

Forty Years On

The Cruise of *Gemette* in 2018

Michael Bonham Cozens

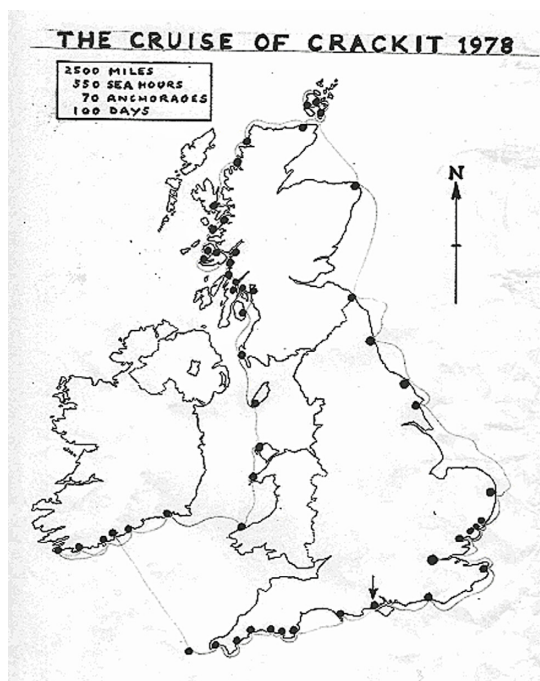
Gemervescence ('Little Gem') was being fully restored in 2011/12 as Eve (RCC) and I began to doubt our ability to sail her in the active manner of the past 30 years, even though a furling Yankee had somewhat reduced the 12 sail wardrobe. Our adored 40', wood, deep-keeled cutter had to be sold. My good humour was restored by the plan to have another vessel on which to stamp my feet in future.

Gemette was that future. She is a 32' motor boat built by Marex in Norway in 2012-3. Her maiden voyage was the 1,100nm back to Poole. I describe her as a 'flying saucer with spacious cabin forward, a comfortable cabin aft and a whacking great engine in between, above which is the driving seat, navigational console, a convivial saloon and an 'all-mod-cons' galley'.

At the end of last year I put a dream into a plan and onto paper: a cruise in 2018 to follow my single-handed, clockwise cruise from Lymington to Lymington in *Crackit*, forty years before in 1978. I bought *Crackit*, a Pioneer

10 by Van de Stadt, second-hand in 1975. I had fun doing fully-crewed RORC racing for two years, followed by single-handed cruises.

I considered following my 1978 cruise by sailing *Gemette* single-handed, but whilst it would have been practical at sea and for anchoring, it is not possible for coming alongside; to control my vessel I have to be at the helm, as she is very skittish. I had decided on six legs, Alpha to Foxtrot, starting from Poole. I was quickly able to find friends and family members to accompany me on all legs.



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Alpha - Poole to Cork - 381nm 17 - 24 May

Crew: James Shaw Porter, a farmer and business friend.



We had planned an early start to capture all of the west-going tide. *Gemette* is a light craft and progress is much dependent on sea state. To get nautical miles behind us, we said goodbye to stopping at Dartmouth, Salcombe or Plymouth, and made Fowey at 1810. This delightful harbour has been my very favourite place, since the time I visited when Armada Beacons were lit in celebration of Queen Elizabeth II's Silver Jubilee. Here we refuelled, including the six 20l cans for emergencies, then

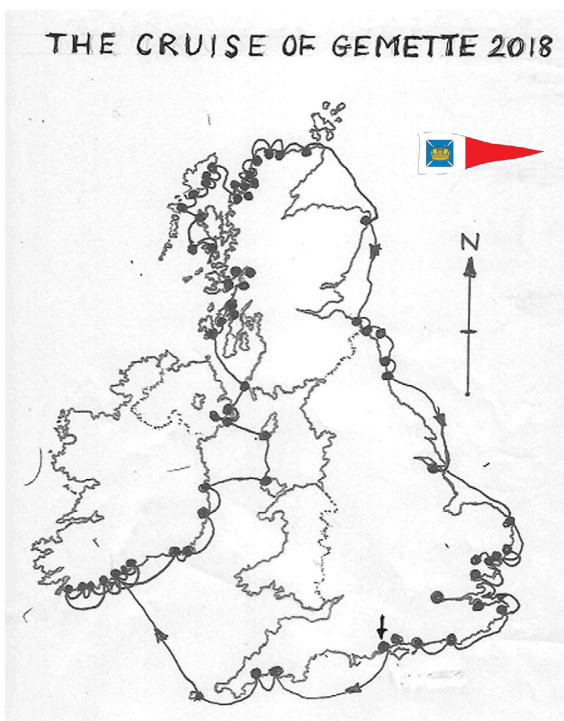
shot off to the Scillies, stopping at St Mary's for fuel, before heading over the Tresco flats, lamenting the moorings now strewn across the anchorage, though we picked one up. Who can resist Tresco walks and good dining?

Another early departure left behind memories of sheltered, and not so sheltered, anchorages in the Scillies. James and I relished our voyage to Kinsale averaging 18 knots. The Irish Sea had a WNW swell under an overcast sky. James wrote in the log: 'Pushed *Gemette* hard to maintain the plane in St Georges Channel, through the Celtic Deep and over the Nymph Bank'. He later referred to 'an uncomfortable trip'.

Gemette's motion at sea is of course very different. Unlike a sailing vessel, that is comfortable in most sea states, a small motorboat is not, and so is not suitable for prolonged open sea voyages. At best,

one can endure a disturbed sea for eight hours. Enclosed in my capsule, I miss the feel of the wind and my ability to predict its strength. However, my beer not only stays dry but also upright.

The Royal Cork YC at Crosshaven always welcomes and my day was further



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brightened by the arrival of my son, Jack. I guessed he wanted a part, however small, in *Gemette's* cruise. James had been a stalwart supporter to give the cruise a good start and I was sorry to see him depart.

During this leg, we had passed close of a timber bulk 10m by 1m girth. If we had hit it at speed, we might have needed our safety equipment,

Jack and I had a mini-cruise, anchoring for lunch lubricated by flowing conversation. On our return, my next crew, Tom, came aboard. We were joined for drinks by Mike Parker (RCC) and his crew from *Northern Light*.

Forty years before, *Crackit's* 145nm from Isles of Scilly to Crosshaven had taken over 22 hours with some 8 hours using a Starcut spinnaker with its bell-shaped dome 'spi-squeezer'. Did I invent reefing a spinnaker as conditions strengthened, by using the downhaul of the spi-squeezer?

Bravo - Cork to Holyhead - 397nm 25 May - 1 June

Crew: Tom Cunningham, naval aviator.

After Jack departed, Tom and I made ready for Kinsale. But first *Gemette* went westwards to re-visit Crookhaven to repeat happy, past sojourns there. Tom and I enjoyed our run ashore at Baltimore, looked at Schull and made Crookhaven in time to visit O'Sullivan's bar followed by dinner at Nottages. Tom recorded 'a rough night at anchor sheering around in disturbed water'.



In 1978 with *Crackit*, out of Crosshaven 'in a fit of madness I decided to pass Kinsale and make for Crookhaven'. With many tacks it took 23h 10m. I wrote, 'a filthy and dark night with rain and no reference after Galley Head was lost. I used the RDF which was not a lot of use' and later recorded 'very much rain'. At that time, the only reliable position fixing was by dead reckoning, lighthouse bearings and RDF about which I was never confident.

We headed back easterly, outside Clear Island to Glandore where we 'avoided Adam and hugged Eve' to anchor within, all on our own. On Monday after a fuel stop in Kinsale, we made 103nm to Dunmore East, anchoring 'in the roads' to wait for the harbour-master's berth, after its use by the boats of the cruise ship, *Privendam*.

For manoeuvring in close quarters and for berthing it is essential for a vessel without a keel to have bow and stern thrusters. The original specification provided for a bow thruster only, and I added the stern thruster, and I would now prefer 6 instead 4hp.

I had amended my plan for the crew change at Milford Haven (40 years before I anchored *Crackit* in the centre of Fishguard Harbour!) and headed towards Holyhead. We collected fuel at Kilmore Quay and departed to 'turn the corner' and go northwards to Arklow. At that corner Tom and I, roughed

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up by the sea conditions, tracked outside Blackwater Rock to the shelter of Arklow Harbour: a miserable place.

Dun Laoghaire was better, with a good marina and the hospitable Royal Irish Yacht Club. In sunny, calm and flat conditions we tracked easterly to Holyhead. Tom talked about 'mechanical empathy' and set up a detailed engine revs/fuel consumption survey, later giving me a graph and associated table of figures. This was useful for the remainder of the cruise.

Holyhead harbour is huge. Forty years before, I had anchored near the middle of the harbour. It now has a marina, or so I thought. I called on VHF. Their immediate response was, 'We are no longer, destroyed by Emma!' Tom, the Admiral, departed next morning. He had been great company. I was fortunate having strong crew for Alpha and Bravo. Before setting out I knew the cruise plan depended on these legs being delivered on time.

Charlie One - Holyhead to Portpatrick - 161nm 2 - 8 June

Crew: Eve (RCC) my wife and fellow sailor.

Eve arrived, after a seven-hour train journey, with enthusiasm for her week aboard *Gemette*. We sped northwards to Port St Mary, Isle of Man, tying up to a ladder, temporarily, then made secure and set up lines for the tidal range of 8m. We enjoyed our run ashore, clambering up a high ladder at low tide.

In 1978, I had arrived using RDF bearings in heavy weather to find the wall prohibited because of 'dredging and explosive works in hand'. I had to anchor. *Crackit* then dragged, hitting the wall starboard broadside at 0330. I grabbed a line, securing it to a shroud, and ran up the harbour steps along the wall. In screeching wind I got the line through a ring, desperate to keep the boat from lunging back and forth so I could return aboard and get fenders and lines in place. At 0800 I worked off the wall and re-anchored for a couple of hours before departing. My brief time on the harbour wall means I am probably the only man to arrive at and depart from the Isle of Man in a pair of pyjamas.

Strangford Lough was our target in Northern Ireland, aiming to take the Narrows, in time to catch the exhilarating in-going tidal stream. We cruised the Lough fascinated by the 'pladdies', like underwater molehills protruding above sea level, anchoring near the RCC (Ringhaddy Cruising Club) and had a second day anchoring in various places with a final run ashore and meal in



Strangford Village.

Although overcast and chilly we anchored for a long lunch in secluded Chapel Bay in Copeland Island before entering Bangor. We enjoyed the Edwardian architecture and a dinner at the Royal Ulster Yacht Club, after a pleasurable walk there along the foreshore. We needed to leave Northern Ireland for Scotland and dashed eastwards to Portpatrick. Eve and I adored the place, its people, its waterfront pubs and had a full day to enjoy it.

Charlie Two - Portpatrick to Oban - 181 nm 9 - 14 June

Crew: Jonathan and Jane Oswin, my nephew and his wife.

Eve had enjoyed great weather and a wonderful cruising week, and made an early departure to travel home. Jonathan and Jane were canny choosing to come on this leg, with its lovely islands and potential to visit malt whisky distilleries. We sped NNW past the Mull of Kintyre without its usual difficult seas. We moored at a pontoon in Islay, to walk to Lagavulin Distillery, returning at 1820 to set off northwards, and anchoring at Craighouse.



After breakfast Jonathan insisted on showing me his 'power is your friend' technique for picking up a mooring. He advised me to power up to the mooring leaving it one metre to starboard and go past one metre, then briefly going into reverse; the paddle effect of the propeller would put the bows on top of the mooring buoy, with everything under control. It worked and I have since used it.

At departure we feasted on the scenery in the Sound of Jura making for Loch Craignish where we anchored off Eilean nan Gabhar. Later we re-entered the Sound of Jura to rest the night at Craobh Harbour Marina.

The weather was unsettled and we needed to move northward, preferably to the shelter of Loch Linnhe, making approach easier to Dunstaffnage. To make our journey interesting, with beauty all around, for entry into the Firth of Lorne, I opted to go through Seil Sound, leaving Shuna to starboard and Torsa to port, turning the corner at Ennah h-Eaglaise to go south-west leaving Cleil Rock to port before going north-west into Cuan South. In fact I do not recommend this route unless the tidal details and range are very carefully studied beforehand. Something I failed to do. Approaching close to Cleil Rock *Gemette* did a 180° to port in a whirlpool. With no room to continue the turn, a burst of power saved a treacherous situation.

Many of us today navigate with electronic maps with a large-scale capability for coastal and close-quarter identification. But we can get misled in identifying our position and track, relying on the chart instead of observing

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Michael relaxing in Portpatrick

the physical objects around us, which give spatial awareness. When close to navigational hazards, I try to guard against complete reliance on the chart-plotter.

We enjoyed a calm anchorage at Duart Castle for lunch, continuing to the delightful Loch A'Choire for the night. Safe in Loch Linnhe we approached Fort William, motoring under the road bridge into Loch Leven, anchoring off the Glencoe Boat Club. That evening, I had texts from Eve and Julie that adverse weather approached. This would have been impossible in 1978.

On Wednesday we arrived at Dunstaffnage marina, giving us time to explore Oban before departure from *Gemette*. We moved to a more favourable berth, and soon the heavy weather kicked in. On Friday Jonathan and Jane's week finished and I was to have a couple of weeks with my family.

Delta One - Oban to Ullapool - 263 nm 30 June -7 July

Crew: Julie, my 'London' daughter.

We returned to *Gemette* and left as soon as possible, keen to get to the Outer Hebrides. The sea was calm as we sped through the Mull Sound, past Ardnamurchan, leaving Muck to starboard and Rhum to port.

After a good night at anchor in Canna, I woke hearing a 'popping' sea and suspected a weather change. Julie and I met in the Galley watching fog roll in from the north-west. We left 0725 to go to Loch Harport, Isle of Skye, with the Cuillen mountains framed at the head of the loch. The fog became a mist and with improving visibility, we changed our course to Dunvegan entering the Loch through a pod of playing dolphins to anchor west of the



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hotel and then later close to the Castle, from where we visited the gardens.

Under way again to North Uist, we found a quiet place to anchor for lunch in Vaccasay. Julie enjoyed a swim in her newly acquired wet suit before we moved onward to South Harris for a calm night in stunning Loch Finsbaye.

We made an early start to explore a remote loch and ended up by passing west of Eileen an Duine through a narrow cleft 30m wide. At 0855 we entered Loch Scadabay. As we proceeded very slowly in, we made a classic mistake, we failed to shorten the dingy painter which whipped round the propeller. The engine stopped dead, but we anchored swiftly by having the anchor cock-bill, as we always do on an approach. Julie dived in, disentangled the line, and then retrieved the dingy.

I had hoped to get to the Shiant Isles to see this amazing place and the bird life described in *The Seabirds Cry*, by Adam Nicolson. We were not disappointed when we tucked *Gemette* close to east of Mol Mor between Garbh Eilean and Eilean and Tighe. Ashore we were all alone apart from thousands of puffins, kittiwakes, fulmars, shearwaters and gannets with their incessant clamour. But, there is always a but! *Gemette's* Log records: 'What a night, what a swell, what a roll!' I put up with it until 0030 when I gave up and carried my duvet to the saloon to wedge myself into the recess by the galley. Not for the first time I slept at sea on the cabin sole, though not as in the past in heavy oilies. Julie in the aft cabin managed some sleep, the motion there so much less than in my fore cabin.

Gemette continued along the coast of Lewis to Stornaway. We had a full day's run ashore in Stornaway, a larger town than we expected. On Thursday we motored to the mainland and Loch Ewe to which I wanted to return more than any other place in the whole cruise: a remote wild area of staggering beauty, that I had visited only once before in my life. I had last been anchored there for four days whilst serving in *HMS Implacable* as a NS Upper Yardman (Air), which included a survival exercise with two others; we were taken 30 miles away to find our way back to Loch Gairloch – no outdoor clothing or rations provided - we survived!

Next day we walked in the magnificent Inverewe Gardens and talked with the gardeners. At 1125 we departed to re-anchor by the pier at Aultbea. We walked uphill to find the Russian Arctic Convoy Museum. These convoy voyages between Iceland, Loch Ewe and Murmansk or Arkhangelsk were described by Winston Churchill as 'the worst journey in the world'. I left this important and touching museum, speechless and close to tears. Julie has not often seen me so choked and she put her arm through mine as we silently walked downhill to the hotel.

Delta Two - Ullapool to Thurso - 46 nm 7 July - 14 July

Crew: Julie joined by Claudia Beach, Julie's Godmother.

How do you rate crew who have returned early from a holiday in China, taken a train overnight from London to Inverness to be on time at Ullapool?

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Answer – highly!

Unable to come alongside on arrival in Ullapool, owing to jostling fishing boats, we finally managed it for taking on water. After departure, we avoided the Skiff Racing in Loch Broom, and set off for the Summer Isles in misty conditions. After a night at Tanera Mor, we zigzagged round the lines of the many fish farms in unpleasant weather and later arrived in Loch Inver, where we went for an energetic up-hill walk to the splendid Inver Lodge Hotel for tea followed by malt whisky, before weaving our way back to *Gemette*.

Next day took us to Loch Dhrombaig for lunch when we delved into Claudia's delicious gifts from Fortnum and Mason. We did a short hop to Loch Nedd for the night at the head of the loch, where we relaxed surrounded by wonderful sea, land and wild life, under a lowering sky and a cloud bank. On Tuesday we studied the tidal stream, its strength and vagaries, whilst anchored at Traigh an Teampull to the east of Handa Island before going onwards to Kinlochbervie.

In 1978 I had had an enlightening run ashore with new-found friends. In that log I wrote: 'They have an interesting existence in Kinlochbervie ... John leases a set of five bag nets ... operating in the season ... and the next morning at 0500 I accompanied John, plus two crew, in a salmon boat with flat bottom and low sides to visit each funnel net, and took salmon – 30 in all. To my surprise I was appointed lord high executioner using a 'priest'. Initially not a pleasant task, after the first few I took this ritual in my stride.' I am pleased such salmon netting is now banned.

In grey weather we battled north between Arm Beg rock and Rubh a Bhuachaille in heavy seas, to conquer Cape Wrath at 1155, declaring ourselves to be 'Cape Wrath-ions.' After taking the north side of the off-lying Duslic Rock at 1215, we had a champagne celebration, renaming ourselves as 'Cape Roughions'. Sadly, we missed seeing the high cliffs owing to a 75ft cloud base.

I had been keen to see Durness from the sea, because for years we have owned a small property there on the coast. We



anchored in the bay for a couple of hours, before slipping round the corner to go SSW to the very end of Loch Eriboll.

I was somewhat melancholy that West Scotland with all its islands were behind us, but we needed to go onward and eastward. Claudia and Julie

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cheered me up during our 45nm to Scrabster, arriving just after midday. The weather had been calm, and at Whiten Head we increased our speed to 21kts, but decreased it at Strathy to 8kts, passing the great sphere at Dounraey.

We were in good time for Claudia to leave on Friday and Julie on Saturday. We did ship's business, many laundry runs, had meals in Scrabster and two long walks to Thurso for provisioning.

Echo - Thurso to Ipswich - 590 nm 15 July - 27 July

Crew: Blake Holt. Deputy Chairman, National Coastwatch Institution.

Blake had been due to arrive Friday, but his flight to Edinburgh was cancelled. After torturous re-arrangements, he arrived on Saturday in time for an excellent meal in Thurso. My three nights in Scrabster had been used in detailed planning for cruising eastward through the Pentland Firth and southwards.

In 1978 I circumnavigated the Mainland of Orkney Islands counter-clockwise with a dramatic passage through Scapa Flow and a second crack at the Pentland Firth.

We departed at 1035, weather 'overcast and dull, calm seas', encountering some chop at Dunnet Head. We maintained 20kts on the plane, when suddenly a loud grating noise happened. It stopped, then started again. Blake and I were flummoxed. It stopped off the plane and resumed on the plane. It took us 15 minutes to identify it as the bow-thruster. With relief, we threw the circuit breaker to stop it.

At exhilarating speed, *Gemette*, tracked the Inner Sound to the South of Stroma averaging 28kts and on occasions over 30. We approached Duncansby Head, passing John o' Groats at noon. As we turned the corner we decided with the favourable sea conditions to abandon Wick as our destination and power down the whole of the Moray Firth to Peterhead, 105nm. We entered the commercial harbour and then the marina who were alerted by VHF about our restricted ability to manoeuvre. When checking in at Peterhead marina office we met a motor boat owner who had heard our VHF call and offered to help. He used to be a mining engineer and is now a North Sea helicopter pilot. To us he was a 'Knight of the High Seas', as he analysed the problem, took information, went home very late and telephoned next day saying the necessary part would be delivered at our next port of call.

On Tuesday we covered the 100nm to Eyemouth in less than seven hours. The power and pace of our cruise contrasted to the leisurely hops along the west coast. Blake was a brilliant supporter of the long, fast passages between ports. Eyemouth is a quaint place not often visited by cruising boats, but well



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worth it. The narrow entrance was a challenge without a bow thruster, but inside it was calm. The helpful harbour-master delivered the package for us. Within an hour, with the aid of photographs and our sketches, the new electrical relay was fitted and checked out: bow thruster now operational. But we discovered that the anchor windlass shared the same breaker and wiring as the bow thruster. If one fails, both fail. I shall alter the wiring.

From the onset Holy Island, Lindisfarne, had been a major aim for the cruise. We picked our way through the rocks from the north, to find the entrance transit before choosing to anchor close to the fishing fleet rather than south of The Heugh. Often I try to anchor near local boats because they know the best holding and calmest water. Stepping ashore from the dinghy into mud at low water, Blake and I took an 80m painter, which just reached to secure to the quay. On return towards high water, we found our dinghy floating alongside the steps of the quay. 'Bravo', said Blake. Luckily the long painter was clear of any fouling on the mud over which we had walked.

After anchoring next day at the Farne Islands, we found that the shear pin of the new electric outboard had sheared for no known reason. We hauled it aboard to release the propeller retaining nut; in spite of every effort and trick we could not get it released. Rowing ashore in the tidal stream was out of the question, so in disgust we set off 35nm to Blyth.

I have great 1978 memories of Blyth and the Royal Northumberland YC, where members gave me their House Flag and one of them, in his crewed yacht, raced me to Whitby the next day. This year was different; annoyingly our effort to bunker diesel fuel was in vain. On Friday we left Blyth and entered the River Tyne. It was easy to collect fuel, available 24/7 outside the locked entrance to Royal Quays Marina. After all my sailing it is an odd experience to be dependent on diesel fuel and the necessity to find places to fill up. Fortunately, when under sail, the choice of destination is not dictated by this requirement.

Gemette has a 480 litre fuel tank; allowing 20% as reserve, 380 litres are available. The distance travelled for this quantity varies greatly depending on the revs of the engine. An average use is 18 l/hr at 10kts, giving an endurance of 210nm. However, if wholly on the plane using 55 l/hr at 21kts, this gives an endurance of 145nm. Tom's graph, showed that at 1,750 rpm, using 13 l/hr at 8kts, gives a range of 230nm. These figures can be affected by sea state.

In *Crackit*, I had visited Whitby and Bridlington, but now we decided to continue to the River Humber and in particular Grimsby. LW Grimsby was at 1833 and because we had made faster progress than planned for the 121nm, we arrived to be confronted with a vigorous ebb stream. We followed the instructions of VTS Humber, whilst seaward of Clee Ness Light Float, and made entry to Grimsby through Fish Dock Island. We missed its lock free-flow 2 hours +/- HW and had to wait and pay for the operation of the locks to allow us entry. We berthed in the affable Humber Cruising Association

marina after refuelling.

Friday was sunny and calm and 'locked in' we declared a lay-day, visiting Cleethorpes, concluding at a magnificent fish and chip parlour. On Saturday our alarm woke us before 0300 to ensure exit through the free-flow lock at 0335. With a carefully planned exit of the Humber, we had a pleasurable morning with The Wash well to starboard and then the Norfolk coast close at hand as we identified towns from Cromer to Great Yarmouth. After eight hours of steady progress, we berthed in the Royal Norfolk and Suffolk YC marina that hosts so well the Two-handed Round Britain Race.

The long hauls and high mileage were replaced by four days of gunkholing in the rivers and waterways of my youth, which I was keen to show Blake. We started in very warm weather in glistening seas in the River Stour, anchoring in Holbrook Bay for three hours before returning down river to Shotley Marina to refuel *Gemette* and ourselves.

Next day, unlocking at 0730, we headed north assiduously following the recommended track for yachts, especially crossing the main channel. I have made the tricky entry to my beloved Riven Deben many times. I was amazed how much the river entrance had altered, taking us from Mid Knoll very close to the shore and its Martello Tower. In earlier days the entrance was by transit to two shore markers that were moved after storms. Part of my early professional duty was managing a farm opposite Ramsholt where three boats used to moor; there are now perhaps 250. *Gemette* potted up this glorious river to Woodbridge and down again over two days, anchoring in different places without going ashore. The number of vessels at Waldringfield amazed me, and we found the same at Woodbridge, where *Little Gem* had been built.

At our departure on Wednesday for the River Orwell, passing The Ramsholt Arms I could not resist telling Blake about the landlady at a time when beer only came from a pump or a bottle, who retained the normally elusive bottle opener at the end of a dog lead, the other end of which was attached to a studded leather dog collar secured round her neck. At closing time, the landlord led her away. T's true.

Our two weeks were running out, so we made way slowly up the River Orwell anchoring for the first night close to Downham Reach, the next day continuing our slow journey to Fox's Marina, Ipswich, at end of this long leg. We gave ourselves a full day to clear up and put *Gemette* into a well-earned sleep for two weeks. I was to spend some time at home. Blake and I returned by train to Dorset. He was a brilliant boatswain, a calm crew and a great dining companion.

Foxtrot One - Ipswich to Ramsgate - 221nm 11 August - 17 August
Crew: Robert Acheson, founder of a construction company.

Robert and I travelled by train to Ipswich, and as we passed through London we talked about it as our next goal for *Gemette*. On arrival at Fox's Marina we could not wait to leave and, risking low water grounding, entered the River

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Orwell and then went on up the River Stour to anchor for the night. A fresh dawn came up as we watched two Maldon or Thames barges (I am never quite certain of the difference) slowly pass us with majestic dignity. I was keen to show Robert the endless mud of West Mersea, frequented by me as an adolescent. It did not disappoint as we anchored at the confluence of Mersea Fleet and Thorn Fleet. We had, for my nostalgic benefit, a two-hour run ashore, visiting the West Mersea YC, identifying the place where the one time 'Sock and Sail Club' had operated, and the shack where Leonard Musson sold Pyefleet Oysters; the shack should be 'listed' for historic reasons. At low water we returned to dine on oysters.



I had planned meticulously for our voyage from the Thames Estuary up the River Thames into Central London. HW London Bridge at 1550 required departure at 0650 to be at Sea Reach at 1050. It is difficult to plan for boat speed since it depends so much on sea state. I got it right for the Thames Estuary, in contrast to getting it so wrong for the Humber.

Robert and I had an enthralling up-river voyage. We passed under each of the sixteen bridges, finally going under Battersea Rail Bridge to berth, just after Chelsea Harbour, at 1520 at the Imperial Wharf Marina for two nights.



Imperial Wharf, Chelsea

The following day we had a drinks party; my children, grandchildren, nephew and niece, never slow to react, arrived plus a couple of friends. This joyful occasion was followed by dinner ashore.

I had never been to Chatham before and wanted to walk the historic naval dockyard. The next day I lay awake in my bunk at 0445 listening to the noise of the ebb (close to springs) and worried about turning *Gemette* in a strong tide from our berth in confined quarters. Both of us leapt out of our bunks as men of action to cast off and make our turn to head downstream.

I recall a 1978 extract from the log as I sailed into the Estuary: 'The wind had veered to come from 285° at 18kts. *Crackit* was at Sea Reach No 1 at 1350 and then started her Thames tacking exercise which went on until 1808 when

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adjacent to Thames Haven. It had been fun tacking right up to anchored tankers, but the party was over. The ebb tide had taken over and I put on the engine. Progress was slow and London would not be reached tonight. The ebb got stronger at Ovens Flat, but I continued to Gravesend. At the Pilot's landing stage, I asked about a mooring, expecting a refusal. To my surprise I was told that I could pick up a certain mooring about 300 yards down river. At that time I had no idea of the size of the mooring and the need to pick up a large rope from the centre of a large buoy encircled by a huge rubber tyre. It was beginning to get dark and the ebb was running at least 2½kts. At the third attempt I did it, but only by leaving *Crackit's* motor in gear. I managed to get the rope aboard and cleated. Then I fixed two warps to the heavy steel cable. Then, with *Crackit* secure, I went below for a meal. It had always been my wish to make London, so to catch the tide, *Crackit* left the mooring at 0228. On passing the Pilots I shouted a word of thanks. There was little wind and I had to use the engine and at last reached Tower Bridge. It was wonderful. At 0554 I tied up to the pier outside St Katharine Yacht Haven to await the tidal lock. *Crackit* went in and was berthed at 0714.'

Gemette raced downstream with the ebb, but at Gravesend the flood stream had started as we approached the Medway at 1035. We chose Chatham Maritime Marina for our visit and we had to exercise great caution entering the narrow lock that has a helpful floating pontoon to starboard. Although we did not visit the Museum I was disappointed that the area was blighted by insensitive commercial development.

Ramsgate Harbour is a good comfortable haven with strong north and south breakwaters and a spacious outer harbour to lower all sails, ready lines and fenders before entry to the inner Royal harbour. The port can be busy but Port Control are helpful. We secured to a pontoon at 1435 and Robert and I had a good day in the Victorian town. Friday arrived and so did Robert's daughter and grandson to take him to their home not far away.

Foxtrot Two - Ramsgate to Poole - 182nm 18 August - 23 August

Crew: Joanna Barringer, my 'Lymington' daughter.

We met at the railway station as she arrived with her habitual smile. After making her comfortable aboard I took her to La Magnolia Italian Restaurant for my second visit.

In preparation for the last leg of the cruise I had marked up the Admiralty Tidal Stream Atlas with each hour's time, based on HW. Joanna and I departed Ramsgate at 0445 as the northerly set was beginning to slacken, passing Dover entrance at 0840 around slack water and catching the west-going towards Dungeness. I



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have an almost pathological hatred of Dungeness when going from east to west. How can I discard a memory of a summer cruise, tacking into a westerly seeing Dungeness visible forward at sunset and still visible just aft at sunrise?

Later the easterly stream gained strength and slowed our progress to Brighton, where we arrived at 1810 and refuelled before berthing. The weather had been unsettled for much of this leg, but the next day was fine and we had lunch at the marina, dinner in Brighton and a good visit to the pier, where Joanna took photographs of me in front of 'The House of Pleasure'.

Monday was a day not to be forgotten. Departing Brighton we stood off Chichester for an hour waiting for the tide and entered at 1335. We debated where to anchor, and for a change I decided on the Thorney Channel. Joanna went forward to release the cat stopper and drop the anchor, but it would not run out. She took the helm as I went forward and found the windlass pawl in place, the first time ever, as we always rely on the cat-stopper. In order to disengage the pawl, I used the electric windlass to take in chain and - as it happened - my left-hand, little finger at the same time. Neither the foredeck nor my finger were a pretty sight.

Joanna was horrified, but to her surprise I wanted to have lunch and think about what to do next. We anchored just to the east of Mid Winter starboard buoy. Of our various alternatives the best was Lymington Yacht Haven, Joanna's home and car being very close. We set off and were able to plane *Gemette* from Cowes and made the Haven, who gave kind support for our needs, at 1805. We went to Lymington Hospital. I was referred to Salisbury Odstock Hospital, where the next day I had an operation, the surgeons doing a great job in saving my finger, for which I am appreciative. I am fortunate that this was the worst accident I have had at sea.

My daughter does not give up. She stayed on board and next day, determined to finish my long cruise, we voyaged to Studland Bay, anchored and had a lovely dinner in truly atmospheric conditions of light and colour watching the sun go down over the chalk and green of Purbeck.

Joanna was of great help in packing and clearing up the boat. We returned *Gemette* to her berth at Lake Yard, Poole after 98 days. Eve and Julie were there to greet us and, joined by some family and crew, we had an enjoyable welcome home dinner to celebrate the 2,511nm which *Gemette* and I had voyaged together. How fortunate I am and how grateful to my trusty vessel.

