

Norway delivers simply stunning mountain scenery on all horizons in, for us, great weather (with a few grey rain days thrown in to keep mass tourism away).

Our time in Norway was drawing to a close. It was a wrench to leave, but our daughter's July wedding and the need to make the start line of the 2013 ARC nearly 3000 miles away was sufficient catalyst to make the decision. We celebrated our northern lights experience with a dram at 68°N to the accompaniment of the Kintyre Schools Pipe Band echoing off the fjord walls, which drew quizzical looks from the nearby Polish and Norwegian boats. This drew a close to our Arctic adventure and we turned south for home, the ARC and ... stunning as Norway is, some warmth!



The midnight sun

Parasailor

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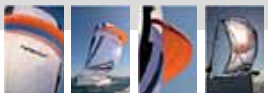

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CAPRICORN AND BACK: ARIADNE'S QUALIFYING CRUISE, 2012–2013

Iain and Meg Buchanan

After several years cruising the Atlantic islands, it was time to sail *Ariadne*, our 45ft Bruce Roberts cutter, across the Atlantic. As part of the preparations we spent some time coaching a 'third hand'. We had had mixed experiences with the windvane which came with the boat until Iain sat down with some dimly-remembered principles from school mechanics to improve its performance, with excellent results. It then proved to be the perfect crew member – silent, needing no sleep, food or drink, and requiring minimal supervision. Our plan was to cross from the Cape Verde islands to northeast Brazil and then, taking account of seasonal weather patterns and visa restrictions, to sail south in Brazil, turning north again when the austral winter loomed. After that we would head for French Guiana and Suriname to see out the Caribbean hurricane season.

We left Mindelo on the morning of Christmas Eve 2012 and enjoyed a lively sail. Once clear of the island effect we activated the windvane and did not touch the steering for six days, trimming the sails and vane to keep us on course. The distance to our default destination, Recife on the Brazilian mainland, was about 1700 miles. At this stage we were getting our Sailmail forecasts from Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, though later Rock Hill, North Carolina, proved to be more consistent. We were in high spirits, as the Inter Tropical Convergence Zone width was forecast as '3/4 degrees' at our crossing longitude. Unfortunately this turned out to be 3–4 degrees, not ¾ degree. We followed conventional wisdom and aimed for an equatorial crossing point about 29°W, and at about 5°N we neared the ITCZ. Progress was very slow and punctuated by heavy rainfall with extremely poor visibility, though we were generally spared the squalls and thunderstorms which many experience.

ITCZ weather. Very soon now it will be dark and wet – it may, or may not, be windy

We crossed the Equator in the very early hours of 3 January, but postponed celebrations until a later date. One dark night, in fairly light conditions, the shackle joining the bottom of the mainsheet tackle parted company from the traveller after a retaining pin moved sideways. No bits were lost, however, and we did a temporary fix, but while Iain worked on it Meg, at the helm, worried that she couldn't see him – less than 2m away. Beyond the doldrums the winds were somewhat contrary and progress was by a mixture of motoring, motor-sailing and sailing. We saw the lights of Fernando de Noronha, but sailed on by and eventually entered the estuary at Recife, mooring at an old yacht club. One objective had been met – we arrived with more than six months to run on Iain's passport – but any elation from that achievement was soon dissipated by our attempts to clear in.

Clearing In

The general principles of clearing in are well documented, doing the rounds of *Polícia Federal*, Customs and *Capitania dos Portos*, the last run by the Brazilian navy. The *Polícia Federal* turned out to be in a closed area of dock which was not even accessible by taxi. We found it with the kind help of a customs official who took us in his car, and the duty officer cheerfully put us into his system, stamping our passports with visas valid for three months. Next, in Customs, the duty officer spotted that the entry stamp was dated 2012 not 2013 ... and this would have to be corrected before they could proceed. We offered to return to the nearby *Polícia Federal*, but this would not do because nobody there had the authority to cancel the stamp and issue the correct one. 'Somebody is on their way to fix it', we were told. We both spoke some Portuguese, Meg especially, and think Brazil would be untenable without it.

Customs went for a long lunch, and were packing up late afternoon with no movement on our problem. It was starting to get dark and we had only a slight clue as to our whereabouts, so we called it a day and said we would be back on Monday. We had entered the large dock area by car and envisaged a long trek to the gate when we saw a worker head down a well-trodden path. We followed, and found a pedestrian gate with buses and taxis beyond, but security at the gate were not inclined to let us out since there was no

A fishing boat under sail at Recife. These craft venture into the open sea

Inshore fishermen, Recife

proof that we had entered. Coming by car, the customs official and ourselves were waved through. Our visas were, of course, not valid, so I think we were 'not in the manual'. After some phone calls we made our escape and gratefully caught a taxi to the boat.

Returning on Monday, the same officer cancelled the invalid stamp and gave us a new one. Customs cleared the boat in for three months, and the *Capitania dos Portos* cleared us into port. Brazil has a federal structure, so on moving from state to state it is necessary to clear out with *Polícia Federal* and *Capitania dos Portos* in the old state and clear in with new officials in the next. This procedure, as well as that of extending our visas, was seldom quick or straightforward – it paid to be patient and take a book along.

Recife

The old club, on the port side as you head upriver, is cheap and welcoming if a bit remote. Best access to town is on a ferry, powered by a home-made outboard, about 15 minutes on foot from the moorings. Access to shops is difficult, and although you can get to some supermarkets by bus, a taxi is really required to get back to the boat if laden with bags. Diesel and water need to be taken to the boat by dinghy. There is a small pontoon, but only lightweight local boats were tied up. Another modern marina – with a tidal entrance – lies further upstream, but a yachtsman we met at the *Polícia Federal* office said he had touched on entry at high water. Since it was now just after springs we decided not to risk it.

The city grew wealthy on slaves and sugar and is now seeking to restore some of its lost grandeur. Together with nearby Olinda (a World Heritage Site) there is a rich

Ecclesiastical architecture, Olinda

mixture of architecture and culture, representing the assorted European states which fought for supremacy here – mainly Dutch, English and of course Portuguese – and the independent Brazilian state which followed.

Salvador

Sufficiently rested, we set out for Salvador in the province of Bahia, at the entrance to the Baía de Todos os Santos. We arrived shortly after dusk and were somewhat perplexed by the number of strobe lights on the water. At first we thought we had come upon an emergency and that there were people in the water wearing lifejackets. The speed at which the lifejackets were moving disabused us of that hypothesis, so our next conjecture was that there had been a change to the Colregs during our time at sea. As we got closer to the vessels we could see that the strobes were associated with boats under sail as well as others under power, and that many of said vessels did not show normal lights. We decided that the collective for strobes should be 'a confusion'.

The Terminal Nautico was 'full' when we arrived, as they were awaiting a rally fleet, and the anchorage outside is now effectively filled with boats and the fuel barge. We did stay for one night after arriving in the dark, but there is a better option outside Marina Bahia. We booked into Marina Bahia, which is expensive but does have some chandlery, again expensive, and an excellent yard if you have to lift out. Access to supermarkets is best by taxi, which are fairly cheap, and the office in Terminal Nautico directed us to a computer/print shop which has a large stock of charts. The vintage varies greatly, but they will print on demand and it worked out at about £7 each*. We stayed in Terminal Nautico on our return trip northbound. It is much cheaper than Marina Bahia and has helpful staff, but the infrastructure is in need of upgrading. Laundry (not self-service) is available at both marinas.

The church of Nosso Senhora de Rosário dos Pretos, Salvador, built by slaves in their 'spare' time

Salvador is Africa in Brazil – a legacy of the slave trade

* This may well have been illegal, as many countries' charts are protected by copyright. Ed.

– and though there are the trappings of a big city there is, as elsewhere, considerable poverty and deprivation. There are clearly many people with a subsistence quality of life, and the benefits of recent economic developments are far from evenly shared. Unlike the stadium-based carnival of Rio de Janeiro, that in Salvador is out on the streets. Crowds and noise are two things we normally avoid, so we observed the action from a suitable distance. At carnival time supermarkets offer beer at a big discount, and we were amused to see a lady at the checkout using a wheelbarrow to collect hers.

The state of Bahia was one of the best that we visited for sampling different cuisines, with a mix of South American and bits of West Africa, and this proved to be some of the best cooking in Brazil. The old town is of considerable interest, with colonial and slave-related buildings and artefacts. Since the slaves were not allowed to attend the white churches, they built one of their own, Nosso Senhora de Rosário dos Pretos – a very impressive edifice where Christian and West African beliefs and images were intertwined and overlaid.

Portuguese tiles in Salvador

The Baía is a favourite cruising ground for local and visiting boats but, anxious to move south, we left any exploration for our return and departed on 1 March for Rio de Janeiro, about 760 miles away. Although the passage was out of sight of land it was not without interest. En route there is a large reef-strewn area, Parcel dos Abrolhos, over 50 miles offshore. With nothing in sight, not even a navigation mark, for a long stretch the echo sounder indicated a depth of 18m, but we drew comfort from the presence of a large container ship overtaking us close by. There is another Abrolhos – derived from the Portuguese for 'open your eyes' – off the west coast of Australia, named by a Portuguese navigator ... or cartographer?

Brazil has an extensive offshore oil and gas industry, and this is so fast-moving that developments do not make it onto (even digital) charts in a timely way. Accordingly, one night we found ourselves surrounded by rigs, with the wind at 25–28 knots, *Ariadne* powering along with a bone in her teeth and the Benny Goodman Quartet playing a suitably presto rendition of *Running Wild* on the iPod.

Rio de Janeiro

Landfall at Rio is spectacular, with the entrance to the bay beyond the cliffs of Sugarloaf surprisingly narrow. For visiting boats, options on the Rio (west) side of the bay are limited to one ill-regarded marina or anchoring with attendant security problems. We opted for the east side of the bay at the Club Naval Charitas in Niteroi, where you can anchor off or go bow/stern to a pontoon, and where we were met by the legendary Susy, an

Rio landfall – the Sugarloaf!

Anglo-Colombian woman and circumnavigator well-known for her help and hospitality to visitors. There are fast catamaran ferries to Rio and we found an easier motion from their wash at anchor. For the senior citizen, the ferries have the benefit of being free!

The Club Naval has bars, a restaurant and a swimming pool, and there is plenty of help and advice about yacht bits and supplies. We also got Campingaz butane and Calor propane cylinders filled with butane at the Club. Supermarkets are best reached by bus out and taxi back – the nearby Pão de Açúcar supermarket was our best find. The water quality is very poor and we had divers down to clean the hull, who removed boilerplate pieces of growth after only three weeks at anchor.

Rio has all the good and bad aspects of modern Brazil – beautiful from a distance but tackier close up, vibrant but sometimes chaotic, and enormous disparities in wealth. When cruising we find that it is not always the big ticket items which are the most memorable, but the smaller, more distinctive events. Courtesy of Susy, we were taken to a concert to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of the composer Ernesto Nazereth – no we hadn't heard of him either. The performers were a German-Brazilian soprano and a Japanese-Brazilian pianist – the products of earlier migrations – and the venue was a large room in a small museum in Copacabana. The music has been described as Latin Scott Joplin, though Nazereth has more of a classical feel, and the infectious rhythms, especially of the solo piano pieces, had the audience jiggin' in their seats from the shoulders up.

Baía de Ilha Grande

About 120 miles west of Rio lies the Baía de Ilha Grande, a cruising ground with an island for every day of the year and where even the largest – Ilha Grande itself – does not have any roads. Everything arrives by ferry, or helicopter if you are rich. We sampled a number of quiet anchorages before moving to Abraão, the main town on Ilha Grande. The scenery reminded us of the west coast of Scotland – if you ignored the greenery, sunshine and bikinis.

We have had our share of anchoring experiences over the years, usually involving resetting it when unhappy about the boat's behaviour. Until Abraão we had not experienced a full-blown drag, but that was about to change. Some anchorages in the Baía have a long fetch, depending on wind direction, but Abraão is fairly sheltered from most directions. The overnight forecast was southwest force 2–3, though being in the lee of some high hills there is the potential for winds below or above that level.

By mid-evening a major squall was blowing with heavy rain, and we were checking our position regularly. About an hour into the blow it was clear that we had moved, and with Meg on the wheel and Iain on the bow we fired up the engine and started to bring in the anchor. After a few seconds the engine cut and would not start again. Iain tried dropping the anchor again – it had not yet come fully in – but although the chain was running out, there was no tension to it. We could now see the approaching shore through the driving rain and let off a red handheld flare. We put out a Pan Pan in English and Portuguese (Meg!) and let off a second handheld. A couple of small RIBs from neighbouring boats and a larger RIB used for tourist trips appeared and took a line from us, towing us clear of the shore. We had not touched, but it must have been damn close. We were taken back towards the town anchorage, but managed to explain that we could not anchor and asked to be put alongside the dock used by local ferries. None are located there overnight and we had an easy time parking.

The following morning we started to sort ourselves out and perhaps confirm our hypothesis about the sequence of events. Abraão has been a busy anchorage for centuries, and Iain had reckoned that the seabed could be foul with debris. Accordingly,

At the Niterói viewpoint above Guanabara Bay, with the Club Naval Charatis beyond the catamaran jetty and Ariadne a white blob anchored off

Ariadne at anchor, Baía de Ilha Grande

we had set a tripping line on the anchor. In the dark of the previous night we could not see it, let alone attempt to recover it, and our closeness to the shore meant that we had no time to go down that route. The line was found wrapped round the propeller – yes we have a rope cutter, but the line probably balled too quickly for the cutter to operate effectively. The line was so taut that it pulled the anchor hard against the hull, so dropping the chain would have little effect. There appeared to be no damage to engine or transmission, and we set off for the anchorage. When we got the 60lb (27kg) CQR back to the bow it was clearly distorted – the boat had bent the anchor as it pressed against the hull! The anchor was still intact, if somewhat lopsided, and we continued to use it, sometimes in testing conditions, until it was repaired months later in Chaguaramas, Trinidad. We had the boat lifted at the same time, and could not find a mark left by the event.

The 60lb CQR after being distorted by the hull!

We spent time in a marina at Bracuhy, on the mainland, where we employed a rigger and canvas worker to make some repairs. Both trades were to a high standard. Our last stop in this area was at Paraty on the west side of the bay. At just over 23°S and about 15 miles north of the Tropic of Capricorn it was to be the southern limit of our journey. The town itself has an old colonial centre, with buildings raised on stone platforms and the streets laid with slight inclines, nominally to allow the tides to cover and clean them.

The old colonial centre of Paraty

Heading north

We returned to Rio for a spell, then on to Salvador to prepare for our exit from Brazil. We had originally thought of a stopover on the way to French Guiana, perhaps Natal or Fortaleza, but time was running out on us and we cleared out of Salvador for the sail north on the day our visas expired. A major football match was taking place that day and the Brazilian navy was out on exercise. We reckoned the sailors were unhappy at not seeing the game and we had four separate hails on VHF 16 as well as a RIB with marines coming close for a good look.

The direct route to French Guiana was about 1700 miles, though we reckoned we sailed nearer 2100, crossing the Equator three times. We kept well offshore, seeking wind, and saw no land until, many days later, the landfall buoy at Degrades des Cannes, French Guiana, showed up on the bow. Thank you, DoD*, for GPS.

* The US Department of Defense

General Comments

Despite going in the 'right' directions at the 'right' times, offshore passage-making was a mixed experience. For the legs between Recife, Salvador, Rio, back to Salvador and from there to French Guiana, we ventured well offshore to be free of coastal weather effects. The sea area forecasts off the southeast coast were typically of the form: 'wind northeast to southeast, occasionally southwest, force 3–4 or 5 ...'. The net effect was that we sailed about 70% of the time, often slowly, and motored the rest. Off the northeast coast we did benefit from the substantial current heading northwest.

We found Brazil surprisingly expensive, probably as the result of recent inflation. Provisioning for passages was more limited than in the European ports we had been used to, though there were some novelties to try. Payment for fuel and for work was sometimes cash only, so it's best to check in advance.

Personal security figures prominently in some guides. We were diligent about lifting the dinghy at night and locking it while ashore, and on shore we were fairly vigilant about our movements and certainly avoided some areas after nightfall. We had no real problems and felt little threat. Indeed many people – on buses, in shops and on the street – were polite and helpful, as well as curious about us, where we came from and what we thought about their home country.

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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 electronically or by mail on CD or flash drive (USB stick).

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 at least 20 articles for each issue, so have 400+ images to juggle! Any digital format is fine, but please contact me before sending prints.

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Finally, please include a list of captions in the order they 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.

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

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HARD YAKKA! *
Rosemarie Smart-Alecio

(*As many members will be aware, Rosemarie and Alfred were forced to abandon their much-loved 38ft gaff cutter* Ironhorse *last October, following a succession of catastrophic gear failures while on passage from La Réunion to South Africa. The following article, submitted in August last year but held over from* Flying Fish 2015/2 *due to lack of space is, of course, printed now with their consent.*

As Editor I shall really miss Rosemarie's regular submissions – an amazing 22 over a period of 21 years – during which she was twice awarded the David Wallis Trophy for 'the 'most outstanding, valuable or enjoyable contribution to Flying Fish'.)

Whilst crossing the Indian Ocean, we left Rodrigues to sail directly to La Réunion, approximately 500 miles further west – but reluctantly, because it is a delightful island and we could have stayed another few weeks easily. We urgently needed to ship spares, however – a new Balmar alternator system and a replacement Iridium phone – and had decided to have them sent to La Réunion after being told that Mauritius would not honour the 'yacht in transit'** policy, and would charge us 15% of their value plus a handling charge. We had hoped that the suppliers would not be quite as efficient with shipping as they proved to be, so that we would have time to stop in Mauritius on the way, but within days of ordering we were advised that they were to be despatched immediately. As some places will only hold things for a short time we thought we should be in La Réunion to receive them. But our passage was not without difficulty...

We left Port Mathurin on a lovely day, ideal to begin a passage if a little slow, but with a forecast for stronger winds. Through our first night they picked up to 15–20 knots, and continued through the following day giving us a good speed. As our third day was dawning, Mauritius was to the north of us, under heavy cloud. We hardly saw the island, which was eventually obliterated by heavy rain. The increase in swell was very noticeable, so things were not so comfortable, but we were still making excellent progress. With a consistent speed of over 6 knots under reefed main and small jib, we were sorting ourselves from having completed our routine night watches when there was an almighty BANG! from behind me in the cockpit. Clearly something a bit serious ... not our automatic-steering system, I pleaded mentally, which guides *Ironhorse* 24/7 and allows us to get on more easily with navigation, meal preparation and the like.

Whatever it was, it promptly sent the autopilot, guiding the Aries, into a 'refusal', in response to which I grabbed the tiller myself – just as Alfred (hardly awake yet) shot into the cockpit having felt that alarming sound through the hull. I pointed to where it seemed to have come from. When we looked over the stern the Aries paddle, having sheared off completely, was dangling behind, tethered by the line which attaches it to its frame and being dragged through the powerful ocean waves! My nightmare was now reality. Alfred donned his lifejacket and, boat hook in hand, climbed out over the

* 'Hard yakka' is an Australian expression meaning 'hard work'.

** This permits owners of cruising yachts to have spare parts shipped in free of import taxes because they will be re-exported with the yacht.

stern to try to rescue the paddle, me in a panic as to the wisdom of this in such rough conditions. It proved an impossible task, and even though we carry a spare paddle, replacing the broken one in these conditions was just not on and would have to wait until we were much steadier.

We looked at each other, Alfred reading my thoughts and commenting that at least we had not lost our main rudder, as had happened to good friends only a few weeks previously. They had had to abandon their yacht when, 1000 miles from both Cocos Keeling and Rodrigues, their rudder broke off in heavy seas. Luckily for them another yacht, also bound for Rodrigues, was only a day or so from where they were and, with the yachtie's network informing them of this dilemma, deviated to take them on board. Although we were not in their situation, we have never needed to steer *Ironhorse* by hand for any length of time. It would be quite demanding. There is 18 tons of her to control with a tiller – no wheel-steering, with all the gearing it provides. Alfred looked devastated – a rare happening. We were now west of Mauritius. Port Louis, the main port on the northwest coast, over 45 miles northeast of us, was the nearest place we could make for, and we debated the wisdom of doing so.

I checked the instruments. We had about 102 miles to go for the waypoint on the north coast of La Réunion, with the marina 10 miles beyond. Impossible to steer all that way, I thought – we were already experiencing how demanding it would be, and for such a distance it would require extraordinary effort and impossible tenacity. But if we pressed on, by the time we'd sailed another 45 miles – the distance to Port Louis – we'd have covered almost half the remaining distance to La Réunion, where our packages were to be delivered. The question was, of course, for how long could we steer her bulk in these increasingly heavy seas?

Alfred was on the tiller while we considered our options. "Can you take her again for a few minutes?" he asked. I did so, and he jumped down into the boat, fiddled about in the bosun's bag and returned to the cockpit with some short lengths of line and a couple of pulleys. "Just let's see if we (*et moi*?!) can set something up," he continued, threading rope through a pulley and passing it behind me, which I couldn't follow since my job required full concentration. I was already worried as to how much longer I could hold her steady, for we now had 22 knots of wind and the swell was noticeably bigger. But he continued to work around me, passing a line behind my arm then winding it around the tiller as I steered, before fixing something on the side deck. Another knot being tied, after a 'by eye' measurement of length and ... "Okay, let's see how this might work. It should make the steering lighter and I'm just wondering if it's possible for us to cope – between us – the rest of the way".

He sat beside the tiller – which was now wearing this contraption of lashings and blocks – and picked up the loose end of the rope coiled around it and led through pulleys fixed across the side-deck. He pulled it towards him, moving the tiller apparently more easily, then releasing it to move it the other way. "Have a go and tell me what you think".

I took the rope and sat where he'd been, then pulled and released. It certainly was much easier although it still needed some effort, especially when working against the weather side, and my poor little arthritic finger joints clearly didn't like it! The rope was already rubbing my skin and I imagined how it might be after a few hours – at the speed we were making in these stronger winds, and having computed that we had at

Alfred concentrating as he works the pulley system for easier tiller-steering

least another 22 hours to reach the waypoint. "I'd better find our gloves," I said, trying to work out the easiest way of keeping on track, and mentally reasoning ... should I watch the GPS digits, reading the bearing that I *should* be on and also telling me the bearing I was *actually* on? Or would it be easier looking at the ship's compass, set nearer to where I was than the GPS? I tried both and rapidly realised that, whichever I chose, it was mesmerising and I could look nowhere else without going way off course. How long could I stick with it without going cross-eyed?

"Go and make us a cup of tea," said Alfred – well, we're Brits, for goodness sake! – "and let me try again". After another few minutes he reckoned he could do two hours at a time. I questioned that, passing him his cuppa and offering gloves, both of us immediately realising that it was impossible to hold a cup or anything else and steer as well. So I took a turn whilst he donned the gloves and drank his tea, then he took over and I had mine ... by which time it was very obvious that our normal routine would have to be abandoned if we were to maintain *Ironhorse*'s progress. We considered heaving-to from time to time – perhaps to eat or sleep – but decided we should aim to continue non-stop if it was physically possible, agreeing to get drinks and snacks during our breaks. The test began.

While Alfred steered I prepared some food in a covered pan on top of the cooker so that we could heat it and 'pick' when we weren't steering. (Interestingly, neither of us felt hungry with all this tension and most of the food remained untouched). Then, by the time I'd been to the heads, I realised my 'free' hour was almost up and went to relieve Alfred. "I'm fine", he declared. "I'll call you if necessary". So I went to lie on our pilot berth in an attempt to get all the rest I could. Half an hour later, he called. "Two hours is too much", he admitted. So I prepared to take my turn, with us both

agreeing that one hour was sufficient – not so much because of the physical demands of working the pulleys as because concentrating to keep on course was so very wearing.

By now we had both tried the two options – digital GPS, and old fashioned ship's compass. Alfred had also tried using our heading line on the chart plotter screen and considered that, although not easy, it was definitely the most user-friendly. And after a few minutes I had to agree. It wasn't easy, but because the graphics showed our heading line superimposed over the course to the waypoint we could respond more promptly by trying to keep them together.

Our cockpit is relatively dry, with detachable side panels, only the one to weather normally in place while on passage. It does a remarkable job of protecting us when a wave breaks over *Ironhorse* – which was happening quite often, with more than 20 knots of wind for much of the time. The Achilles heel of the system are the small gaps where they fit around the two winches on either side. Water gets through these and runs into the cockpit, at times with some force, depending on the wind and wave strength.

No problem for us normally, unless we're daft enough to forget and sit on that side, but our new steering arrangement *required* that we sit on the weather side so, inevitably, we each got cold showers from time to time. Alfred was the first to experience it – he cried out and laughed, then grimaced as he was hit by that cold onslaught, and wished he'd been wearing waterproofs over his 'warmish' clothing, now soaked from behind. (We'd left hot and humid Malaysia, less than 7'N of the equator, only three months previously, and hadn't really had time to toughen up to the cooler temperatures of 19'S!) I'm a real coward when it comes to cold water and rushed to seek out our brand new ocean-going Mustos, which were to experience their ocean baptism within minutes of my beginning my turn.

The suits were a tad too much because we didn't need such warm stuff – only protection from those intermittent dousings. We were actually working quite hard and continuously for the hour, so sweated a lot, even though we left the Mustos undone. But since our lightweight suits were packed deep in a locker we had to put up with it. The suits were certainly doing a good job – especially as the drenchings became cooler as the night progressed.

We steered for an hour, then rested for an hour. Interestingly, both seemed to race by. The concentration of steering occupied us full time, with no lull or boredom, and our rest time – such a luxury – seemed to pass incredibly quickly. And of course the one off duty had to deal with any other issue – like checking the radar or calculating the CPA of nearby shipping with the AIS*.

Our sailing gloves are tipless and I'd swapped mine for full-finger gloves because at times the line rubbed my bare fingertips, which threatened blisters. However, their lining rubbed against the outside leather as I worked, and consequently also rubbed my fingers! We both tried different gloves until we were comfortable.

After having managed several stints, with my fingers feeling sore and my right shoulder aching, I found myself wondering if I could last the course. We had covered less than half the distance, and I wondered if I should suggest heaving-to so we could have a proper rest. But Alfred's encouragement and enthusiasm kept me from that, and I continued with gritted teeth, determined not to let the side down. No messing about

* CPA: Closest Point of Approach; AIS: Automatic Identification System.

during my break, as I tend to do when relieved from a night watch, believing it helps me wind down – I'd remove my oilies and throw myself onto the pilot berth to refresh myself as much as possible. "Try to get some sleep," Alfred would say each time. (What, in one hour? It was no time at all!) A longer break each time would have been wonderful, but the need to relieve Alfred forced me to drag myself out with enough time within that precious hour to get my togs on. (How complicated they can be when you're in a hurry!) Then I'd give my fingers a rub, get the gloves on, take a deep breath and take over.

The sheared Aries paddle on Ironhorse's coachroof, showing both halves of the broken sleeve

By now we were well into the night, not having slept at all since the previous night, and part of the steering rope was beginning to show signs of chafing – we know the signs well on a gaffer! I worried that the line would need replacing but it kept good. To keep alert from the mesmerising power of the screen, every so often I'd give myself a 'break' and treat myself to a quick glance elsewhere, usually at the SOG* display racing through its split-second computations. Unbelievable – 7·5 knots ... 7·9 ... 8·2 ... 8·5 ... 7·6 ... must watch our course! No wonder I needed more effort to hold her.

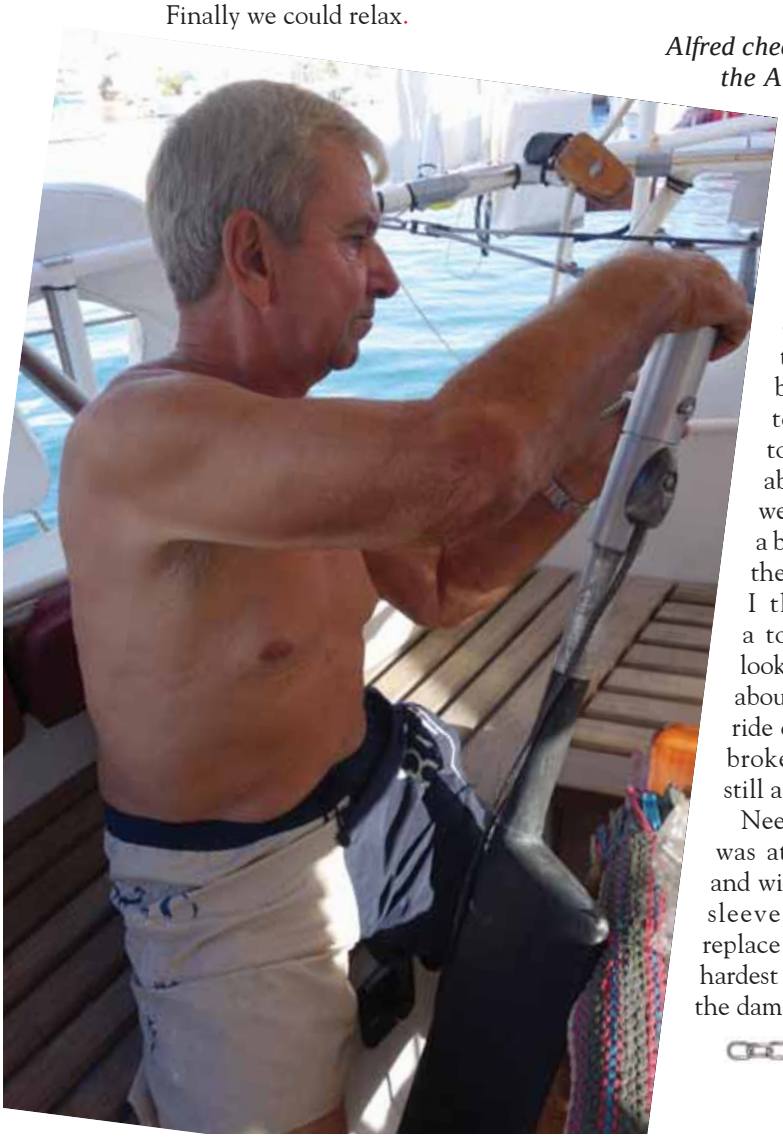
This presented another question for me to ponder: which would be preferable – to have less wind and be able to steer more easily, which would take longer, or have to work harder in stronger winds, but arrive sooner? Yes, the winds had increased and *Ironhorse*'s solid rails on the leeward side were now being dragged through the water as we raced along. No wonder we needed our oilies. It was just as well I had the distraction of steering.

* SOG: Speed Over Ground

By midnight we were only 20 miles from our waypoint, with the bright lights of La Réunion's north coast clearly visible ahead. It was obvious that we would be way ahead of our planned dawn arrival. But what encouragement, and what a boost to determination – less than three more hours of hard yakka! And if we needed to heave-to for a few hours to await daylight, that would be more than welcome!

The wind remained just aft of the beam for most of the time and, as we continued along the north coast, our concern was how long it would take to find some lee so that we could comfortably get to the foredeck to drop the hanked-on headsails and reduce our speed. It was not until we were within a few miles of the northwest tip of the island with its brightly lit town slopes that we felt some protection from the land, and we were able to slow down. Then, having pulled the main in amidships, *Ironhorse* slowed almost to a stop, comfortably bobbing slowly back and forth in a semicircle.

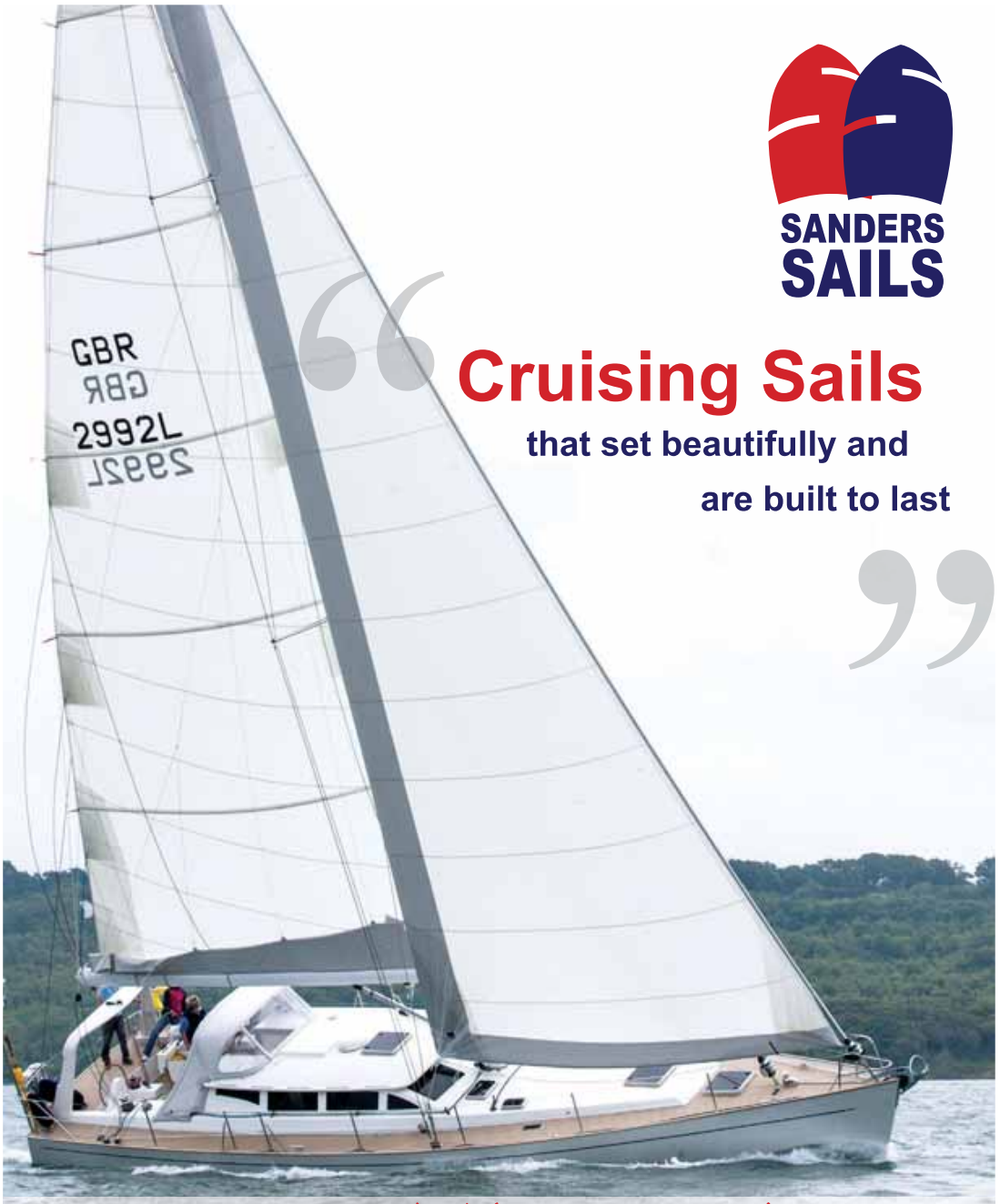
Finally we could relax.



Alfred checking the new sleeve, the Aries ready to go again

"We've made it!" breathed Alfred. "I'm really proud of you", he added, hugging me as we both collapsed onto the cockpit seat, delighted that our 70 year old bodies were still up to it. As he went on to mention something about "... repairs later" we both became aware of a bump-bumping around the stern. "What now?" I thought, as he took a torch to check. "Hey, look!" he exclaimed, "how about this?" After a rough ride of over 100 miles, our broken Aries paddle was still attached!

Needless to say the repair was attended to promptly, and within a few days a new sleeve had been made to replace the broken one, the hardest part being removal of the damaged pieces.



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SHELDUCK'S CRUISE TO AMERICA
Cascais to the Chesapeake, 2013–2014
Neil Hegarty and Anne Kenny

(*In 2013 Neil and Anne enjoyed significant birthdays, and to celebrate in a memorable way Neil invited Anne to cross the Atlantic and cruise America. Because of their age their families were not happy for them to do it alone, so they joined the 2013 Atlantic Rally for Cruisers (ARC).*

Shelduck *is a Dufour 34, built in La Rochelle in 2003. She is fitted with the standard rig, but has a deep, racing, lead keel which makes her quite stiff. In November 2012 she was laid up ashore at Belém on the western outskirts of Lisbon, Portugal to be prepared for the voyage...*)

Our first task on a long list was to replace all standing and running rigging. While the mast was down, folding steps and an active radar reflector were added, and we also fitted a roller-reefing unit with an anti-twist high tension halyard on the detachable inner forestay. This would allow us to roll away or reef sails from the cockpit and still be able to move the forestay out of the way when we want to tack the full genoa going upwind. We moved the headsail Spinlock cleats to the mast to free up cockpit Spinlocks for a second spinnaker pole, and bought a second genoa which could be set with the existing one on the twin foil. We planned to do most of the fresh downwind sailing with these two sails set on poles, but no mainsail. We also have a spinnaker for light winds.

Shelduck ready for winter storage at the end of her trip

The next issue was the provision of energy, and we considered a diesel generator, the engine, a wind generator, solar panels and a fuel cell as possible sources. We eventually decided that the most suitable solution


80°W
70°W
Chesapeake Bay
Dismal Swamp Canal
Norfolk
Elizabeth City
NORTH CAROLINA
USA
Cape Hatteras
Intracoastal Waterway
Morehead City
Myrtle Beach
Charleston
Savannah
Atlantic Ocean
Jacksonville
Daytona Beach
Intracoastal Waterway
Fort Pierce
Great Sale Cay
GREAT ABACO ISLAND
FLORIDA
Miami
BAHAMAS
Cat Island
Long Island
Ragged Island
Tropic of Cancer
CUBA
Puerto de Vita
20°N
Mona Passage
Puerto Plata
BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS
CULEBRA
ST KITTS
JAMAICA
HAITI
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
PUERTO RICO
US VIRGIN ISLANDS
GUADELOUPE
DOMINICA
MARTINIQUE
SAINT LUCIA
ST VINCENT
Tobago Cays
GRENADA
N
Caribbean Sea
80°W
10°N
COLOMBIA
VENEZUELA
PORTUGAL
Lisbon
Cascais
Sesimbra
Sines
Cape St Vincent
Lagos
Atlantic Ocean
30°N
LANZAROTE
GRAN CANARIA
CANARY ISLANDS
MOROCCO
Tropic of Cancer
20°N
MAURITANIA
SÃO VICENTE
To Saint Lucia
CAPE VERDES
SENEGAL

for a boat of *Shelduck*'s size was a fuel cell, so we fitted an Efoy Comfort 140. It would keep the batteries topped up without noise. Watermakers can be troublesome and expensive, so instead we added a 100 litre flexible tank to the existing system and carried another 100 litres on deck. All safety equipment was checked and serviced, and a discharge plate fitted in case of a lightning strike. Among the final items were charts, courtesy flags and a sat phone.

Cascais to Las Palmas

We flew from Cork on 6 October 2013 and spent two nights in a hotel in Belém so that we could inspect *Shelduck*'s hull, including her new folding propeller, prior to launching. We joined her afloat on the 9th for what was to be almost eight months aboard, and immediately left for nearby Cascais. We were joined for the passage to Las Palmas in the Canary Islands by Len Curtain and Peter Clark, both of whom were a great help in the final preparation of *Shelduck* for the Atlantic crossing.

We left Cascais on 24 October, starting with easy passages to overnight in Sesimbra and Sines before rounding Cape St Vincent to Lagos, where the crew spent three days cutting, fixing and cleaning before departing on the afternoon of 31 October for the passage to Lanzarote. This was our first opportunity to experiment with the new twin-headsail downwind rig. *Shelduck* averaged 140 miles a day while the wind held, and we arrived in Puerto Calero on 4 November. We rested for a day, and then headed on for Las Palmas, Gran Canaria and arrived after 12 days' cruising during which we'd used just one 5 litre tank of methanol for the fuel cell. Peter and Len both left, one for a walking holiday with friends on Tenerife and the other to return home, while we enjoyed a fantastic evening, said to be the best ARC Welcome Party

Anne and Neil at the Skippers' Dinner in Las Palmas

in the event's 27 year history. This party doubled as a farewell to the fifty or so ARC+ yachts who were setting off one week ahead of the rest of us so that they could stop off at the Cape Verde islands.

Las Palmas

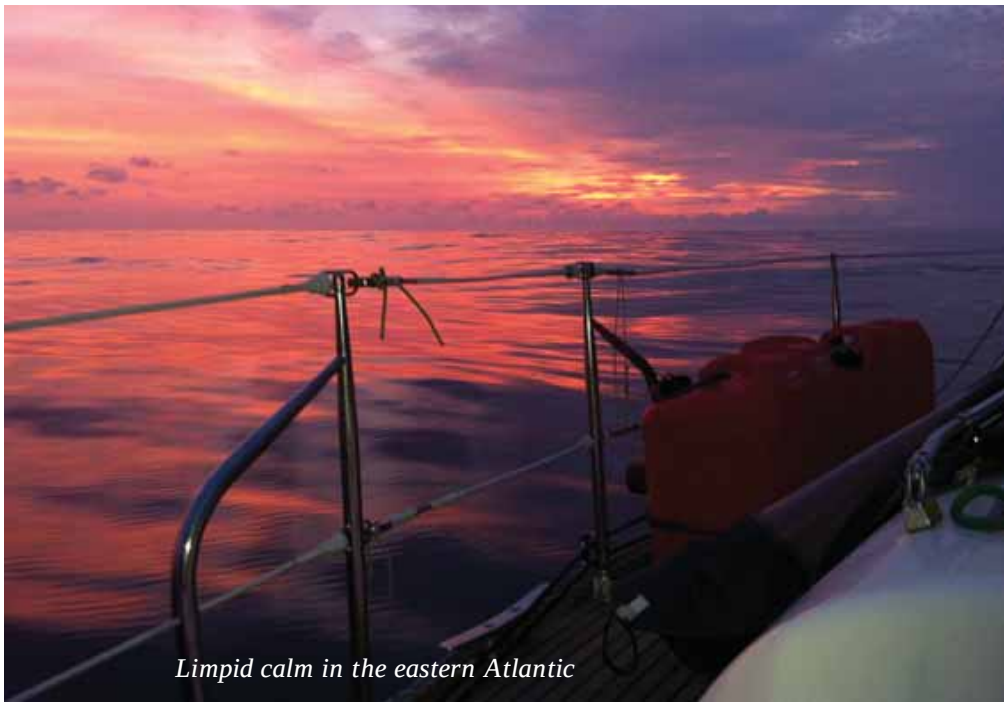
Our crew for the Atlantic crossing were Gabby Perry and Brendan McGarvey. Gabby flew in on Saturday 9 November to help with preparations, and having officially registered we attached our number on the starboard quarter as we were in the 'Cruising Division' – those who were racing had theirs to port. Each evening we attended the ARC Sundowner, a good place to meet other participants. On Tuesday Bojan, a Dutch member of the ARC team, called in to do our safety inspection, which we passed with the caveat that food and water rations, flares and two thermal insulating blankets should be added to the grab bag. Gabby spent a day in a series of seminars ranging from managing emergencies (loss of rudder/rig/power), rigging check, weather, to provisioning food and drink for three weeks at sea. We visited the City Market, and ordered meat which would be deep-frozen to –18°C and delivered to the boat the day before we sailed. We have no freezer, but deep-frozen meat in the bottom of the 'fridge keeps cold enough to avoid spoiling for the first two weeks. After that we'd be down to tinned and dried food. Brendan arrived to join us at the Skippers' Dinner, and he and Neil spent the next day at the ARC seminars.

Neil was given the honour of carrying the Irish Flag at the opening ceremony, when we paraded around the port with the flags of each participating country – at least thirty were represented. There were more than 200 yachts and over 500 crew already there, with the remainder expected to arrive the following week. There were speeches from various Canarian dignitaries, and Leo, the Port Authority and Cultural Representative from St Lucia, provided us with a tantalising glimpse of the festivities and activities we could expect when we arrived.

Next day Brendan set up Anne's 'SPOT' GPS locator device and sent out the first message to our friends and family, and set up the laptop to accept the Iridium sat phone. After five days of off-wind sailing from Portugal we had worn the ends of our genoa sheets, so Neil fitted blocks to the ends of the spinnaker poles. 'Jerry the Rigger' called by to do our in-depth rigging check, and we were more than surprised to find that a split-pin was missing at the base of the forestay. Meanwhile Anne, with help from Gabby, was working hard planning menus and listing how much we needed to buy. The start on Saturday 23 November was approaching rapidly, and to our delight Anne's son Ian and grandson Lucas flew in to see us off. On Friday evening we ate out in Las Palmas, and went to bed in anticipation of the next morning's departure.

Atlantic Crossing (eastern)

While motoring to the start we had a great send off from hundreds of people lining the walls of the harbour, and the boat marking the line and controlling the start was a Spanish Naval Patrol vessel. *Shelduck* had fresh winds at the line – she was doing 7 knots with the No.4 jib and two reefs in the main – and then Neil had to continue hand steering while we fixed a connection which had become dislodged behind the autopilot control. For much of the night we had breaking waves from astern, and we all admired the beautiful stars and quite a few meteors. Four days out and we were in



Limpid calm in the eastern Atlantic

'cruising mode' and had taken one of the most easterly routes south, only 100 miles off the African coast, to avoid a low which was further west. We may have sailed an extra 30 or even 50 miles to avoid the low, but at least it meant we stayed dry. There were amazing thunder storms to be seen to the west, especially in darkness.

We were able to do some motor-sailing at night, but mostly we were motoring into force 1 directly on the nose. At sunrise the wind freed, then followed the sun round to be on the nose again at dark. We topped up with 40 litres of diesel from the cans on deck – at 2000 rpm she was using 1·6 litres per hour. One night the moon rose looking very tropical – like a great crescent on its back and much bigger than you'd expect, blush pink to start with and gradually turning to gentle yellow as it rose. We had a small, dark bird with a white rump following us for two days, and also saw a large mixed pod of dolphins and porpoises.

On Monday 2 December we made a lightning stop for fuel at Mindelo Marina on São Vicente in the Cape Verdes – the wind had been incredibly light and variable for the previous few days so *Shelduck* had had to motor. We were just berthed when Neil heard, from an approaching inflatable, "Hello Mr Hegarty!". Who was it but Dave Hennessy with whom, some years back in his previous yacht *Beagle*, Neil had had many a joust in the Royal Cork Yacht Club, and whom we'd last seen when Dave entertained us with music and song in a pub on the Isle de Croix during the Irish Cruising Club Brittany Cruise in 2011. Dave was very helpful, telling us not to check into the country as it was unnecessary if we were not staying overnight, but advising us to pay the marina fee, which we did. He also took Gabby and Neil in his inflatable to a beach next to a fuel station where they purchased a replacement gas bottle.

By Sunday 8 December the wind was still light, but *Shelduck* managed 120 miles in 24 hours. Next day *Shelduck* motored in a flat, limpid calm. The ocean surface had a

slick oily look and the waves were just small humps and hollows. There was a colourful sunset of strong pinks and blues created in the combination of sky, sea and clouds approaching from the east. The day was split into five watches – two 6 hour watches from 0800 to 2000, followed by three 4 hour watches from 2000 until 0800 – Anne and Neil keeping one watch, and Brendan and Gabby the other. Dinner was cooked for all by the 1400–2000 watch.

Atlantic Crossing (western)

On Tuesday 10 December the wind arrived at last and *Shelduck* sailed 160 miles in 24 hours, settling into a steady reach. We celebrated the halfway mark from the Cape Verdes to St Lucia with a five course dinner prepared by Gabby (Brendan and Gabby were on watch). We were being carried by the North Equatorial Current, as well as being pushed along by the Trade and non-Trade winds, and the waves were enormous, maybe because we were crossing an area called Researcher Ridge which is only 550m deep rather than the usual 3000–5500m. There were huge mountain ranges below us, taller than Mount Everest, but we kept well northwest of the Vema Fracture Zone. The seas made life below decks particularly difficult, and it was almost impossible to move around without using both hands.

It was still blowing hard by Saturday, with 5–6m waves. Several days had been overcast, but the squalls were easy enough to see coming, like dark shapes in the sky. When they hit the wind usually increased to force 7 and backed 30°, though a few times it backed 50° and increased to gale force. During one of these *Shelduck* lay down and water came over the cockpit coaming, engulfing Neil up to his armpits.

Shelduck finishing the ARC, St Lucia

The ARC crew at the finish in Rodney Bay, St Lucia

At about mid-day Saturday, Neil was down below and just moving to the chart table to download the weather forecast when he was caught off-balance by a broach and thrown across the boat. He landed on the bar protecting the cooker, catching it just to the left of his spine. He decided he should not move from the floor for an hour, but organised the crew to pull him onto a blanket and under the table to protect him from any flying objects. After a further hour he reported movement in all parts of his body, with only superficial cuts and some bruising, but was very sore. He was able to transfer to the nearest bunk, and stayed there till noon next day when he returned to the watch rota. During this period he altered the watches to 2 hours on and 4 hours off, with just one person on deck-watch at a time. On standing watches again he changed them to 4 hours on and 4 hours off, working in pairs – no 6 hour day watches for now.

Five miles from the finish at St Lucia it was blowing force 6 so we dropped the poles and rolled up the genoas, and still made 5 knots without any sail. We then set the No.4 on the inner forestay – our speed increased to over 7 knots – and set the main when we gained some shelter from the land. We finished in Rodney Bay at 15:08:59 GMT, 11:08:59 local time, on 17 December. (We had decided not to change ship's time as we travelled west, which resulted in our dinner time going from dark to light.) *Shelduck* sailed the 3026 miles from Las Palmas to Rodney Bay in just under 23 days at an average speed of 5·5 knots. OCC qualifying passage completed!

The Windward, Leeward and Virgin Islands

Gabby and Brendan returned home on 22 December and Neil's son John arrived to cruise with us over Christmas. First we headed south to spend Christmas in St George's, Grenada, where John and Neil enjoyed their first Christmas Day swim (Anne had often gone swimming on Christmas Day). *Shelduck* cruised Grenada until New Year's Eve, and then headed north visiting Carriacou, Union Island and

our dream anchorage at the Tobago Cays. On 5 January we reluctantly departed for Bequia and on to Marigot Bay, St Lucia, where John left us to fly home. We continued with just the two of us, visiting Martinique, Dominica, Guadeloupe, St Kitts, and the British and US Virgin Islands.

Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Cuba, the Bahamas and the US East Coast

Shelduck reached Culebra in Puerto Rico on 19 February, checked in, and learned of the strict rules of Homeland Security. We cruised on south of the main island and through the Mona Passage at night, making sure to avoid the Hourglass Shoal, then headed for Puerto Plata on the north coast of the Dominican Republic, and on to Cuba. We had decided to tour Cuba by land from the marina at Puerto de Vita on the northeast coast, so that we could easily sail on to the Bahamas. *Shelduck* arrived there on 6 March and we had two very enjoyable weeks touring the island by bus (Neil had bought the tickets on the internet six months earlier while at home in Cork). We had both been keen to visit Cuba before McDonalds and Walmart arrived.

On Friday 21 March we prepared *Shelduck* for her next passage. When changing the chart card Neil seemed to have damaged the guides in the plotter at the chart table, so put the card into the plotter at the wheel instead and made it the master. But as we steered for Ragged Island in the southern Bahamas the autopilot was not happy with its new master, so we steered one hour on and one hour off and visited Long Island, Cat Island, Great Abaco Island and then Great Sale Cay, from where *Shelduck* sailed across the Gulf Stream to Fort Pierce, Florida. We had finally finished crossing the North Atlantic Ocean, and having sailed 119 miles on this last passage without an auto helm we were very, very tired. In fact we had sailed all the 667 miles from Cuba without one, which was very hard work, particularly at night.

Anne and John in the Tobago Cays

The Dismal Swamp Canal

Shelduck's journey from Florida to the Chesapeake was partly by sea and partly through the Intracoastal Waterway.

On reaching Elizabeth City, North Carolina we decided to take the Dismal Swamp Canal route to Atlantic Yacht Basin, just south of Norfolk, where *Shelduck* was to be stored for ten months. The name alone attracted us and *Shelduck* was just within the maximum draft allowed. Everything from birds and slithering reptiles to winged insects and bears, including a few scattered people, inhabit this unique primeval forest. Once owned by George Washington, the swamp holding was donated in 1973 by the Union

Neil steers through the Dismal Swamp Canal

Camp Company to create the Great Dismal Swamp National Wildlife Refuge. At 0830 on Monday 19 May *Shelduck* left the Mariners Wharf Free Dock in Elizabeth City to catch the 0900 bascule highway bridge opening, and then headed up the winding, narrow, unmarked headwaters of the Pasquotank River. Here you have some of the most undisturbed and natural cruising grounds anywhere. *Shelduck* passed through a manually-operated railway bridge to South Mills Lock, where she arrived at 1315 for the 1330 opening. We decided to moor for the night between the lock and the nearby bridge, which are worked by one person who drives between the two. On a grassy bank we folded and bagged *Shelduck*'s sails in the late afternoon sunshine. Next day *Shelduck* passed through the bridge and entered the Dismal Swamp Canal, and as we reached the Welcome Centre the floating bridge that gives access to the Dismal Swamp itself opened for us. Although the depth gauge showed a minimum of 0·5m under the keel

in the Canal itself *Shelduck* rolled over logs on the bottom a few times.

Next morning Neil timed *Shelduck*'s departure to get us to the Deep Creek lock at 1330. She exited it at 1415, and continued through the winding but marked Deep Creek to join the Intracoastal Waterway at Virginia Cut. We turned south for the Steel Bridge into the Great Bridge lock, and at 1600 passed through the Great Bridge, which opens every hour. Neil immediately called the dock master at Atlantic Yacht Basin, which lies just beyond and where we secured alongside at 1630. We had brought *Shelduck* here because our insurance company insisted she was north of Cape Hatteras before the start of the hurricane season.

Our seven month cruise – almost eight months away from home – was over, and *Shelduck* had logged 7013 miles. We had sailed 3987 of those miles with friends and family, including the passage from Cascais to Grand Canaria and the ARC itself, and another 3026 miles on our own.

Things we were glad to have:

1. **The Active Radar Reflector**. We observed many ships altering course to avoid *Shelduck*, including a tanker as we exited the Mona Passage.
2. **The Hella Fan** in our cabin. We would have expired in the heat of the southern Caribbean without it.
3. **The Fuel Cell** which kept the autopilot, 'fridge and GPS going without noise and with only two noisy 30 minute periods each day running the engine to assist the cell. It was also very useful while at anchor or on a mooring as we rarely had to run the engine in neutral to charge the batteries.
4. **The two poled-out genoas** but no mainsail for many of the fresh periods between Lagos and St Lucia.
5. **The Satellite Phone**, which we used to upload our blog – http://blog.mailasail.com/shelduck – and for weather routing with Neil's son Tom in Cork.
6. **'SPOT'**, which is a satellite GPS messenger and sends e-mail from anywhere on earth to selected people.

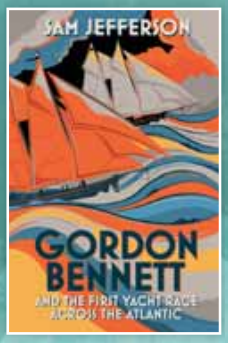
Our best tips from the ARC briefings before the start:

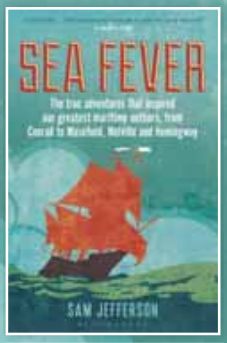
1. Have a block at the outer end of each spinnaker pole to run sheets through. *Shelduck* did not damage any lines through chafe during the entire cruise.
2. When the frozen food is being put in the 'fridge just before you leave, fill any remaining space with water bottles and don't open the door for three days. We had fresh meat for two weeks.

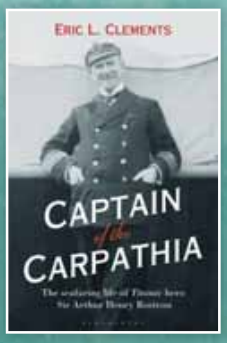
There was little trouble from customs and immigration. Our US Islands – Dominican Republic – Cuba – Bahamas – US East Coast route seemed to please all of those countries, and we enjoyed a welcome from many who noticed our Irish flag. People were friendly, helpful, interested and seemed delighted to see us wherever *Shelduck* took us.

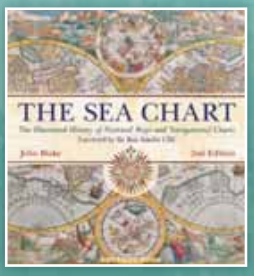
Sail Away

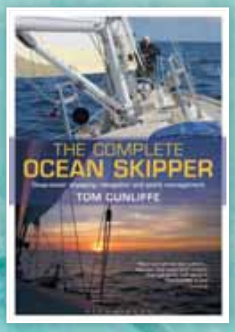
with a good book











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DARWIN TO DAMPIER VIA THE KIMBERLEYS

Mike Bickell

(*Mike and his Crealock 34* Alchemi *will be familiar to all but very recent members, having featured in* Flying Fish *more than a dozen times since 2002/2. This account follows on directly from* Northeast Australia 2014*, mentioned below.*

Mike's original, very detailed account, had to be cut for Flying Fish *– visit* Grandpa's Voyages *(easily located via any search engine) to read his full story. Once on Mike's homepage scroll down and use the Blog Archive to locate the entry, posted in August 2015. Alternatively click on 'North West Australia' among the many 'Grandpa's Maps' listed on the homepage to follow Mike's cruise on Google My Maps.*)

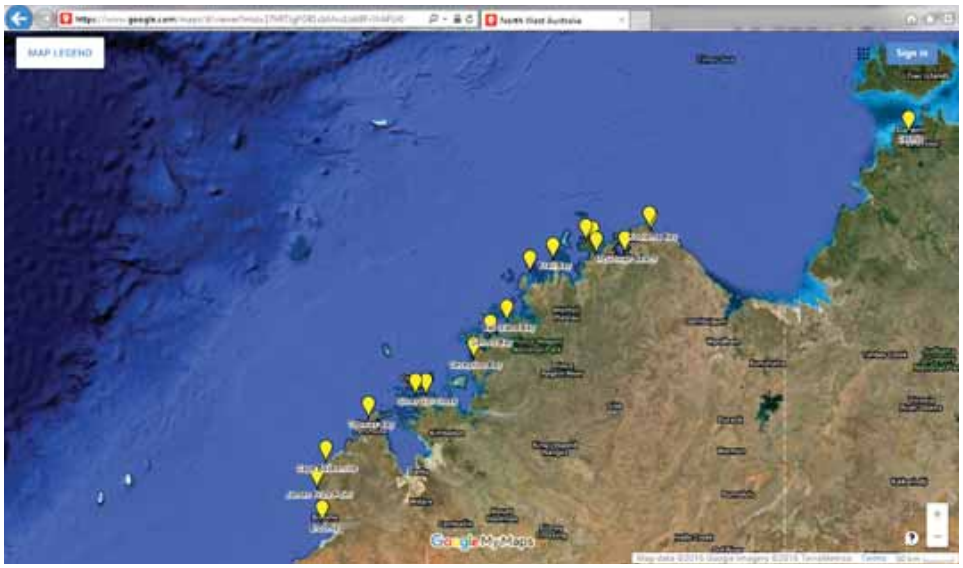
Flying Fish 2015/1 contained an account of *Alchemi*'s voyage from Bundaberg to Darwin. I had arrived in Australia on 2 April with an Electronic Travel Authority Visa which permitted me to stay in the country for three months (91 days), so on arrival in Darwin on 8 May after a 22 day passage I still had 56 days remaining. I needed seven of those in Darwin itself, to re-provision, get a dental crown cemented back in place and buy a new 2hp Yamaha outboard. *Alchemi* was ready to leave on 16 May, with just 50 days left in which to make passage along the Kimberley coast to a port from which she could leave Australia to cross the Indian Ocean.

A section on the Darwin Sailing Club website provides information on several Kimberley destinations, and I did some further research to decide where best to stop en route to see something of the coast, while still reaching a Port of Entry in time. That required the acquisition of tidal data, which wasn't straightforwardly available, though in the end I found what I needed on websites aimed at fishing enthusiasts, eg. http://www.tides4fishing.com. Careful planning based on tidal data is of paramount importance in this region because of the very large range and strong tidal currents that occur all along the coast.

I considered three possible ports for departure – Broome, Port Hedland and Dampier. I liked the idea of getting as far west as I could to reduce the distance of the next leg across the ocean, but recognised that Broome might be a better choice if I was close to running out of visa time when I got there.

Darwin to the King George River

There are several possible places to visit and explore all around the coast of the Joseph Bonaparte Gulf, but lack of time ruled these out so I headed direct for Koolama Bay near the mouth of the King George River. The river is known for its dramatic, high-sided gorge, a highlight for many cruising this coast. There is, however, a bar to be crossed before reaching deeper water farther in, and as my arrival in Koolama Bay coincided with the top of spring tides I was concerned I might become neaped. I couldn't afford to wait two weeks to get out, so decided not to risk potential entrapment and moved on after enjoying a second calm night at anchor in Koolama Bay.



King George River to McGowan's Beach, Napier Broome Bay

Inshore sandbanks and shoals force a boat to round Capes Londonderry and Talbot a long way offshore, with the prospect of strong adverse tidal flows if the timing is wrong. To give myself the best chance for making that passage in daylight and with a favourable current, I decided first to stop at Butterfly Bay, just over 20 miles along the coast. There were 25 knot winds that day and the current tended to pile up on the coast beyond the entrance, so entering the bay was quite exciting. Once inside I found swell penetrated as far up the eastern wing as I dared to go, so there was good shelter from the wind but a fair amount of movement.

To catch the tidal stream round Cape Londonderry I left the anchorage at 0530 next morning in very little wind, but by 0800 it had picked up to 15 knots and *Alchemi* was sailing fast with a fair tide under her. Consequently we rounded Cape Talbot earlier than expected, and instead of anchoring in its lee as I'd originally intended I kept going in towards Napier Broome Bay. Approaching McGowan's Beach, deep within the bay, I was surprised to see a large motor boat at anchor but had no difficulty in finding a spot nearby for *Alchemi* to come to rest.

The local 14ft foot croc didn't chew on this 'teething ring' when I went ashore for fuel

The following morning I launched the dinghy and went ashore, pleased at the performance of the new outboard. The attraction was a note in the guide book saying there was a campsite nearby frequented by 4x4 drivers at which it was often possible to buy diesel. I hadn't used much since leaving Darwin, but was able to squeeze 40 litres from cans into the boat tanks and thought refilling the cans at the first opportunity would be a good idea. My hopes were enhanced by the sight of a 5000 litre road tanker parked on the beach!

Soon after landing a figure appeared in a dune buggy. His first words were: "What's that thing you've dragged up the beach?" – my introduction to locals' contempt for what they call 'teething rings for crocs'. He went on to explain there was a 14-footer that cruised up and down this beach from time to time. He did fill my two cans with diesel, though, whilst explaining that no 4x4s had yet made it through this year due to floods blocking the tracks further inland.

After returning to *Alchemi*, and hoisting the dinghy aboard before it got munched by a hungry croc, I established VHF contact with the motor boat, *Melita*. It wasn't long before Dave appeared in a large and croc-proof 'tinny' and took me back to *Melita* to meet Lyndell. They told me they had been cruising around Australia in *Melita* for many years, including several visits to the Kimberleys. We were pleased to make contact in this remote place, and stayed together for several days during which their knowledge of places to visit and/or anchor was enormously helpful. My time in their company was the most enjoyable of my entire cruise along this coast.

Napier Broome Bay to Freshwater Bay, Vansittart

For those cruising this coast from north to south, passage from Napier Broome to Vansittart Bay presents the first of many similar planning dilemmas. It is of course possible to go well out into the ocean to clear all the offshore islands and reefs between one bay and the next, but that entails long distances and still requires tidal flows and timing to be taken into account. This is because the continental shelf lies at such a shallow angle that huge volumes of water rush to and fro between each major bay and the Indian Ocean. These flows occur at slightly different times in each bay, so strong transverse currents are also created between one bay and the next.

It is about 40 miles from McGowan's Beach in Napier Broome to Freshwater Bay in Vansittart. The crux of the passage is about two-thirds of the way along the route, where it passes through a narrow channel between Long Island and Mary Island, past Middle Rock which lies between the two. It needs to be traversed at or close to the turn of the tide to avoid the very fast currents and turbulence that occur at other times. *Melita* had made the passage several times before, so she went first with *Alchemi* following. This allowed me to see how she was affected, although in practice I relied more on *Alchemi*'s own instruments than on watching her.

The seaward side of Freshwater Bay is encumbered by another hazard that is repeated many times along this coast. In the past, people in Broome and nearby made a living by collecting pearls from naturally-occurring oyster beds. Nowadays this is done on an industrial scale, with man-made farms occupying very large areas in many places along the coast. The periphery of such farms is usually marked by buoys and netting, often unlit, preventing yachts – or any other craft not involved in the farming operations – from entering the areas. So it was in Freshwater Bay as I approached in the rapidly

The first pool in Freshwater Bay at high tide…

fading light, steering by instruments and hoping the farm boundaries marked on the chart were accurate. They were, and soon *Alchemi* was able to anchor not far from *Melita* in a cove off the southern shore.

We stayed there together for two days, enjoying new experiences that I would not have found without Dave and Lyndell's prior knowledge. The first was an expedition in *Melita*'s tinny to a shallow and rocky area near the mouth of the cove, each equipped with a bucket, a hammer and a metal tent peg. Dave pointed out the Pacific Blacklip Oysters growing prolifically on the rocks and becoming exposed as the tide receded, and the purpose of our equipment became obvious as we inserted the tent pegs between shells and rock, hammered away and put the resulting oysters in our buckets.

It all seemed very tranquil until Dave advised me to keep a watch over my shoulder every now and again in case the croc known to be resident in the cove was creeping up. He tried to settle my anxieties by saying I could probably move faster than a croc over the rocks and boulders, but I didn't really relax until we were back on *Melita* enjoying Oysters Naturel and Kilpatrick with a glass of wine!

For many years early explorers failed to find any fresh water in Vansittart Bay – it was only relatively recently that the creek running into the cove where we were anchored was found, giving rise to the name Freshwater Bay. The mouth of the creek is hidden behind mangroves, and the approach through them is so narrow and shallow that, even in the tinny, entry was only possible a couple of hours either side of high tide. Once inside there is a pool at the foot of a series of rock ledges, with enough water flowing down the creek to permit laundry to be done and even a full-length, if shallow, immersion to be enjoyed.

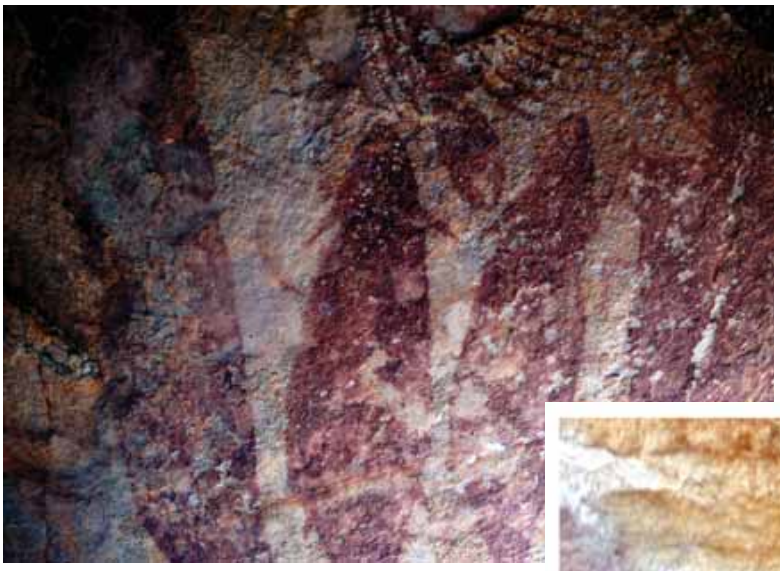
Jar Island, Vansittart Bay

Jar Island lies at the head of Vansittart Bay, and is so named because primitive pottery was found here by early explorers. It has since become famous for the many aboriginal cave paintings subsequently discovered. As a result the island is often visited by smallish cruise ships which anchor off its northern tip, but Dave and Lyndell, having

… with swimming and laundry pools higher up

been here before, knew it was possible to get round to the southeastern corner of the island, between its rocky shore and the nearby edge of yet another pearl farm – provided one went cautiously. This time I did follow the route taken by *Melita*, because she was moving slowly and not far ahead. The anchorage was a big improvement – better wind protection, less swell and shallower water – though later we did see bull sharks coming to the surface nearby, hunting for scraps – or perhaps for an arm or leg!

Ascent to the plateau becomes more difficult farther up the creek



Aborigines were fishermen as well as hunter-gatherers

More than one generation used the same rock face at Jar Island

The following day we used the tinny to return to the northern tip of the island, near which most of the paintings are situated. There we found one of the small cruise ships that tour the Kimberley, so our viewing of the paintings was partially accomplished in private and partially as hangers-on, eavesdropping on the guided groups and benefiting from their explanations of the provenance and character of the paintings.

Vansittart Bay to Admiralty Bay and on to Krait Bay

Dave and Lyndell planned to return to Freshwater Bay, but I had only 36 days left in which to reach a Port of Entry and depart the country. So with some sadness we bade each other farewell and I left the anchorage at Jar Island at 0645 next morning, 28 May.

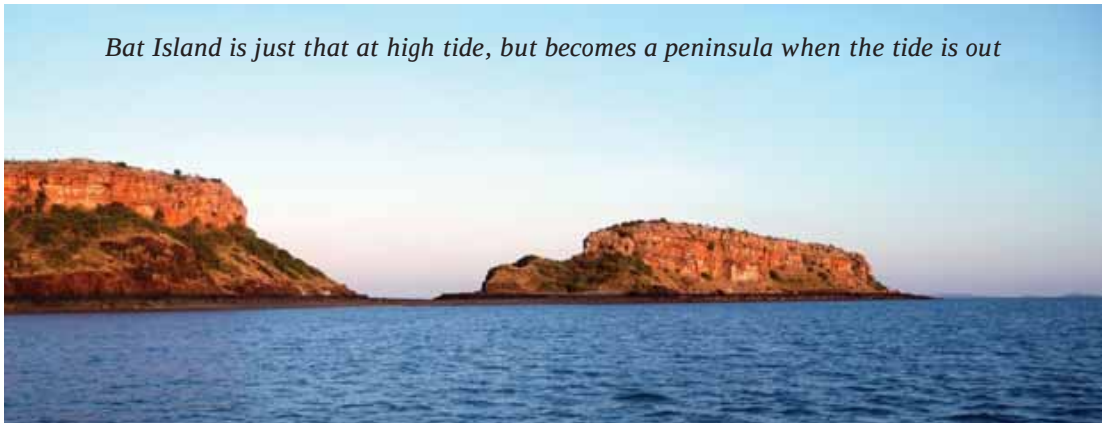
Making passage around Cape Bougainville is comparatively straightforward, but it still needs to be timed to catch both the outgoing and incoming tides. My early departure did that, and *Alchemi* reached Parry Harbour on the northern coast of Admiralty Bay that afternoon without incident. There are many islands and anchorages in Admiralty Bay and I would have liked to explore some of them, but pressure of time again forced me to move on.

The next convenient anchorage on the route south is at Krait Bay, near the tip of the peninsula which forms the west edge of Admiralty Bay – but to get there without going miles offshore requires one to go through the Voltaire Passage. This is another narrow channel between offshore islands, where extremely strong currents flow at most times except for a short period when the tide turns. Weighing anchor at 0530

did the trick and saw me anchoring again in Krait Bay at 1230. The anchorage is well sheltered but it is imperative not to go too far into the bay – what seems at high tide to be the tip of a small rock, reveals itself as the tide goes out to be the summit of a long vertical wall right across the bay.

Krait Bay to the Prudhoe Islands and York Sound

The next stretch of coastline has hundreds of small islands and inlets that would provide weeks of cruising if one had the time. In the middle of these is Bigge Island, celebrated for its many examples of aboriginal art and other remains. Bigge Island also represents a serious obstacle to passage along the coast, because its surrounding waters are extremely shallow, particularly to the south where there are narrow, fast-flowing rocky channels as well as the ubiquitous pearl farms.



Bat Island is just that at high tide, but becomes a peninsula when the tide is out

Mining scars on Koolan Island

To make good time and avoid all these obstacles, particularly difficult for a singlehander, I elected to make for Shelter Bay in the Prudhoe Islands, northeast of Bigge Island. These can be approached either from north or from east and south. There are uncharted areas in both approaches, but I chose the latter as it looked more open. Another early start from Krait Bay saw *Alchemi* anchored in the almost completely enclosed Shelter Bay soon after noon. From the Prudhoe Islands one can soon turn south towards the Coronation Islands, and seek anchorage in many places including, as I did, off Cape Brewster.

York Sound to Yampi Sound

As one continues south, Augustus Island and its neighbours again create obstacles with their narrow, rocky and current-swept channels and many pearl farms. Again it is possible to go outside them, but in a small and short-handed boat this will take longer and probably require forays towards the mainland to find anchorage. That was certainly the case for *Alchemi* with her next stop at Dennis Bay – a well-sheltered and pleasant anchorage followed by another at Deception Bay.

Here one is faced with yet another choice – to enter Camden Sound, which contains the Montgomery Reef where the tide goes out so quickly that it's said one can watch seawater waterfalls coming off the reef, and south of that Walcott Inlet, or to bypass the area. Purists say you haven't really visited the Kimberley unless you have cruised this area, yet again time pressures led me to choose the bypass route and head straight towards Yampi Sound. Evidence of modern industry in the form of mining scars becomes apparent even if approaching from the ocean side, and once inside the Sound itself, after passing between Koolan and Cockatoo Islands, it becomes even more obvious with

An ore carrier awaits its load

anchored ore carriers and piles of spoil on the hillsides. There are several anchorages available, but I chose to pass through the outer entrance to Silver Gull Creek and anchor in the pool outside the creek itself. It was peaceful there, though I did see a catamaran at the entrance to the narrower part of the creek.

Yampi Sound to Broome

King Sound, the last of the great Kimberley Bays on the way south lies between the southwestern end of Yampi Sound and Cape Leveque. Again it has many places worth visiting, but with my time pressures I once again had to take the quickest route – across its wide mouth and past the many islands, taking account of the fast tidal currents generated by this enormous bay. But first I wanted to get as far west as I could before leaving the protection of the islands around Yampi Sound. So I moved from Silver Gull Creek to Conulurus Island, which turned out to be one of the best-protected and most appealing anchorages in the entire voyage.

Looking west from Conulurus anchorage

It is possible to anchor close to Cape Leveque, on the southwest side of the entrance, but the waters are shallow and current-swept so I decided on a 0430 start to catch a favourable tide round the Cape and get as far as Thomas Bay. Care is needed to enter and leave, because there are rocks on both sides of the entrance and a patch in its centre. As these can be awash at low tide, entry an hour or two after high tide is recommended. Thomas Bay proved to be fine, but the same cannot be said about the next two anchorages at Cape Baskerville and James Price Point. Both were safe enough and sheltered from the strong southeasterly winds, but subject to some swell and tidally induced restlessness.

Broome

Broome is a Port of Entry and, as I discovered later, would make an excellent arrival or departure port were it not for the difficulty of finding an acceptable anchorage and getting ashore. This problem arises because the town sits at the landward end of the peninsula which forms the northwestern boundary of Roebuck Bay. This is a shallow expanse of open water edged by mangroves, in which significant waves are set up by the strong southeasterly winds, often accelerated by the effect of high pressure systems that track from west to east south of the Australian continent. The Bay is named after the ship in which William Dampier first explored this coast.

There are big ship mooring and wharf facilities, but these are exposed to the waves and impractical for yachts because of the large tidal range. The recommended solution is to go up the creeks near the town and either anchor for a short time around high tide and dinghy to a pier, or go far enough into the mangroves to gain protection and then settle on the mud at low tide.

In the past it was possible to anchor off the south end of Cable Beach on the ocean side of the peninsula, where there is good protection from the wind and swell, but by 2014 this area was occupied by moorings for local boats and the small cruise ships that offer tours to the Kimberley. Consequently *Alchemi* was compelled to anchor so far up the coast that swell could be seen breaking on the shallow beach, creating conditions that would have made it difficult to land or relaunch a dinghy without it being overturned. So although I stayed at anchor for two comfortable nights off Cable Beach, I decided to press on south and west in order to shorten the length of the long passage across the southern Indian Ocean.

Broome to Dampier

There is a choice to be made when sailing between these places – to hug the coast or go offshore. The offshore passage is about 350 miles and the inshore one slightly longer. There are a small number of places along the coast where it is possible to anchor, but many fewer than might be supposed because the tidal range necessitates anchoring well away from the shore. The few indentations and creeks are coral encumbered. That is no deterrent for strongly-crewed yachts where the crew can stand anchor watches, but is much more problematic for short-handed boats.

The offshore route is much more exposed, with no protection from the wind and a long enough fetch for significant waves to develop. Nevertheless that is the way I decided to go, both for visa reasons and because I was reluctant to risk sailing close inshore in darkness. I didn't get caught for the first couple of days, but the wind grew stronger as I neared the waters offshore from Port Hedland and Port Walcott. This is where I first experienced the heavy traffic to and from the offshore rigs,

Hampton Beach at high tide, seen from the Dampier Sailing Club

necessitating on one occasion a VHF call to a fast-approaching vessel on a course at right angles to mine, to alert her to my presence and request she pass behind *Alchemi*. I think the oriental radio officer understood my request – in any event there was no collision.

The wind grew stronger and stronger as *Alchemi* headed southwest to round Legendre Island, before ploughing straight into it as she made her way into the more protected waters off Dampier. Here the main hazard was making sense of the multitude of apparently conflicting buoys and flashing lights – there are many ore-loading, repair yard and other installations up the multifarious creeks and short coastal stretches leading to the inner bay in which the Hampton Harbour Boat and Sailing Club is located.

Dampier, Karratha and Port Hedland

These three places are at the heart of the Australian resources boom. As a consequence, in 2014 they were home to a huge range of engineering facilities and other skills of great use to anyone needing to repair, service or provision a yacht, and in these respects formed an ideal region from which to prepare for an ocean crossing.

The HHBSC has good facilities and friendly staff who even make a pick-up truck available for the use of cruisers when it's not needed for work around the club. It made enough money from its fuel station serving leisure sailors and work boats to construct the best club harbour I've ever seen, with pontoons for dinghies and shallow draft craft. Working and leisure boats are kept on moorings in the bay beyond. These are well spaced, but as at Broome there is not a lot of room between them because they need long scopes to cater for the tidal range and to provide a small margin against dragging.

Dampier Sailing Club's harbour, with its moorings beyond

The latter is definitely needed because the whole area frequently experiences strong gales. There were some very windy days when *Alchemi* was there, but I managed to keep her clear of other boats and the holding was good.

Dampier town is quite small, but has a supermarket with a limited choice of provisions, some local businesses and a Customs Office usually busy with foreign crew arriving to go ashore or leaving to return to their ship. There are many more service industry businesses, shops and accommodation in Karratha about 30 minutes away by road. The air-conditioned mall at Karratha has as good a range of supermarkets, clothing, electronic and other stores as an inner Melbourne suburb, and better by far than the outer suburbs of the big cities. I didn't visit Port Hedland, but judging by the number of ships entering and leaving as I passed I imagine it too has an abundance of service businesses.

My stay at Dampier was socially enlivened by meeting both locals and two couples on a South African catamaran. Rory, who installed and serviced air-conditioning systems in Karratha, was particularly helpful, arranging a welded repair to a broken stanchion in double-quick time. So although I missed many places in the Kimberley which it would have been good to explore had more time been available, I did reach a great town in which to prepare for an ocean voyage where I received a warm and helpful welcome from locals and fellow cruisers alike.

I finally left Dampier on 27 June just four days before my 91 day Electronic Travel Authority Visa expired on 2 July.

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FETCHING PANACEA
Peter McCrea and Doug Theobalds

(*This is the voyage for which the 2015 Rambler Medal has been awarded – see page 28.*)

'Arrival – underway – Stream sucks – go West – wind is up – 0300 knockdown! – chaos & smoke – assess – regroup – jury rig 12V power – Stream crossing – Smiles'

... this cryptic passage summary was transmitted from *Panacea* to family using a handheld DeLorme inReach communicator, which utilises the Iridium Satellite constellation to transmit e-mail messages and current location. The 160-character limitation of this remote messaging system, every key stroke counting, made it a challenge to convey the complex sets of circumstances we had experienced during the six-day passage.

Some seven weeks prior to this Haiku-like transmission, *Panacea*, a Freedom 32 cat sloop, had been left on a storm mooring in Bermuda following the solo leg of the biennial 2015 Bermuda 1-2 Race, after skipper Peter McCrea and son John received debilitating injuries in a moped accident while sightseeing prior to the start of the second, two-handed leg. Following the mishap both flew back home to heal broken bones and, while recuperating, Peter sought a crew member who could help deliver *Panacea* back to mainland USA before the hurricane season. Doug Theobalds, President of Epifanes NA Inc, was the first to offer his time and extensive offshore experience, an offer quickly accepted. The two men had served on committees together for a decade, and a few years previously had delivered

Preparing Panacea in Bermuda before departure

Doug's boat from Mystic, Connecticut to Thomaston, Maine, so the critical 'crew chemistry' imperative on a small boat at sea had been proven.

The boat retrieval mission started off with a hiccup when the pair arrived at the local regional airport only to learn the early morning Cape Air flight was cancelled, the assigned pilot not having shown up. Fortunately one of the passengers, coincidentally a Senior Vice President of the company, saved the day. Without missing a beat he personally rented a vehicle to deliver several passengers to the Portland Jetport and ferried Doug and Peter to Boston's Logan Airport to make missed connections. After an overnight stay in Boston paid for by Cape Air – great service! – and a 0300 wakeup call, they headed to Bermuda via an 0530 flight to NYC with connections to Bermuda ... a long day.

Long-time friend Verna Oatley, together with husband Bobby, owners of Captain Smokes Marina and the Godet & Young Hardware Store in St George's, had looked after *Panacea* and assisted with transportation (avoiding renewed moped challenges) during her brief stay at their marina while provisioning for the 635 mile passage to Newport, RI.

The Summary...

'Arrival' By the morning of Thursday 6 August, a scant 2½ days after arrival in Bermuda, captain and crew felt ready to depart – having provisioned, scrubbed the hull, checked out all vessel systems, conversed with Gulf Stream and weather-routing advisors, paid bills, etc. In the haste of leaving the marina, topping off diesel, making last-minute provisions (beer and olive oil) and clearing out with Bermuda Customs at Ordinance Island, we missed the 0730 single-sideband (SSB) weather chat with Chris Parker, the Florida-based meteorologist and vital element in a safe passage home. Plenty of time to catch it tomorrow, we thought, confident in the knowledge that the forecast was for benign weather for several days ahead. Had we listened, Parker would probably have tried to discourage a departure at that time.

'Underway' at last**,** with great relief to be heading homeward with full water tanks and extra diesel, unlike the light-ship configuration *Panacea* usually has when racing. The SSB long-range radio was used to contact a cruiser in Onset, Massachussetts who was asked to send an e-mail to Parker stating we were underway and would contact him at our scheduled radio time the next morning. At sunset seas and wind moderated from showery rainsqualls in Bermuda to quieter conditions, and by midnight we were motor-sailing with the engine providing gentle thrust, moving the boat along at just over 5 knots. At that RPM the diesel consumes less than 0·4 US gallons per hour, giving us 500 miles of motoring range. A watch schedule was agreed upon of two hours on, two off during the night and unstructured rest periods in daylight, with someone always awake and alert for alarms (bilge, AIS, radio schedule, log entry, etc) and visual watch-keeping.

'Stream Sucks' was our paraphrase of what Chris Parker had to say on Friday morning. A massive, energetic system akin to a nor'easter would create untenable sea states in the region of the Gulf Stream for which *Panacea* was heading, some 300 miles to the northwest. No immediate alternative other than turning back to Bermuda was offered, and we signed off to rethink options. We decided to slow our 7+ knot rate of progress, so doused the main after securing first and second reefs as a precaution, and reached

Squally weather

northwest under the small jib at 4·4 knots. We advised Parker of our new 'go-slow' strategy with a brief InReach message. Respond he did, with a three-page imperative!

'Go West' was the essence of his advice, warning us *not* to go above 36°N until reaching a Gulf Stream entry point at 36°N 72°W – a long way off the rhumb line course one normally takes. But this was not normal weather. He also cautioned that building southwesterlies with squalls would be upon us by Saturday on our way west. This option was preferable, however, as it offered a path of avoidance of very nasty Gulf Stream weather at the expense of extra miles travelled, while still heading for home – eventually. Soon after 1630 on Friday the double-reefed main was raised and the Monitor wind vane set to maintain a course heading west along 34°40'N, doing 6 knots through the water.

'Wind is up!' By 1830 Saturday the winds were 28–33 knots apparent, increasing to high 30s in squalls. The double-reefed main was handed, with Doug doing the deck work while Peter advised the sequence and worked the cockpit. Continuing under small jib alone with the Monitor steering, *Panacea* was doing 5·4 knots over the ground, heading slightly north of west. By midnight Parker's Gulf Stream entry waypoint target was 132 miles distant, bearing 323°M. Wave action was increasing but did not appear to be threatening, and *Panacea* was comfortable and not overpowered despite the deteriorating conditions.

'Knockdown!' At 0300 squally conditions saw Peter on watch, sitting on the perch in the companionway, just inside the 'offshore slider' which closes off the below-decks space from the cockpit with a 5 x 24in (12·5 x 61cm) opening at the top. Doug was

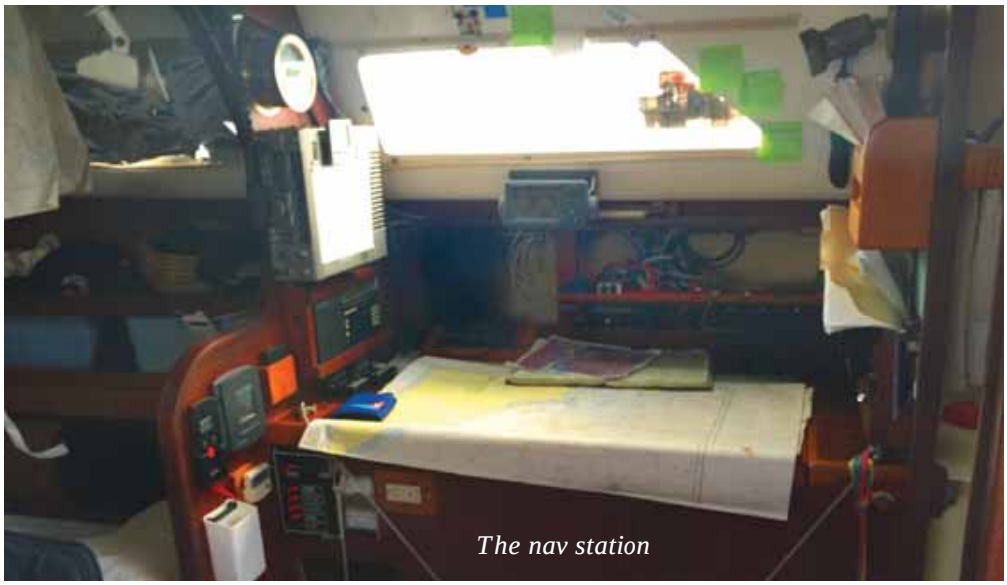
off watch in his bunk in the aft cabin. As quick as a blink and with no breaking sea pre-warning roar, Peter became horizontal with water pouring in through the small slider opening, accompanied by a cacophony of sound as loose objects followed parabolic arcs across the cabin to land on the nav station and leeward berth. Doug awoke lying on a hull-mounted port light, and emerged quickly from aft as *Panacea* righted herself and resumed sailing with an added load of seawater and flailing jib, its top third severely compromised.

'Chaos & smoke' The bilge alarm sounded as the 6in or so of sea water in front of the nav station began to filter below, while we tried to capture and bail as much as possible with a dish pan. A dozen eggs in their container had mysteriously appeared on top of the nav station, along with much of the contents of the spice rack from the opposite side, but none of the eggs appeared to have suffered from the 12ft arc across the galley from *inside* the ice chest.

A serious new threat quickly emerged when acrid smoke appeared at an access slider adjacent to the 12V electrical panel. A search for the ignition source proved useless as the fumes quickly became thick, black, acrid and absolutely impossible to breathe, forcing both of us out into the cockpit. Without a lot of discussion but with a shared belief that something had to be done, *and soon,* Peter, with fire extinguisher in hand, dove back into the cabin and shut off the three battery switches in three different areas of the boat, thereby nipping the source of the electrical fire at its origin. A second trip below left an open galley hatch to windward, resulting in rapid clearing of the cabin atmosphere in order to regain the shelter of the cabin to assess the damage. Doug deployed the cockpit-mounted manual bilge pump and drew air after 150 strokes.

With all electrical power off we were basically a 'dead ship', but with the Monitor steering and the damaged jib still pulling, albeit noisily, we were still making westing and slightly north. It was agreed that little more could be done after the cabin sole

Breaking seas

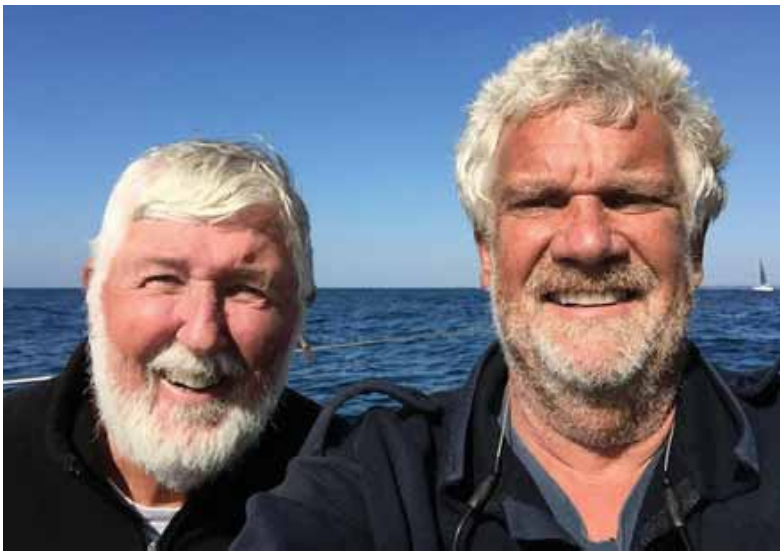


The nav station

had been cleared of detritus and trip hazards, and we both retreated to our berths to think through the situation.

'Assess' Little sleep took place over the next few hours as we separately, and later, jointly worked through the possibilities of bringing lost functions back online. Daylight brought a slight moderation in conditions and a sense of optimism when it was discovered that the engine start battery and circuits, as well as the independent SSB/Tricolor/GPS battery and circuits (a Bermuda 1-2 requirement), were unaffected by the electrical fire. Only the main house bank and it's 20 breakers were inoperative – including chart plotter, all three electric autopilots, nav lights, cabin lights, propane solenoid, bilge pump, wind instruments, radar, VHF and AIS. A visual inspection of the engine compartment was carried out, paying close attention to the engine mounts. Then the engine was started and run in gear to ensure that no lines fouled the prop and that the shaft was not bent. The SSB circuit was gingerly energised, but though its functionality was intact the radio itself appeared unusable. Fortunately, the inReach communicator continued to operate for text communications.

'Regroup – 12V jury-rig power' With an improving sea state and the waves now on the quarter, Doug handed the dying jib while Peter engaged the engine. An electric autopilot was necessary to hold a satisfactory course, so a jumper 12V feed from a live 'good' circuit was run to the nearest autopilot with inelegant but adequate results, considering. A similar patch soon had the stove capable of receiving propane so that an accustomed morning jolt of dark roast was assured. When the nav station lid was lifted, containers of olive oil and wasabi from the spice rack, along with a second egg carton with ten eggs, were discovered sitting atop seawater-saturated charts. Only two eggs were cracked. This was obviously the first carton of eggs to have landed, as the nav station lid was forced open either by water pressure or by the rotational energy in the knockdown. Makes one wonder about the Newtonian mechanics of full egg cartons at sea!



Smiles from Peter and Doug on arrival in Newport

Another strange flight path was the one taken by a copy of *Vertue XXXV*, a slim volume describing a noteworthy transatlantic passage in a 25ft sloop written by Ocean Cruising Club founder Humphrey Barton. The book was found wedged into a centreline overhead handhold – as if the author wanted it to be the last item to remain dry.

'Stream Crossing' Chris Parker predicted good stream-crossing weather "just around the corner to the North", and sail was soon added to the engine to reach the waypoint. By 0800 Monday *Panacea* was reaching at 6+ knots with no engine, heading across the Gulf Stream in bright sunshine. Parker warned, however, of increasing winds and strong convection with squalls to 60 knots the following day, on the track to Newport. And then there was a further surprise. Some of the largest mature waves Peter had seen in his 24 crossings of the Gulf Stream were encountered – monsters that we were both sure spanned 25ft from crest to trough. The scene was both awe inspiring and humbling.

Early on Tuesday morning both the first and second reefs were set as the southerly wind increased. A third reef was added two hours later, the small sail area which resulted being quite compatible with the Monitor steering on a broad reach. The weather worsened, making the third reef the right choice for most of the day, but by dark it was clear the bullet had been dodged and we had been spared the worst part of the predicted system.

'Smiles' The wind was down by the time we arrived just south of the Nantucket shipping lanes, so with 58 miles to Brenton R-2, the entry buoy to Newport, the engine was engaged. *Panacea* passed R-2 close aboard at 1010 Wednesday morning, 13 August, six days and 796 miles after leaving Bermuda.

Observations and lessons learned

A conclusion to any story is essential, and this one is no less deserving. There are always lessons learned:

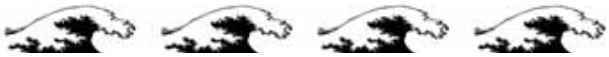
- First, the time prior to the 'incident' was reviewed. We both agreed that *Panacea* had not been over-canvassed for the conditions. Had the wave intensity risen to a severe state we could, and probably would, have dogged the leeward heads hatch, typically kept ajar for some cabin ventilation, fastened the latches on the ice chest

and nav station lids, and installed the top closure panel on the offshore slider. These actions would have kept most of the water out of the interior of the vessel, thereby preventing the electrical fire. Loss of the jib would not have been prevented.

- By far the greatest asset during recovery was Peter's intimate relationship with *Panacea*. His mental picture and thorough knowledge of the workings of the vessel proved critical time and time again. With this level of familiarity, and a well thought-out toolbox, we were able to repair essential systems and continue in relative comfort and safety.

- The sea state and wind conditions were challenging at best during the passage. There was temporary relief a couple of nights and, at last, a glorious morning the day landfall was made. Despite the considerable challenges, we both remained calm and were able to share ideas, suggestions and opinions. In spite of the incidents experienced and chaos below, voices were never raised or harsh words spoken.

- It is good to remember that most boats can withstand far more than their crew. Skippers must know their boats inside and out, remain clearheaded and calm, and regain control as quickly as possible after the unexpected happens. *Panacea* was fortunate to have two good seamen aboard – needless to say, Peter was extremely pleased with his choice of Doug to help fetch *Panacea* home.



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ALONE ON THE OCEAN ~ PASSAGE MAKING

Vicky and Tom Jackson

(*Tom and Vicky are some of* Flying Fish*'s most prolific contributors, this being their 16th article in 18 years. They are also among the world's most experienced cruising sailors, a fact recognised by the Cruising Club of America with the award of their 2015 Blue Water Medal, and by ourselves with the 2015 OCC Award, which recognises the inspiration and cruising example they have set for over three decades – see page 39.*

Tom and Vicky's 40ft S&S-designed Sunstone*, now nearing her 50th birthday, has carried them close to 200,000 miles over the years and still looks immaculate. A lesson to us all!*

All photographs are by Vicky Jackson except where credited.)

Sailing is not just one activity – there are many variations on the theme of being on the water aboard a sailing yacht. Sometimes there is a stay in a marina, time on a mooring, cruising from one anchorage to another, short coastal hops, longer coastal jumps ... and then there is passage-making. For us that means far out of sight of land, in open waters, crossing oceans, constantly sailing, being self-sufficient for a long period, arriving tired in a new place.

Passage making is about sailing. For some, sailing is the prime motive – these are 'swish of the bow-wave sailors'; for others the sailing will be something you have to bear to get somewhere else. There is even a group for whom using the engine most of time may qualify as a 'good passage'.

We have sailed passages of 500 to 1500 miles with *Sunstone* many times. Our longest single passage was 5200 miles over 37 days, from Simonstown in South Africa to

A calm channel in the Broughton Archipelago, British Columbia

Fremantle in Western Australia. More recently we have criss-crossed the Pacific Ocean. Twice in the past five years we have sailed from our home base in New Zealand north to Alaska and British Columbia and back. The Pacific Ocean is big – it is over 6000 miles from New Zealand to Alaska.

From April to July 2015 we gently cruised around Vancouver Island. We took in the Gulf and the San Juan Islands, Vancouver City, Louisa Inlet with the aptly named Chatterbox Falls, Desolation Sound and the Broughton Archipelago on the east side. Rounding Cape Scott we sailed south down the west coast; navigating into rock bound anchorages, heading 'inland' up some of the long inlets that indent the mountainous coast, and soaking up the history of the early explorers, along with a real soak in hot pools. Tofino, a small tourist and fishing town on the west coast, was our point of departure for the sail home to New Zealand. It would be the first time we would be sailing back to our static home, our house in Nelson. As in 2011, we broke the Pacific Ocean into three legs with stops in Honolulu, Hawaii, and Vava'u, Tonga (the latter because we knew it would be cooler than Samoa).

Sunstone in Tranquilito Cove, bow anchor and stern tie to small island

Pre-passage preparations are important. Water, sun and salt take their toll on varnish. For any passage over 1500 miles we give *Sunstone's* topsides and other on-deck woodwork a fresh coat of varnish. Tranquilito Cove near Tofino was a perfect spot to varnish, do engine and rig checks, and relax on our own with not a ripple in sight. In Tofino we filled all the food containers, stacked the tins locker, put UHT milk, OJ and tonic into the bilges, as well as some beer and wine for the stops, wrapped everything in plastic bags in case it should get wet, filled

Fresh varnish on Sunstone's hull, in Tranquilito Cove

and tied down the diesel cans, and walked the decks inspecting everything carefully. We set out rags and towels in case of drips. On the penultimate day, we bought fresh produce and bread to see us through the next month or more. *Sunstone* has a tiny 12V fridge. Fruit is stored in open plastic boxes, veggies in paper, and bread is double-wrapped in plastic bags with the air sucked out. Finally we topped up the water tanks. We have no watermaker – water is probably our defining limit for long passages.

We avoid eating out in the days before departure and eat simple fare on board. Too often a final meal ashore can lead to stomach upsets and/or seasickness for the first days at sea. We get a final, long night's sleep. However, we nearly always make an early start to get into the open ocean and the passage routines as soon as possible. The last few items on lists are never crossed off, but if the weather is right – go! We motored away from Tofino on 1 August 2015.

Life on a passage makes you acutely aware of the sea and sky; especially if, as we do, you 'stand watches' on deck, in the cockpit. On board *Sunstone* we have no protection from wind and spray in the cockpit so perhaps, more than many others, we are intimately connected with the elements around us. We become 'cloud connoisseurs', bird watchers, readers of the waves and swell. We feel the change in the temperature of the sea water, the wind increasing on our faces. We consider the sail plan with the wind we have and for the expected conditions. We watch the sun rise and set. We marvel at the orange moon that becomes a silver globe or a crescent sliver in a blue-black sky.

The 24 hour cycle rolls round. Unlike life ashore, when it is possible to stop what you are doing – to go somewhere else, to change your schedule, to seek help – that is not possible when some hundreds or thousands of miles from land or other people. You have to cope. 'Scotty cannot beam you up'.

Tom trimming the genoa, under the bimini

The sailing part of passage-making is about trimming, taking reefs, rolling up the headsail, changing the headsail, setting up the pole, taking the main down in a blow. For long periods we may sit in the cockpit contemplating the ocean, the waves, the clouds and the sea birds, even reading a bit. Then there is a burst of physical activity. With modern aids navigation does not take up much time, but we do record the GPS

A calm watch, and Vicky reads in cockpit. Photo Tom Jackson

Pencil dots cross the Pacific chart from Vancouver Island, closing in on Hawaii

position and conditions on deck, and we make a pencil dot on the paper chart at every change of watch. It is reassuring to see the lengthening line of dots creeping towards our destination! Each day is set into watches and routines. We always use the same watch system; each 24 hours has six watches of 3, 4 and 5 hours.

The 24 hour watch system on board *Sunstone*:

0800–1300	Vicky
1300–1800	Tom
1800–2200	Vicky
2200–0100	Tom
0100–0400	Vicky
0400–0800	Tom

Off-watch time has patterns too. Tom gets a weather GRIB at around 0820 every morning, and we both look with interest to see what winds we may experience in the next five days. We eat supper at 1720 after Vicky has cooked it. Tom washes up at 1810. Vicky makes a cup of tea at 0025; Tom has a breakfast of coffee and biscuits at 0330. We each have an on-watch exercise routine of around 45 minutes, in the cockpit, in the middle of the night.

We get grimey. We have never rationed water for drinking, but we do ration it for washing! We revert to an old-fashioned flannel wash and a head in a bucket for hair washing – but not often. We have to conserve our 220 litres (58 US gallons) of water and 200 litres of fuel, as well as all other consumables.

Passage making is about self-reliance. Whatever is forgotten cannot be bought. The food has to last. The bolt, or piece of stainless-steel, will have to do. We do

Vicky cooks in Sunstone's galley. Photo Tom Jackson

not report into a net, we have no scheds. We get weather from GRIB files and we can send and receive e-mails via Sailmail with the SSB radio. So we are not entirely 'alone', though no one knows exactly where we are. That is how we like it. We have made our choices and it is up to us to live with them. We do have an EPIRB, but we have some doubts about calling for rescue. We have decided to be out in the ocean, for our own experience and pleasure, and we are not sure that we should put other lives at risk to come and find us.

We had reaching conditions most of the way to Hawaii. The water temperature climbed from 15°C/59°F to an unseasonably warm 27°C/80°F near Honolulu. After about 750 miles the water became peppered with plastic. This area is called the 'North Pacific Gyre', where floating plastic gathers and stays. We saw it first in 2002, and it was much the same thirteen years later. For five days plastic floated by; without trying hard we saw some bit every 200m, mostly fishing debris – plastic fish floats, nets, bits of fish boxes, light bulbs, shoes, and polystyrene. On 12 August there was much less plastic to be seen. Instead nature took over – flying fish skimmed the wavelets, squawking tropic birds flew over-head and shooting stars lit the night sky.

Off watch, we usually fall into deep sleep quickly. That is important. We always build up a sleep deficit, with naps of only 2 or 2½ hours, three times a day. In the tropics, with a water temperature of 30°C/86°F, we can fall into our bunk quickly,

Plastic floating by in the North Pacific Gyre

with few clothes to remove, but the bunk is hot and sweaty even with a fan. When, in Alaska, the water temperature drops to 4°C/39°F, there are some seven layers of clothes to take off, leaving at least two on, before climbing into a big sleeping bag and curling into a tight ball to try to get warm. Dressing takes 15 minutes or more, with many thermal layers, mid-layer jacket and salopettes, oilskins, boots, hats and gloves to put on before venturing on deck.

It was hot and sweaty tied up at the Waikiki Yacht Club in Honolulu after 17 days from Tofino. Daily we looked at the weather with some concern. The strengthening El Niño was upsetting normal weather patterns, and with higher water temperatures tropical storms and hurricanes were regularly forming to the east and tracking towards the Hawaiian Islands. We did not want to be in Ala Wai Boat Harbor during a hurricane, nor did we want to sail south with any nearby. Tropical storm *Kilo*s dumped 55mm (2¼ in) of rain over Honolulu, but passed somewhat to the west. We found what looked like a gap, and departed on 25 August after a one week stay.

Seven days later we breathed a sigh of relief on reaching 10°N, normally considered the southern limit for hurricanes. We now had a different weather issue to contend with. We had heard that the ITCZ was very wide – and it was. For over 600 miles we had very light winds, often from the west or southwest, with squally clouds and rain. Progress was further slowed by an adverse current. The water temperature rose to 31°C/86°F. It was most uncomfortable below, especially as we had to use the engine more to make progress. It was a slow week, covering only 752 miles. We crossed the Equator at 2101 on 6 September. Earlier that evening we had agreed that we would have to stop motor-sailing as we always keep some diesel reserves for charging and emergencies. The next day the South East Tradewind wafted in and we delighted in sailing again. The next week's mileage tells a faster story – 1079 miles!

Two additional diesel cans for the light winds of the ITCZ

Tropical rain clouds

For us, passage making is about two people, sailing and living close together, relying on and supporting each other, but not seeing much of each other! It is about full moons, big horizons, a starry sky, colourful sunsets, soft-hued sun rises, dolphins playing in the bow wave, a wandering albatross soaring and swooping over the wave tops. But it is also about dark squally clouds, a tropical downpour, frightening bolts of lightning, a ship not changing course. The pace of life is slow. Time passes but is unimportant; in many ways it hardly exists. Days and nights go by. Slowly a small yacht on a big ocean gets closer to a destination. Occasionally not even that happens. Heaving-to in

Royal albatross

A dolphin keeps pace beside Sunstone's bow

bad weather provides rest for the crew and the boat – hitting the 'pause button' for some hours can be important. Time is not the issue, progress is.

After 21 days and 2731 miles we picked up a mooring off Neiafu in Tonga's Vava'u group – surrounded by 80 yachts! In 1999 there had been 20. It was cooler, as we had hoped, and with the water temperature at 24°C/75°F we were much happier and more comfortable. Our one week stay was pleasant – we found friends among the other boats, and bought fresh fruit and veggies from the market though not much from the poorly stocked shops. And there was the start of the Rugby World Cup! We managed to watch a few of the early matches.

With El Niño stirring up more trouble we snapped up a weather window and set off on 25 September for the final, shorter, leg of 1270 miles to Opua, New Zealand. The first seven days gave pleasant, fast, two-sail reaching, but we could see that an NZ welcome was waiting. The active front brought strong southwest winds and we beat into 25–35 knots for the final two days. Closing the land requires special attention after a long passage. You are tired, but important navigational decisions must be made and crew need to be alert. Seeing land provides a feast for the eyes after so much water. There is also a bouquet for the nose. Approaching tropical islands the first scent is of damp, green, jungle vegetation; approaching a big city the 'scent' is of fast food. And then the passage is complete. We arrive. The long awaited dreams take shape. We are still, there is no rush to be on watch, we can eat fresh food and sit down for a meal at a table, we can stand for minutes under a stream of warm water, liberally using the soap.

Nine weeks since departure from Vancouver Island, with two one week stops in Honolulu and Neiafu, we arrived in Opua on 4 October 2015. We had covered 6400 miles in 47 sailing days. We were glad to be back in New Zealand.

Land ahoy – Tom clasps a coffee as we approach Opua, New Zealand

Walking the coastal path from Opua to Paihia is a post-passage treat for us. We experience new sensations, on a fine spring morning, along the woodland track. There are bright colours, a tapestry of trees, land views and fresh bouquets. It is wonderful to soak in the white, pink, yellow, red and blue colours of the spring flowers, the green leaves and lush new growth, the patterns of ferns, the forest and estuary views, with earth under our feet. Tom touches leaves as we walk past. Vicky bends down to smell a flower. Our legs tell us they had had no real exercise for months, but we love it.

Tom strides down the woodland track from Opua to Paihia

After a long passage, seeing other people and doing normal things is very different. We look at people and think, 'you have no understanding of what we have just experienced; you have not felt those deprivations, those fears, those wonderful moonlit nights, those wet days bouncing to windward, those joyous sights of dolphins playing in the bow wave'. For a time we remain in a separated world. We cannot walk in a straight line ashore. We are so tired and our brains are used to constant motion. They feel disassociated from our bodies. Then our bodies give in and at last we can lie down in our bunk, safe and secure. For a few seconds there is a complete letting go, before a black, velvet sleep overwhelms us.

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HOW TO GET STARTED ON FACEBOOK

Frances Rennie
Administrator, OCC Facebook Page

Many members, including me, grew up in an age when if you wanted to communicate with friends or family you posted a letter, perhaps including a photograph that you'd had developed and printed, or just dialled their number on the telephone.

How things have changed over the years! Now everything is digital, from your phone to your camera, and one of the biggest changes was the launch of the social media site Facebook. This has made communicating with friends and family much easier and quicker, and also allows you to join groups of like-minded people. It was not long before the OCC decided to start a group to enable club members to keep in contact with each other and, on occasion, to find out what is happening within the club, such as new events.

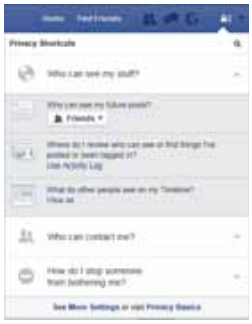
Even for those fairly new to computers, who mainly use one to keep in touch with friends and family via e-mails and maybe Skype, Facebook is simple and easy to master. It can be used on a computer, tablet or smart phone – just follow the steps below to set up an account, all without the indignity of having to ask your children or grandchildren to do it for you.

Open your web browser (Internet Explorer, Chrome, Firefox etc) and type www.facebook.com in the bar at top left. The screen on the left will appear.

Complete the boxes with your details and click the green button at bottom right (**Sign Up** or **Create an Account**). The next screen to appear will be this:

If you'd prefer you can skip this stage, click on the **Next** button and this screen will appear:

To complete the sign up, first click on the **Confirm Now** tab at the top of the page. Staying on the page, take the Privacy Tour and make sure you select the option that only friends can see you. To do this, click on the padlock symbol at the top right of the screen (a bit difficult to see, being black on a dark blue background). This brings up a list of **Privacy Shortcuts**, headed by **Who can see my stuff?** Open the list using the V opposite, and check it says **Friends**. Returning to the main page you can, if you wish, add a profile picture – just follow the step-by-step instructions – or you can leave it blank. Welcome to Facebook!



At the top of the page is a search bar, so just type in the name of the person you want to connect to – though the number of people with that name may surprise you! Just select the one you want and click on it. You will see a tab **Send friend request** – just click on it and hopefully your friend will accept and you can now keep in touch, and even post photos or videos for them to enjoy.

To join the OCC page just type in Ocean Cruising Club (in full) and a drop down list will appear. Click on the one that says **Closed group** (probably at the bottom) and when the page opens hit the **+ Join group** tab and ask to join. As Administrator I will be happy to accept you if you are an OCC member, either Full or Associate.

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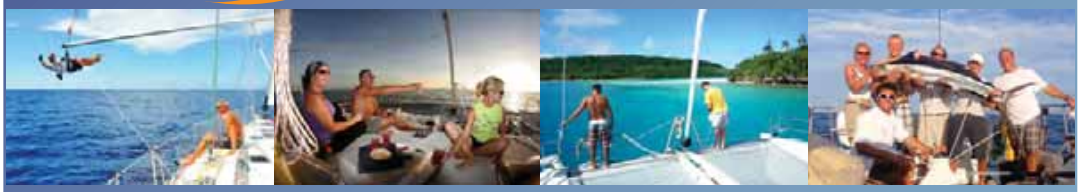

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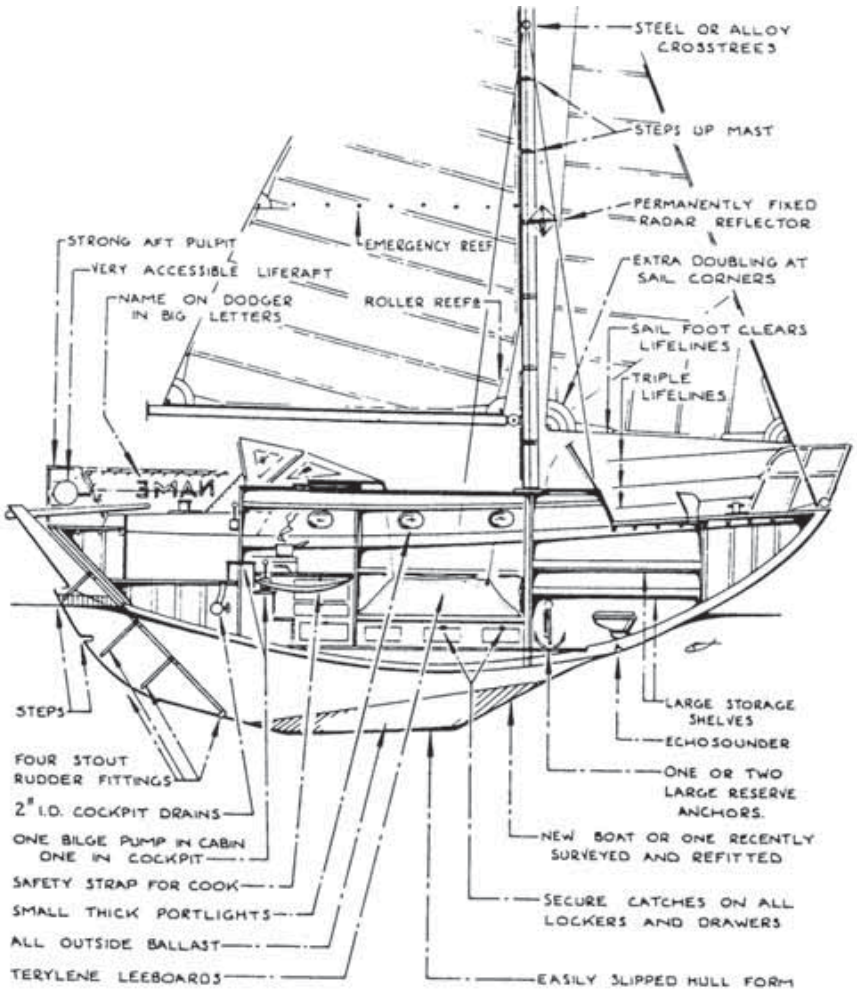
YACHT DESIGNER'S NOTEBOOK – Ian Nicolson, 3rd edition, and YACHT DESIGNER'S SKETCH BOOK – Ian Nicolson, 2nd edition. Both published in soft covers by Amberley Publishing [www.amberley-books.com] at £14.99. Each containing 160 234mm x 165mm pages. ISBNs 978-1-4456-5158-3 and 978-1-4456-5150-7

Amberley Publishing, which has a wide range of maritime titles mostly of a historical nature, has recently added a number of Ian Nicolson's books to its range – six in 2015 with more due this year. Nicolson, a Founder Member of the OCC and a highly prolific author with many books on yachting subjects and thousands of magazine articles, has a distinctive hand-drawn style seen in most of his work – see overleaf. One reviewer noted that they are 'obviously not computer drawings, they're proper hand drawings'. This is so partly because many of them date to three or more decades ago, before CAD was in widespread use, but his style continues to this day. He reduces each subject to its basic elements, amplified by numerous call-outs delineating the important features and in some cases how to execute a project. Each drawing is accompanied by descriptive paragraphs.

This reviewer has in his library 18 of Nicolson's titles, including earlier hardcover editions of *Yacht Designer's Notebook (YDN)* from 1988 when it was titled *Designer's Notebook*, and *Yacht Designer's Sketch Book (YDSB)* from 1983, allowing careful comparisons to be made with the new paperback editions. Both of these 2015 volumes have 160 pages and are of a smaller size than those from the '80s. Interestingly, the back cover of *YDN* refers to it as 'this fully revised third edition', whereas basically it is just re-formatted to cut its page count down from 192 pages. The drawings now have borders and many have been reduced in size. All the slightly larger text is virtually identical. For example two words, chainplates and guardrails, are no longer hyphenated and a couple of sentences have been added or deleted. Nicolson's current introduction has a new final sentence and is no longer dated 1986. In the case of *YDSB* the page count has been increased by one and one drawing has disappeared – it referred to using asbestos cloth when adding lead to an existing ballast keel.

None of the foregoing detracts in any way from the value of the books, but those who possess either of the earlier editions need not consider purchasing the paperbacks. With the predominance of vintage concepts, their greatest appeal may be to owners of wooden boats with a do-it-yourself bent. Those with more modern boats should not disregard these books, however, since they can stimulate thinking about features that may not have crossed their owners' minds, or help solve a problem arising in some remote part of the world.



Both books have 'chapter' headings indicative of the range of topics within. Of the 11 headings in *YDSB*, nine are paired with the same or analogous headings among the 15 in *YDN*. The only heading in *YDSB* that truly is not covered in *YDN* is one titled *Racing Dinghies*. In most cases the drawings under headings such as Construction, Cabin Furniture, Deck Fittings, Engines, Plumbing and Spars illustrate a single item, but there are some that address a range of features.

Two final items that reflect the traditional aspect of *YDN* are the tables on the last two pages giving recommended rope sizes for various applications where the sizes are specified by circumference. Surprisingly, there is no formula given for converting circumference to diameter, by dividing the circumference by 3·14 (pi). While there are values for imperial to metric conversions, there is a quick way to go from imperial circumference to metric diameter without a calculator. Based on the methodology this reviewer presented in an article titled *Mental Metrics*, just multiply the circumference in inches by eight and the result is the diameter in millimetres. For example, for a rope with a circumference of 3·14 inches (a diameter of one inch) double 3·14 to get

6·28, double that to get 12·56, and finally double that again to get 25·12mm – only one percent less than the exact value of 25·4mm.

In this day and age when many publishers minimise taxes on their inventory by not keeping titles in print for decades, it is good to see many of Ian Nicolson's books available again.

JEP

ATLANTIC ISLANDS – Anne Hammick and Hilary Keatinge, 6th edition. Published in hardback by Imray Laurie Norie & Wilson [www.imray.com] and the RCC Pilotage Foundation [www.rccpf.org.uk] at £45.00. 456 A4 pages, with hundreds of colour photographs and four-colour plans. ISBN 978-1-8462-3649-5

This is the 6th edition of *Atlantic Islands*, in my opinion the definitive cruising guide to these islands and indispensable to anyone wishing to cross the Atlantic in either direction. New to this edition is the inclusion of Bermuda, which has long been a stopover, albeit an expensive one, for those crossing from either the Caribbean or the eastern seaboard of the United States or Canada.

The introduction covers passage-planning, weather forecasting and internet-based meteorology (which has increased considerably in both quality and quantity since the last edition). There is also a very useful list of websites from which weather data can be extracted, along with methods by which the data can be obtained. What is noted, however, is that weather patterns are changing and that a well-prepared yacht should be ready for every eventuality – 2016 saw the first January hurricane in the North Atlantic since 1954, and 2015 the first hurricane to hit the Cape Verde islands in more than a century.

The chapters devoted to the individual islands and archipelagos are a delight to read, giving reliable information on navigation, administration, local customs and things to do ashore, so I found myself reliving the times I had spent in places like St George's, Bermuda; Velas, São Jorge, Azores; and La Restinga, El Hierro, Canaries, and making mental notes of what to do in other places with which I was less familiar. It is particularly beneficial to read of the changes which have taken place since one's last visit, such as the requirement for a permit to anchor off Playa Francesa on the island of Graciosa, just north of Lanzarote, and that the maximum permitted stay is now ten days. It is nuggets of information such as this which makes *Atlantic Islands* such an invaluable publication to both newcomers to the Atlantic circuit and those who have cruised the islands before. The excellent chartlets, often accompanied by photographs, add an extra dimension to the other navigation aids one should have on board.

Above all, this cruising guide demonstrates that the archipelagos of the Azores, Canaries and Cape Verdes can be regarded as cruising destinations in their own right, and that those who regard them simply as quick stopovers on the way to the Caribbean or to Europe – just stations on the way – are denying themselves some very real pleasures. It gives an insight into the facilities and ambience of a wide variety of locations, from deserted anchorages to busy cities, harbours and marinas, giving a flavour of somewhere everyone can enjoy.

Atlantic Islands builds on the experience and expertise not only of its authors – Anne Hammick FRIN and Hilary Keatinge – but has input from both itinerant cruisers and locally-based individuals, all adding their ha'porth to the information to round it out and bring it up-to-date. Since we live in a dynamic world it is inevitable that changes will occur during the lifetime of this book*, but although I may not *need* another copy of *Atlantic Islands*, I certainly want one – it's an informative, practical, lively and invaluable resource, and one which will end up being well-thumbed and slightly grubby after a single season.

LMLT

* Visit the RCC Pilotage Foundation website at www.rccpf.org.uk to download free Supplements to all their titles, including Atlantic Islands, designed to combat this very problem. See also page 202 of this issue.

REACH FOR PARADISE – Andrew Rayner. Published in both hard and soft covers by Companionway Press [www.reachforparadise.com] at £29.50 and £18.50 respectively. 376 178mm x 254mm pages, with hundreds of photographs, sketch plans and original paintings. ISBN 978-1-4456-4633-6

Reach for Paradise, A Journey among Pacific Islands, is just that – and is extremely comprehensive, too. When I first dipped into it I had a feeling of déjâ-vu – lots of *Flying Fish* articles on the South Pacific, all in one volume. But this book is much more – *Flying Fish* contributors usually write in the past tense and are limited in the length of their pieces. Andrew Rayner uses the present tense and has the luxury of no word-count or other restrictions. He has an entertaining style, and the level of detail and historical research is impressive.

Andrew Rayner bought a Dutch-built Nordia steel ketch, renamed her *Nereus*, and followed the milk run to Panama via Barbados and Trinidad. *Nereus*' Pacific crossing – with a frequently changing crew of friends, relatives and a few pier-jumpers – at first followed a fairly conventional route, with some unusual and intrepid detours from the usual track which make the most interesting reading. These include visits to Makemo, Tahanae, and Fakarava in the Tuamotus; Muapiti in the Society Islands; Palmerston Atoll in the Cook Islands, and Niue. Later in the book Andrew recounts *Nereus*' visits to Popao, Euakafa and Foeata in the Vava'u group of the Tonga Islands, and the Astrolabe Reef south of Fiji.

The first part of *Reach for Paradise* is illustrated by many photos – interesting, but mostly fairly small and some of only average quality. But after his new crew Robin (later his wife) joins him and *Nereus* the book is enhanced by Robin's paintings, mostly acrylic on canvas. She captures the Polynesian life and culture perfectly in this medium, with brilliant colours used to great effect.

After a year-long stay in New Zealand, and less than halfway through this long book, Andrew and Robin sail north for Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands, continuing to visit villages in remote bays. Unlike many cruising yachts, *Nereus* seems unconstrained by

either time or money, so the visits are extended, the locals become good friends, and Andrew describes it all in great detail with much fascinating historical background. Having cruised through the Solomon Islands in 1989 I was particularly interested in the chapter on this area, where civil unrest and 'The Tension' in recent years has caused major changes for the worse. Corruption is rife and there is serious misuse of island resources. Timber and fish products make up 75% of exports, very little from sustainable stock in either case, and tourism is right down. Andrew and Robin were relieved to move on from Honiara without having been attacked or robbed.

At Marovo lagoon, famous for its exquisite carvings, *Nereus* was the first yacht to visit for ten months and was bombarded by locals in canoes, trying to sell their wares. Back in '89, with a steady stream of visiting yachts, the pressure was less intense and we chose a few beautiful souvenirs. Luckily *Nereus* had some Solomon Island dollars and lots of items to trade for carvings. Visiting the Louisiade archipelago next, and having been unable to get the necessary visas for Papua New Guinea, Andrew used his negotiating skills to obtain a five day permit, which came at a high price with the usual 'overtime' ruse. Plenty of cigarettes were required as an additional 'gift' – some things never change...

Nereus sailed south to Australia for the hurricane season and then up to Papua New Guinea, where she cruised alone for several months. The last part of the book covers the islands of the Bismark Sea – New Britain and New Ireland, rarely visited by yachts. Again, Andrew's insights and historical details make it particularly interesting reading. Not put off by warnings of trouble, this couple were intrepid travellers and *Reach for Paradise* continues to be 'un-put-downable' to the end – a fascinating and thought provoking read, especially interesting for OCC members who have crossed the Pacific but may have missed some of the more challenging areas. For those heading that way, this book will encourage cruisers to get off the beaten track, although, as the author warns, it is definitely not a pilot book. What it will provide is a huge amount of extra information to enhance your travels.

EHMH

WILDLIFE OF THE CARIBBEAN – Herbert A Raffaele and James W Wiley. Published in soft covers by Princeton University Press [press.princeton.edu] at US$19.95 / £12.96; Kindle edition $15.46 / £10.44. 304 250mm x 210mm pages, with colour illustrations throughout. ISBN 978-0-691-15382-7

If you are heading to the Caribbean this is a must to have aboard – it is the first comprehensive, illustrated guide to the natural world of the Caribbean islands. With 600 exquisite colour images, it is an ideal field guide which will spark the imaginations of everyone on board. The text covers 451 species both terrestrial and marine, selected on the basis of those most likely to be seen. Each has at least one image associated with it. The geographic coverage includes the Bahamas, Greater Antilles, Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands and Lesser Antilles. Trinidad and Tobago and the ABC islands (Aruba, Curaçao, and Bonaire) are not covered.

Wildlife of the Caribbean begins by exploring the issues in general, including

biogeography, climate, lost faunas, habitats, the influence of hurricanes, folklore and environmental threats and conservation. It then moves on to terrestrial life including plants, mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates in colour coded sections. This takes up 228 of the 304 pages so forms the majority of the text. Marine life is not given short shrift, however. Marine mammals, reptiles and fish are covered in sufficient detail to assist in identification and learning. Fish are separated by where they are likely to be seen – reefs and sand/grass flats or open water game fish. Marine plants and invertebrates follow, before closing on sea shells or molluscs.

Each species is introduced with a set of key features intended to assist in identification in the field, while the language is plain English and suitable for all audiences. What I really liked is that one guide covers all the wildlife most likely to be seen rather than just one type, so you need carry only one book. It is available in print and Kindle, but the comments on Amazon about the Kindle edition suggest that it may be more difficult to use in the field than the print edition. I did not review the Kindle version.

Herbert A Raffaele worked for more than four decades directing wildlife conservation for the Puerto Rico Department of Natural Resources, and served as chief of Latin American and Caribbean programmes for the US Fish and Wildlife Service. James W Wiley has conducted ornithological research throughout the Caribbean since 1972. Raffaele and Wiley previously collaborated on *Birds of the West Indies*, also published by Princeton Press. What they have produced is invaluable for the Caribbean cruiser. I wish we had had access to it when we sailed there – perhaps we'll just have to go back.

DOB

GORDON BENNETT and the First Yacht Race Across the Atlantic – Sam Jefferson. Published in hard covers by Adlard Coles Nautical [www.adlardcoles.com] at £16. 99. 282 230mm x 140mm pages with eight pages of colour photos. ISBN 978-1-4729-1673-0

History is about the doings of interesting people. Gordon Bennett was so extraordinary there is an expletive, used in moments of massive frustration, which is nothing more than his name. He raced across the Atlantic in what today we would call a large, heavy, comfortable fully-equipped schooner soon after the end of the American Civil War.

This book, written in what can be called 'the modern manner', is aimed at a wide audience, so there is little technology and not much about the three yachts competing. There is not a vast amount about the race, but then getting data would be hard for the most enthusiastic researcher. And the author of this book certainly has dived into lots of archives. The paucity of technology is in part because Bennett led such an extraordinary if unedifying life that the author has not had much space to cover those aspects of the transatlantic race which would especially fascinate OCC members.

As a glimpse of New York life in the late 19th century this book is packed with

delicious detail. Wealthy people had coachmen to take them to yet another evening of heavy drinking ... and take the half comatose semi-corpses home afterwards. Maybe we should revert to this method of avoiding drink driving charges. The wild crowd and the anti-hero of this book did not lack toughness or determination, as the race started in a freezing December. What the crews did not have, and needed, were safety harnesses. The loss of life was horrific.

IN

OFFSHORE SEA LIFE ID GUIDE: WEST COAST, and OFFSHORE SEA LIFE ID GUIDE: EAST COAST – Steve N G Howell and Brian L Sullivan. Both published in soft covers by Princeton University Press [press.princeton.edu] at US$14.95 / £10.95. West Coast containing 56 132mm x 196mm pages, more than 300 colour photos and one map; East Coast containing 64 132mm x 196mm pages and 120 colour photos. Soft cover ISBNs 978-0-6911-6613-1 and 978-0-6911-6621-6; e-Book ISBNs 978-1-4008-6597-0 and 978-1-4008-7403-3

Steve Howell, an international bird tour leader with WINGS and a research associate at the California Academy of Sciences, has teamed up with one of the most respected bird photographers in America, Brian Sullivan, who is eBird project leader and photographic editor for *Birds of North America Online* at the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology. Together they have created two offshore wildlife guides, one for each coast of the United States. They are the first state-of-the-art pocket guides to pelagic sea life and are designed to be used during day trips in offshore waters. As such, they concentrate on the species seen on whale watching and birding trips off the US coasts.

The informative text highlights what to look for and is suitable for beginners and experts alike. The carefully crafted colour plates show species as they typically appear at sea. The material is organised in such a way as to help identify species by age and sex likely to be seen together, as they might be while feeding. The books do not include coastal birds such as most gulls, terns, and cormorants, or inland waterways species such as harbour seals and otters. They cover a few of the rarer species, but not in great depth.

The West Coast guide covers Washington to California waters and features more than 300 photos used to create composite plates, including whales, dolphins, sea lions, birds, sharks, turtles, flying fish, jellyfish, molas (sunfish) and more. A sample chapter can be downloaded from http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/i10465.pdf. The East Coast guide covers Maine to Florida and features more than 100 colour photos and composite plates, including whales, dolphins, birds, sharks, billfish, turtles, flying fish, seaweeds, sea skaters, jellyfish and more. A sample chapter can be downloaded from http://press.princeton.edu/chapters/i10465.pdf.

Perhaps the only drawback is that the design of the books makes it difficult to discern one composite plate from another on some pages. I found it confusing when trying to read across a spread and link the text on the left with the photo on the right, when that image blended together with three others next to it, all of them composed from multiple images. Perhaps a future edition will separate the images enough to make them clearly distinct from one another.

On the other hand, I really appreciated the composite photos that show different features of sexes next to each other, and the differences between adult and juvenile within species. I also liked seeing the different indicators of what a whale may be doing when you see a certain display, and birds in flight as well as on the water. These authors clearly have a treasure-trove of amazing photos, and we are privileged to share them. The two books do not aim to be comprehensive guides, however, but rather identification aids, handy to keep on deck to look up what you see quickly and ideal for those times on an ocean passage when a rare, brief glimpse gives momentary access to the natural world.

DOB

THE FIRST INDIAN – Dilip Donde. Published in soft covers by Fernhurst Books [www.fernhurstbooks.com] at £10.99; Kindle edition £10.44. 304 128mm x 197mm pages, including eight pages of colour photos. ISBN 978-1-9099-1149-9

In 2006 the Department of Sports and Adventure Activities of the Indian Navy was kicking around the idea of sponsoring a solo circumnavigation by a naval officer. Commander Donde saw the opportunity and ran with it – the right man in the right place and time. A few other Indian sailors were cruising in sailing boats, but none had so far undertaken a solo circumnavigation south of the three great capes. Initially having no clear idea of the magnitude of the task he was taking on, he met the successive challenges with enthusiasm, patience and humour. His family were behind him and he also gained the support of good friends and mentors from the world of ocean sailing and the naval hierarchy.

Commander Donde did not have to seek funding for the project, but instead faced a constant battle to put that money to the best use in acquiring the other vital ingredient – the boat. He was fortunate in his choice of boatbuilder and together they learned 'on the job'; producing a hull with the structural integrity to inspire confidence and the looks to cheer the heart. *Mhadei* did them proud. From a standing start, the project gained momentum as the yacht was fitted out with the thousand and one pieces of gear that transform a bare hull into a going concern. These items had to be sourced from far and wide, a logistical headache of the first order not aided by the many obstacles raised by a slow-moving and often obstructive bureaucracy. At the same time, Commander Donde was struggling to get the ocean-going experience he needed. The story of his three years of effort makes for an entertaining read.

The second part of the story, the actual voyage, is mainly a recap of his blog, posted en route. Finally, the frustrations of preparation were left behind as man and boat took on the new challenges of wind and sea. Sails blew into streamers and there were some gear failures – though not many considering the distance sailed, and none disastrous. Deadlines were met and expectations more than fulfilled during a voyage which Commander Donde tackled with adventurous and infectious enthusiasm. The title is apt!

FASF

HOW TO READ WATER – Tristan Gooley. Published in hard covers by Sceptre [www.hodder.co.uk] at £20.00. 384 pages including 16 pages of colour photos. ISBN 978-1-4736-1520-5

Tristan Gooley founded his reputation with *The Natural Navigator* and has built on it with four more books dedicated to 'outdoor clues and signs'. As (probably) the only man alive to have crossed the Atlantic solo both under sail and in a light aircraft, it was inevitable that sooner or later he would turn his attention to water, and how it can be observed and understood.

How to Read Water starts with a somewhat inspirational introduction describing contrasting navigational skills from different oceans and cultures, before zooming in to study the behaviour of water in an environment to which all have accesss – the kitchen. From there he moves out to observe ripples on his garden pond (with a digression to the South Pacific) and into the wider countryside to seek signs – from plants to animal tracks – which indicate there is water nearby.

The chapter on 'Rivers and Streams' is particularly interesting, and also implies that soon we will reach the sea – the real point of interest for most OCC members. No so! Chapters on trout fishing and on the behaviour of 'trapped' water in a lake follow, though the curious will learn much from the latter. Then colour, light and sound as generated and/or reflected by water all are examined, until finally we do reach the coast, in the form of waves – everything from the barely visible ripples produced by blowing on hot tea to the breaking giants sought by serious surfers. 'When Water Meets Land' is followed by clear explanations of 'reflected', 'refracted' and 'diffracted' waves – something most will have witnessed, perhaps without knowing quite what they were seeing – illustrated by equally clear diagrams.

Many members will be familiar with Dr David Lewis's research into the methods employed by Polynesian and Micronesian navigators until relatively recently, and may also be aware of the Vikings' use of lodestone and, allegedly, sunstone. However Tristan Gooley believes they also used 'natural' indicators such as cetacean routes, the distance land birds range from the coast, and the colours of different currents (though no mention is made of water temperature). With his usual 'put the theory to the test' approach, Tristan and a friend head north on a two-handed voyage from the Orkneys to the Arctic Circle and then back to Reykjavik in Iceland. All turns out much as Tristan had predicted, and it rounds off the book neatly, though it would have been good to know what other navigational tools, if any, they also used.

How to Read Water is an intriguing and very well researched introduction to the subject, so why did I end up feeling very slightly disappointed? Possibly because much of its content is not actually that new, and because at times the author appears to forget that many of his readers will be intelligent adults who already have some knowledge of the subject – typical OCC members, in fact! In addition, a 'dipping' approach might suit its subject matter better than the reviewer's task of reading from beginning to end in limited time. Having said that, there is much to interest and enthral between its covers, and there will be very few who don't learn something new. For a more technical analysis of waves of all kinds, some may wish to follow *How to Read Water* by reading Gavin Pretor-Pinney's *The Wavewatcher's Companion*, published by Bloomsbury in 2010/11.

AOMH

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SWAN SONG?
A Tilman expedition – Sail and Climb
Rev Bob Shepton

(*The redoubtable 'Rev Bob' and his equally redoubtable 33ft Westerly Discus,* Dodo's Delight*, will be known to all members except perhaps a very few recent joiners – who are recommended to read Bob's autobiography,* Addicted to Adventure*, without delay. Will this be his Swan Song? I somehow doubt it...*)

Every expedition has its ups and downs, and this was no exception.

The first down this year must be when I fell off the two oil drums I was standing on to clean *Dodo's Delight's* topsides after the boat had wintered ashore in the small but friendly boatyard in Sisimiut, west Greenland. The oil drums went one way and I went the other, falling on my side onto some loose rails lying on the ground. Bruised most certainly, but I was lucky not to break anything. The second down was when I had to buy two new heavy-duty batteries to make sure the engine started, at Danish prices (the equivalent of £230 each), but then some ups might be that there was now plenty of power to run auxiliaries and electronics on board, and that we launched safely with a coat of antifouling on the hull after three years without in the Arctic, where we relied on the cold water to keep her clean.

Patrick and Trystan arrived in early June, and after some preliminary sail training in the fjord outside – they had not sailed before – and necessary bunkering with food, water and diesel we set sail for Evighedsfjord to the south. Again, an up must be that after days of no wind at all in Sisimiut we had a following wind, and the skipper, to the relief of the crew, was on watch when it blew up to 28–30 knots. We charged south under mainsail alone.

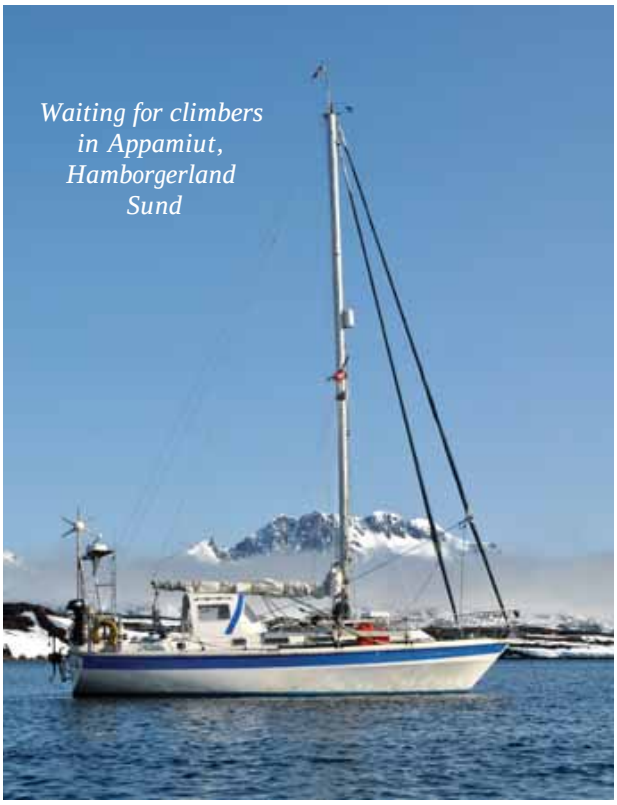
Dodo's Delight wintering ashore in Sisimiut

Early morning in Evighedsfjord

Another positive was that, putting in for a rest, we discovered a more convenient anchorage behind Cruncher Island at the start of Kangerlussuaq fjord than that described in the excellent *Arctic and Northern Waters Pilot*. Boats, including Willy Ker (OCC) in *Assent,* have threaded this 50 mile-long fjord in the past to put down or pick up crew at the airport at the far end, but sometimes you must wait for the tide to abate first. On the other hand, when we reached the dramatic fjord of Evigthedsfjord with its Alpine-type mountains we became aware of a definite negative. We had expected to be rock climbing at this time of year in Greenland, but it became increasingly obvious that it was still winter here, with snow right down to shore level. It was the same when we reached the Hamborgerland/Maniitsoq area further south with its tremendous potential for climbing, and it was summed up by the manager of the Maniitsoq hotel: 'This year in Greenland winter has lasted later than for the previous 47 years'.

In Evighedsfjord we put into Tilman's anchorage of Tassiussaq, and were surprised to find a luxury motor superyacht from Bermuda, with attendant helicopter parked ashore. This was a first for me in Greenland. The glacier debouching into the fjord further on was as dramatic as expected, and still further into this 25 mile-long fjord I re-learned another valuable lesson. At the head of these fjords there are often huge, hidden silt banks from past glacial activity which uncover at low water. Fine, so you lay your anchor accordingly, but when the wind goes round you can suddenly find yourself on the silt bank. It is important to lay another anchor astern before you are caught out. Meanwhile Patrick and Trystan toiled 3km up the edge of a glacier to make the first new route of the expedition on a rock buttress at the far end, *The Rocky Route to New York* – strange names climbers give to their routes these days!

We went further south to Maniitsoq, where Mark and Rob joined us. Soon afterwards there was a somewhat disgraceful incident when a large quantity of wine was consumed



Waiting for climbers in Appamiut, Hamborgerland Sund

in the cockpit, followed by some of the skipper's scarce and precious whisky, while he slept fitfully below; we will pass hastily over that! We returned northwards to Hamborgerland Sund and put into the pleasant anchorage of Appamiut. Nearby, in spite of the late winter, the lads made a number of first ascents of rock climbs on a low-lying crag we named Starter Walls – there were two of them. Expecting the usual summer conditions we had only brought rock climbing gear and had little alpine equipment with us, but many of the walls and crags lay up glaciers with possibly snow-covered crevasses. So, after some further unsuccessful prospecting and subsequent discussion, we went 30 miles south to what looked like a possible crag on the rather inadequate Saga maps (for mountaineering) but which turned out to be an impressive looking mountain ridge.

There was a rather dramatic incident when we anchored for the night in the fjord below. We put our anchor down to leeward of an island – I knew it was probably on rock, but all seemed well. I woke up at 0500 to find the wind had again gone completely round

Dancing on ice – why? Photo Rob Beddow

Anchored in sand near the Finnefjeld ridge, with plenty of cod in the bay …

– these fjords make their own weather – and we were facing in the opposite direction, the wind was strong, and our stern was quite close to the rocky island. But somehow the anchor was holding, and we were not drifting back, fast, into the island. The crew were all sleeping peacefully so I kept an anxious anchor watch myself, not wanting to try and shift the anchor in that wind in any case while we were stable. Later we picked up the anchor by motoring over the top of it. I thought it a merciful deliverance!

The lads set off with enthusiasm to climb the ridge, but once again it was guarded by a huge snow field and they lacked the proper

.. so the skipper takes to fishing… Photo Rob Beddow

… with some success. Photo Rob Beddow

equipment so they aborted. Initially I was disappointed, but when I saw the pictures later I understood why! So the Finnefjeld Ridge remains inviolate, to my knowledge. Meantime I had found a picturesque and safe anchorage in sand further south, where you could hook out sea cod on a line every few minutes. Over the brow of the enclosing arm there was an intriguing fresh water lochan, undisturbed by tide and so still it remained ice-covered. On the way back to Maniitsoq we discovered another enclosed haven off the channel, but only after hitting an uncharted rock in the next door cove where the depth went from 4m to 'bang' in a moment.

Having returned to Maniitsoq we went straight to a feature I had named the Shark's Fin, a 360m mount with a sheer east face, officially named Lin of Sal – a curiously English name on the Danish maps and charts, we never did discover why. The Greenlandic name means 'Great Heart', which didn't really help either. But here

On the pontoons at Maniitsoq, in company with a much larger French yacht. Photo Mark McKellar

Trystan near the top of one of the climbs, Midnight Sun on the Shark's Fin. Sailing and climbing go so well together. Photo Rob Beddow

the lads put up two superb high standard routes, really stretching themselves beyond their usual standard – both routes were E4, 6a, 280m. They also put up two shorter routes 'on the best rock so far' round the back on the west side of the second summit. Strangely, the best anchorage with the least disturbance from wind and currents was in the middle of a channel between islands.

One day the forecast, which I was still getting by e-mail from the redoubtable Peter Semiotuk in Yellow Knife, showed a limited period of northerly winds, so I radioed the team ashore and we left the Shark's Fin in a hurry, heading southward for Nuuk with a following wind. We sailed for a while but eventually had to motor. At Nuuk, instead of going to the town we went straight round to the fjords to the north and east, on the way discovering a well-protected inlet immediately to the north of the town, a pleasing way to escape the hurly burly of the capital city. We explored the fjords, and I have to confess I was a little disappointed that my team did not really seem to want to leave their comfort zone and attempt to climb these big, attractive walls. On the other hand, two of them did traverse a high standard alpine type ridge which included a peak of 1180m and which took 25 hours from boat to boat. It was probably the second ascent, some Norwegians having done it before. We also spent a pleasant time with *Arctic Monkey* and *Suilven* (OCC) anchored in Itissoq fjord below, where the water was so clear you could choose which fish you wanted to catch, and then they all fought to get onto your lure and hook. As it can be complicated taking on water in Nuuk, we filled our tank from the clear chuckling mountain stream ashore.

Crew logistics had been a nightmare in the initial planning, but it all worked out well in the end. Mark and Rob had joined us in Maniitsoq, and when Rob later returned home from Nuuk, Martin joined us. Martin is an arctic research scientist and so was a

mine of information on arctic ice. Furthermore Patrick had now voluntarily taken over all the cooking on board – a welcome first for this boat, to have a full time cook. In this connection yet another first was that Patrick and Trystan became masters at raiding the skips in the settlements late at night and purloining quantities of food – bread, chocolate, bananas, pizzas, you name it – thrown out that day by the supermarkets. We ate it all with relish and without mishap; that must have something to say about waste and westernised society. Though as somebody commented on Facebook, maybe this is the new face of cruising...

All this time I had been doing some pilotage, recording new and checking old anchorages, for the supplement to the excellent *Arctic and Northern Waters Pilot*. Perhaps of special significance in these fjords were Qarasuk, the site of an old settlement, where anchorages for nearly all wind directions apart from south are available inside the line of two outlying islands; and the dual islands of Qeqertaq, where protection can be found from any wind direction around the two islands or in the channel between. *Dodo's Delight* did in fact ride out strong southerlies for several hours, anchored in sand or silt in the bay on the north side of the western island. We also checked out anchorages already recorded, and hopefully added one or two helpful points.

Leaving Nuuk we had to motor, and continued on into the night. There was darkness by now, so somewhat stressful pilotage was required through the islands and rocks in the dusky night to reach another fjord with yet another glacier, named Sermilik, to look for climbing possibilities. We anchored offshore short of the fjord and continued on next day in daylight, but on returning we found where we should have anchored – a perfect bay with sand and a line of huge sand dunes forming the shore, obviously some sort of ancient outflow. And if the wind was onshore this side you could go round the headland of Marraq and anchor in sand the other side with the sand dunes above.

The passage from Nuuk to Paamiuth proved somewhat difficult, and varied. At one stage we hove-to as the wind was strong from the south where we wanted to go, and

Filling with water from a mountain stream near Nuuk

that night, when it had moderated somewhat, we closed the shore and invented an intriguing anchorage between the islands close in. Fortunately the ice floes brought in by the tidal currents during the night kept close to the shores. Next day we made our way to Paamiut in a strong northerly following wind and a boisterous sea.

Paamiut may not be everybody's favourite settlement, though it does have a conveniently long hose from the jetty for filling with diesel. We filled up and re-stocked and looked around, but some establishments only opened three times a week and we could not get wifi for less than 100 Danish krone (about £10) for four hours, with nothing less allowed. So quite soon we put out to search the long fjord to the east for climbing possibilities. It was ironic that, the climbers having found some cliffs above a lake system off an adjacent fjord which they liked, the mist stayed obstinately over the area even when it was clear further to the west. We had to return to Paamiut as we found we had only one loo roll left, but when we came back the mist still hung relentlessly over the climbing area. We decided to give up.

I used to be able to say, half humorously, 'if you see another sailing boat in Greenland, it's been a busy summer'. Not anymore – but you do meet a lot of nice people! In addition to *Arctic Monkey* and *Suilven* already mentioned, in Paamiut *Lady Dana 44*, a Polish yacht, moored up alongside and kindly asked us aboard. I was slightly surprised at the vast quantities of vodka consumed by some of my crew – 'it was very weak stuff' they said later – but in spite of some language difficulties it was a convivial and pleasant evening. Then when we returned to Paamiut there was *Nomad* with a young Austrian couple just in from Labrador, with news of old friends from the Northwest Passage in *Vagabondelle*, whilst *Empiricus*, also old friends from the Northwest Passage, were pursuing us south having wintered the boat in Aasiaat. Of course it was not always thus – there was a large Swiss boat behind us in Nuuk whose crew played music loudly through speakers until 0300!

There was a convenient hose for diesel in Paamiut

Ice with everything, Nunarssuit.
Photo Martin Doble

We had previously found a hurricane hole down a short fjord with a right-angled offshoot, protected from all winds. We passed this now on our way south through the inner passage, before putting out to sea and motoring the 100 miles south, in no wind and Greenlandic fog, to Kap Desolation on the large island of Nunarssuit, with its scenic peaks, reindeer herds and sea eagles, plus excellent hiking and potential for climbing. We found a unique protected channel with an anchorage in its northwest corner, strengthened by a line ashore, between the cliff of Kap Thorvaldsen and the enclosing line of islands at its foot. An added bonus was that the numerous icebergs which tend to ground in this area had found it difficult to get in, though one did sail up and down in threatening mode on the tide inside. The lads climbed a couple of new routes on a wall round the back of Kap Thorvaldsen, and we continued to investigate a number of pleasing anchorages on this island, recording them for the supplement. There cannot be many places where you can anchor with a pair of sea eagles circling above you, a reindeer sighted ashore, and you awake to scenic mountains to starboard and big icebergs in the fjord to port.

A reindeer posing on Nunarssuit.
Photo Martin Doble

Not a bad team photo! Photo Martin Doble

After some days exploring we made our way in lovely sunshine but no wind to the town of Qaqortoq. The Seamens' Mission regrettably has now closed, but a long walk to the other side of town found us showers, clothes washing facilities and

Enjoying the thermal springs at Unartoq, with refreshments…

A sea eagle circling above the boat at Nunarssuit, not happy to be disturbed. Photo Martin Doble

wifi, though later a Danish warship did move us from our berth because they wanted it! From Qaqortoq we did the tourist thing, visiting the well preserved 14th century Norse church at Hvalsey, soaking in the hot thermal springs at Unartoq where the lads went back for another session in the night, and then riding out stormy winds in the circular fjord of Tasiussaq off Tasermiut with its magnificent panorama of mountains all around, and a spectacular display of the northern lights covering the whole night sky. Yet another stormy night sheltering on the way back, with the wind howling over the boat but the anchor holding, took us to Nanortalik for final stores and bunkering.

Aurora borealis at Tasiussaq. Photo Martin Doble

Sailing home entailed the usual difficult Atlantic passage in these northern latitudes, the notorious Cape Farewell joining in the act. As we turned south to get into the Atlantic the wind went from 5 knots to 25 knots in seconds, and an already nasty sea became even more bouncy. We reefed down and set the inner staysail and clawed our way south to get away from the Cape.

The weather charts we were getting by e-mail from 'my man in Scotland' showed that a depression to the south of Iceland had thrown out a huge spider's web of isobars stretching right across the Atlantic from Greenland to Scotland and beyond. Our plan was to work south around these, hoping to pick up westerlies to the south. Later we hove-to for 26 hours in big winds, during which the base plate of the boom vang burst off the mast foot – we could only effect a repair to re-attach the boom vang to the mast with shackles later. Then we were almost becalmed, before big winds and seas again – the isobars were tighter at the back (west side) of the depression. A wave hit me in the chest and threw me across the cockpit, which did my back no good for a while; then the fresh water system stopped working and only recovered when we bypassed the filter system – at least we had water to drink if we boiled it first.

All we could do was stuff in fibreglass paste – mid-Atlantic. Photo Martin Doble

We were in those big, long, Atlantic rollers now, and one of them hit the boat like a slab of concrete, bursting open a repair I had done two years previously on some damage sustained when the boat was wintering in the water in Aasiaat. Water spurted in a jet across the saloon below and soaked Martin's bunk – he was understandably not amused. This necessitated doing a repair in mid-Atlantic as soon as it calmed down, pushing fibreglass filler into the cracks and holes as best we could. Thankfully it held for the rest of the trip.

More winds, more calms, more big rollers. The salt water taps started to play up, the loo seat began to crack, threatening to lose its vacuum (disaster loomed), and the wind instruments gave up altogether, in spite of the lads climbing the pirouetting mast twice to check the anemometer at the masthead. They had to learn to sail by the feel of the wind – no bad thing, no doubt. Then for the last few days we picked up constant wind from the west which sped us towards Ireland, though it was sometimes difficult to choose the right sail plan and course, broad-reaching or running before with following wind and big seas. The wind miraculously lasted through the final night in spite of a contrary forecast, into and up the Firth of Lorne. We put into Oban to collect fuel – to be met with a notice 'Sorry, no fuel' – then sailed and motored in heavy rain showers past Castle Stalker and through the narrows into Dallens Bay, to tie up at the pontoon shattered but thankful.

The real thing, mid-Atlantic

It had been 1645 miles in 14½ days, the first Atlantic crossing for the crew and the 15th for me, to celebrate my 80th year. Lucky it wasn't easy then....?!

And now the grandchildren want to go sailing – now there *is* a challenge.

We are immensely grateful to the Gino Watkins Memorial Fund for their generous support once again, and also, this year, to the British Mountaineering Council.

FROM THE GALLEY OF ... Bill Salvo, aboard *Cascade II*

Clams Cataplana[1]

Ingredients

- 50 ml olive oil
- 300g fresh tomatoes
- 1½ kg fresh clams
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 bay leaf
- 60g cured ham
- 100g *chorizo*
- 100 ml white wine
- chopped parsley
- salt and pepper to taste

Wash clams in salt water and soak for a few hours. Peel the onion and chop finely. Heat oil, add chopped garlic, onion and bay leaf, and sauté gently. Add the white wine and deglaze[2].

Meanwhile cut the ham into small pieces and the *chorizo* into small rounds. Remove the skins from the tomatoes by placing them in boiling water for a few minutes and chop finely. Add to ingredients in pan, together with the parsley. Simmer for 5-10 minutes.

Remove the clams from their salt water. Place the *cataplana* or other pot with a tight fitting lid on the stove and add half the mixture from the sauté pan, then add half the clams, then the remainder of the mixture and finally the rest of the clams on top. Cover and cook on a low heat. After 10-12 minutes turn the *cataplana* or pot over and cook for another 5-10 minutes until the clams have all opened.

If using a pressure cooker keep the top screwed on tightly but do not use the valve. The clams will open more quickly than if using a *cataplana*.

1. A *cataplana* is a cooking pan which originated in the Portuguese Algarve. Traditionally made of copper, it is shaped like two hinged clam shells which form a seal when clamped together. Much like *tagine*, *cataplana* is the name for both the recipe and the utensil in which it is cooked. See www.cataplana.org for more details.

2. Deglazing is a cooking technique for removing and dissolving browned, caramelised food residue from the bottom of a pan to make a sauce. Thank you, Wikipedia!

If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs,
it is just possible that you haven't grasped the situation.

Jean Kerr, Please don't eat the Daisies

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FROM HOWTH TO TORREVIEJA WITH LA LUMIÈRE OF HOWTH

Ken and Carmel Kavanagh

(*Previous issues of* Flying Fish *carried Ken and Carmel's account of exploring the Black Sea aboard their previous yacht,* Safari of Howth*, and then bringing her back west across the Mediterranean from Turkey to Spain. Two years on, and we rejoin them in their home port of Howth, a fishing and yachting harbour on the north side of Dublin Bay...*)

Two OAPs in a Boat

In late 2013 we sold *Safari of Howth*, our beloved Hallberg Rassy 42. After a thorough search she was replaced with *La Lumière of Howth*, a Hunter Legend 36, which we thought would better suit the needs of two ageing sailors who wished to spend their final years pottering around the Med. We found her in St Quai Portrieux in Brittany in 2014 and sailed her back to our home port of Howth, where we spent a season kitting her out for what we hoped would be a new beginning in the Med.

The excitement begins

On a wet, cold Sunday, 24 May 2015, the skipper and I finally set off for Greystones, just 20 miles south of Howth. We thought we had a serious problem when the autopilot refused to hold a course, but on investigation discovered that 'the crew' (moi!) had packed an electric polisher too close to the fluxgate compass in the cockpit locker, and the magnets in the motor had led the autopilot astray. Flogging and walking the plank were discussed, but thankfully that thought was soon abandoned!

We left for Milford Haven at 1500 the following afternoon to catch the tide at St Anne's Head. Light variable winds accompanied us for the first few hours, then veered to the west so we were able to roll out the sails and motor-sail down the Irish Sea. It was a cold, bumpy and, on one occasion, alarming passage. At around 2330, while I was on the first night watch of the season, a red masthead light suddenly appeared ahead on what looked like an imminent collision course. According to the AIS this would occur within the next two minutes! I quickly altered course and watched as a large yacht glided past under sail, far too close for comfort. While I was recovering from the fright it disappeared from the AIS screen and the navigation lights were extinguished. Hardly the smartest idea with two rather anxious OAPs at large in the middle of the Irish Sea.

At 1100 the following morning we duly locked into Milford Haven marina without any further excitements, not realising that nine days would pass before we would be on our way again. There followed a week of gale-force winds, which reached storm force 10 in Lundy, the Bristol Channel and the Irish Sea. Even though Milford Haven is far from being a 'des res' town, we enjoyed our stay there because of the central location of the marina and its excellent facilities.

The Bristol and English Channels

On Thursday 4 June the weather forecast was reasonable enough to make the 120 mile

Our new, swing-mounted, TV/ chart-plotter

passage across the Bristol Channel to Newlyn in Cornwall. We exited the dock at 1130 and the southeast 3–4 allowed us to make good progress in the early part of the trip, but at midnight it veered to the southwest which resulted in a long, slow slog down to Land's End. Soon the wind had reached 22 knots and we were concerned that we would miss the tide to take us round Land's End. The decision – prompted by the forecast – to depart Milford Haven two hours earlier than strictly necessary paid off however, and at 0845 next morning, with the fog lifted and the Longship's Lighthouse finally visible, we shot round Land's End with the help of 4 knots of favourable tide and a nice westerly breeze, which brought us into Newlyn by 1300.

At 1715 the following day we left Newlyn for the 100 mile passage across the English Channel to L'Aberwrac'h. The wind was forecast to be west 4–5 backing northwest 3–4 later. All went mostly according to plan, except for the extreme cold, but there was one funny incident along the way. While once again on a solo night watch, I roused the skipper to seek advice on how best to handle the large orange-coloured cruise ship coming over the horizon. After peering at it for a second he looked at me as if I had lost the plot, said "that's the moon" and returned to his bunk. I was left feeling very alone and stupid in the middle of the English Channel...

More gales, but blue skies on the horizon

We berthed on the visitors' pontoon in the small, very exposed marina in L'Aberwrac'h at 1245 next day, and were kept in port another four days by gale force winds. Eventually they abated and we set sail to pass through the Chenal du Four bound for Camaret, 35 miles along the coast. It turned wet and murky towards the end of the passage, and we were glad to be in by 1800. We set off early the following morning to pass through the Raz de Sein, hopefully into sunnier climes, and were not disappointed. After transiting the Raz at slack high water, we emerged into South Brittany and the first real sunshine of the trip. The 37 mile stretch from the Raz to Loctudy also produced the first really enjoyable sail since departing Howth.

The following morning, 30 June, saw us depart Loctudy at 1015 bound for Lorient, 38 miles away. We had another lovely sail in sunny conditions arriving off the harbour at 1700, but to our horror there were no marina berths available as the Volvo Round

the World Race yachts were there for the weekend. I think the staff of Marina Locmiquelic must have got fed up with me eventually, clogging Channel 9 with my foreign accent, begging all and sundry for a berth, so they sent out a RIB to escort us into their marina where we were delighted to find ourselves berthed alongside the renowned meteorologist Frank Singleton and his wife, who were cruising Brittany.

The village of Locmiquelic itself was an absolute delight and has an excellent *boulangerie* and *charcuterie* where we stocked up with some very tasty provisions.

For the fourth day in a row the wind gods co-operated with our sailing plans, forecasting north 3–4 occasionally 5 and some showers – excellent conditions for the 55 mile passage to Pornichet/La Baule at the mouth of the Loire, where we were due to meet up with some friends from Nantes. We left Marina Locmiquelic at 0850 and headed southwest, and by 1400 it was finally warm enough to don shorts for a few hours and commence working on the tan! The sunshine didn't last too long, however, and we docked in Pornichet at 1830 in an absolute downpour, pleased that we had completed the first 500 miles of our journey.

Biscay – always a challenge

We spent a relaxing day in Pornichet in the company of our friends, and then it was back to planning the Biscay crossing. After a considerable amount of soul-searching we decided to opt for a two-night crossing from Pornichet to Gijon, a distance of 262 miles – with just two OAPs on board, prolonged passages at sea are no longer the fun they used to be!

At 0800 on Tuesday 16 June we began the passage to Gijon, and were soon making 6 knots with the help of a northwesterly 3–4. About an hour out we were hailed by a Customs vessel from the ever-zealous Lorient region whose crew examined our ships' documents. Thankfully all was in order, and we were sent on our way with cries of *Bon Voyage* ringing in our ears. Then at 1830 the passage came to an abrupt and juddering halt! There was a sudden vibration from the engine and all indications were that the

Glad to have the Raz behind us

propeller was fouled. The best option was to head for Les Sables d'Olonne, the nearest port on the French coast, 55 miles to the east. As darkness closed in the northwest wind increased to 20–25 knots which, accompanied by a 2m swell, turned the passage into a tough, challenging, overnight sail. We were utterly exhausted when we finally docked in Les Sables d'Olonne at 0800 the following morning. There, a diver established that all was well with the prop – the offending article had somehow detached itself in the very rough conditions we had experienced during the night.

Mutiny aboard

By this stage I was both exhausted and freaked out, and presented the skipper with three reasonable options for the onward journey, the fourth being that he cross Biscay singlehanded! They were:

1. Do an overnighter to Santander and work our way along the north coast of Spain;
2. Get a third person to accompany us across Biscay as far as La Coruña;
3. Have the boat transported by road to the Med.

The marina manager referred me for advice to Jean-Louis, owner of the nearby boatyard, and he offered to introduce us to his cousin, Jean Garnier, a retired fisherman with great local knowledge and also a highly experienced singlehanded sailor. Jean-Louis also agreed to get a price for transporting *La Lumière* by road to the Med. The following morning he introduced us to Jean who, after hearing our story, promptly offered to accompany us across Biscay. We would depart the following Monday, 22 June, and cover the cost of his return flight to La Rochelle. As it would cost around €5,000 to have the boat transported by road, Jean's offer was a no-brainer!

Drying out in Les Sables d'Olonne

Ken, Jean and Jean-Louis

Biscay here we come ... again

The following Monday at 0715 the three of us departed Les Sables d'Olonne with a forecast for light, variable winds. While initially there was some wind from the northwest it soon died, never to reappear again during the 84 hours it took us to reach Bayona – after all my fear and dread of Biscay, it turned into a long, uneventful passage in flat calm seas! Under these circumstances there was plenty of time to chat, so I became an authority on fishing for tuna off the Azores and prawns in the Irish Sea, and on the politics of EU Fishing! (Jean's English was very limited, so I got a chance to use my French). I also discovered that Quai Garnier, to starboard of the entrance to Les Sables d'Olonne, is named after Jean's uncle, a war hero, who was a member of the French Resistance and who died on a train heading for Auschwitz after being captured by the Germans in 1944.

We passed La Coruña at 2200 on Wednesday 24 June and decided to continue on to Bayona, 150 miles down the coast. La Coruña radio advised us to expect east-northeast force 4 occasionally 5, which would be perfect. The visibility was to be good. This turned out to be pure fiction – the wind died completely, a dense fog descended, and our speed dropped to 4 knots as we battled against tide and current towards Cabo Finisterre, finally struggling past it at 1000 the following morning. The fog didn't dissipate until 1430, which was pretty tiring. But with clear visibility, a freshening wind and sails hoisted, our speed increased and the final 36 miles into Bayona passed pleasantly and swiftly. Upon arriving in port, our main priority was to replace all the fuel we had used over the previous 84 hours – and to enjoy a good meal!

We were now under some pressure to reach Porto, from where Jean was due to fly back to La Rochelle the following day, so departed Bayona at 0700 and covered the 63 miles to Porto in 11 hours. With good visibility, a flat sea, and a northwest force 3 we were able to motor-sail on low revs, just bumping over one unseen lobster pot along the way. There are thousands of these down the Portuguese coast!

Jean and Ken consult the oracle

Another hard day on passage!

We docked in the marina at Leixões, a few miles north of Porto, to find the town abuzz with a Mediaeval Pirates' festival. We celebrated the completion of another 518 miles of the journey with a delicious meal in a local restaurant, where all the serving staff, cooks and indeed many of the patrons were dressed as pirates. After Jean's departure we enjoyed a few days R&R exploring Porto. We also had time to become acquainted with our neighbours in the marina, a Norwegian couple in *VidVandre* and a French couple in *Lazycat*. They too had just crossed Biscay and were en route to the Med, so we had plenty of stories to exchange!

Plenty of help from the Portuguese Trades

Our next deadline was to get to the Bay of Cadiz by 9/10 July to meet up with one of our sons and his fiancée, who were coming to Spain for a wedding. So from Tuesday 30 June, after four nights in Leixões (dense fog kept us in port for an extra, unplanned, night) we proceeded to hop, skip and sail our way down the Portuguese coast, slipping in and out of marinas on a nightly basis. The northwest wind and the Portuguese current ensured speedy, uneventful passages from port to port.

First up was Figueira da Foz, 63 miles down the coast. Then it was the turn of Peniche, 52 miles further on, where we spent the bounciest night of the trip as local fishing boats entered and exited the harbour at high speed throughout the night. A much more peaceful night was spent in Cascais, west of Lisbon. Then came another day of lobster pot dodging as we made our way to Sines, a fishing port and holiday resort 35 miles south of Cascais.

Friendly pirates – we hoped!

Arriving in Lagos

The weather forecast predicted increasingly strong winds along the west coast of Portugal and in particular at Cabo São Vicente, notorious for strong winds and big swells at the best of times. As the winds were due to last for 4–5 days and strengthen to gale force, we decided to depart at 0400 next morning in order to round the Cabo before conditions really worsened. We made good time down the coast, with plenty of wind from the right direction. Once round the Cabo we were met by 25 knots gusting 30 from the northwest, and hurtled northeast to Lagos where we docked at precisely 1700, delighted and relieved to have finally rounded that infamous corner. We decided to reward ourselves with a two-night stay in Lagos Marina as we needed to catch up with laundry and provisioning, but Monday 6 June saw us heading along the coast to the expensive and rather characterless marina at Vilamoura.

Andalucia and into the Med

After one night in Vilamoura we departed for Mazagon, 66 miles across the Gulf of Cadiz, which was reasonably priced and very friendly. It is one of a group of Andalusian marinas run by the regional council, where charges are fixed and affordable, unlike at Cascais, Lagos and Vilamoura. The price per night for a 36ft boat was €27.67, which was great value given that it was now high season. From Mazagon we made our way to Chipiona and then to Rota in the Bay of Cadiz, where we met up with our son and his fiancée and ended up attending a fantastic wedding with them in Jerez de la Frontera.

Contrasting styles!

After four days in the lovely town of Rota we headed for Barbate, to position ourselves for passing through the Straits of Gibraltar. Unfortunately a strong easterly delayed our departure for five days, but our French and Norwegian friends from *Lazycat* and *VidVandre* were also held up there, so we spent the time socialising and generally having fun. We all enjoyed the celebrations on 16 July to honour our Lady of Mount Carmel, the Patron Saint of the Sea – indeed we had a special party on board *La Lumière of Howth*, given that it was my very own Feast Day!

On Sunday 19 July the wind finally changed direction and we were able to leave the swell and roll of the Atlantic breakers behind and head for what we hoped would be the less turbulent waters of the Mediterranean. First we enjoyed a few days in La Linea, arriving to discover it was *Domingo Rociero*, the first day of a week-long celebration of Spanish music and dance. There was a great atmosphere around town, with many locals dressed in traditional costume, singing, dancing and imbibing large quantities of alcohol in the streets!

From La Linea we popped into La Duquesa to meet up with a friend who was holidaying there, and after dropping her off in Estepona headed on for Benalmadena – which has to win the prize for the dirtiest marina we have ever visited! The heat, noise and dirt were so overwhelming that we were glad to make an early departure for Marina del Este (on the east face of Punta de la Mona) after just one night. We enjoyed two nights there, then nibbled our way along the remainder of the Costa del Sol, calling into Almerimar and Almeria before finally reaching Cartagena which we were really keen to visit. We enjoyed our stay in this historic city, made all the more enjoyable by the company of our friends from *VidVandre* and *Lazycat*.

One of Cartagena's beautiful old buildings with, on the right, an extremely lifelike sculpture

Journey's End

Our original plan had been to do an overnight sail from Cartagena up the coast to Denia, about 95 miles to the north, but soon after we left the wind swung round to the northeast and strengthened, turning the passage into a slow slog against wind and swell. Then at 1730 we got a weather update which mentioned the risk of severe thunderstorms north of Alicante, the direction in which we were heading, so we altered course and headed for Marina Salinas in Torrevieja which was only an hour away. This is a large new marina with excellent modern facilities, but unfortunately the non-stop music from the surrounding bars and discos turned our overnight stay into a sleepless nightmare.

We phoned the two other marinas in the harbour, and fortunately the Real Club Náutico Torrevieja had some berths available so we transferred there the following morning. The *levanter* continued blowing for three days, during which we became closely acquainted with Torrevieja and the club itself. We liked what we saw, and when they invited us to become members of the club we accepted. We now plan to stay there for the next few years – so ended our original plan to overwinter in Sardinia!

Direct, year-round flights from Alicante and Murcia airports to Dublin were a big attraction, while the club itself boasts a swimming pool, a great gym programme and lovely, friendly members. The cruising grounds are marvellous with the Balearics to the north and the Mar Menor to the south and, very importantly, the price was very right for our purse! Having covered 1945 miles and visited 31 marinas in the ten weeks since departing Howth, we were quite happy to finally sit back, relax and bask in the pleasure of having successfully brought *La Lumière of Howth* to her new home in the Med.

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FROM THE GALLEY OF ... Niki Phillips, aboard *Spirit of Penmar*

Sweet Potato Cakes (serves two)

Ingredients

- 1 medium sized sweet potato
- 1 medium sized white potato
- 1 egg, beaten
- plenty of grated hard cheese, ideally mature cheddar
- 6-8 tbs of combined 'roughage' (multi-seed breadcrumbs, whole grain flour, oat flakes etc)
- oil for frying

Peel, cube and boil the potatoes until soft, then drain and mash. Add the egg and grated cheese and then add enough 'roughage' to make a fairly dry mixture that will hold its shape when frying (I favour those listed because of their low GI properties, particularly oat flakes, but white breadcrumbs and flour will work just as well). Mix thoroughly. Heat the oil on a medium heat and drop rounded spoonfuls of the mixture in the pan, frying for several minutes on each side, until golden and crispy. Serve with a salad – a simple tomato and onion salad works well, perhaps with a few black olives thrown in.

Instead of cheese, you can add a pretty much anything you like for different flavours and textures, as long as it isn't too lumpy when combined with the mash. Tuna works well. A little bit of cheese should still be added, as it helps to bind the ingredients together nicely.

FROM THE GALLEY OF ... Linda Lane Thornton, aboard *Coromandel*

Watercress Salad

Ingredients

- large bunch of watercress
- 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped or crushed
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

Marinade the garlic in the olive oil for at least an hour. Chop the watercress into easy-to-eat pieces and place in a large bowl. Douse with the garlic and olive oil, mix thoroughly and serve immediately with toasted baguette slices.

Andy and I stayed in a *gîte* in the Cirque de Mafate in La Réunion. This watercress salad was served as part of the meal, so I asked the lady what was in it. I serve it with all sorts of meals, either as a starter or as part of the main meal.

A TRIP TO REMEMBER
Vicki Mortimer

(*Vicki and Roger left the UK in September 2006 to circumnavigate aboard their 42ft Vagabond cutter-rigged ketch,* El Vagabond. *While in Grenada in 2009 they were joined by Monty, a white Havanese puppy, and all three completed their circumnavigation on returning to Grenada in May 2015.*)

Having recently completed our circumnavigation, my husband finally deemed me worthy to join 'his' Club. When completing my OCC application, I looked back over our various ocean crossings and decided that, whilst our Atlantic crossing in 2006 was theoretically my first qualifying passage, by far the most memorable trip was that from Easter Island to Valdivia, Chile back in 2010...

Vicki dwarfed by the Easter Island moais

We had spent three weeks in Hanga Roa on Easter Island and finally left on 3 March. It seemed very strange to be heading for the cold after the previous three years spent in the Caribbean, and our thermals, fleeces and oilies were all to hand as we knew they would be needed somewhere en route. Twenty minutes after we left the anchorage a squall came through for an hour or so, just to get us used to being back at sea again. Once this had blown through, the wind dropped to about 10–15

Monty, our Havanese puppy, is totally at ease

Happy hour

knots allowing us to make roughly 4 knots despite the big swell. We progressed slowly but surely for the next few days, with decent winds during the day but dropping right off at night. As a result we were only averaging about 90 miles a day – not really fast enough, especially as it was not in totally the right direction...

We had had a new Raymarine Drive fitted in Panama before we left in December and we had needed to repair the flimsy bracket (supplied by a different company) in Galapagos and then get it re-welded on Easter Island. After four days at sea the bracket broke again, so it was back to the trusty old Monitor self-steering which is great except in light winds. Unfortunately we were still experiencing very light winds, and averaging only 4 knots during the day dropping off to 2·5-3 knots at night – very slow progress but still comfortable, and we were able to enjoy our Happy Hour of Diet Coke and peanuts at 1730 every evening.

A well-earned nap

The seas were gradually getting bigger and bigger, but we were managing to eat and sleep well. I was able to bake bread and muffins, so we had no real complaints except that progress was much slower than we had anticipated. After ten days we still had 1186 miles to go, and we were still putting in a lot of southern miles to pick up the elusive westerlies. Luckily, we were able to pick up regular weather forecasts via our shiny new sat phone, and were consequently able to adjust our course to try and pick up the favourable winds. We were checking the weather GRIBS every three days or so, and the sat phone is now up there with Marmite and Corned Beef as great things to have on board for long passages. Although, admittedly, it is a tad spooky being able to send and receive e-mails when miles from anywhere.

Everything was going too smoothly and, as always, it was time for something to happen ... in the early hours of 16 March our steering cable sheared. We drifted until daylight when we managed to set up the emergency tiller, a great bit of gear which plugs straight into the rudder shaft. Unfortunately you have to crouch like a garden gnome to use it, making it virtually impossible to hand steer, and we still had no autohelm. After some experimentation we managed to rig up various bits of string to attach the tiller to the steering wheel, which meant that hand steering was possible but the Monitor was redundant – with 983 miles still to go.

Roger hand-steering using the emergency tiller

After two days, and 36 hours of hand steering, Roger decided there must be something he could do about the Autohelm, so he disappeared below for the day. After nine hours of bashing, bolting and lots of sweating (or was that swearing?) he had used every spare bolt, piece of string, length of tape etc to create something solid(ish) to hold the bracket in place unless we had really big seas – fingers crossed...

We knew that the weather was due to change and, when squalls came through, we lashed the wheel and reefed the genoa. The wind picked up to 35 knots very quickly on these occasions and the waves were getting very big. Surprisingly, although we had the odd 'big boy' over the deck, the sea did not seem particularly threatening. We were now sharing the steering with the Autohelm, which made life a lot easier, and when hand steering with the 30–35 knots of wind from behind the boat speed increased to 8 knots, improving our average to 6 knots. In the middle of all this mayhem, Monty was fantastic as a morale booster. His ability to judge the big waves, run across the aft deck, poo and race back to the cockpit without getting wet was really quite remarkable – obviously he got a treat every time, so he was happy and we were happy that he survived each marathon adventure!

On 25 March we really knew we had hit the Roaring Forties. The wind steadily increased all day, and by 1800 we had a steady 40 knots gusting to 48. We lashed the helm and stayed between 60° and 90° to the wind with the staysail coping – forward progress about 2·5 knots. By midnight we felt a bit battered but it had passed through and we could hoist the main and genoa again. We were glad to have a bit of calm the next day – the wind had died completely and again progress was slow. We were just drifting, and still had 292 miles to go.

It has to be said that ships are a bit like buses. We had been at sea for 24 days without seeing anyone else at all, and then two fishing boats came along at once – neither of which bothered to respond to our radio call. We were now very keen to reach Chile, but the forecast was for calm for the next few days so, on 28 March the engine went on and we motored at 5 knots through the night. We sighted land at 1100 next morning.

The Autohelm temporary fix

One more night to go

The sea was still dead calm and it was great to be able to watch Monty running around the foredeck again – he had been confined to *El Vagabond* for 3½ months since we had left Panama and was really looking forward to being on land.

The sky got bluer and we could see the mountains some 50 miles away. Penguins and sealions suddenly appeared from nowhere, and it was a fantastic feeling to be approaching Chile, some 5500 miles after leaving Panama in December. We worked

Beautiful Rio Valdivia

out that we had spent more time at sea than at anchor over the previous four months – really good news for our livers! We closed the land with the Autohelm still just about hanging on by its last bolt, and hove-to at about 1800 to be ready to head up the river to Valdivia in daylight.

We awoke early next morning and started up the beautiful Rio Valdivia. We had a lovely end to our journey, and arrived at the Valdivia Yacht Club at about 1300 after a total journey of 2339 miles and 27 days at sea. After tying up Roger went to see the *Armada* to get us checked in and to advise them that we had Monty on board. We were pleased to learn that there were no quarantine requirements, and by 1600 we had all walked into town and were sitting outside a little restaurant having a beer and chips. Needless to say, all three of us slept well that night.

Postscript

Vicki e-mailed again a few days after submitting her account, adding: "Just thought you might want to hear the happy ending to the story!"

"The company in Panama which fitted the bracket for our Raymarine Autohelm were completely incompetent and clearly did not know what they were doing. They refused to acknowledge our e-mails sent from Galapagos and Easter Island so, when we arrived in Chile, we contacted Raymarine in the USA who were absolutely brilliant. Their South American representative sent us a new Autohelm as ours had been damaged by the flimsy bracket, and arranged for Alwoplast (a boatbuilder in Valdivia) to build and fit a new sturdy bracket for it. Both have since completed just over 36,000 miles...".

From the kitchen of ... Liz Hammick

Flapjacks

Ingredients

- 8 oz (250g) butter or margarine
- 6 oz (170g) sugar (any type)
- 1 desert spoon Golden Syrup
- 8 oz (250g) rolled oats
- 1 desert spoon cocoa (optional)
- dried fruit – raisins, cherries, cranberries (optional)

Line a baking tin with foil and grease it well. This is important – you'll never get the flapjacks out of the tin if it isn't lined.

Melt the butter and sugar, add the oats and either cocoa or dried fruit if you are using them. Turn into a baking tray, smooth down with a fork dipped into cold water, and bake for about 20 minutes in a medium oven. While still very hot, use a rounded knife dipped in cold water to cut the flapjacks into squares. Leave to get completely cold before taking them out of the tin and separating them. Will keep for several days in an airtight box ... if they get the chance!

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THE OCC STRENGTHENS LINKS WITH THE RCC PILOTAGE FOUNDATION

George Curtis

(*In 2002, whilst in Fiji, George Curtis was unable to find Beth Bushnell's award-winning notes on Vanuatu on the web. On returning to the UK he volunteered to put the OCC's existing paper-based cruising information online, and has been involved in publishing the Club's cruising information ever since.*

For a number of years this ran on a separate website – the Cruising Information Community (CIC) – but this is to be closed shortly, to reduce the cost and management overheads of running two sites. George has therefore spent the past year moving information about the least frequently cruised areas onto the Forum section of the OCC website. He has also led negotiations with the RCC Pilotage Foundation, so that a more formal route to publication is made available to those OCC members who would like to use it.)

One of the founding objectives of the Ocean Cruising Club is 'to collect information likely to be of use to members and to arrange for such information to be available to members...'

The OCC's store of cruising information is now held on the Forum on the Club's website. The Forum provides an excellent platform to search for any information that might be there, but does not, at a glance, show what is actually available for an ocean passage or for a particular area of the world. There is also a great wealth of cruising information held on members' websites, but again we lack information as to what is available. Despite the advance of technology, many of us like to browse through a printed volume or scan a map of our proposed route and sample the reports on possible destinations. Fortunately a number of OCC members also seem to enjoy recording pilotage and shore-based information.

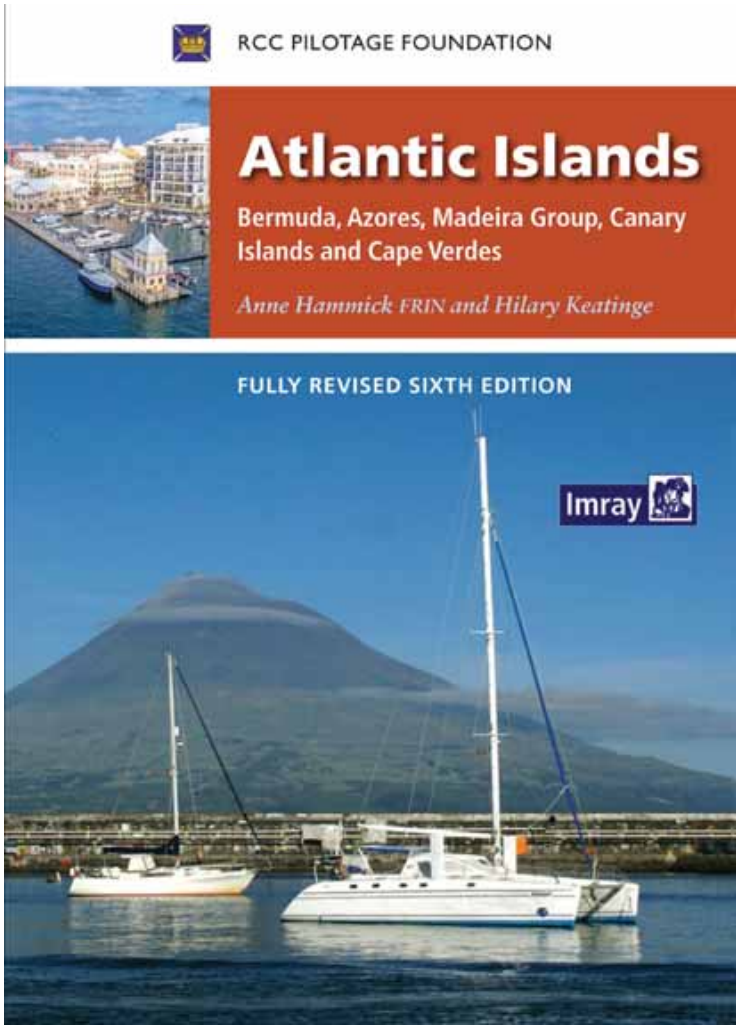
On behalf of the OCC, I have been in discussions with the Royal Cruising Club and the RCC Pilotage Foundation to allow OCC members to benefit from and contribute to the RCC Pilotage Foundation (RCCPF), and to encourage more OCC members to consider volunteering as RCCPF author/editors. The objectives of our discussions are:

- For members of the RCC and the OCC to benefit from cruising information gathered by both clubs, enabled by an exchange of information between the two.
- For members of the OCC to have access to the RCCPF's management and publishing expertise if they would like to have their cruising information published. This could be either as a contributor to existing publications, or as author/editor of a new publication if a need is recognised – for example, for a particular region where good pilotage coverage is sparse.
- For RCCPF editors to have access to OCC cruising information when seeking information about specific parts of the world. Permission will be sought from originators before any information from the OCC sites is included in any RCCPF publication.

- For the RCCPF to be able to request information from OCC members and Port Officers when seeking people with knowledge of specific areas, and to seek assistance from OCC members in the management and publication process.

The RCC Pilotage Foundation came into being in 1976, when an American RCC member, Dr Fred Ellis, indicated that he wished to make a gift to the Club in memory of his father. The Foundation was established with a charitable objective which was, and remains: 'to advance the education of the public in the science and practice of navigation'. It was incorporated as a company limited by guarantee in 2005, and is a registered charity which is fortunate to have The National Hydrographer as its Patron. The overall management of the Foundation is overseen by Trustees appointed by the Royal Cruising Club, with day-to-day operations undertaken by members of the Executive. Most of the management of the Foundation is done on a voluntary basis.

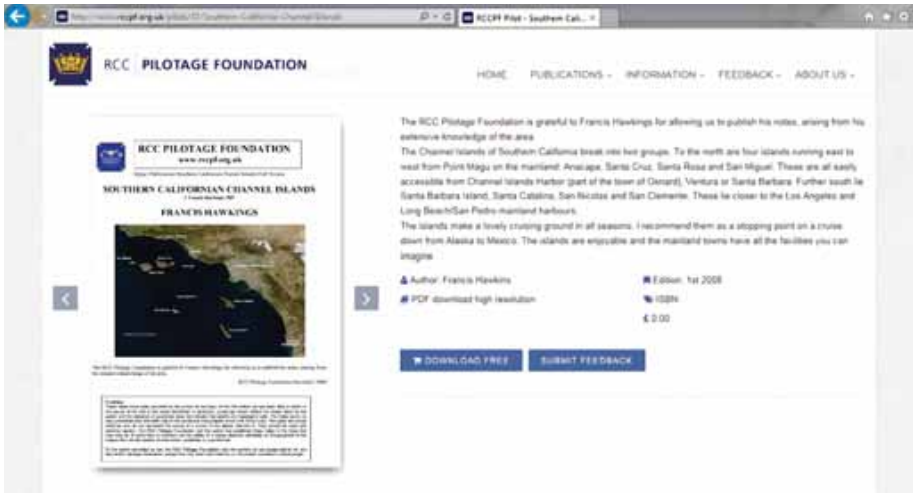
The Foundation collects and researches written, photographic and chart information relating to small boat pilotage, navigation and operation, climate and weather conditions, including information from remote areas of the world where other sources of information are scarce or non-existent. The Foundation then publishes this information in the form of conventional printed pilot books and, increasingly, also in the form of downloads, e-books



The RCC Pilotage Foundation is best known for its high quality printed books. The cover photo for the new edition of Atlantic Islands was taken by OCC member and Advertising Manager Mike Downing

and other media. Annual updates and supplements to all the printed books are available as free downloads on the website at www.rccpf.org.uk.

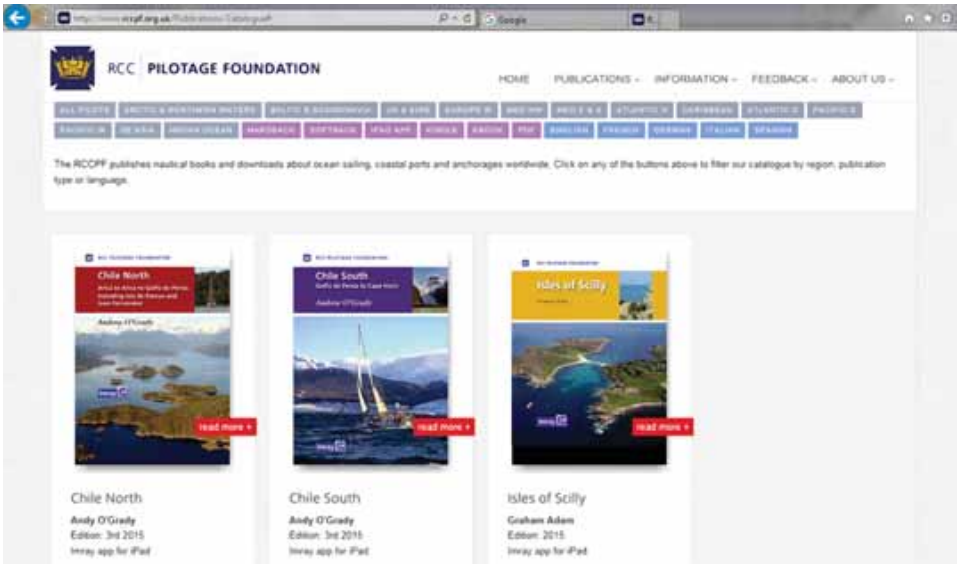
Formal guides are currently available for: *Arctic and Northern Waters* (covering Faroe, Iceland, Greenland and the North East and North West Passages); Scandinavia, including *Norway* and *The Baltic Sea and its Approaches*; Atlantic Europe, including *Isles of Scilly* (a separate volume), *Channel Islands, Cherbourg Peninsula and North Brittany*, *Atlantic France*, *Atlantic Spain and Portugal*; the Mediterranean, including *Mediterranean Spain*, *Islas Baleares*, *Corsica and Sardinia*, *The Black Sea* and *North Africa*; the North Atlantic, including *The Atlantic Crossing Guide*, *Atlantic Islands*, *North Africa* and *West Africa*; the South Atlantic, South America and Antarctica, including *Brazil*, *Argentina*, *Chile*, *South Atlantic Islands* and the *Antarctic Peninsula*; the Pacific Ocean, including the *Pacific Crossing Guide*, the *Aleutians*, and *Fiji-Lau*; and *South East Asia*.



A free downloadable e-pilot is available for the Southern Californian Islands

The creation of new RCC Pilotage Foundation publications and updates to existing publications is only made possible through the supply of information from around the world by generous-minded yachtsmen and women, and the dedicated work of authors and editors. The Foundation welcomes pilotage information in all forms, and OCC members are encouraged to send corrections, amendments and updates to the RCCPF Information Manager at info@rccpf.org.uk. For further details visit the feedback page of the Pilotage Foundation website – www.rccpf.org.uk/Provide-Feedback.

OCC members are encouraged to come forward as possible authors, editors or contributors for any of the above areas, but in particular for the Balearic Islands, Corsica and Sardinia, and North Africa where the current authors are no longer available. In addition there is a need for editors/authors to cover the following areas, which are under discussion for possible new publications: The Indian Ocean, Labrador/ Newfoundland/ Baffin, Papua New Guinea, the Solomons, and Fiji-Lau. New areas are likely to be served at first by individual reports, which will be published on the RCCPF website and on the OCC Forum. As these proliferate they will progress to e-books or printed volumes.



Imray Apps for i-Pad are a relatively recent innovation

The size of the job is what the editor/author makes it! They need to be good writers and researchers and collaborative networkers. They may not be commercially published writers before they are commissioned by the Pilotage Foundation, but will probably have contributed to magazines or journals such as *Flying Fish* or may have a blog or website. What is important is enthusiasm about their book area, cruising knowledge of that area, and their use of plans (chartlets) and photographs to inform the reader. The named person is the overall manager of the published information under that title. They will actively research, both on and off the water. They will provide the main focus on passage planning, navigation and pilotage, but also a broader perspective of the relative joys (or perhaps frustrations) of sailing those waters. They tend to do it for the love of it and not with the expectation of much financial reward – it is usually work of high satisfaction but low remuneration!

In summary, OCC Members are encouraged to make use of the information already held by the Pilotage Foundation, and to make additions to it so that their experience may contribute to the safety and enjoyment of navigators following in their wakes. Should a more fulfilling – and demanding – role as an author/ editor appeal, contact the Director of the Pilotage Foundation at director@rccpf.org.uk.

Cruising has two pleasures. One is to go out in wider waters from a sheltered place. The other is to go into a sheltered place from wider waters.

Howard Bloomfield

A BRITTANY CRUISE 'OOPB'
Mike and Helen Norris

(*Mike and Helen have been frequent contributors to* Flying Fish *over the past five years. Unfortunately Mike's recall to hospital in January 2015 ruled out their plans to spend the summer cruising from Portugal to Greece in their 37ft ketch* Island Drifter*, so they went for the next best thing...*

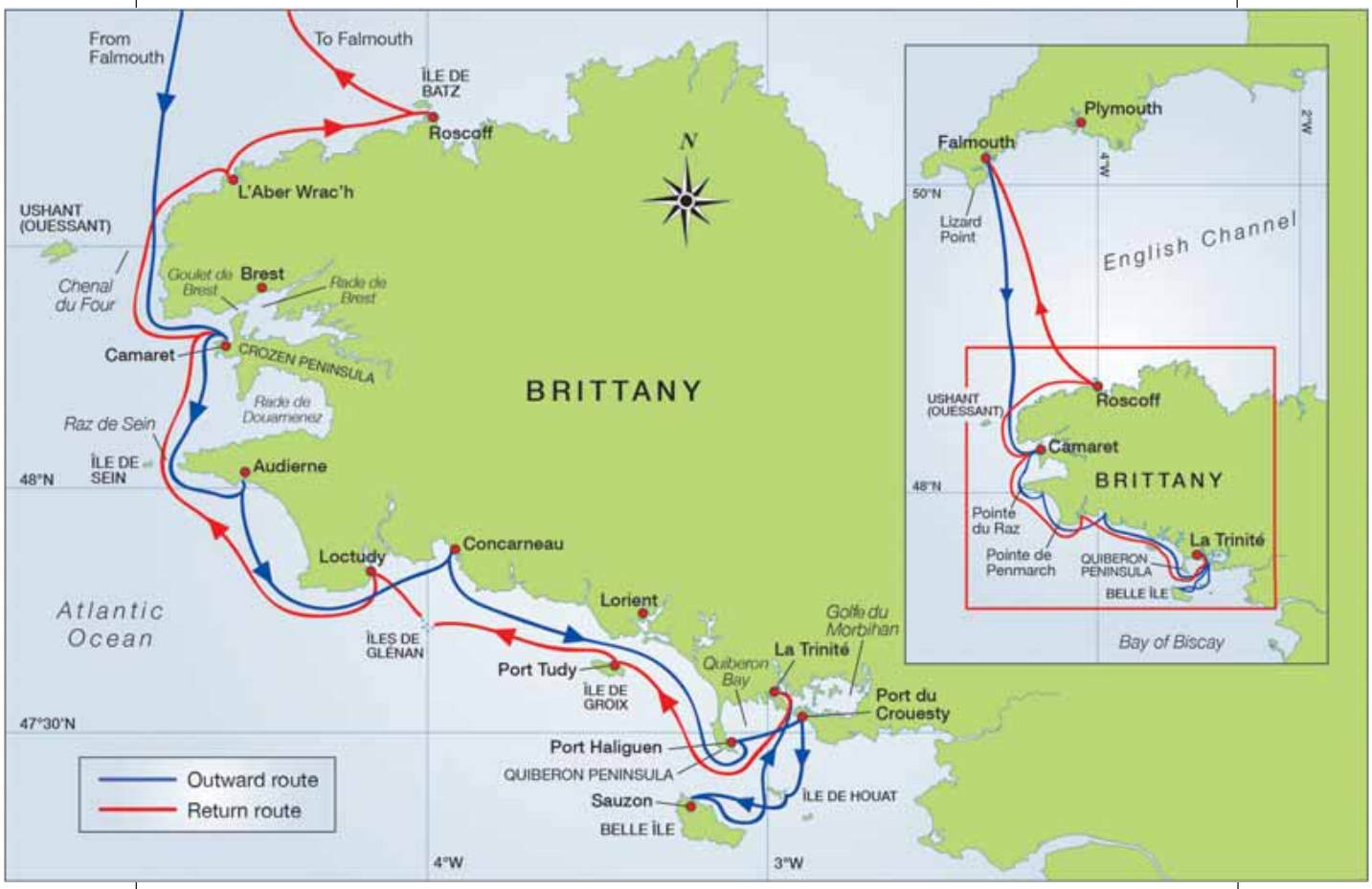
For those unfamiliar with the acronym, OOPB stands for 'on other people's boats'.)

Having left *Island Drifter* in Portugal for the summer, we were easily persuaded to join friends Alan and Lynn for a cruise of northwest Brittany in July. We first met them in the Caribbean in 2000, when they were chartering, but soon after that they bought *Bucks Eagle*, a 34ft Sadler, which they now keep in Falmouth. We have cruised on each other's boats several times.

We joined them in Falmouth on Monday 6 July, gave Tuesday a miss as our departure date in view of the 25 knot southwesterlies, and finally left on Wednesday after a 'traditional' pasty and baked bean lunch. We had a good crossing of the Western Approaches in 16 knots from the west-northwest, and even spent the second half of the passage de-powering the sails to avoid arriving too early at the Chenal du Four tidal race. Our passage through the Chenal and across the Goulet de Brest to Camaret was in consequence uneventful. On arrival at the visitors' marina we secured on the inside of the large wave-breaking outer pontoon. In total our 120 mile passage had taken 25 hours.

The town of Camaret is near the western extreme of the Crozon peninsula, which separates the Rades de Brest and Douarnenez, and is a 'traditional' stop-over point for yachts passing through the Chenal du Four and Raz de Sein. An attractive old fishing port, it has successfully transformed itself into a boating and tourist centre. Next day we hiked eight miles around the spectacular Crozon peninsula on the GR34 coastal path.

Camaret's well-protected harbour, seen from the Crozon peninsula


From Falmouth
To Falmouth
ÎLE DE BATZ
Roscoff
L'Aber Wrac'h
USHANT (OUESSANT)
Chenal du Four
Goulet de Brest
Brest
Rade de Brest
Camaret
CROZEN PENINSULA
Rade de Douarnenez
Raz de Sein
ÎLE DE SEIN
48°N
Audierne
Loctudy
Concarneau
Atlantic Ocean
ÎLES DE GLÉNAN
Lorient
Port Tudy
ÎLE DE GROIX
Quiberon Bay
La Trinité
Golfe du Morbihan
Port du Crouesty
47°30'N
Port Haliguen
QUIBERON PENINSULA
Sauzon
BELLE ÎLE
ÎLE DE HOUAT
4°W
3°W
BRITTANY
N
Outward route
Return route
Plymouth
Falmouth
4°W
2°W
50°N
Lizard Point
English Channel
USHANT (OUESSANT)
Roscoff
Camaret
BRITTANY
48°N
Pointe du Raz
Pointe de Penmarch
La Trinité
QUIBERON PENINSULA
BELLE ÎLE
Bay of Biscay

Traditional Breton cakes laden with calories – delicious!

Audierne

On Saturday we left Camaret, and sailed in light airs south to and through the Raz to Audierne. Again, having ensured that we reached the tidal gate of the Raz at slack water, we had an uneventful passage through this otherwise difficult area.

In Audierne we moored on one of the 30 visitors' buoys off Ste-Evette, where we enjoyed a pleasant, sunny afternoon with a clear blue sky and light breeze. We didn't go up the river to Audierne itself because access is only possible 1½ hours either side of high water and it would have restricted our departure the following morning. On arrival we discovered that the batteries – which did not appear to have been holding their charge – were very hot. Later, when they'd cooled down, we disconnected and cleaned up the terminal connections in the vain hope that that would solve the problem.

Concarneau

We left next day, Sunday 12 July, for the 39 mile passage to Concarneau in a 15 knot breeze, initially on a broad reach and subsequently a run. We chose to pull into Concarneau because the write-up in the pilot book suggested that the town had good support services for yachts.

A balloon-seller celebrates Bastille Day with Mike

The old citadel of Concarneau, adjacent to the marina, is on a small island connected to the mainland by a drawbridge. Within its massive defensive walls is a maze of beautifully preserved little streets, lined with tourist shops, bars and restaurants. The town itself is a busy fishing and leisure port. Along with most other Breton towns it claims to be the birthplace of the Kouign Amann – a high-calorie cake of butter, sugar and flour.

Since the next day was Bastille Day and therefore a major public holiday, we were not optimistic about solving our battery and charging problems. To our surprise, however, we found a local electronic engineer prepared to help. After looking over the system he sourced and fitted new batteries, re-checked the charging system and gave us the thumbs-up. That evening we attended the start of the local Bastille Day celebrations. At the *poissonnade* (fish festival) we sat at one of the communal trestle tables and enjoyed *moules et frites* washed down with local cider, before attending a *Bal Populaire* (concert) in the town square followed by a magnificent firework display on the end of one of the quays.

Port Haliguen

On Tuesday 14th, with the 55 mile passage to Port Haliguen ahead of us, we were off early but ended up motor-sailing in light airs most of the way. The good news, however, was that this allowed us to check the charging systems and batteries, both of which worked well. On arrival we hauled Alan up the mast to repair the wind instruments, which were giving false readings due probably to water ingress and corrosion at the mast connection.

Alan repairing the wind instruments

Port Haliguen lies on the east coast of the Quiberon peninsula which protects the bay itself. It is one of three very large marinas in the bay, and has good services and facilities. The open-air market in the small fishing and holiday village surrounding the marina was one of the best we've been to. Today Quiberon Bay is a major sailing area. In 1759, however, during the Seven Years War, the British fleet under Admiral Hawke chased its French counterpart into the Bay and, in what became known as the Battle of Quiberon Bay, destroyed most of the French ships. This turned out to be a major turning point in the war.

Port du Crouesty

Next day, Wednesday 15th, we crossed Quiberon Bay to Port du Crouesty, a huge six-basin marina with 1400 berths. A holiday village has grown up around the marina and local beaches, which supports the bars, restaurants, tourist shops and supermarket in the area. Port du Crouesty lies some two miles from the entrance to the Golfe du Morbihan – 50 square miles of shallow, sheltered waters with deeper channels, fast tidal

Market day in Port Haliguen

streams and plenty of counter-currents – which unfortunately we did not have time to include on this cruise.

Île de Houat

On Saturday 18th we sailed on a beam reach back around the southern end of the Quiberon peninsula to the Île de Houat. There we anchored in sand off Treac'h Gourhed, said to be one of the best bays in Brittany. It is famous among sailors for its 'pyjama parties', which occur when the fickle *Vent Solaire* (a northeast land breeze) blows hard at night and those whose anchors have failed to dig in properly have to leave at speed to avoid ending up on a lee shore.

Town square and hall, Port St Gildas, Île de Houat

After lunch we inflated the dinghy and rowed ashore to look around. The attractive old little ferry and local boat harbour of Port St Gildas on the opposite side of the peninsula was a ten-minute walk away. Today a pleasant holiday village has grown up around the port. Although it blew hard later, our anchor remained well bedded in and we had a comfortable night.

Belle Île

Next day we enjoyed a good sail for the 14 miles to Sauzon on the northeast coast of Belle Île, the largest of the Breton islands. It is a pretty little town, but its inner harbours dry out, at least partially, other than in isolated pools and channels. Since we wanted to leave before high water next morning we took one of the deep-water visitors' buoys outside the harbour, well tucked in behind a protective headland.

Deep-water moorings outside Sauzon harbour. Bucks Eagle is one in from the left

Ten miles long and five wide, Belle Île has many holiday homes and lets and encourages hiking, cycling and boating. There is one other harbour, Le Palais, a bustling ferry port and tourist town, plus six reasonable anchorages. Ster Wenn, a beautiful fjord-like inlet on the northwest corner, is rated by many as the most attractive anchorage in France.

La Trinité

We left early next morning and had an excellent sail along the coast of Belle Île, then around the Quiberon peninsula (again) and across the Bay to La Trinité – a flourishing sailing and oyster centre to the west of the Golfe du Morbihan. The area is famous for

Alignements at Le Ménec near Carnac

its large number of menhirs, long mounds, stone circles, passage graves and *alignements*, erected around 5000 years ago during the Neolithic period. We visited the *alignement* at Le Ménec, near Carnac, which is more than a kilometre long with twelve rows of stones laid out between two enclosures. Like Stonehenge, the *alignements* are believed to have been constructed for religious or astronomical purposes.

Île de Groix and Îles de Glenan

At 0500 on Tuesday 21st we started our return passage to the UK with an enjoyable 38 mile beat to Port Tudy on the Île de Groix, which lies 8 miles southwest of Lorient. Boats raft-up fore and aft on large buoys in the outer harbour. Although it was relatively empty when we arrived, it soon filled up and by tea time you could walk across the raft of boats to any of the three harbour walls.

We departed from the middle of our raft in Port Tudy at 0900, causing no more chaos to our French neighbours – who had been forewarned – than is normal in such circumstances! Yet again we had an excellent beat for the 20 mile sail northwest to the

Île de Penfret lighthouse

Dawn breaking over Île de Loctudy

Îles de Glenan, 10 miles south of the Benodet peninsula. Visibility during the passage was down to less than 200m at times, but with a chart plotter, radar and AIS this did not prove a problem. We finally anchored in the small bay on the east of the Île de Penfret (the most easterly of the Îles), just south of its famous lighthouse and well sheltered from the westerly winds forecast for overnight. On a good day – or as good as you can get in South Brittany – the islands' beaches are said to be similar to those in the Caribbean, but on a misty day with poor visibility and rain it was more like anchoring off an island in western Scotland! Its main attraction was its splendid isolation.

Loctudy

Before leaving next morning we noted, as part of our engine check, that the saltwater filter was full of weed. We couldn't get the Perspex filter cap off, and were not prepared to risk breaking it while away from any support services, so took the alternative risk of motoring slowly in zero wind the 15 miles across the Benodet Bay to Loctudy, watching the water filter and engine temperature gauge like a hawk.

Alan and Mike enjoying oysters and wine in Loctudy

Lighthouses on a calm day at the Raz due Sein

Loctudy turned out to be a pleasant combination of active fishing port and yachting centre. The marina, surprisingly, had two excellent chandleries, in one of which we were amazed to find an identical saltwater filter to that in *Bucks Eagle*, so we simply purchased it and replaced it on the boat. The highlight of our visit, however, was the dozen very large Grade 1 oysters that we bought in the market – for less than 40p each. Alan and Mike enjoyed them on board as a starter, washed down by a bottle of chilled white wine.

Camaret and L'Aber Wrac'h

We left Loctudy early on Wednesday 22nd for the 57 mile passage north to Camaret. We had planned to stop in Audierne, again on a buoy, but were becoming concerned by a nasty-looking low which was expected in the Western Approaches by the weekend. So we decided, 40 miles into the passage, to give Audierne a miss and push straight on through the Raz to Camaret since, fortuitously, the tidal gate was in our favour.

Bucks Eagle rafted against large, black Trintella 'fender'

Our departure from Camaret for the 32 mile passage to L'Aber Wrac'h was also timed to catch the start of the north-going tide, this time at the southern end of the Chenal du Four. L'Aber Wrac'h is located in a deep-water estuary on the western extremity of Northern Brittany, and has long been a popular staging post for yachts going south towards the Raz de Sein or Biscay, or those returning north through the Chenal du Four. There we rafted up against *Heavy Metal*, a 60ft Trintella, and, with such a large 'fender', had a relatively comfortable night even though it was a bit windy.

Roscoff

We left L'Aber Wrac'h at dawn on Friday 24th to catch the strong six-hour tide for the 37 miles northeast along the rocky North Brittany coast to Roscoff. It poured (and poured) with rain all day, but we had a fast reach in force 5 all the way. Roscoff is a major ferry port, which connects Brittany and France with Plymouth and Ireland. Visiting yachts no longer have to dry out in the Vieux Port, following the recent completion of a modern, 670-berth deepwater marina with excellent facilities and support services.

When approaching the town its austere granite buildings, dominated by a strangely-shaped Renaissance church tower, appear to rise out of the flat and featureless coast. The region has specialised in onion cultivation since the 17th century – onion sellers, known as 'Onion Johnnies', used to travel to Britain with bicycles laden with strings of onions, which they sold in the street and from door to door. Next day we caught a *vedette* (small ferry) to the Île de Batz, a mile off Roscoff's headland. The *Daily Telegraph* has described the island as a 'hidden gem' – its beaches are fine white sand and inland there are acres of potatoes, onions, shallots and fennel, grown in small hedged fields.

Roscoff's famous onions drying in the sun

Since the forecast made it plain that the weather would soon start to deteriorate, we decided to depart immediately after supper that evening and make use of the final small weather window. This indicated that a force 3 would increase to 'no more than force 6' over the latter part of our 97 mile passage to Falmouth.

After sailing for ten hours, the B Watch (Mike and Lynn) were woken by the A Team who were running fast downwind with too much sail, having been hit by a 38

One of the many superb beaches on Île de Batz

knot (force 8) squall. After dropping the sails we lay hove-to for the next six hours and, in negligible visibility, monitored the AIS and radar and communicated by VHF with approaching vessels. Earlier in the gale, when we were taking down the sails, we experienced lightning and thunder immediately overhead. No damage appeared to have been done, but we believe we were in fact struck as a large blue flash crossed the cockpit and hit Lynn's arm, which ached and tingled for the next twelve hours or so.

Once the gale started to abate we raised a spitfire jib and sailed on it for the rest of the way to the Falmouth estuary – most of the time in the top end of a force 6–7. On the way we got caught by a rogue wave that partially flattened us, filled the cockpit and dumped a fair quantity of water below – we were changing watch at the time so the washboard was out. Helen (yet again) proved the value of keeping clipped on until well inside the boat, being caught midway and flung out into the guard rails. Alan, already below, ended up accelerating across the saloon and head butting the VHF.

On entering Falmouth estuary we turned the engine on for the first time since leaving Roscoff. It soon started to stutter and reduce in power, probably due to fuel starvation caused by dirt from the sides of the fuel tank being shaken free in the rough conditions and partially blocking the filters. So we sailed as far as we could, before coaxing the engine with its ever-decreasing revs – but with a flood tide in our favour – up the remaining mile or so of river to Falmouth Marina. We arrived at 0400, toasted Neptune, the boat and ourselves, and turned in.

Our cruise had taken 21 days, covered 619 miles, and visited 15 ports, marinas or anchorages. An enjoyable and interesting summer cruise on 'OOPB'.

MORE LAND THAN SEA – A CRUISE IN FINNISH WATERS

Thierry Courvoisier

(Flying Fish 2014/2 *carried the story of* Cérès*'s cruise along the southern Baltic coast from Denmark to Estonia, where she overwintered in Tallinn. We rejoin her here about to head north across the Gulf of Finland...*)

Between mid July and mid August my wife Barbara and I sailed *Cérès*, our Centurion 40S, from Tallinn, Estonia to Finland, the latest leg of our exploration of the Baltic Sea. We enjoy sailing up in the north, where the light does not end during the summer weeks.

Leaving Tallinn on the south shore of the Gulf of Finland for Helsinki means leaving the Hanseatic world. The Hanseatic league was a union of North European cities organised to foster maritime trade which flourished from the Middle Ages until the 16th century. Cities like Gdańsk, Riga and Tallinn, but also Bergen and Koenigsberg (now Kaliningrad), belonged to this league, a centre of which was the island of Gotland in the middle of the Baltic Sea. The architecture and quality of the building materials in these cities is a testimony of the wealth brought by this organisation. Some of the 'local' specialities still to be found in modern shops give a clear indication of the extent of the exchanges. Thus Tallinn is proud of its marzipan, and some go as far as claiming that it is there that it was invented in the Middle Ages. Since almonds, the basis of marzipan, do not grow in the cold marshes of Europe, but rather in the warm climates of the southern and eastern parts of the continent, the tradition of producing marzipan testifies to long-lasting links between the Baltic Sea

Cérès under sail in the Finnish archipelago

The roofs of the Hanseatic city Tallinn

and regions of the Middle East. Tallinn and the other Hanseatic cities were thus the maritime end of long terrestrial routes that linked Northern Europe to the rest of the then known world including China and the Middle East.

None of this is true of Helsinki. The long tradition of trade with southern regions ends on the south shore of the Baltic – its northern shore reflects the harsh lifestyle of the Vikings rather than the sweets of international trade. There are no sophisticated medieval stone buildings in Helsinki, but rather many early 20th century constructions, which tell a story of prosperity developing at that time. Older buildings are often in wood, brightly coloured and harmoniously shaped.

Leaving the south shore of the Baltic Sea also means leaving long, straight, shallow coastlines of sandy beaches, dunes and forest extending for many miles, with very few good natural harbours. The latter are naturally where the Hanseatic cities prospered. On the northern shore of the Gulf of Finland one finds no sandy beaches, but rather the granites of the Scandinavian Peninsula. The distance from Tallinn to Helsinki is some 45 miles and navigation is easy. If in doubt about the direction one can simply

A section of the long shore line of Helsinki

follow the ferries which cross between the two cities many times each day. There is almost always at least one in sight in either direction. Arriving from the south, the coast is preceded by a reasonable number of islands with clearly marked channels leading to the city's many harbours. No problem there either, provided ships are avoided.

We stopped at the Helsinki Sailing Club (HSK) on Lauttasaari island, a very friendly harbour for visiting yachts with all facilities, including chandlers and chart shops, in the immediate vicinity. Kalevi Westersund, a former president of the club, whom Vladimir Ivankiv, OCC Port Officer Representative in Saint Petersburg, had recommended as a helpful and reliable contact in Helsinki, welcomed us warmly, indicated the way to the sauna, and helped us get started with the preparation of our Finnish navigation. Indeed some preparation is necessary before sailing along the coast, as the 'reasonable' number of islands off the coast near the city does not prepare the newcomer for the challenge of sailing in the completely unreasonable dense mesh of water and land that one finds elsewhere in these 'waters'.

Our first call was therefore to the chart shop to find the charts and other documents that we would need to cruise in Finnish waters. Looking at the charts it is immediately clear that sailing between Helsinki and Mariehamn in the Gulf of Bothnia is not like sailing from A to B in open seas. The area is littered with rocks and islands of all sizes, from a metre or less to kilometres. The highest ones dominate the sea by a few tens of metres, the more treacherous ones are covered by a few centimetres of water. Routes

A chart of part of the archipelago. Routes with maximum allowed depths are indicated – we followed them with attention and precision

Leading marks in the grey Finnish summer of 2015

are marked on the charts to guide boats and ships and the maximum draught allowed on any route is indicated. Fellow sailors we met in the HSK warmly recommended that these routes be followed, as the regions surrounding them are not reliably charted. We were told about a boat which had hit a rock with an indicated depth of 6·1m while approaching a known anchorage – on enquiry, the skipper was told that a mistake had been made and the depth on the chart should have read 1·6m! Subsequent editions of that chart were corrected. The maze of rocks and islands made it easy for me to be convinced that we should follow the marked routes.

Following the routes is straightforward, provided that continuous attention is given to the navigation. There are a huge number of marks, most in the cardinal system, but some red and green. All must be followed without missing any as the route winds between large and small rocks. At times the passage is barely wider than a couple boat lengths, allowing a detailed look at the texture of the granite. Precision is required at the helm, which cannot be trusted to the autopilot for any length of time. In addition to the marks in the water and the little lighthouses, one also follows

Barbara at the helm as we follow a tricky route in company

leading marks and lights – large red and yellow panels which indicate a segment of route with precision when superimposed. Some are large enough to be seen several miles away. My solution was to take the paper chart into the cockpit, install a portable chart plotter next to it, and tick off all significant marks on the paper chart as they were identified. Looking at the way the local navigators behaved indicated to me that they followed similar routines.

Following a route – the chart part

By the end of a day's sail we had seen hundreds of such marks. We had reminded ourselves ad nauseam that you pass east of an east mark, so leaving it to your west, and west of a west mark that you therefore leave to your east, and so forth. At the end of the day it was necessary to drink a solid beer followed by some considerably stronger beverages to straighten our cerebral cells again and get them ready to find north and south properly the following day.

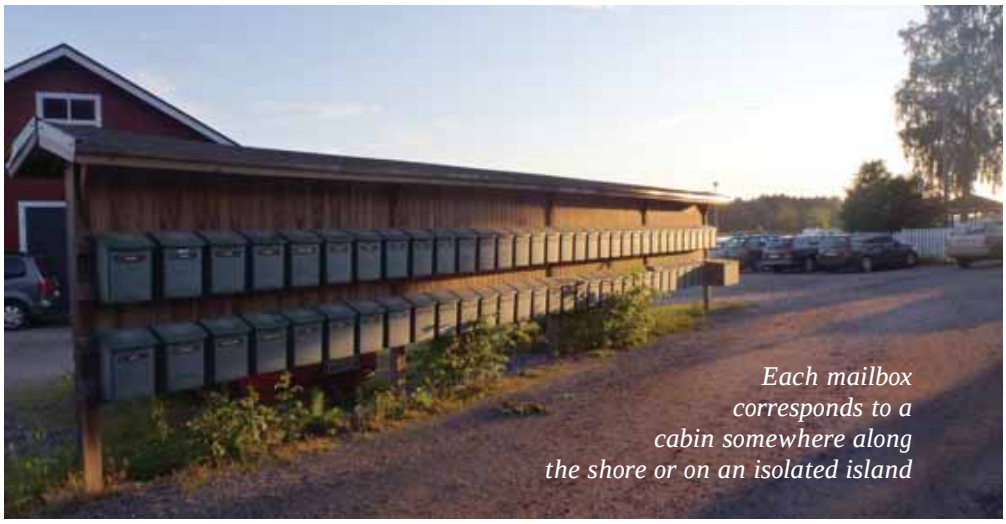
Our course took us west from Helsinki in the direction of Hanko and Kasnaes, where we met up with OCC port officer Tom Tigerstedt. Tom told us how we could identify spots to stop for the night, and how to relate the charts to the other information in our possession. From then on we had all the tools and tips needed to navigate safely and locate suitable harbours and anchorages.

In the course of the month we stopped at many places, some rather small, where the

Straightening neuronal cells after a long day's navigation, and preparing for the next one

first thing we were told upon arrival was how to find the sauna. We soon understood that saunas are an essential element of the Finnish way of life. At the HSK, even during the winter, when all boats are out of the water for fear of ice, the sauna opens every week for members to gather and share a beer, naked in steaming heat. Apartment buildings also have saunasv in which the inhabitants meet regularly. Passing along the coast and islands it was not unusual to spot naked silhouettes on the shore on their way between sauna and sea or back. In Finland, therefore, a significant part of social interaction takes place between naked people, a somewhat disconcerting fact for most Europeans and even more difficult to imagine in America. Where and how the sauna emerged in Finnish society seems to be unclear, but it is certain that religious pressure was less successful in quenching the need for hot baths there than elsewhere on the continent.

Sauna on the rocks



Each mailbox corresponds to a cabin somewhere along the shore or on an isolated island

The weather was rather miserable – cold, wet and unpleasantly windy – during the summer of 2015, so we stayed a couple days in Kasnaes before moving on to Nauvo where, the weather continuing to be miserable, we again stayed for some days, making a bus excursion to Turku. In Nauvo, a large place by Finnish archipelago standards, we met a long-time friend and colleague astrophysicist, a professor at Turku University. He had a group of Russian scientists visiting and invited all of us to his cottage, some distance from the harbour.

There are many such cottages hidden behind the first lines of trees along the coast – so many that even in very small harbours one sometimes sees a moderately large supermarket and rows of mailboxes. People use this infrastructure as base camps to keep the small boats they use to reach their cottage, and to purchase the food and goods they need to live on their isolated islands. The cottages are often more like cabins than fully-fledged homes. They are used during the summer months for holidays, the state not being keen to have these houses permanently inhabited as that would imply keeping a much larger infrastructure, including for example schools, running year-round. The cottages are hidden, as the law requires that they should not be visible from the sea. Our friend had built his himself, as many do. Indeed tradition requires that every Finnish man should build at least one house in his life. Inevitably part of the afternoon we spent at our friend's cottage was used for a sauna that included a swim in the 16°C sea.

From Nauvo we moved further west to Mariehamn in Åland. Åland is part of Finland, but not within the European Union. How this is arranged is unclear to me, but it suits everybody, as taxes, particularly on alcohol, are very low. In addition, ferries travelling from Stockholm to Turku or Helsinki and making short stops there are allowed to sell tax free goods on board. Mariehamn, like Turku, is a very, very quiet city. We did nonetheless enjoy a 19th century *lieder* concert in the local church.

From there we moved southeast to Utö, a rocky and windy island at the extreme tip of Finland. Until a few years ago this was part of an extended military region closed to civilian navigation, but it now hosts a hotel open all year. The recent military past is clearly recognisable by the large number of trenches and holes in the rocks, and the remains of cannons. The population is about 35 in the winter and 300 in summer. That

Arriving in Utö

these numbers are sufficient to sustain a human social life was illustrated by a marriage between two local people which took place the day we were there.

The next days saw us sailing east back towards Helsinki, where we were to leave *Cérès* for the winter. We enjoyed some magnificent sailing, following routes winding between northeast and southeast with mainly westerly winds. Barbara was at the helm and I at the charts, which did not leave much time for anything except keeping to our route. We set the sails not so much to maximise boat speed as to keep to a pace with which we could follow all the marks without missing any. It seemed to me that 6 to 7 knots was plenty.

We stopped in Rosala, another very small 'harbour'. Actually these small places often have a wooden jetty around which one finds some buoys. One ties the stern to the buoy and the bow to the jetty. Rosala used to be a Viking centre, and one can visit some reconstructed buildings from the Middle Ages. Among the objects on display are models of the island over the centuries, which show that the island has grown significantly since Viking times. This is due to a rise of the land – Scandinavia was covered by a kilometres thick ice layer during the last glacial period, which melted some 10,000 years ago. The weight of the ice on the land having disappeared, the land now rises at a speed of about 5mm per year. We worked out that since our previous visit to these waters, when our children were still very young, the

Utö in the wind and sun

One of many small and delightful harbours of the Finnish archipelago

land had risen by 13cm – or expressed differently, that there would be 13cm less water under our keel now than then, and some of the rocks just at the surface now would not have been visible then. This is geological phenomena taking place at a speed fast enough to be noticed within the span of a life.

Our cruise had taken us from regions of rather large islands near the shore to parts of the archipelago dominated by small islands, most of them uninhabited. Rocks are found everywhere. The larger islands, also rocky, are covered by forest. Blueberries and wild strawberries grow generously under the trees. The rocks, be they bare or appearing in the forests, have been polished by the glaciers to round, soft, almost voluptuous shapes. Any roughness has been wiped off, making them comfortable to walk on. While their shapes are soft, their firmness is not to be questioned and contacts between hull or keel on one side and rocks on the other are to be avoided, particularly when speeding along marked routes.

Approaching Helsinki and looking back on the month spent in the archipelago, we realised that we had had very little contact with people. We counted that we had exchanged no more than ten sentences with about fifteen people over that period, including my colleague and his four Russian guests. This was partly due to having spent a few nights at anchor, partly to the fact that not all Finns speak English comfortably, or to the bad weather that confined all of us inside heated boats, but it was mainly because most Finns tend to speak very little. They don't speak when they have nothing to say and, contrary to so many of our contemporaries, evidently despise small talk. This makes contacts difficult, but gives a very special rhythm to conversations, in which silence is part of the exchange and is amicable rather than hostile. We were nonetheless happy to spend our last evening in Helsinki with another astronomer colleague, very popular in science communication in Finland, together with his wife and a friend, all talking a lot, he having given a long interview to a national newspaper a few weeks before while naked in his sauna...

OBITUARIES & APPRECIATIONS

Michael (Mike) Pocock, Commodore 1998-2002

Mike's brother-in-law Peter Barton remembers: It must have been 60 years ago that I first met Mike. We were both racing 12ft National dinghies at the Royal Lymington Yacht Club and my twin sister Pat crewed for me. I can't remember whether it was my moving to Finns that prompted Pat to look for another helmsman, or whether losing my very able crew to Mike precipitated my decision to go singlehanding. Either way, my loss was their gain and they were soon married.

Pat Pocock adds: When Mike and I married in 1960 we quite naturally spent our wedding present money on a 21ft cruising boat, which took us on many adventures in the English Channel and into the Bay of Biscay.

Peter continues: Their first keel boat, which they completed in the garden, was a cold-moulded Folkboat, *Whisper*, with a secondhand mainsail. They sailed this little boat, with neither engine nor guardwires, through the Chenal du Four to the islands of the Bay of Biscay with their children Richard and Jenny aboard – probably not something that the OCC would recommend these days! Though, as Pat adds, it was in *Whisper* that both their children learned to really enjoy sailing.

Mike had trained as a terrestrial architect, but it was not long before he was showing his artistic flair by painting the sea and boats, and then designing them.

Pat again: In 1967, when my father Humphrey Barton fell ill in the West Indies, Mike flew out and sailed *Rose Rambler* safely back to Lymington. Later that year we formed our own bareboat charter business with a Rustler 31, a Twister and a Westerly Centaur, and then Mike went into sales with two of the Ohlson designs and the Hirondelle catamarans. He raced two of the Ohlson 35s, competing in the Fastnet in *Cavalcade* in 1973 and winning the RORC Class 4 championship in *Flashlight* the following year.

The first yacht Mike designed was the 35ft Starlight, built in Jersey. Altogether he owned three different Starlights over the years and raced them hard, winning the RORC Class V championship. During this time he joined Laurent Giles as a partner for two years before becoming an independent yacht designer and surveyor.

Mike competed in the 1981 Two-handed Transatlantic Race in the 38ft *Blackjack* which he had designed for Rodney Barton (no relation), and which he bought from him two years later. In 1985 we cruised to Iceland to cover the 1000 miles required to qualify for that year's Round Britain and Ireland Race, which was followed by the Two-handed Transatlantic Race in 1986. Long distance cruising now became out aim, and in 1987 we left the UK to sail around the world. We took the standard route, except for a diversion to Alaska and a winter at home to design the unusual water- ballasted *QII* for Mary Falk, OCC.

Mary Falk tells us: I was lucky enough to have a boat designed by Mike – and this wasn't just any boat, it was the brilliant *QII*. The design stage was tremendously exciting. I was living and working in London, and Mike and Pat, with their renowned hospitality, had me to stay each weekend. Mike would show me the work he had done on *QII*'s design in the previous week, and we would talk through all the options. He designed *QII* and her every detail expressly for me. After she had been launched, someone said that her only fault was that the chart table light was on the wrong side. I was able to reply that I am left-handed, hence the design detail!

The plan was to design a boat in which I could win the 35ft class in OSTAR (the Singlehanded Transatlantic Race). This was a tall order bearing in mind that I am small and, even then, was well into my forties. But Mike achieved it and more. In 1996 *QII* won her class, beat all the monohulls in the class above, all but one of the class above that, and all but two of the 50 footers. She set a new class record which remains unbroken to this day ... and *QII* achieved this with very little input from her then 50 year old skipper!

As a designer Mike was brilliant, meticulous, understanding and enthusiastic, and his designs had the benefit of his own extensive ocean cruising experience.

> **Pat:** By 1994, after a seven-year circumnavigation which had included visits to many Pacific islands, New Zealand, Australia and South Africa, it was time to come home, as Mike was being asked to design more and more long distance yachts, such as *Troubadour* for Stuart Ingram, OCC.

Stuart and Annabelle Ingram: We had met Mike Pocock once, but I had read his book *Inshore ~ Offshore*, sought out details of the boats that he designed, and followed his and Pat's travels in *Blackjack* in the Pacific. I thought that someone who had designed boats as diverse as *Blackjack* and *QII* and was now doing the kind of cruising that we aspired to, must have ideas that would give us more than just another stock design. We began a

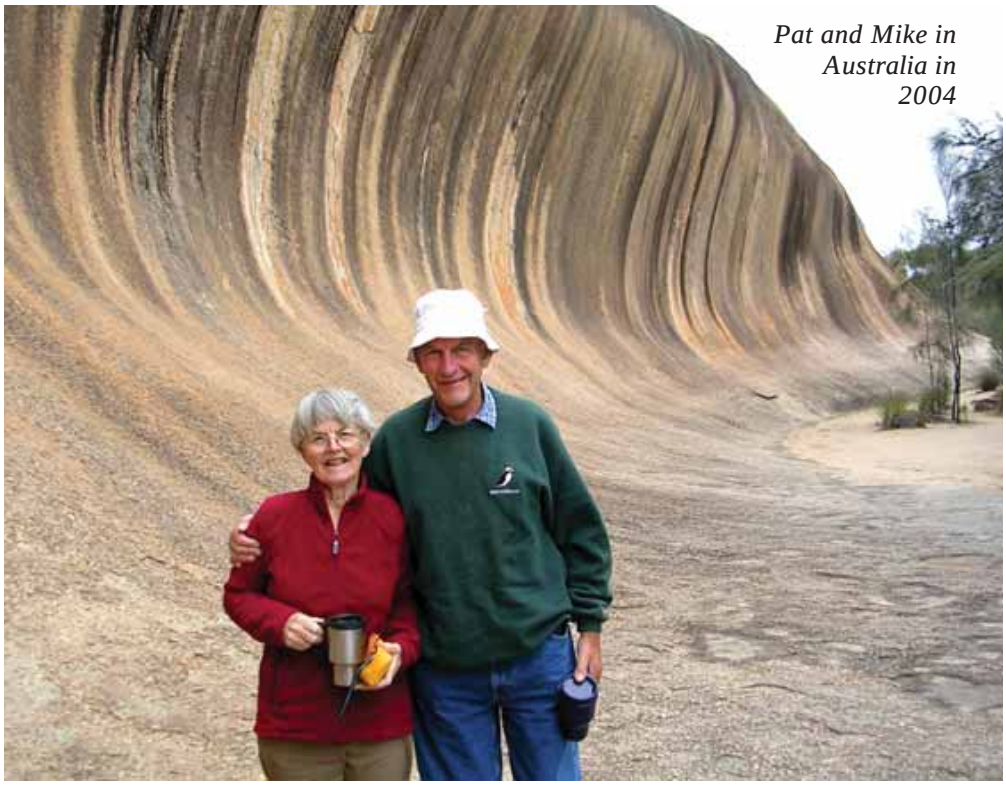
protracted correspondence whilst he was cruising on the east coast of Australia: sometimes *Blackjack* was in a remote area and I heard nothing, at others I came down in the morning to find half a roll of fax paper full of ideas and drawings covering the floor.

By the time Mike and Pat reached home we had agreed to go ahead, and at the beginning of April 1996 construction began with Steve Etheridge as builder, Mike Atkin as project manager and Mike Pocock the designer carefully watching everything, and visiting pretty much daily at crucial times. We had absolute confidence in the team, and as promised *Troubadour* was launched exactly one year after the contract had been signed.

Throughout our extensive cruising in *Troubadour* we have always thanked our lucky stars, both when things have been good and especially when they have been bad, that we have had a boat designed by Mike Pocock. He was a man of total integrity, enormous knowledge and experience, and disarming humility.

Past Commodore John Franklin: I quickly realised that Mike Pocock was not only a talented yacht designer but a very special man. At the time, I had little ocean experience but I thought I knew it all: I had very fixed ideas about what I wanted in terms of design and equipment. As we worked together on the design of my new boat in 1999/2000, Mike very carefully and patiently re-formed many of my ideas based on his own extensive ocean experience, but he did it in a mildly persuasive way that didn't destroy my confidence and I ended up thinking that the changes had been my ideas!

Mike's draughtsmanship was superb – all hand drawn, no computer drafting, notes



Pat and Mike in Australia in 2004

beautifully hand-lettered. In awe I watched him work, his drafting table filled with all the traditional splines and lead weights as he painstakingly explained waterlines, buttocks, tables of offsets, ballasting and stability calculations. By the time *Al Shaheen* was launched in May 2001 (by Pat), Mike had become a friend. I had by now joined the OCC, without any pressure from Mike, but he exuded such enthusiasm for the Club that it just seemed the right thing to do.

Mike was an exceptional craftsman. He crafted a beautiful half-model of *Al Shaheen* for me, commissioned by Jenny as a birthday present, and spent many hours lovingly making models yachts for his grandchildren. He was a man of many parts; designer, builder and craftsman, but above all he was a very human person – patient, considerate, understanding, always composed when angry, who rarely uttered a bad word about anyone. It was a pleasure and an honour to have known him, and to have worked with him.

Mary Falk: I was tasked with the job of persuading Mike to take on the role of Commodore in 1998. It was a difficult task with someone as modest as Mike who kept insisting that he wasn't up to it! But he then came up with the idea of the Commodore's Millennium Cruise and it was that idea which, luckily for the Club, finally persuaded him. The Cruise was an enormous success, drawing in many new members. Not only was it thoroughly enjoyed by all who took part; it brought together Club members from distant parts in a way that had never been achieved before.

Peter Barton: Mike and Pat's Millenium Cruise to the West Indies and eastern seaboard of the USA saw them visit every possible Port Officer along the way. It was the longest rally undertaken by any Commodore!

> **Pat adds:** *Blackjack* was sold in 2002 and Mike started work designing the 27ft *Twilight*. He built her, with some help, and we launched on 6 August 2003 just in time to sail down to the Falmouth meet. For ten years *Twilight* took us cruising in French and Irish waters, before being sold to Michael Murphy OCC a few years ago.

Memories of Mike abound – from **Gus and Helen Wilson** who met Mike and Pat in Falmouth after making their first landfall in the UK in 2008; **Rona House** who learnt the value of taking and passing on photos of other boats from Mike in Tonga; **Jill Vasey** who remembers *Blackjack* sailing in fortuitously to celebrate Hum and Mary Barton's wedding anniversary in Grenada in 1989; **João Carlos Fraga** of Horta who wrote to Pat that: "I keep very good memories of the occasions we met and the days you spent in Horta in *Blackjack*".

Finally back to Peter Barton: Mike will always be remembered for the yachts that he designed. He had no formal training in yacht design, but his creations will be sailing the seven seas for many years to come. It is sad that so many yachts being built today are unattractive. I would have been proud to own any of Mike's designs because they were such good-looking boats. We still admire yachts that are fifty or even a hundred years old, and in years to come people will say, "Yes, that's a Mike Pocock design – isn't she a pretty boat".

Mary Jennifer Guinness Booth

Born in Dublin in 1937, Jennifer was the daughter of Colonel JB Hollwey, a well-known Dublin Bay sailor. She took charge of her own vessel at an early age, when her father gave her a sailing dinghy with a bright red sail, which she navigated within certain limits around Dublin Bay. The only crisis she encountered was when joined by a school of dolphins playing around the tiny craft.

When she married another sailor, John Guinness, she moved across the Bay to Howth, where their three children, Ian, Gillian and Tania, were born. John came from the banking branch of the Guinness family. At one time Commodore of Howth Yacht Club, he was later Commodore of the Irish Cruising Club. If you ever received in the post a copy of the ICC sailing directions, Jennifer most likely put it in the post, as she was Publications Officer for many years.

John and Jennifer cruised together to many places, initially in a Folkboat, *Sharavogue*, in which they sailed around Ireland and as far north as Stornaway, a rare feat in those days. They later purchased a McGruer 43, *Sule Skerry*, on which they cruised from the Azores in the south to Norway in the north. That was followed by a Hood 50, *Deerhound*, in which they again cruised to many destinations including North Cape in Norway, the Mediterranean and the Azores yet again – she cited the 1981 passage from Howth to the Azores as her qualifying voyage. Jennifer was not only in charge of provisioning but was involved in all aspects of life at sea. She had a 'fly on a wall' ability on deck, was able to navigate using modern technology as well as instinct, and at the same time produce hot food to maintain her crew's morale in exacting conditions.

Jennifer joined Clayton Love's Swan 44 *Assiduous* as a crewmember on the 1973 Irish Admiral's Cup Team, which included the Fastnet Race. After this she was able to organise further cruises around racing her Dragon, *Ragnor*, which she jointly owned with Peter Mullins. She was the first lady to win a race at the Edinburgh Cup, in Torbay in 1977. After the Dragon she joined forces with Tim Goodbody in the J24 Class, and at the helm won numerous National and Regional Championships. They were also the highest placed Irish J24 at the 1984 World Championships in Poole.

In 1986 Jennifer was kidnapped by masked gunmen and held to ransom for eight days, but fortunately she was rescued unharmed. Her bravery and fortitude during and after the event were a measure of the lady. Ten days after her release she joined Robin Knox-Johnston in the 60ft catamaran *British Airways*, which duly set a new record for the circumnavigation of Ireland. In 1990 Jennifer joined Peter Bunting in his Halberg Rassy 44 *Gulkarna* on the first ARC Round the World Cruise, which she thoroughly enjoyed.

Following John's death in 1988, Jennifer purchased a Rob Humphrey's Sovereign 400, *Alakush*, replaced in 2004 by a Sabre 426, which she owned jointly with her second husband, Alex Booth. They cruised and raced extensively from Finland in the east to Spain in the south, and most places in between. Jennifer's racing relationship with Clayton Love was renewed when he restored the classic Fife 30ft Cork One Design, *Jap'*. They had a very successful series of regattas in St Tropez in 2004 and 2006, taking the silverware from some of the larger classics. In 2005 they raced *Jap* on the Clyde in the regatta to celebrate three generations of Fife design and building.

Jennifer took up skiing again somewhat later in life to accompany her new husband. On the advice of a friend she took on a private instructor, as the friend understood that

a relationship cannot withstand the resulting tensions. One morning in St Anton when Alex was asked to join the pair, the group stopped at the top of an ultra-steep part of the Kandahar Downhill race track – a frozen waterfall called the Ice Fall. The instructor just said 'COME' to Jennifer as he went over the edge. Alex has never, in the 25 years before or since, seen anyone else do this. In fact it is normally fenced off. A definition of attitude!

A few years ago Jennifer suffered a serious accident while skiing when a snow-boarder, out of control, ran into her at speed while she was standing talking to a friend. Recovery was slow and difficult, but she continued to sail over modest distances. Throughout all this Jennifer never lost her zest or love for sailing. She died on 23 January 2016, aged 78, following a long battle with cancer.

Jennifer was also a member of the Howth Yacht Club, Royal Irish Yacht Club, Royal vSt George Yacht Club, Irish Cruising Club, Royal Cruising Club, Clyde Cruising Club and the Cruising Club of America.

Fortitude, bravery and ability only begin to describe this remarkable lady.

Alex Booth, the Guinness family, and John Bourke, RRC Ireland

Denise St Aubyn Hubbard

Denise died on 22 January 2016 at the age of 91. Olympic diver 1948, Bletchley Park translator, Royal Naval Auxiliary Service skipper 1978-89 and yachtswoman, Denise completed the Carlsberg Singlehanded Transatlantic Race in 1988.

Brought up in Egypt in the 1920s and 30s, Denise became a champion swimmer and diver during her teens, breaking many records. Her family returned to England in 1938 and she was chosen to represent Great Britain in the 100 metre freestyle against France,

Denmark and Germany just before the outbreak of World War Two. After returning to Britain from Abadan in 1943 with a working knowledge of Arabic and Persian, she was interviewed by the Foreign Office and, after an intensive six-month course in Japanese, was seconded to Bletchley Park to work in the Naval Section as a translator breaking Japanese naval codes. After the war she married and had two children, Geraldine in 1946 and Hugh in 1950. She resumed her diving career, and in 1948 was selected to represent Britain in the 10 metre high board diving at the London Olympics. She was lying fifth when a torn shoulder muscle upset her performance. Nevertheless, she was later chosen for the England v. Denmark match and came second.

In 1955 the family moved to Bosham in West Sussex, and as her swimming and diving days were passing, Denise was fortunate to find a new interest in sailing, both inshore and offshore, with her lifelong friend and companion Andrew Reid. Between 1964 and 1967 they sailed his 15ft clinker built, half-decked sloop *Pintail* round mainland Britain in several stages, laying her up in Dale, Oban and Rhu during the winters. Denise attended courses to gain Board of Trade certificates in navigation and seamanship, enabling her to take professional jobs as skipper and navigator delivering craft in coastal waters. At Emsworth Yacht Harbour she learned the practical basics of running a business – accountancy, fuelling and buying stores. In 1970 she began teaching navigation at evening classes, and in 1971 was elected a member of the Royal Institute of Navigation. Two years later she started to teach RYA courses for Competent Crew, Coastal Skipper, Yachtmaster Offshore, and Yachtmaster Ocean shore-based certificates. Professional yacht crews from all over the world began to enrol. She later became an examiner for Yachtmaster candidates.

Keen to develop her seamanship and navigation skills, in 1970 Denise joined the Royal Naval Auxiliary Service (RNXS), the only service at that time to accept women for seagoing duties, and subsequently passed out as Mate. Based initially in

the Portsmouth and later the Littlehampton units, aboard the converted Inshore Minesweeper *Portisham*, she participated in exercises with the RNR and training passages around the British Isles and cross-Channel. In 1978 by passing the Skipper's course of the RNXS, she became qualified to command their ships – inshore minesweepers, fleet tenders and fast patrol boats. For eight years until 1986, Denise was the only woman to take command of a ship in Her Majesty's service.

In 1982 Andrew Reid bought a Beneteau 42ft sloop, *Flying Light*, which Denise agreed to charter for her sea school courses. Always up for a challenge, when someone suggested the Singlehanded Transatlantic Race, her eyes lit up. *Flying Light* was duly modified and a singlehanded return passage from Gibraltar, preceded by a two-hander on the outward leg, qualified her for entry in the 1988 race, which started from Plymouth on 5 June. The voyage tested her and showed just how resourceful she could be – first the self-steering broke, then the back-up autohelm, then the generator, then the satellite navigation, then the log and then, just as she was approaching Nantucket with its dangerous shoals, the Loran radio-location network placed her well to the north of her actual position (it would have been better had it not been working at all). She had to rely entirely on her seamanship and navigation skills with the sextant and chronometer to establish her position. Eventually, on 9 July after 34 days at sea, she arrived safely and cheerfully at Newport, Rhode Island to finish 71st out of 95 starters. At 64 she was oldest woman ever to complete the race – the 3376 mile passage qualified her for membership of the OCC.

In 1993 Denise chronicled her life in her book *In at the Deep End*. Above the water, through the water, below the water, on the water, in the water – Denise's life had been dominated from an early age by the 'wet stuff'.

Dr Hugh V St Aubyn Hubbard

Kenneth (Ken) Saylor

Lt Col (USAF ret) Kenneth Saylor passed away in San Antonio, Texas on 10 November 2015 at the age of 88. Born and raised in land-locked Montana, he joined the Merchant Marine in 1944 and was in Okinawa when World War Two ended. It was during this time that he got his first taste of sailing, in a lifeboat, and was hooked for life. He returned to the University of Montana, where he earned a degree in Business Administration, but was called up during the Korean War and decided to follow an Air Force career as an intelligence officer. He met Penny Plummer in Mexico City at this time, leading to more than 62 years of marriage. He was trained in Russian and Arabic, and also earned a masters degree in International Relations at the American University in Washington, DC. He and his family were fortunate to live in Tripoli, Libya; Iraklion, Crete and Naples, Italy; and Ken also served in Trabzon, Turkey, where he was the base commander. During US assignments the family always lived by the Chesapeake Bay. Ken was medically retired in 1970 and told, among other things, to sell his boat if he wanted to live. Instead, he gradually worked up to bigger boats.

Ken and Penny had bought a 28ft cruising/racing sailboat while they lived in Crete, and later moved the boat to Naples. While living stateside, Ken had the opportunity to crew on various races including Annapolis to Newport, Newport-Bermuda and SORC. After his retirement and settling in Severna Park, Maryland, sailing and cruising became a way of life for the Saylor family. They cruised extensively on the Chesapeake Bay, and Ken participated in additional ocean races and passages. He owned a variety of different sailboats, including a 24ft centreboard sloop, a 28ft cruising/racing sloop in the Med, a 34ft double-ended steel cutter, a Columbia 36, and an Allied/Wright 40ft ketch. His final boat was the Whitby 42 *Barefoot*.

In 1979, after their daughter Kim graduated from college, Ken and Penny headed off for a lengthy cruise to Mexico, Belize, Honduras and Guatemala. For the next 24 years they spent eight or nine months of the year cruising south to Florida, the Bahamas, Cuba and the Western Caribbean and, occasionally, up to New England. When not sailing in their own boat, they joined friends on boats in different parts of the world.

Ken and Penny both qualified for OCC membership in 1997, with a 1164 miles passage from Puerto Rico north to Beaufort, North Carolina aboard the 45ft *Trumpeter*. Being OCC members was a wonderful way to meet many wonderful people, and in addition to the OCC, Ken served as Commodore of the Sailing Club of the Chesapeake, was a life member of the Annapolis Yacht Club, a member of the Cruising Club of America and the Storm Trysail Club. He held a Coast Guard Masters license and was an amateur radio operator.

Ken was the consummate gentleman and generous with both his time and his knowledge. He was a great shipmate, and was well known for keeping close track of time in the late afternoon – promptly at 1700 Ken was always ready for his scotch and soda! He had a great sense of humour, and the cruising community and the OCC has lost a wonderful person with his passing. In addition to Penny, his wife of 62 years, Ken is survived by his son Kenny and daughter Kim, grandchildren Morgan and Ricky (whom he took great pleasure in teaching to sail in a wooden Penguin and a fibreglass sailing dinghy), and great-grandchildren Noah and Lily. Ken will be greatly missed by his many friends. He made a lasting impression on everyone whose lives he touched.

George Marvin and Penny Saylor

Gary Schwarzman

Gary M Schwarzman of Alameda, California died on 13 January 2016 at the age of 71, after living for two years with a brain tumor. He was predeceased by Beth, his wife of 43 years. Gary's life took him far from his birthplace of Vineland, New Jersey. He earned a BA from Carleton College in Minnesota, where he was active in theatre. After college he moved to San Francisco and started a small software company, pioneering computer-aided dispatching and record-keeping systems for public agencies such as fire departments.

In 1977, Gary and Beth and their two young daughters sailed their boat from San Francisco through the Panama Canal to the East Coast, settling in Falmouth, Massachusetts, in 1981. Besides a dozen whitewater trips through the Grand Canyon, Gary sailed with his family aboard *Bantry Bay*, and later aboard *Anasazi*, to destinations as far flung as Newfoundland, the Shetland and Faeroe islands, Scandinavia, West Africa, Brazil, Haiti and Cuba. Beth and Gary both joined the OCC in 1999, citing their 1985 voyage from Cuttyhunk, Massachusetts, to Flores, Azores aboard *Bantry Bay* as their qualifying passage. In his 1998 book *The Architect's Apprentice*, Gary tells the story of building *Anasazi*, a 43ft cutter and their second cruising boat. The narrative evinces Gary's pragmatism, logical thinking and a healthy individualism.

Gary took great satisfaction in introducing young people to boats and the sea. He volunteered with the Sea Scouts, and started and ran a youth boatbuilding program in East Falmouth. He was instrumental in the creation of the Tall Ship Education Academy, a San Francisco Bay Area non-profit organisation for high school girls, and he was a founding board member for Call of the Sea, which connects urban youth to the Bay and beyond. Working in this capacity for a decade, Gary led sailing expeditions in Baja California, headed up development, and spearheaded a renewed education program. We remember Gary as a free-thinking, clear-sighted adventurer who lived his life intentionally. He leaves his daughters Caitlin and Megan, three grandchildren, Arlo, Alma and Oliver Wilson, and companion Molly Cornell of Falmouth, Massachusetts.

Caitlin Schwarzman

William McNeill Carslaw

Neill was born in Glasgow in 1922, the youngest of a family of five. His father was a surgeon and his mother an artist. When his father retired the family bought a house in Rhu and a clinker-built boat called *Rowan*, and spent many summers on the West Coast of Scotland, where Neill developed his love of sailing. At the age of 17 he joined HMS *Conway*, a training ship for Merchant Navy cadets, after boarding at Merchiston. Following two years' training he was taken on as a cadet on the Patrick Henderson Shipping Line, and in 1941 joined his first ship, the SS *Kindat*, which sailed for Rangoon around the Cape.

Between September and December 1942 he sailed on SS *Daldorch*, which was part of Operation FB on the Arctic Convoys. On one occasion, having left Hvalfjord in Iceland on 3 November, word was received that ships ahead were being attacked, so 27 hours after departure they turned round and headed back to Hvalfjord at full speed. Another cadet aboard SS *Daldorch* was Donald Smith, and in November 2014 both Neill and Donald were awarded the Ushakov Medal by the Russian Federation – reunited after 72 years! (The Ushakov Medal commemorated the 70th anniversary of victory in the Second World War, known at 'the Great Patriotic War' in Russia and some other former Soviet Union countries).

Following the end of the War Neill worked for various shipping companies, spending his last ten years prior to retirement in 1983 with the Fyffes Group as Second Officer and then Chief Officer. After he retired, and not one for being idle, he sailed with friends on the West Coast of Scotland, built several dinghies, and at the age of 78 crewed across the Atlantic aboard Mark Holbrook's 31ft *Serini* together with Frances Rennie, as recounted by Mark in *Flying Fish* 2000/1 under the title *Scots sail to an English Harbour*. Neill's own account of the voyage appeared in the following issue as *At Sea Once Again*, the 2963 miles from Gran Canaria to Antigua becoming his qualifying passage when he joined the OCC on his return. This was only one crewing position among many, however, and Neill later wrote about his experiences of crewing on a number of other yachts – including passages from Singapore to Malta and Capetown to St Helena – in *Flying Fish* 2003/2.

Neill married Audrey in 1950 and they had five

children. When not at sea he lived in Helensburgh for most of his life, moving into a retirement home for Merchant Navy officers in his late 80s – though at the age of 91 he was still riding his bicycle!

Judy Ross

Dr Richard Gregory Gantt

My seafaring cousin Richard passed away on 15 October 2015 at the reasonable age of 85. The first significant voyage in our family was when our joint ancestor, one Thomas Gantt, emigrated from England to Maryland shores around 1660 (clearly a 'qualifying voyage'). From then, until Richard (and to a lesser extent I) took up serious voyaging, the Gantts were pretty much landlubbers. But Richard set the record straight. His wife Edythe, a true companion, maintains that Richard always had a passion for the sea. He enlisted in the Navy as a path to the Naval Academy where he graduated in 1953. While there, he learned to sail on the Academy's knock-abouts and Luders 44 yawls – being highly competitive by nature, he relished the opportunity to race from Annapolis to Newport as watch captain. He earned a Masters from the Illinois Institute of Technology and a PhD in Marine Studies at the University of Delaware. After his career in the Navy (reaching the rank of Lieutenant Commander), he became a patent associate at the Dupont Experimental Station.

All that is interesting, but Richard and Edythe's enormous sailing achievement was a 75,000 mile voyage in their Bermuda 40 yawl *Celerity*, begun in 1993, which included more than 800 anchorages in 54 countries and territories. Their 2050 mile passage from Easter Island to Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas in 1995 served as his qualifying passage.

Edythe was not 'born' to the sea. Her first extended time on a sailing boat was on their honeymoon in the Virgin Islands, when she became violently seasick and was clearly not enthralled by the movement or angle of heel. Nevertheless, she says that, "Knowing that I had married a man who had a lust for the sea, I knew that sailing was in my future. I was curious about what lay around the next corner and I did not plan to be left behind. We had a life ahead of us. We just wanted to see things. We were curious what was out there".

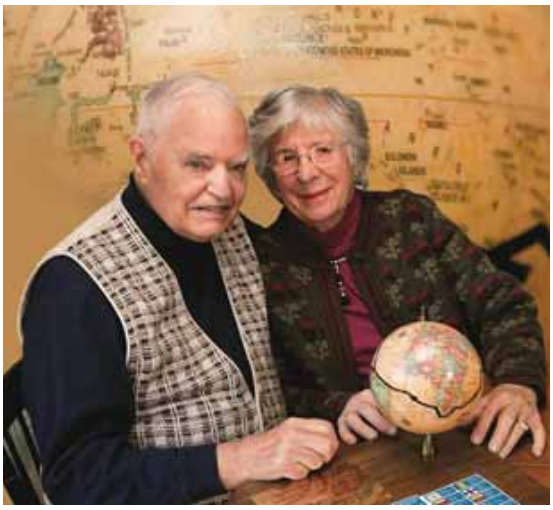
Richard was supremely confident in his skills and meticulous with his planning. Before any cruise, he spent countless hours studying and correcting charts and publications before laying out courses and distances. With his naval skills and training, he never hesitated to enter an unfamiliar port at night, often to Edythe's dismay. His comment on entering Cartagena after sunset under dead-reckoning was, "Well, if Drake could do it, so can I". Following an engine and main compass failure, this stalwart couple sailed from Antigua to Bermuda using only a sextant and hand-bearing compass. Creature comforts on *Celerity* were basic – she had no refrigeration, for example.

After seven years of cruising the Atlantic, the couple discussed a circumnavigation. Their initial goals were at variance. Richard tended to want to do a non-stop or one with minimal pauses, Edythe wanted to see many of the interesting places en route, and pause from time to time to visit their large extended family back home.

Richard and Edythe aboard Celerity in Western Samoa, 1995

As often happens, compromises were reached. After the Caribbean and Panama Canal transit, and stopping at the Galapagos and Easter Islands, they headed west via the normal route visiting many of the anchorages used earlier by William Bligh and James Cook. Five years were spent in New Zealand and exploring about 90% of Australian area waters. Richard used the trip as an experimental platform, field-testing remote-sensing applications from his doctoral work at the University of Delaware.

As the trip progressed, Richard developed significant heart problems which sapped his energy, leading to increased pauses and changed sailing routines. To reduce physical exertion, from Bali onwards *Celerity* was sailed under jib and jigger (mizen), the mainsail remaining furled. "Well, we could still make 5 knots, so what's the difference?" said Edythe. In Thailand the engine required significant repair, and mechanical work and visits back to the States extended their stay to half a year. Finally, in Singapore, Richard suffered cardiac arrest and spent ten days in an intensive care unit. Following initial recovery, a short visit to the States stretched to six months. There was clearly an issue as to whether *Celerity* would complete her voyage.



Richard and Edythe Gantt. Courtesy Ambre Alexander and the University of Delaware Messenger

From then on, the couple's determination and resolve ruled. In Malaysia the engine required major mechanical work causing another stressful delay. Departing Thailand, *Celerity*'s course was laid to the Cape of Good Hope, where Richard again spent time in an ICU tending to his ailing heart. "But we had to get the boat back home," says Edythe, and on they went. *Celerity* finally sailed through the Virginia Capes in 2010, 17 years after her departure.

Richard was an active member of the Chesapeake Bay Bermuda 40 Association, the Cruising Club of America, the Ocean Cruising Club and the Sailing Club of the Chesapeake. He and Edythe exemplified old-time attitudes toward sailing the world's oceans – their voyages demonstrated skill, determination and practicality, wrapped up in Richard's particular passion for the sea. He and Slocum would have had a lot to talk about. I am proud to claim him as 'Cousin'.

Andrew H Gantt II

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