

## Adventure Cruising – University of Oxford Sailing Club

### Supported by the Noel Marshall Cruising Foundation

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*Leah at the helm.*

Scotland, rounding Land's End in between Day 2 and 3, and sailing straight up to the Irish Sea. From there, we would head across to Northern Ireland, then down to the Isle of Man, Wales, and back to the Solent. By day three, looking at the weather report and understanding the time constraints of the trip, we realized we had to change course. While we would have handily made it to Scotland, Northern Ireland, Isle of Man, and Wales, the beat from Wales and around Land's End on the way back would have not only been miserable but also quite dangerous, requiring us to sail downwind in Code 8-9 winds.



*Lucia, Amelia, and Ross enjoying a sunset sail.*

I think we all went into this cruise with no expectations, and it ended up being an incredible experience for everyone involved. This was a crew complement that had never met before, had never sailed or trained together, and with varying levels of experience. Despite it all, we came together as a crew; by the end of our two weeks on board the *Talisman*, we parted as friends.

Termed the '4 Nations' Adventure Cruise, the initial plan of this sail was to do a five-day nonstop beat leaving from Gosport to Campbeltown,



*A calm and sunny day sailing.*

Hitting a storm on Day 3, we decided to seek shelter in the appropriately named Milford Haven, Wales. However, the marina was full, so we took 'shelter' on a public pontoon in a cove in Dale. While it was good to get a night's sleep initially after three consecutive night shifts, we collectively dreamed of showering. In Dale, we came up with a new warmer and sunnier plan: France. We would sail to Falmouth or Plymouth, then head for the Channel Islands and Cherbourg. We spent a well-earned rest day playing cards and cleaning the ship. We planned to leave early the next morning around 0300. However, the winds were so intense that one of our bow lines snapped the U bolt off the bow of *Talisman* the evening before we planned



*Chaotic seas on our sail from Wales.*



*A beautiful sunset sail.*

to set back off. Quick repairs were made and a watch team of Leah and Amelia was set up to ensure we were secured to the pontoon.

Land's End a second time and finally made port in Falmouth. Our long-awaited showers arrived 6 days after we had set off from Gosport. Smelling slightly less disgusting, we spent a day in Falmouth eating fish and chips and watching a local parade.

The sail the next morning was the most intense weather many of us have ever been in on a yacht. After the night shift of watching the lines, Amelia and Leah were granted leave from the morning sail shift. However, no sleep was had as the weather we hit soaked us all to the core whether we were inside attempting to sleep in the bunks or out on deck. Very wet!

We then spent the next two days rounding



*Our champagne sail feast from Guernsey to Lymington.*



*Bunking situation! We hot bunked for most of the journey due to space constraints.*

and the next morning set sail for Gosport.

One of my favorite anecdotes of the trip was probably almost losing Amelia overboard after an accidental jibe from Lucia at the helm. Lessons were learned, mostly that Amelia can climb onto boats like a seal. I also almost went overboard a few times. Luckily, Simon, *Talisman's* owner, has a great lifeline system in place to prevent any accidents!

The experience of attempting to sleep while in active freefall on our way back from Wales to Falmouth was probably my highlight of the trip, an experience of 'type two fun.' In 35mph winds, two reefs in the sails, we were so keeled over that every time we hit a wave I would fly off the bunk



*Beautiful Guernsey.*

Guernsey was gorgeous. We enjoyed sun, swimming in pools, beaches, tanning on the boat deck, and more. At this point, we were running out of time, and the storm which we changed course from at the beginning of the trip was fast approaching. It was important that wherever we were, we were in a marina by the evening of the 15<sup>th</sup> for fear of wrecking.

We decided on a champagne sail after two days in Guernsey to the Isle of Wight. Another overnight sail later, we were safe in port in Lymington, as Yarmouth was full. We spent our last team day and evening together in a pub in Lymington,



*Lucia relaxing on deck.*

and slam back down every 20-30 seconds. I gave it the old college try but forfeited sleep after about 5 hours of attempting. I can't imagine the Code 8 winds we would have hit if we stuck to the original plan!

I really enjoyed re-acquainting myself with living and sailing on a yacht. I was very into sailing as a



*Disaster struck. Betsy's phone went in the water in Guernsey. They have a man with a robot that will go and get it for you...for a fee.*

This yachting trip was a very meaningful one for me, as it was a very valuable experience in my life. Since I met sailing, it was the first time I had spent an intensive week trip on the sea, mainly on rivers for a few hours or at national and international regattas. Therefore, a two-week sailing trip was something I wanted to try, and it turned out to be a very meaningful trip.

When sailing, it is very important how you adapt to nature and create new plans when conditions change. And how to spend the time you have in a meaningful and efficient way is another thing to consider. When I arrived in Falmouth, Plymouth, Guernsey and Lynmouth, I went out into the city center to explore the history and culture of the area, which played an important part in making each week intellectually and culturally enriching. In St Brides Bay, Wales, I loved being able to relax and enjoy the view of the sea.

Depending on where we were going, we could take turns sailing at different times of the day, even if it meant a full day of non-stop sailing. During the day, we were able to marvel at the glory of the sunlight falling from the sky to the sea and celebrate the beauty of nature at sunset and sunrise. In the evenings, the sky was the horizon in all directions, and it was fun to watch the stars shine like diamonds.

This yachting trip made me fall in love with yachting even more. All in all, this yachting trip not only taught me about yachting, but also created new hopes with the spirit of challenge, and I was able to

child and would dinghy sail with friends often. I also completed two month-long sailing cruises in the Caribbean, but those were over 10 years ago. I have only done very casual day sailing since then, so it was fun to relearn things I had forgotten and be introduced to things I had never done before.

The rest of this report is a response from each of the members of the cruise about their experiences on board.

Sunyoung:



*The crew of Talisman! Simon (skipper), Sunyoung, Leah, Lucia, Amelia, Sophie, Betsy, and Ross*

enjoy the freedom of life, which is very precious to me. Special thanks to RCC Marshall awards and OUYC leadership for creating this opportunity.



*Cloudy and choppy and sunny and smooth - we had all weather days.*

Lucia:

The 2024 OUYC Adventure Sailing trip has perhaps been one of my favourite sailing adventures so far. Helming both in rougher conditions than I have previously experienced as well as helming for longer periods of time, I have greater appreciation of the precision it takes to battle the oncoming waves. Having gone from accidentally gybing due to the rough swells at the beginning of the trip, leading to some unwanted showers (sorry Amelia), to gaining more experience in my downwind sailing ability, I feel more confident as a helmsman and look forward to future trips where I might be afforded a similar opportunity. I promise I won't almost cause a man overboard again.

The sights over the past twelve days were also magnificent. The sprawling constellations on some of the overnight sails were sights I had never seen before, having come from the smoky, light-polluted suburbs, and sights I shall not soon forget. Neither will I forget the inquisitive companionship of the multiple dolphins that we encountered on our journey nor the sunsets that lit the skies with hues of gold.

However, a trip this unforgettable cannot be achieved without an equally unforgettable crew. Some of my favourite

moments have been chatting with my fellow sailors on the rail as the headlands race past. The days flew by with countless hours spent laughing over the simplest things such as the heads or sharing our collection of bruises from crashing into furniture while heeled over. Waiting for the winds to die down a little in Milford-Haven on an isolated pontoon might sound uncomfortable, but when there is a crew that is so funny and lively and willing to share a host of card games, it's almost impossible to not smile and laugh. It's been an honour and a privilege to sail on *Talisman* with the OUYC crew and hopefully an honour and a privilege I will be afforded again soon some day.



*Friends joined us on occasion!*

Amelia:

The trip was my first time offshore sailing, spending multiple days and nights sailing without stop, and often with little sight of land. I admit, that after the first 24 hours, all I wanted to do was get onshore, have a shower, and use a toilet that was not at a thirty-five-degree heel. However, as the sea-sickness subsided, the crew began to bond and I got so tired that I was able to sleep at any point of the day, no matter how cold, rocky, or wet I was, things began to look up. The journey to Scotland ahead of us no longer seemed like such a daunting task.



*Sophie in the front camera, Betsy and Amelia in the back camera.*

However, the trip to Scotland did not materialise due to foul weather, and instead we were stuck on a floating pontoon outside Dale – unable to get ashore.

This however, did not dampen the mood. Cards were played, the boat was cleaned and plans were re-made. Soon, we were setting off for Falmouth, with an eventual trip to Guernsey on our minds.

By the time we were sailing back from Guernsey, everyone was in high spirits, but extremely sad at the prospect of leaving the boat, and those aboard. Jokes were made, cakes were baked, ovens were set on fire (accidentally) and prosecco was drunk.

The trip solidified my belief that good friends make hard times better and when we find ourselves in a difficult or challenging place, we should not bail out but continue on - even if not all the way to Scotland.

Sophie:

As someone new to offshore sailing, participating in the OUYC 'Adventure Cruising' trip was a highly rewarding experience. It allowed me to gain hands-on experience in all aspects of sailing, while also working with an amazing crew who made the journey truly unforgettable.

One of my personal goals for the trip was to gain confidence at the helm, which I was able to do in some challenging conditions. After helming for over five hours on the first day, I immediately felt more confident taking on long shifts throughout the week, and often took on the night shifts – navigating by the stars at night allowed me to develop a new sense of direction even in the dark. Further, moments when I was not on the



*Crew photo!*

helm allowed me the chance to gaze at the constellations above and witness incredible flurries of shooting stars, a sight I had never seen before. It was not only the night sky, but the view of dolphins surrounding the boat, and the view of the sunrise while helming through Atlantic rollers, that made the early shifts worthwhile.

Aside from helming, I gained an appreciation for the other difficulties of offshore sailing, such as using the heads while heeled over, especially when it had been accidentally flooded by other members of the crew, and cooking for the crew, as Betsy and I tried to avoid dropping multiple plates of burgers on the floor when preparing dinner underway. These moments only made the journey more memorable and made for many jokes and hysterical bouts of laughter.

Finally, I would like to express how grateful I am to the RCC for facilitating this journey with the Marshall award. I also appreciate the effort our skipper Simon put into guiding us in our sailing, and the privilege he afforded us of sailing on *Talisman*. This experience has been invaluable for my progress in sailing, and I look forward to applying the skills and knowledge I've gained to future voyages. This was a journey I will truly never forget.



*Betsy relaxing on deck of Talisman.*



*Ross at the helm.*

**Betsy:**

Taking part in the adventure cruising was a very enjoyable and challenging experience, one which I would definitely do again. The first few days we travelled up to Milford Haven, working in watches. I enjoyed the experience of night sailing as well as helming in my watch. It was really interesting learning to navigate at night, and sleeping at random points of the day. One thing that surprised me was the amount of dolphins that loved to follow the boat, and how loud they could be at night. The stars and sunrises were also a highlight, it was a very picturesque journey. On the Milford Haven leg, going round Lands End was another highlight. However, this was definitely the most challenging part of the journey. After Milford Haven, we travelled back down south. I loved visiting places for the first time, in particular Guernsey- I was a big fan of their natural bathing pools. Despite the fact I dropped my phone in the

marina, I liked Guernsey a lot. Also visiting different Yacht clubs was fun, such as one in Lymington

that had the nicest showers I've ever been in. It was also great to get to know the crew, I think we got on very well by the end of it having shared some interesting experiences. Overall, I learnt a lot on the trip, and it has definitely made me want to sail more!!

Ross:

The 2024 OUYC "adventure cruise" brought together 8 sailors from the club for a 12-day journey that took the 38 ft boat around Lands End to Milford Haven in a 3-day leg before heading down to Guernsey by way of Falmouth and Portsmouth and finally returning to the Solent. The trip was designed to provide a challenging environment outside of the club's usual racing format in which the crew were able to develop their offshore skills and build experience handling the boat under a wide range of conditions.

Offshore sailing demands a set of skills that aren't typically required for inshore racing. Night sailing, crew management, watch rotas, victualling, galley cooking, and boat maintenance were but a handful of the unique challenges that faced the crew during the tour and were met with keen interest by all aboard. Night sailing is a particular highlight of mine -- the quiet calm of the night listening to bioluminescent water lap the hull while dolphins play abeam is a hard moment to beat and the views of the Milky Way are something from home I've often missed (even if the constellations are upside down in this hemisphere).

The trip marked the first offshore outing in advance for the club's Fastnet 2025 campaign, for which considerable preparation is required. Access to training events such as this would not be possible for many students without the support provided by The Royal Cruising Club for which we are incredibly grateful, we hope you follow the teams progress as we round Fastnet rock in July!

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Thank you!