

# Wind and weather

for yachts, rafts and logs

Editor

There is a lot of weather in this year's journal and not just in Europe. Bob Shepton tells us that the Arctic had its longest winter for 47 years. His crew did manage to get some climbing in, however, together with some photographs that are quite terrifying to non-climbers, before sailing back to Scotland in all sorts of weather. Now, like all good RCC octogenarians, he is going to settle in quieter waters to teach his young grandchildren to sail. So no more Greenland mountain climbing, at any rate, not until the children are a bit older.

Trevor Robertson had similar weather problems in Labrador. This year he left the 'Celtic fringes with good company, good music and abundant whisky of varying quality' to sail single handed to Labrador for some extreme FPI. In the cold, the ice and the fog, he went out in his dinghy to chart the many hazards of two uncharted bays, both of which sound quite beautiful once the fog lifts. He explains how to do it, but don't worry - when the FPI Sec. reminds us all to send in pilotage information, a few small updates to the Brittany pilot are still quite good enough.

Jo Winter was also gathering FPI, in her case for the new edition of the SE Asia pilot that she is writing, so she was in the sunnier climes of the Philippines. The cruise started badly when they found that a mouse had created havoc in the cabin while they were away. Fortunately Jo had had the foresight to give her husband Giles a vacuum cleaner for Christmas, so that was alright. Her log then takes us on a wonderful journey through many islands with their delightful people, although also in a quest for 'typhoon holes'. Even paradise has its weather.

Mike and Hilde Gill, are now in the fifth year of their cruise around the Pacific. They too cruised the Philippines, starting from Malaysia, and then continued on to Taiwan, Japan and the Aleutian Islands of Alaska. They found that one island up there now boasts a 'National Forest' with all of twelve trees; but quite an achievement for somewhere so cold, rocky and wind-blasted.

Tom and Vicky Jackson were going the other way. They take us on a beautifully described exploration of the nooks and crannies around Vancouver Island. They say that they are now reaching an age of 'impending decrepitude' and prefer to do more gentle sailing. So after Vancouver they

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simply sailed to New Zealand. I suppose it will happen to us all one day.

Closer to the South Pole, Jim and Karin Lott were at the worlds most southerly yacht club being discouraged from going to Antarctica itself, because, they were told, 'there is not much to do once you get there'. So instead they headed north from Tierra del Fuego along the coast of South America to the Caribbean Islands and finally Chesapeake Bay. They found all manner of attractions on the way. For example, they tell us that 'dental floss' on the beaches of Brazil is in fact a popular garment. It seems to be somewhere between wearing a bikini and not wearing a bikini.

A number of logs are about keeping the sailing rather than the clothing simple. Our two most senior members have both written accounts of sailing in the days before anything complicated had been invented.

Hugo Duplessis describes his cruise to the Spanish Rias in 1949. He found that the secret to all that paperwork on arrival was the local Siesta. It takes priority in the latin mind over absolutely everything, even pointless bureaucracy. Reaching Corunna shortly before General Franco arrived for his hols, however, was more tricky. Hugo tells us how he coped with the situation.

Keith Holland-Gems tells a splendid tale of his preparations and cruise to the Netherlands in his younger days, and with a most unlikely crew. The yacht may have been quite old, he tells us, but it had been modernised in 1926, so that was alright. It even had an engine, although perhaps not the kind that many of us would know how to make go.

After many impressive years sailing in larger yachts, David Whitehead believes that modern technology spoils all the fun. He describes how he has developed his own 16ft Sharpie instead to go 'micro-cruising' around his local bays in the west of Ireland, or anywhere else he can take her on a trailer. Clearly the Morbihan beckons and perhaps the Swedish Islands too.

Lizzie Berton tells us of her adventures sailing from Falmouth to the VC's Mount St Michael meet. Not a huge distance, but she had several hours rowing her 16ft day boat, *Ramble*, when the wind dropped, and some very hard sailing around that rocky coast when it picked up again. Her rations appear to have been oatcakes and wine until she arrived, when she had Anthony Fawcett's curry. What more could she ask for?

Like David Whitehead, Annie Hill is also building a boat. She doesn't like fibre glass, so poor little *Fantail* has had to go. Instead she has set to work with her own fair hands to build a wooden, junk-rigged (of course) 26 footer - an aircraft carrier by the standards of David and Lizzie. Her log shows the design and she lists all the key features that her ocean experience has taught her really matter. Not many toys for the boys in her life, I'm afraid.

Julian Mustoe has, of course, already sailed around the world in his 26 foot *Harrier*, following the path of Darwin and HMS *Beagle*. It's all described in his well reviewed book *The voyage of the Harrier*. Sadly, his log this year describes *Harrier*'s tragic end when he was half-way from Lerwick to Bergen to start his new project on the Hanseatic League. *Harrier* was also his home, but was uninsured because insurance companies don't like

single-handers. Julian clearly deserves all the support we can give him, so that he can write his next book to tell us all about one of the most extraordinary powers of the middle ages.

Peter Fabricius was involved in a different kind of tragedy when he joined a May-Day search for a man overboard. He and his crew did eventually find the victim, and as he tells the story he also has some important ideas for us following the experience.

Nick Charman's disaster was to be struck by lightning in Sweden. It may be a surprise to know that the nature of lightning strikes is not fully understood, even by research physicists. Nick has learnt a lot both from the experience and from his subsequent researches, however, and has some useful precautions for us.

If that's too many disasters, then we need Nick Chavasse's log to help us recover. It simply bubbles with enthusiasm as he, his wife and daughters make their first attempt at ocean sailing, heading for the Azores. Much of the cruise was up-wind and on lumpy seas, but that didn't spoil the fun. When they arrived, we see, amongst other things, Nick's women folk driving in all the wrong places in the daftest looking 'buggies' you could imagine.

Back in Britain, Charles Warlow describes his top twelve 'must see' places to visit on a cruise round the UK. It's a fascinating list, beautifully photographed, and few of us will have been to all of them. For those who have only rushed round the course in the Round Britain Race, his advice is to do it again, but this time to do it slowly - proper cruising words!

The one place Charles leaves out is the bar of the Blundellsands Sailing Club, whose wisdom and advice, ordinary centres of learning like Oxford or Cambridge can only struggle to emulate. This year they were planning Steve Pickard's entry to the OSTAR, based on a misunderstanding at a boat show. Still, Steve in his own characteristic way almost did it. He went as far as Co. Wicklow, which is certainly in the right direction.

The RCC has always been for 'yachts, boats and canoes', but somehow rafts were left off the list. Mike and Joanna Lewin Harris have now put that right with a cruise through the rapids of the Grand Canyon on a white-water raft. It made a Contessa 26 seem really quite a dry boat.

Finally, I should mention that this is the last of the four journals I shall edit. I have thoroughly enjoyed working with everybody to put them together, and have managed to persuade just the right couple to do the next four. All the logs from the last ten years are, of course, on the website, together with eBook versions of the last four journals and the club histories. The rest of the logs since 1883 are in the library, but since most members aren't, I hope to add all these earlier logs to the website over the coming months. So there will be plenty more to read, whether you are basking in the sun or just weather-bound.