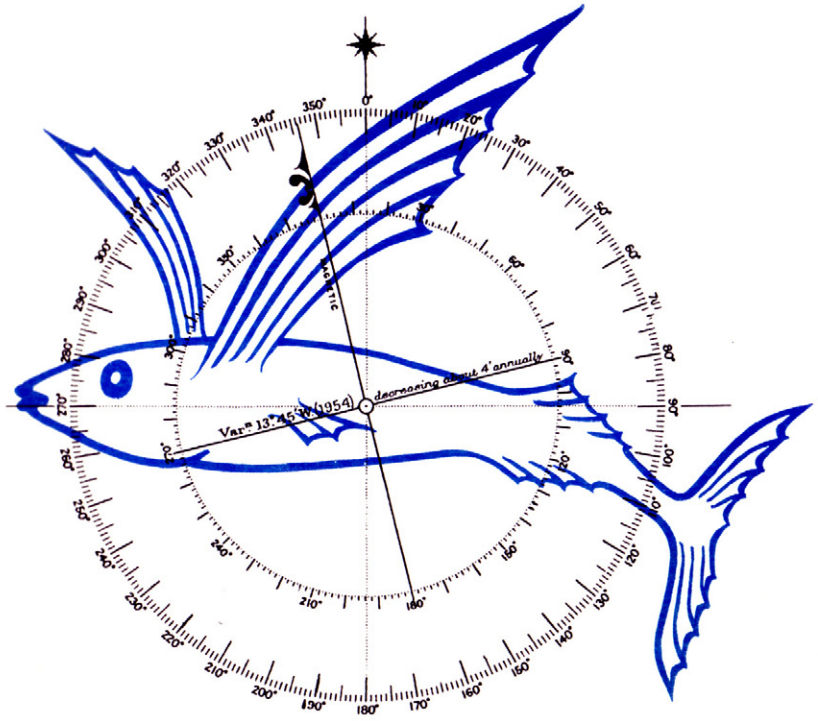
flying fish

2003/1



The Journal of the Ocean Cruising Club

OCC officers

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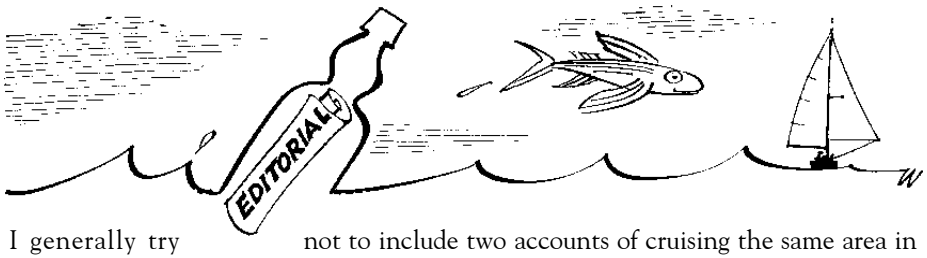
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I generally try not to include two accounts of cruising the same area in one issue, but there's an exception to every rule – in this case Tom and Vicky Jackson's *Sunstone in Alaska* and Bill McLaren's *Wildlife and Wild Places – Vagrant in Alaska*. Tom and Vicky's is a fast-paced cruise account, with asides on the pleasures of meeting fellow cruisers, the problems of deep-water anchoring, glaciers (and the bits that fall off them) and plenty of sailing. Bill, on the other hand, concentrates largely on the wildlife of the area, with sailing almost incidental. I really couldn't decide which I enjoyed more.

An even more extreme contrast can be drawn between two 'straightforward' transatlantic passages – in this case because they were made almost half a century apart. Founder member Chich Thornton tells of crossing the Atlantic *With Solace to Trinidad in 1953*, while new member Iain Simpson made the same passage last autumn with *Song of the Sea*, a brand new Najad 460. The two yachts could hardly be more different, yet both shed light on aspects of cruising with which many of us may be unfamiliar.

Now for a quick change of tack ... photographs. An increasing number of articles arrive accompanied by digital photographs – or more accurately, by photographs taken on digital cameras. These may look large and gorgeous on the computer screen but nearly always have to be drastically reduced in size to print well. (For reasons which I don't pretend to understand, colour printing requires at least 300 'dots per inch' whereas around a quarter of this – 72 dots per inch, to be exact – looks fine on a computer screen. How do I increase 72dpi up to 300? By reducing the size in proportion, of course.) So if you're planning to try out your new digital camera *and* to write up your cruise for *Flying Fish*, please take a look at the instruction book first, as many digital cameras are quite capable of taking photos at higher definition if the right nobs are twiddled. Failing that maybe you could even take a steam-age camera along as well?

Another change of tack, and the observant amongst you will have spotted from the title page that *Flying Fish* has a new Advertising Manager, with Mark Holbrook taking over from John Garey. John volunteered for the job in 1997, swiftly increasing the number of advertising pages to the dozen or so which the Committee of the time agreed was a suitable maximum – I got the impression that he could easily have doubled this given the chance – and in the process bringing at least £10,000 of revenue into Club coffers. Thank you John, for doing this largely unsung task so capably and cheerfully for so many years, and thank-you-in-anticipation to Mark!

The only, highly predictable, thing left for me to say is that the deadline for *Flying Fish* 2003/2 is **SATURDAY 13 SEPTEMBER** but that, as always, the sooner the better. In fact a piece arrived from the South Pacific just this morning....

PS: I ran out of space on this page ... you'll find my final request at the foot of page 5.

A NOTE FROM THE COMMODORE

I am writing this in March, at the end of my first year as Commodore. And what an excellent year it has been, with a good excuse to travel, meet new and look up old friends. Jenny and I enjoyed our time on the East Coast of the USA and also being guests of the Irish Cruising Club at their Annual Dinner. The ISOCC Summer 2002 Rally was fun, and we enjoyed sailing in company to Ireland and Scotland where the fleet received excellent hospitality.

I have just returned from Antarctica where, together with OCC members Martin Thomas, Sue Thatcher, Colin Chapman and Pat Waller, we chartered *Northanger*, a Damien 54, out of Ushuaia for a trip down to the Peninsula. Even in such a remote part of the world we met other OCC members – John Clothier in *Brown Bear of Bantham*, and 1998 Barton Cup winner Roger Wallis with *Spirit of Sydney*. Roger also runs charters down to Antarctica, and we met him in Puerto Williams, the most southerly town in the world. Returning home via Brazil, Jenny and I had the opportunity to meet up with Romulo Federici, the Club's Port Officer in Rio.

There are two topics on which we are fast approaching a wind shift, and the Club needs to decide what tack to take:

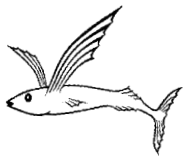
Firstly, the website. Mike and Liz Downing, with some assistance, have worked long hours to establish the Club website and keep it constantly updated. To take it to the next stage of development we require further investment of time and perhaps some professional support. We must decide how to achieve this.

Secondly, we need to review the Club's Cruising Information Service. Given the number of pilot books now available we should review what information is required by Club members. We now have the technology to add that information in downloadable files to the Club's website, which for many would speed up the availability. Fortunately George Curtis has volunteered to assist with the extra work which this will require.

Finally, the Club can only function with good and committed Flag Officers and committee members, all of whom have an expiry date attached to their term of office. We do need to enlist some new blood and we would welcome a call from any member who might be in a position to volunteer.

Happy and safe sailing.

Alan J Taylor, Commodore
e-mail Bellamanda@super-hub.com
Telephone +44 (0)1252 737007



THE 2002 AWARDS

In a break with tradition, and to avoid the long delay before circulation of the next *Flying Fish*, full citations were included with the Award announcements in the March *Newsletter*. However a list of recipients will continue to be included in *Flying Fish* for reference.

Congratulations to the following members and non-members:

OCC AWARD OF MERIT	–	**Lin and Larry Pardey** (*Taleisin)* **Eric Brossier** (*Vagabond)*
GEOFF PACK MEMORIAL AWARD	–	**Liza Copeland** (*Bagheera*)
BARTON CUP	–	**Peter Passano** (*Sea Bear*)
RAMBLER MEDAL	–	**Steve and Julie Ferrero** (*Dos Tintos*)
ROSE MEDAL	–	**Alan Tyson-Carter** (*Karma*)
OCC AWARD	–	**Betty Lindsay-Thomson**
DAVID WALLIS TROPHY	–	**Don and Jean Salter** (*Lycæna*)
VASEY VASE	–	**Denise Evans** (*Dunlin of Wessex*)

Neither the **WATER MUSIC TROPHY** nor the **QUALIFIER'S MUG** were awarded.



'FILLERS'

Do any members have favourite sayings, poems or short prose passages which I could add to my stock of potential 'fillers'? At a rough count I've featured about 130 of these snippets in the 25 *Flying Fish* for which I've been responsible, and though in theory this means that the two dozen or so currently in stock should last until well into 2005 I'm always glad to receive more. They don't have to be sailing-related (though it's a bonus), and can be anything from one to eight or even ten lines in length.

Humorous, historic, pithy – if you've stopped to re-read or consider, please share your discovery with the rest of us. Many thanks.

OUTLANDISH NEWFOUNDLAND
Doug and Dale Bruce

(*Doug and Dale are experienced cruisers who have sailed for more years than they are willing to admit. From 1995 to 1999 they spent five years living aboard their Tayana 55 cutter* Bluewater *in the Caribbean, transiting to Maine or Trinidad for hurricane season. They have now retired to Camden, Maine – but clearly not from cruising...*)

In years past we've cruised the Bahamas, Caribbean and the US East Coast, and have gunk-holed just about every nook and cranny along the coasts of Maine and southern Nova Scotia. By 2002 we were ready for a fresh adventure. We had heard some encouraging comments about Newfoundland so, over the summer, we sailed from our home port of Camden across the Gulf of Maine, then along Nova Scotia's south coast, and finally crossed over to Newfoundland's south coast from Cape Breton. To put it succinctly, this was THE BEST cruising we've ever done. We are so elated by our experience we keep trying to invent a whole new vocabulary of superlatives to describe the awesome scenery, the friendliest, most amusing people, and the abundant wildlife – birds, fish, mammals and wildflowers.

For those who want the big picture, Newfoundland is HUGE – known as 'The Granite Planet'. Rock cliffs come tumbling straight down to the sea from plateaux over 1200 feet high, with even higher mountains in some areas. Fjords as dramatic as any we've seen in Scotland are ubiquitous. Waterfalls cascade down rock faces so vertical that you can seemingly sail underneath for a freshwater shower. Everywhere one looks there are enormous formations of every description, shape and colour. Everything is oversized, awe-inspiring and spectacular. On *terra firma* there is an amazing variety of colourful wildflowers growing all over the place – even out of the rocks. Much of the ground cover is soft and spongy – you sink down halfway to your knees, like walking on fresh snow. At every port visited we became the centre of attention, but always in the most positive sense. Newfoundlanders were eager to meet us – eager to show that they are friendly, generous, amusing folk, which they are in spades. However they speak with accents and in expressions that can be a little hard to decipher at first:

"Dat feesh she sum gud b'ye, wha?" (That Codfish tastes terrific, doesn't it?)
"Where's ya longs ta, b'ye?" (Where are you from, sir?)
"Who knit 'ya?" (Who's your mother?)
"How ya gettin' on me ole trout?" (How are you?)
"Lard thunderin' jumpin' dyin' Moses" (Damn!)

Most sentences are punctuated with a "yez b'ye" expression that we equate to teenagers in the States saying, "like, ya know". Newfies also pronounce place names differently, including their own province – "NewfunLAND" (emphasis as in "underSTAND"). The



Deadman's Cove, La Hune Bay



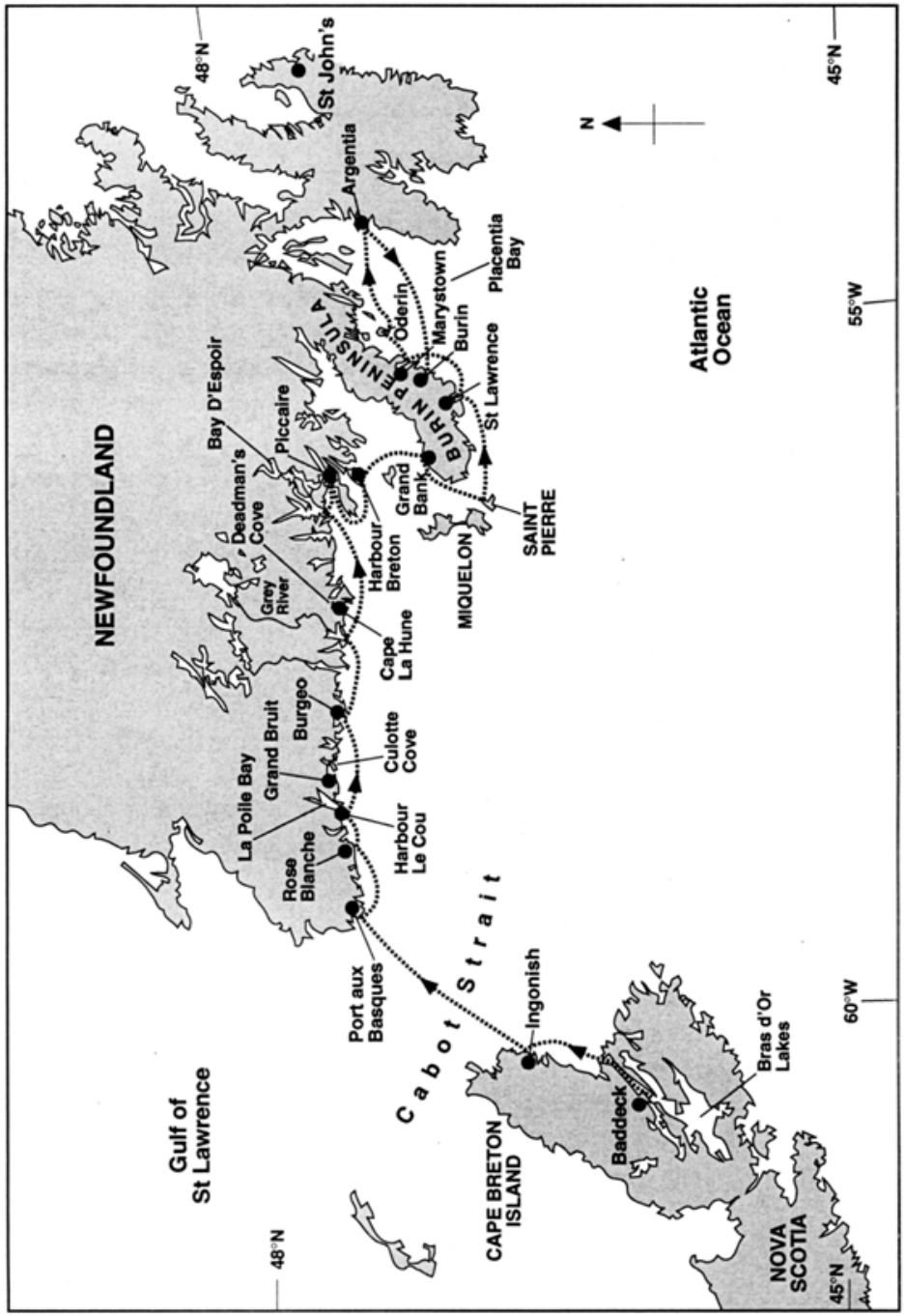
The carnivorous pitcher plant, Newfoundland's national flower, grows wild all over the south coast



Bluewater anchored in front of the magnificent waterfall at Deadman's Cove



Alongside the Coast Guard Search and Rescue station at Burgeo



towns of François, Gaultois, and Piccaire are pronounced "Franzeway," "Galltus," and "Pickarie." And there are many quaint place names – Come-By-Chance, Seldom Come, Blow-Me-Down, Bumble Bee Bay and Pink Bottom. Also there are some unforgettable rock names – Bad Neighbor, Naked Man, Dildo. You get the picture.

Our preconception was that Newfoundland would be cold and the water rough with generally uncomfortable sailing conditions. Our experience proved this notion greatly exaggerated. Temperatures were in the 60°s and 70°s by day (sometimes cooler in a sea breeze) and no lower than the upper 50°s at night. Fog, while it occurs occasionally, was not as bad as experienced in Maine and Nova Scotia. We had several bright, sunny days when we felt like we could be in the Caribbean – the water was a very clear green-blue, and the islands pop up out of the sea like the volcanic cones in the Lesser Antilles. We constantly saw porpoises jumping around us, spotted several humpback whales, and watched all manner of sea birds including puffins, gannets and shearwaters then, inshore, eagles and osprey.

What follows are selected entries from the daily log of *Bluewater* and her crew of two couples – ourselves from Maine, with friends first from Scotland and then from Nova Scotia.

We departed Baddeck, Nova Scotia in the beautiful Bras d'Or Lakes in mid-July. Our crossing of the Cabot Strait began from the dramatic harbour of Ingonish on the northeast side of Cape Breton. Fortunately the winds treated us kindly and we had a fast reach most of the way across, completing the 77 mile passage within fourteen daylight hours. Despite fog on the approach we had a secure entry into Port aux Basques, thanks to the local Coast Guard ship traffic controllers who guided us expertly around vessels in the busy shipping lanes. We tied to the massive government wharf well before dark – in time for showers and a birthday celebration ashore for our crew. The highlight was a plate of cod tongues, a local delicacy, shared by all. Really, they're not so scary as the name suggests!

Port aux Basques proved to be an excellent first port-of-call. Being the main terminal for the huge ferries coming from Sydney, Nova Scotia, it has nearly all the amenities one might need – plus it's a great town for a walkabout, with impressive vistas and friendly shopkeepers. We enjoyed a particularly cordial reception at the Coast Guard Station, from the traffic control specialists who'd guided us safely into harbour the day before.

Our first passage east along Newfoundland's southern coast took us into an absolutely gorgeous isolated anchorage, Harbour Le Cou, with rugged mountains looming all around us and a waterfall cascading down into the barasway (basin where river meets ocean) that became our anchorage. This was our first fjord experience, complete with 'ooohs' and 'aaahs' at the incredible rock formations all around us – truly breathtaking. It was also our first experience with the Newfie Air Force – mosquitoes and black flies – pretty ferocious little beasts. Fortunately the repellent did its job.

Our second outing brought us to our first serious fishing village, Burgeo, where we took *Bluewater* into the narrow passage leading to the local fishers' dock to tie up. The wives went ashore to make friends, and in short order we'd received a brief oral history



Moored alongside in the outport village of McCallum

plus a guided tour by van around this attractive little town, courtesy of a generous villager. By now we had concluded that all Newfoundlanders are delightful people who eagerly make fast friends with visitors.

From Burgeo we sailed a short distance in thickening fog to the entrance to Grey River. Now this is an entrance to reckon with. The river pours out between 1200ft cliffs at a narrow spot just 150ft wide. Visibility was zero-zero. We crept in on radar, the waves pounding the rock walls on either side. Suddenly cliffs appeared *above* the fog on both sides and in front of us as the river took a turn sharp to the right. Magically the fog lifted as we progressed upriver. Finally we saw massive walls on either side and the shoreline open up ahead. At that point, the 'ooohs' and 'aaahs' turned into 'Oh-My-Gawds!' It was like nothing we'd experienced before – a curtain of fog opening to reveal a narrow, steep-sided fjord in brilliant sunlight – absolutely fantastic!

As soon as *Bluewater* was anchored the dinghy went over the side – we all had an uncanny desire to climb the hills around us. The only place we could actually find to climb – everywhere else was impossibly steep – was a stream bed that rose at a 45° angle. Amazingly, all four of us schlepped and slurped our way upwards like crazed teenagers and made it to the peaks about 1200ft above the fjord. The views were stunning. The rocky ground was a maze of thick undergrowth and fabulous wildflowers, including Newfoundland's national flower, the pitcher plant. Black flies and mosquitoes were so numerous and aggressive there was no way to avoid getting chewed upon, despite having lathered every exposed bit of skin with repellent. But it was worth it – even the slide down the slippery streambed afterwards was exhilarating. Bleeding and worn to a

frazzle we made it back to the mother ship for showers, supper and a sound sleep. (Oh, did I forget to mention that wee dram?) Each of us agreed that this had been the most magical day we'd ever experienced in our collective years of cruising.

Our next destination was Deadman's Cove on the La Hune River. Sounds inviting, yez b'ye? Well it was fantastic – 1000ft of pure rock cliff with a bridal veil waterfall coming down almost vertically from the very top. Naturally the boys had to investigate the source of this incredible waterfall. We found a manageable route up another stream around the side of the cliff and made it to the top – not just to the waterfall but another 400ft above the lake that fed the waterfall. It was an exhausting but inspiring ascent. Being a sunny, crystal-clear day the views in every direction were utterly breathtaking. The girls were equally excited about their walk up a meadow littered with thousands of wildflowers, including wild orchids.

After Deadman's Cove we visited the isolated outport (a village accessed only by sea) of McCallum. We found an attractive town of maybe 50 homes and one church, set into a steep hillside and surrounded by a series of islands and mountains that gave protection from virtually all winds. Here we tied to the government wharf and again became the centre of attention. Many residents came down to inspect the latest visitors and were invited to come aboard – we found this was the best way to make friends, and here we succeeded admirably. Next morning the harbour master (and local fisherman) brought us a gift of cod tongues. He showed us how to eliminate the less enjoyable parts (jelly and cartilage) and cook them properly. Our guest chef did them up that night and they proved considerably tastier than our first batch.

Fog lifting at the entrance to Grey River, with the ferry from Burgeo just visible



From McCallum we sailed through a series of incredibly beautiful passages among the rugged islands of Bay D'Espoir (locally known as Bay Despair) and ended up in Pink Bottom Harbor at the deserted community of Piccaire. Back in the 1950s and '60s thousands of Newfoundlanders in these isolated outports were coerced into leaving their homes to 'resettle' into more centrally located villages, to enable the Canadian government to affordably provide the social services which had been promised when this part of the British Empire joined Canada in 1949. Seeing the remains of Piccaire – empty foundations and an overgrown cemetery – was sad in many respects, but provocative to imagine just how difficult life must have been in these out-of-the-way areas.

From Piccaire we visited Harbour Breton and Grand Bank, both attractive, then sailed across the invisible border into France and the island of Saint Pierre. Not only is this entering a foreign country, but Saint Pierre is a small city that takes up virtually all the habitable space on this 20 square mile island. We expected a quaint fishing village and found a bustling commercial centre. While Saint Pierre is attractive in its own right, and the food is everything one expects in France, it is very different from Newfoundland … an unusual and a pleasant diversion.

On leaving Saint Pierre we were required to check back into Canada, and arranged to meet Customs and Immigration in the fishing village of St Lawrence on the southeast side of the Burin Peninsula. (Normally one must check in at the town of Fortune, now out of our way back to the west). On the sail over we were thrilled to see several humpback whales. About 70ft long, humpbacks are indeed impressive creatures –

Entering Hare Bay – sunny inside the fjord, cloudy and foggy outside





The crew of Bluewater (left to right: Elisabeth Scott, Doug Bruce, Dale Bruce, Clive Scott) about to launch into a gourmet meal of local sea scallops

especially when seen from a 'small' boat. We also witnessed flocks of puffins demonstrating their unique helicopter-like flight.

Near St Lawrence we found a lovely anchorage up a narrow bay tucked behind an island, where the water was perfectly still. The sunset looking back over the mountains was one of the best ever – gorgeous hues of pink, red and purple. 'Chef/mate' served a gourmet meal in the cockpit – what a tough way to cruise! (Oh, did I forget to mention that wee dram again?)

Our final day with our Scottish guests took us further up the Burin Peninsula to Marystown. Neither Marystown nor its harbour was especially attractive – perhaps we'd become jaded by too many awesome places – but what made this a memorable stop was the abundance of really nice people we met. One man gave us fresh scallops, another fresh bread baked by his Mom, another drove us into town. Others enthralled us with their refreshingly candid conversation. It also happened to be the town's annual summer celebration, so we were treated to fireworks in the local park. And a fitting send-off it was for our good friends, who hopped a jitney* the next morning for the drive up to St John's, where they planned to do further touring on land before flying home.

Before meeting our next guests, we sailed to the small outport island of Oderin ('O-DARE-in'), situated about halfway across Placentia Bay. Oderin was an isolated fishing community whose residents were resettled several decades ago. Unlike other

*A 'small passenger vehicle' according to Chambers 20th Century Dictionary...



The McCallum waterfront

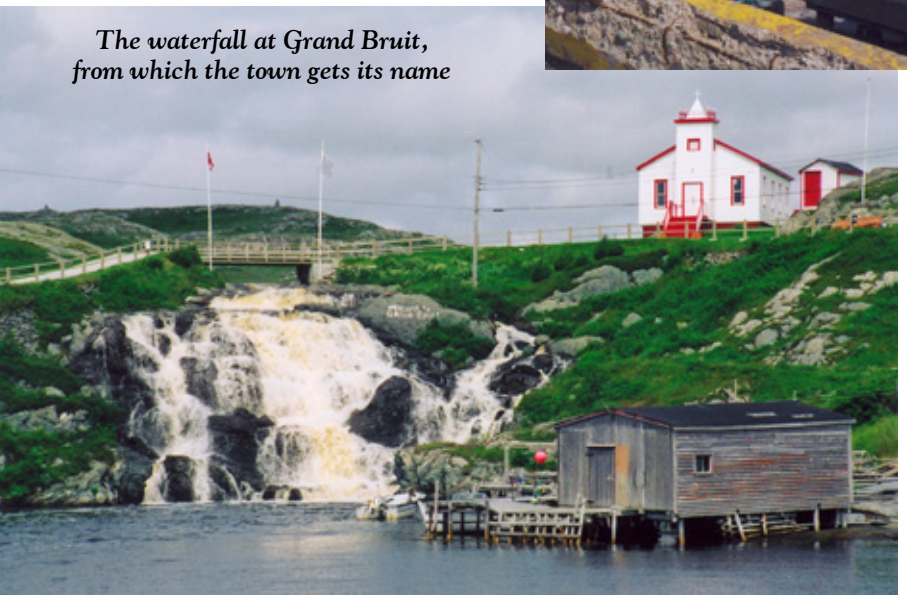
The docks at Grand Bank harbour, with Bluewater in the middle





A fisherman's colourful dockhouse and dory in Rose Blanche

The waterfall at Grand Bruit, from which the town gets its name



abandoned villages, however, several houses are now being fixed up by descendants of the original inhabitants to be used as summer cottages. We walked quite a distance and found several graveyards, all suffering from years of neglect. Nevertheless the tombstones made fascinating reading, telling stories of suffering, illness, and also great love and respect.

From Oderin we had a romping good reach east across Placentia Bay to the port of Argentia, where a ferry from Nova Scotia calls during the summer months. Besides the ferry terminal Argentia has several commercial wharves, most in poor repair, on the site of an abandoned US Naval Air Base. Fortunately we found a spot that looked reasonably secure and located our Canadian friends, a bit weary from their fifteen hour crossing. That's about all we can say that's positive about Argentia.

Morning dawned foggy and wet – a nasty combination of dew, mist and drizzle – but fortunately the wind Gods brought a welcome northeasterly breeze, a perfect direction for heading back across Placentia Bay to the southwest. And as the day progressed the fog and dampness lifted, giving us a very pleasant sail for the 55 miles to the Burin Peninsula and the town of the same name. Once a major fishing centre, Burin is now more of a 'has been' fishing village. However many of the homes, churches and other buildings have been maintained in excellent condition, making this a very attractive harbour. It is also stunning from the scenic standpoint, with mountainous islands surrounding the harbour and giving it protection from all directions.

We tied to what appeared to be the normal government wharf – one side was home to a Coast Guard Search and Rescue station, the other side public. As we pulled alongside uniformed Coasties came and took our lines – very efficient – and from this point forward our typical docking became anything but typical. Many of the Coast Guard crew stayed for a long chat, then the station chief came out and offered us every conceivable convenience – hot showers, internet connection, laundry machines, hose for fresh water, use of his car to get groceries, etc. Needless to say we thoroughly enjoyed their boundless generosity and 'gamming'.

Our next several days took us back to the west, seeing ports already visited on our way east, so we'll skip ahead to some new harbours. One was the fjord of Hare Bay. It was by far the steepest, tallest, deepest fjord we'd seen and it just took our breath away, sailing nearly 5 miles up to where the river opened up into a wider bay. By now we'd learned that, to anchor properly in a Newfoundland fjord, one must be near a waterfall where the sun can be seen setting over a mountaintop.

From Hare Bay we had several choices of new harbours, but with a nasty low pressure system approaching we decided to go for the security of a known fjord where we could find good protection and holding – Grey River. What a first night … it poured with rain and when we awoke the next morning, that little waterfall we'd anchored next to had turned into Niagara Falls. Water was cascading down so fast and in such volume, we couldn't believe it was the same stream. In fact there were now hundreds of waterfalls coming down from the hills in every direction – it was an awesome sight. The low persisted for another two days, so we stayed inside Grey River (it has three arms) moving anchorages to help dispel the boredom of looking at the same incredible scenery two days in a row.

Another new spot, Culotte Cove, sounded secure and interesting according to *The Cruising Guide to Newfoundland* (Puffin Press). It was indeed snug and picturesque, with hilly rather than mountainous terrain inshore and rocky islands protecting us to seaward. With an early departure we arrived in plenty of time for hiking the hills. Up through the marshy tundra, we followed animal trails near a stream until we saw this absolutely gorgeous lake surrounded by steep hills and rocks everywhere. It was a warm, sunny day and the water was surprisingly warm, so someone suggested a swim *au naturel*. Wow, did that feel great! After air-drying in the brisk wind we climbed a hill that looked almost straight down on *Bluewater* from 400ft overhead. What incredible sights – besides looking out to sea, we could watch eagles and osprey roaming the area for fresh fish.

How would we top Culotte Cove? Not hard, we just motored in the early morning calm to the next harbour, Grand Bruit, just seven miles away. Here we entered a circular cove between two enormous outcrops, which then opened up to the neatest little town you could possibly imagine. Houses and docks all surround a 75ft waterfall that spills directly into the harbour – hence the French name meaning 'great noise'. No sooner had we tied up to the ubiquitous government wharf than our crew was off meeting locals. It seems about 80 percent of the people have the same name – Billard – all descended from British and Welsh settlers of the 1700s. Nearly all the houses are immaculately painted, lawns manicured and flowers planted just so. We had a good walkabout and felt most welcome in this idyllic little community. We poked into the local gathering/drinking spot, a tiny shack overlooking the harbour named Cramalot Inn. Inside we found more than a few empty beer bottles, plus some intriguing historic photos of the town taken before the demise of the fisheries. We thought, now THIS is the best town we've seen along the coast. So hard to compare – they're all wonderful.

Onward we sailed to La Poile Bay where we found an isolated little cove snuggled up close to an island, next to little side coves where the tide formed rapids rushing in and out of the narrow entrances. After a while the scenery seems so fantastic that you can't believe it's all really real … and there are virtually no other cruising boats around. In a month of cruising we shared an anchorage with other boats just once.

From La Poile we motor-sailed to Rose Blanche, where we docked among the fishing boats on a quiet Sunday. Rose Blanche is trying to survive the government's fisheries cutbacks and is succeeding to some degree. The townspeople have restored a handsome granite lighthouse and turned the area into an attractive tourist venue, made accessible by a relatively new road from Port aux Basques are also several harbourside walking trails which make exploration of the town most enjoyable.

Our last sail took us back to Port aux Basques where our Canadian guests caught the ferry to Sydney, Nova Scotia.

We've heard it said that what's important in measuring the quality of life is not how many breaths you've taken – it's how many times your breath has been taken away. We're grateful to have had a summer cruising Newfoundland filled with breathtaking sights and lasting friendships – in fact, we found Newfoundland so outlandishly beautiful, we *will* be going back.

OCC OWL
Margo and Clive Egginton

(*Margo and Clive are cruising the Caribbean aboard* Revid*, their She 31.*)

It was late afternoon and we were cruising along the south coast of Cuba, about 5 miles offshore, on our way round the west end to Cayos de Lena, when an owl landed on one of the solar panels, gripping onto the edge. I quickly grabbed the digital camera – flat batteries! – so pulled out my old camera and started snapping, expecting the owl to fly off. He wasn't going anywhere, though. He found himself a more comfortable perch on the lifebelt, then on the outboard. We put out some fresh water for him but he ignored that. He didn't seem bothered by us but he didn't like the sails flapping, but then nor did we. He didn't bother with the engine noise either – he was one very tired bird.

He spent part of the night on the outboard, then decided that there was a better perch under the sprayhood. I quickly closed the hatch as I didn't want him flying down below, but he made himself comfortable, with his claws on the mainsail halyard and his bottom on the cockpit speaker. Whenever I went down below to plot our position I had to crawl under the hatch to avoid disturbing Fidel (well, what else could you call an owl that close to Cuba?). Our usual seat on night watch is in the companionway, leaning on the hatch cover. Clive had Fidel leaning on him while he was on watch.



Fidel, the migrant short eared owl

Next morning, while Fidel was making himself more comfortable under the sprayhood, he overbalanced. Since there wasn't enough room for him to use his wings he fell down through the hatch onto Clive's head, bouncing onto the cabin sole. I handed Clive some thick gloves and a rag for protection, but he made no attempt to peck while Clive replaced him under the sprayhood .

As we turned into the cut into Cayos de Lena we could hear the birdsong above the engine – and so could Fidel. He was like an excited child. As I rounded up to anchor Fidel flew to the guard rail and was off before Clive got the anchor down. Unknowingly, we had probably taken him to owl paradise – no people but lots of mangroves, birds etc.

We had the privilege of Fidel's company for 23½ hours, during which time he really became part of the boat. His face was incredibly expressive, although we did find it a bit disconcerting when one minute we were looking at the back of his head and the next at his face without any apparent movement of his body. That would be a great facility for



Sleepy owl!

watch keeping! The only noise he made was a clacking reminiscent of false teeth, generally if we went up and down through the hatch too quickly or too often.

When our birdwatching friends consulted their numerous books they concluded that Fidel was a migrant short eared owl. It was decided that he was migrating because he had hairy legs, and it seems they quite often land on boats and oil rigs for a rest. He was one of the highlights of our cruise and we hope he made it to his final destination. (Our friends thought they might put up a sign on their boat offering free trips for owls.) We had three cattle egrets later on the same trip but they were not very bright – they tried sheltering on deck behind the rolled up dinghy but got wet every so often and left pretty quickly. We have had other birds land on *Revid*, but Fidel will always be *numero uno*.

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Be very careful, then, how you live – not as unwise but
as wise, making the most of every opportunity.

Ephesians 5:15-16

THIS PAGE CARRIED AN
ADVERTISEMENT
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MEDICAL EMERGENCIES AT SEA
Martin Thomas

(*Martin combines his career as a surgeon with serious sailing. He joined the OCC in 1987 after competing in the previous year's Two-handed Transatlantic Race with our current Commodore, and in 1999 completed the Azores and Back Race in his classic 8-Metre,* Charm of Rhu.)

Please note that the author cannot accept any responsibility for the outcome of drug treatment or first aid administered.

There are few more frightening experiences than to suffer illness or injury in a small boat at sea. The real skill in managing medical emergencies at sea is to avoid them – remember that prevention is better than cure, and that common things are common. When your crewman slumps down on the quayside, he is less likely to have had a cardiac arrest than to have taken a tot too much rum. Remember also to do the simple things well. The skipper should equip the boat with an adequate medical kit and have knowledge in how to use it. Just as important is that the skipper should run the vessel in such a way that the chance of illness and injury is minimised.

COLD, FATIGUE and SEASICKNESS

More boats and their crews have suffered more problems from cold, fatigue and sickness than any other medical cause. Each affects our ability to function and each makes the other two worse. We recognise that multiple layers of clothing under modern weatherproof gear will keep out the cold, but they must be put on in good time and before we get wet.

Fatigue is a real problem which creeps up unseen – remember Pete Goss returning to Raphael Dinelli in the Southern Ocean, when he initially plotted his position incorrectly through sheer exhaustion. A good watch system to which everyone adheres, including the skipper, is the key to avoiding fatigue. Crew must take regular rest, food and drink so that when a crisis occurs – whether a storm at night, a rock-strewn, fog-bound coast, or a galley fire – they can deal with it effectively.

There is no easy cure for seasickness, but like cold and fatigue it can to some extent be alleviated. We know that sick crew are often novice, apprehensive, have failed to take medication or have a hangover. Rushing down to the boat on a Friday night after a hard week in the office, consuming four pints and a curry, and then setting off at midnight straight into a force 6 is asking for trouble. So if we start in the morning into light weather when fresh and sober, having taken medication, there is some chance of not hanging over the lee rail hoping for death to intervene.

MEDICAL PLANNING

It is important to plan ahead, especially if travelling far. Any sailor known to have a medical condition such as diabetes, asthma, epilepsy or allergy must take adequate medication, and it is helpful for them to have a deeper understanding of their condition

than the landlubber. A visit to the doctor will help. Allow plenty of time for immunisations – three months may be required. Remember to arrange and then to take malarial prophylaxis if appropriate. A dental check up is sensible. Some crews like to arrange medical insurance to enable repatriation. For men over 65 it is worth taking a urinary catheter. My father developed acute retention of urine while sailing single handed in the Channel at the age of 77, a very unpleasant experience.

INFECTIONS

Infections are caught more readily in port than at sea. Many can be treated by simple methods and antibiotics are not always necessary. For instance *otitis externa* (swimmer's ear) can be helped by stopping swimming and treating the ear canal with dilute vinegar in a cotton wool bud. Antibiotics should be carried, but in my view the number of drugs should be kept to a useful minimum. Like nautical knots, the ship needs a few good ones that work well.

Be prepared for jelly fish stings, and bites from insects and other creepy crawlies. An insect in the ear can drive people insane. The treatment is not to try and drown it, as illustrated in some manuals, as that simply makes the creature more cross. The trick is to instil a few drops of olive oil, which stops it dead. Remember to pick out the corpse.

DEHYDRATION

Dehydration can readily occur on a boat. When crew are cold, tired and sick, fluid intake is poor. Ballast crew sitting on the windward rail all the way to the Fastnet Rock with constant salt water in their faces can become very dry. Tropical heat, a fever, gastroenteritis with diarrhoea – all will cause excess fluid loss and can lead to serious collapse. The treatment is fluid and salt in copious amounts. If a proprietary electrolyte solution is not available then prepare your own. The formula is 8 flat teaspoons of sugar and ½ a teaspoon of salt to 1 litre of clean (bottled or boiled) water. In really severe cases as much as 10 litres (18 pints) a day may be needed. A person can survive on electrolyte solution alone for two weeks or more.

TRAUMA

Prevention is better than cure, and in a well run ship with good routines much trauma can be avoided. The risk of accidents rises with fatigue, with an untidy vessel, with hatches open during deck work, and when novice crew are asked to do unfamiliar tasks such as work the anchor windlass.

Cuts should be washed with antiseptic and, if clean, then sutured, taped or glued. Do not glue yourself to the patient. If the cut is dirty, after washing with antiseptic any foreign material such as wood splinters should be picked out, the wound left open and a sterile dressing applied. Analgesia (pain relief) and perhaps antibiotics should be administered.

Bleeding is staunched by direct pressure over the bleeding point. Lie the victim down, apply a bandage and elevate the part. Analgesia is required as pain can make shock worse. Fluids to replace the lost blood should be given. Do not use a tourniquet.

Fractures at sea are a disaster as the use of all limbs is needed to move around safely and



Heads at risk from the boom aboard Martin's 8-Metre, Charm of Rhu

to work the boat. Fractured limbs should be gently straightened, then immobilised with a splint. For an arm, a sling made from a triangular bandage is usually sufficient. For a leg, a splint is required and often the other leg will suffice. Place a pillow between the legs and bind them together. The patient needs to be immobilised in a bunk with a lee cloth to prevent further injury. Fluids and analgesia will help alleviate shock.

Head injury from the boom can be lethal. Care and constant vigil are needed to avoid this disaster. Employ a boom preventer*. When running in heavy weather or before the tradewinds skippers can elect to drop the main, stow the boom and run on headsails alone.

Feet: I discourage bare feet on deck, especially when anchoring.

Hands: rope burns, knives and fish hooks are a constant danger to hands and fingers. Hands can be severely damaged by winches, the anchor windlass, engine, prop shaft and in the galley. Some boats have a deck button to control the windlass. With a foot on the button and while leaning forward to handle the chain, a gloved hand can become entangled in the turning windlass. The victim is pulled down with their foot trapped on the button and a severely mangled hand can be the result. Bernard Moitessier emphasised in his writings the prudent care of hands.

BURNS

Burns are horrible. Burn victims suffer severe pain, fluid loss, infection and smoke inhalation. At best a burn will completely ruin your cruise and at worst a burn is life threatening. Again prevention is better than cure. For instance, do not hold a cup in one hand and pour boiling water from a kettle into it from the other. A rogue wave will cause a scald. To avoid such an injury place the mug in the sink first and then only half fill it. Hand cups of coffee up to the cockpit in a washing up bowl. A burnt hand should be plunged into cold water for ten minutes to remove the heat, then covered in an antiseptic cream such as Flamazine and placed in a plastic bag sealed at the wrist. For burns elsewhere, Clingfilm is an excellent dressing. It conforms to the contours of the body and helps keep the fluid in and infection out. Pain relief and fluids are essential, and in some cases antibiotics are advised.

HYPOTHERMIA and DROWNING

Hypothermia can occur during a prolonged period on deck. Symptoms include irritability, lethargy, slurred speech, loss of memory and an unresponsive state leading to coma. My crew often seem to exhibit these symptoms, but with hypothermia the symptoms are much worse.

Drowning is the fear of all who go to sea. Once the victim has been hauled back aboard assess them for signs of life. This means checking for A, B and C – airway, breathing and circulation. If these are present then roll the patient on their side and press the upper abdomen. This is to empty the stomach, which will be full of seawater which can be vomited and inhaled, threatening recovery. Place the casualty in the recovery position (see below) and remove wet clothing. Wrap in warm covers, perhaps including a space blanket, and lay in a bunk with a companion alongside to help the

* See also Ian's Nicolson's suggestions for *Better Booms* on page 53 of this issue.



Modern oilskins protect the wearer in a way undreamed off fifty years ago

warming process. If the victim is conscious offer hot sweet drinks.

If there are no signs of life then the airway, breathing and circulation must be checked and cardiopulmonary resuscitation commenced. The airway is most commonly blocked by the tongue, but also sometimes by a foreign body, dentures or vomit. Check for circulation by feeling for the carotid pulse in the neck or the femoral pulse in the groin (you can practise in the bath). Do not waste time trying to empty the lungs of water. The process of CPR will do this and, anyway, the amount of water in the lungs is often quite small. For people with hypothermia and near-drowning, and for children, CPR should be continued. Do not give up. The principles of CPR are shown in the table, and also apply to collapse and cardiac arrest.

The recovery position

To place a casualty (who is usually lying on their back) in the recovery position, first kneel beside them. Place the arm nearest to you palm up in the 'stop traffic' position. Bring the other arm over towards you and hold it against the casualty's cheek with the palm out. Lift the furthest leg up, bending the knee but keeping the foot flat on the floor, and roll the casualty towards yourself into the semi-prone position. Adjust the final pose by bending the upper leg to a right angle and tilting the head back to keep the airway open.

CONCLUSION

Prevention is better than cure. With good preparation and anticipation the crew of a well-run ship will suffer fewer illnesses and less trauma. Take a comprehensive but not over-complicated medical kit and know how to use it. Self reliance is important. Seek advice if you can, but realise there is a limit to what can be achieved over the radio.

MEDICAL EQUIPMENT

RECOMMENDED	SUGGESTIONS
antibiotics	Augmentin, trimethoprim, flucloxacillin, ciprofloxacin, metronidazole, chioramphenicol eye ointment
analgesia	paracetamol (morphine)
anti-inflammatory	diclofenac, ibuprofen
anti-emetic	Stugeron, Buccastem
diarrhoea	electrolyte drink (Dioralyte, Isostar), loperamide
indigestion	
laxatives	
antimalarials	
personal medication	diabetes, asthma, epilepsy, heart, allergies
sunburn	hat & shirt, sunblock
insects	insect repellent (Deet), (olive oil)
antiseptic	Savlon, Flamazine
sterile dressings	melolin, gauze
paraffin gauze	Jelonet
wound tapes	Steristrips, superglue
crepe bandages	
triangular bandage	sling
elastic strapping	elastoplast
assorted plasters	band-aid
scissors, forceps, safety pins	
clingfilm	
calomine lotion	
clinical thermometer	
disposable gloves	
first aid manual	

Remember that drugs have side effects and that Augmentin contains a penicillin

OPTIONAL

wound glue	dental filling (Cavit)
suture kit	urethral catheter
scalpel	needles and syringes
finger stall	lignocaine
finger bandage applicator	space blanket
eye patch	splint
dental mirror	digital camera and access to a medical website

BURNS PREVENTION

Never cook in swimwear only
Wear an apron
Don't boil saucepans of water in rough weather
Fill mugs in the sink and only half full
Pass mugs up to cockpit in a bowl
Beware working on a hot engine
Beware sunburn
Use hat, shirt, bimini, awning

BURNS TREATMENT

Immerse in cold water for 10 minutes
Clingfilm cover to burnt area or
Flamazine and dressing or
Flamazine and plastic bag
Don't prick blisters
Fluids
Analgesia
Antibiotics

FRACTURES

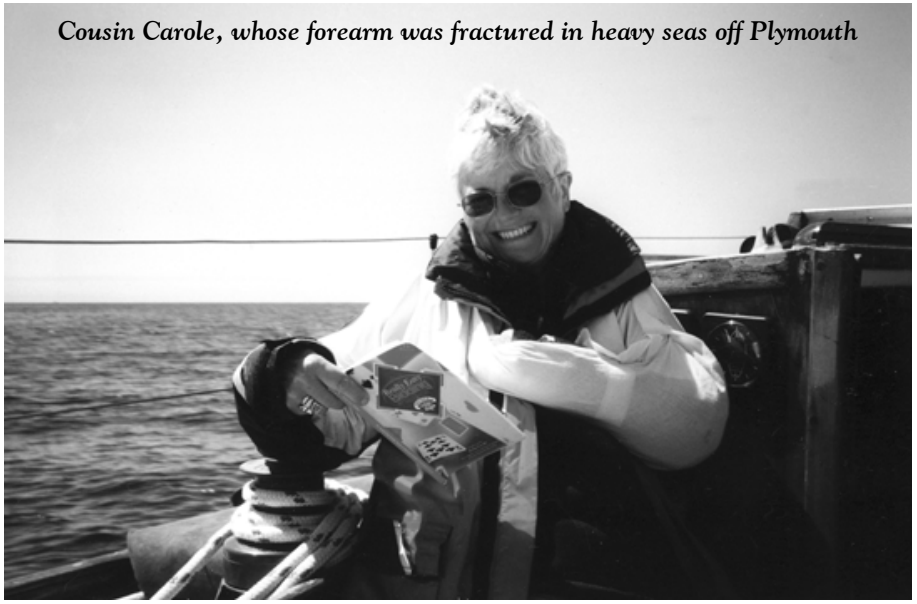
Gently straighten limb
Immobilise the limb with splint
Immobilise patient in a bunk

Analgesia
Fluids
Warmth

INFECTIONS

TYPE	SYMPTOM	TREATMENT	ANTIBIOTIC
Skin	sores, cuts, infected bites	clean with antiseptic	Augmentin/ flucloxacillin
Sinusitis	facial pain, headache	stop snorkelling	Augmentin
Chest	green sputum	breathing/coughing	Augmentin
Cold/cough	white sputum	none	none
Eye	conjunctivitis/red eye	wash eye with water	chloramphenicol ointment
Ear	itching, discharge	stop swimming – vinegar cotton wool	otosporin
Cystitis	painful wee	drink plenty fluids take cranberry juice	trimethoprim
Diarrhoea	loose bowels	fluids	none
	above plus blood	fluids	ciprofloxacin
Athlete's foot	itching between toes, cracked skin	separate towels	micovazole, daktarin
Malaria	fever, chills, headache	prophylactic tabs	treatment tabs

Remember that drugs have side effects and that Augmentin contains a penicillin



Cousin Carole, whose forearm was fractured in heavy seas off Plymouth

CARDIOPULMONARY RESUSCITATION

Patient on a hard surface
Tongue is commonest cause of obstruction
Two persons, one on each side of patient
Alternate tasks to prevent fatigue
15 cardiac compressions to every two breaths
When pulse returns continue ventilation
When breathing returns place in recovery position

KEEP GOING:
For drowning, hypothermia, electrocution and children

DROWNING – CHECK A B C

If ABC satisfactory:

Place on side, press abdomen to empty stomach
Remove wet clothing
Recovery position
Dry warm covers, space blanket
Companion in bunk
Hot sweet drinks if conscious

If ABC not satisfactory:

Start CPR
Do not waste time emptying lungs
Keep going

THIS PAGE CARRIED AN ADVERTISEMENT

WITH SOLACE TO TRINIDAD IN 1953
Chich Thornton

(*Not many members are able to look back 50 years to their first ocean passage, but founder members Chich Thornton and Victor Clark are amongst them…*)

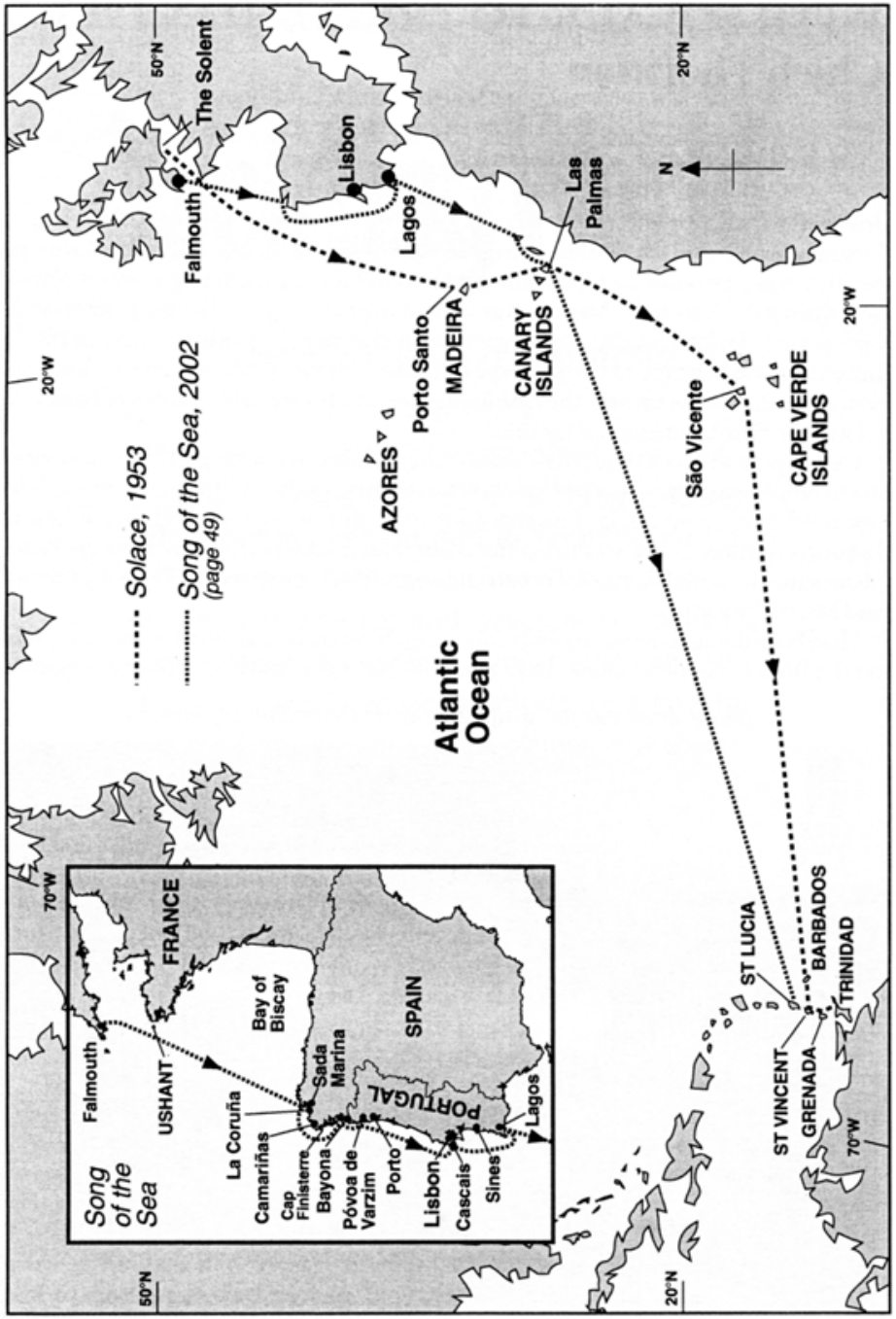
Solace was the yacht chosen by Victor Clark, when he retired from the Royal Navy longing to sail round the world. He had crewed aboard an old salt-fishing smack in the North Sea as a teenager, and spent many years in naval ships, including action at Narvik and against the *Bismarck*. After he was sunk in the *Repulse* in 1942 he ran commando raids against the Japanese, was sunk again, and had amazing adventures in the jungle. In the end he was betrayed to the Japanese by locals, for money, and became a prisoner of war. After the war he became the dashing captain of a frigate, which is where I met him – I was the First Lieutenant of his ship.

Our ways parted for a time after I 'retired' from the Navy, but six years later he invited me to help him on the first leg of his circumnavigation, as he was new to yachting. I did not need much persuading. I arranged for time off from my job and joined him at Lymington where *Solace* was being fitted out. Humphrey Barton was advising Victor about suitable modifications for ocean cruising, and the work was being done at Smith and Marshall's yard.

I had been doing some racing and cruising, most recently chartering an ancient yacht on the West Coast of Scotland. I had also done plenty of armchair yachting – Slocum,

Solace dried out for antifouling in St Peter Port, Guernsey







Reid's Hotel, just outside Funchal, where Sir Winston Churchill used to stay – and still going strong

Voss and many other books including *Vertue XXXV* by Hum Barton. This chronicled his recent adventures in 'the smallest vessel that has ever crossed the Atlantic ocean from east to west', to quote the blurb.

Compared to *Vertue's* five tons and 25ft 3in, *Solace* had nine tons, a waterline length of 27ft and was 33ft overall. She was already 26 years old, built to order in 1927 by Hillyard of Littlehampton. Her first owner wished her to look like some large Herreshoff yacht that had taken his fancy. By the time I joined in August nearly all the work had been done. "Over the financial details," wrote Victor in his beautiful book *On the Wind of a Dream*, "I prefer to draw a discreet veil! ... The expense was fantastic."

We sailed over to Guernsey in fine weather to apply the Kobe Green antifouling, then returned to do all the extra things which needed to be done before our departure – we were determined to sail at the beginning of September, to avoid the hurricane season in the West Indies. Provisioning was quite an experience. I had recently become a car-owner, and my pre-war Morris Minor ferried great loads of food to the quayside. I recall eggs in waterglass (sodium silicate) being stowed in large numbers, though I forget what else we had to embark.

We had a spin in the Solent with Hum, in a sou'westerly force 5–6 over a sluicing ebb, and about a week later sailed for Madeira. Kindly northerlies wafted us along, and we covered the 1300 miles to Porto Santo in just thirteen days. After a couple of days there we spent a rough night at sea on the way to Madeira. We stayed a full week in Funchal

harbour, then a magical place. Friends ashore were very hospitable, but returning hospitality was difficult when the southeaster kicked up a sea in the harbour. Boatwork became tricky and seasickness was a hazard for the guests.

At that stage Victor began to have ear trouble. The Portuguese doctors did their best, but our departure was delayed. When we finally sailed for Barbados we had calms, then headwinds. A lot of water found its way below whenever the lee rail was buried as the deck canvas had not been properly fitted. Perhaps it was as well that we didn't get too far, as early one morning when I hoisted the mizzen a port shroud plate carried away, broken cleanly in two pieces. Quick action saved the mast but the episode revealed a defect which might have been tricky in mid-Atlantic – all the fine, galvanised-steel shroud plates were in fact made of elderly brass. The zinc had come to the surface, weakening the alloy and giving a thoroughly misleading appearance.

We set a course for Las Palmas in the Canary Islands, and there Victor found an engineer who was willing to refit all the shroud plates at a very reasonable price. Victor's ear was still not right, so it now had attention from Spanish doctors. The noise and stink and oily water of the harbour at Las Palmas contrasted poorly with the delights of Madeira, although we were hospitably entertained ashore several times. There were thieves to be coped with at night, and even though we had Fernando, a night watchman with a reputation for honesty, Victor found himself forestalling a raid one night when Fernando was ashore sick.

Eventually we sailed again for Barbados, this time with fair winds under an overcast sky, but Victor's ear again gave him bad pain and we had to alter course for the Cape

Approaching the Cape Verde Islands



Verde Islands. Romping along, 137 miles in 24 hours, the water level under the counter was high enough to reveal another defect which might have been troublesome in mid-Atlantic – the packing in the rudderpost gland needed attention. We found a stream of water coming from the gland, which explained the extra pumping we had been having to do. It also explained some alarming bangs we had heard when running under self-steering conditions, which was a relief.

During our week at São Vicente, the deep water port of the Cape Verde Islands, Victor's ear was attended to by Portuguese doctors – at a price, of course. The gland was repacked by a friendly Welsh engineer for free. São Vicente was an interesting place to visit at that time. It is a volcanic island with no water and had been a coaling station for ships. It had also been a cable station, where morse messages were read and tapped out again, on the next stage of their long journeys by undersea cable. A small British community still ran the cable station, and entertained us very kindly. They even had a golf course, despite all water having to be shipped in. What the rest of the population did for a living I never discovered. I think the changeover from coal to oil had left them unemployed.

On our first night there some locals boarded *Solace* while the watchman, another Fernando, slept peacefully in the cockpit. They were getting on quite well with emptying the forepeak when Victor was woken by pains in his ear. Here was the chance for a chase, just the kind of thing Victor really enjoyed. In no time he had commandeered a boat from a nearby schooner, and he and Fernando, as interpreter, were being rowed like mad after the thieves. Victor was quite undeterred by missiles flung by the thieves, such as linseed oil (from the forepeak). To cut a long story short, they made it to the shore and Victor continued the chase barefoot. He was still in his pyjamas, by then completely soaked from jumping out of the boat too soon. Three of the four thieves got away but were later caught and questioned, the other having died from a heart attack during the chase, and we were able to recover a good many of our missing items. A full and very entertaining first hand account of all this can be found in Victor's book, *On the Wind of a Dream*, published by Hutchinson in 1960. Running barefoot over volcanic rock is not to be recommended, and at the end of his account Victor comments drily, "I now needed medical attention at both extremities ...".

It wasn't long before he was ready to put to sea, and this time we really were bound for Barbados. I have the fondest memories of all the weeks we took for the crossing. I loved the sun in the daytime and the stars at night, the sunsets and the sunrises. Sometimes the sunrises showed an effect like the Japanese flag. I loved the quiet of a passage under sail, and every other aspect of being at sea.

We had no problems with battery charging, as the only electrical thing on board was a fine old (valve) radio receiver. My memories of this set were that it had given up completely after the drenching it suffered between Madeira and Las Palmas, but in fact we did use it for time checks later. There were no other electrics. All lights used paraffin, as did our cooking facilities. There was no echo-sounder, no anemometer and no pilot log, still less a dial to show speeds. The old-style Walker log, towed from the quarter, was effective and reliable. Sounding, when needed, was by lead and line.



Solace under sail off Porto Santo, northeast of Madeira



Under all plain sail, looking aft down Solace's port side deck



Solace at anchor

Looking at the mass of electrical equipment on a modern yacht gives one pause for thought. Is it all really necessary? We had no transmitter, let alone a fax or the internet, and GPS had not been invented. We had no electrical self-steering. We had no radar. We had no EPIRB. Indeed our liferaft, kindly donated by Hum, had been *Vertue XXXV*'s and was so neglected by us that I do not know if it would have floated.

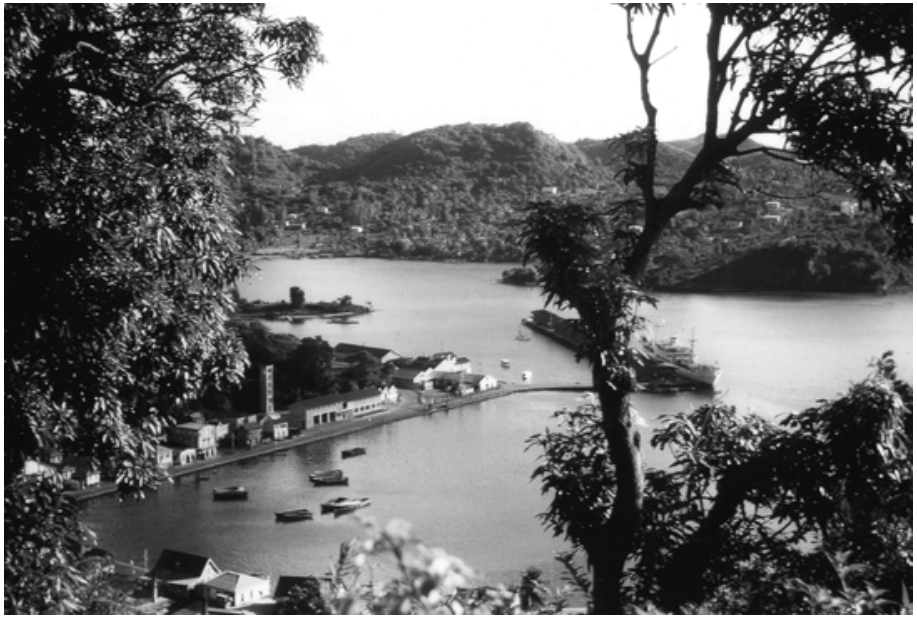
As for the engine, it was a large and powerful diesel which must have seen a lot of service in the days when *Solace* was based in the Channel Islands. I do not remember our using it at all, but Victor's book, written a few years later, includes an imaginative passage about our joint efforts to start it in the Grenadines. On this ocean passage it was just dead weight, with a large propeller which slowed us up and made an unwelcome noise if allowed to turn. A few months after I left the ship it proved useful in the Panama Canal, then "never worked again", according to Victor's book.

Progress was slow for the first week or two, mainly because of light winds, force 2–3, but also because of the modest sail area. We made measurements and found that the entry in Lloyds' Register credited *Solace* with half again as much canvas as she actually had. Perhaps the original sail plan had been reduced because the effect of scaling down the Herreshoff design had been to make the ship too tender. The lack of sail area had probably made little difference in the Channel Islands, with the big iron tops'l down below.

I had no complaints at all with our leisurely progress, but I think Victor felt rather frustrated. For the first few days he also had more pain from his ear, despite the best efforts of all the Portuguese and Spanish experts. Then he applied what he called 'granny's remedy' – a little warm olive oil – and all was well. As a diversion he had a mongrelly little puppy which a doctor at São Vicente had pressed upon him. He seemed very fond of this funny little dog, which he insisted was a 'Cape Verde Terrier' and named Yo-Yo. The little dog was certainly quite an amiable shipmate and really seemed to enjoy life on board.

For more diversion we did experiments with the twin staysail self-steering. Basically this was quite simple – just sheets rove through (almost) frictionless blocks and secured to the tiller. The sails were hoisted on two stays near the mast, with the tacks on wire pendants and clews shackled to the end of the twin booms. The heels of the booms fitted into swivels on the mast. A single guy was attached to the outboard end of one boom, then rove through blocks on the bowsprit and the outboard end of the other boom, and so back to the mast. We experimented with making this arrangement work for various wind directions. The secret was to increase the tension in one of the sheets by means of a snatch block with a rope tail. I called this an 'intensifier', but Victor didn't like that name. Later he found a proper nautical term for it, namely 'inhaul'. With the aid of this it was possible to have self-steering on quite a wide range of courses, and even to set the mizzen with the twin staysails.

We both enjoyed fixing the ship by taking sights with the sextant. For accurate time we used the marvellous, self-winding, Rolex watch on Victor's wrist. It usually had a rate of less than a second a day, but on two occasions anomalous results suggested the watch had jumped as much as half a minute, so it was useful to have the radio receiver for time



St George's, Grenada

checks. My favourite was a morning star sight, but this needed both of us to be awake at an early hour.

We also honed our galley skills on the single gimballed primus, quite a new experience for Victor. I had brought one of the new-fangled pressure cookers with me, and it proved invaluable. It was amazing what a variety of tasty meals one could produce with it. I always knew when I had produced a *chef d'oeuvre*, because Victor would then want an extra helping. Particularly delicious at breakfast time was the occasional fresh flying fish, cooked in a pan. We also started with an oven, but luckily the thieves at São Vicente disposed of that, using it as a missile during the chase. Baking might have been more difficult.

Eventually we reached Barbados and brought up on the gorgeous coral sand near the yacht club. The brilliant colours in the water seemed too good to be true. Lush green ashore was also very noticeable after the blues and browns and yellows of the past 26 days. Later, when lecturing to sailors about this trip, I used to compare the experience of our landfall after sailing a long way with that of arriving at a pub after walking a long way. It seemed to strike a chord.

The yacht club members were tremendously hospitable, and even though we were only there two days they made it seem much longer. I remember being rather disappointed to learn that nine transatlantic yachts had already arrived that year. I remember also the delicious taste of freshly squeezed West Indian lime juice, and discovered why the commercial lime juice in Britain in those days was so poor by comparison – it was, of

course, the added oil from crushed skins (crushed, not squeezed) which made the difference.

From Barbados the aim was to sail to Trinidad and find a ship which would take me back to the UK. I needed to be back in six weeks, and voyages by ship take time, so we did not have too much to spare. At St Vincent, Victor piloted us into a deserted anchorage on the south side, and I landed and walked into Kingstown while he relaxed. It was fascinating to see and hear a Caribbean steel band in Kingstown, and to see how they made their instruments out of the 44 gallon drums which abounded at that time.

Then we headed off for the marvellous Grenadines, mostly quite deserted in those days. Two incidents particularly impressed me. One was anchoring off an uninhabited island in the cool of the evening, with virtually no wind but quite a strong current running past the ship. It occurred to me that falling over the side would simply be fatal. I could not remember being in such a situation before.

The other incident was more congenial. We were anchored in a bay, with hills quite close to the east and west and no lights at all on the shore. The night was moonless, with magnificent stars. It was an amazing experience to see the rising stars suddenly appear, at full brightness, from behind the hill to the east. In the same way the setting stars suddenly disappeared behind the hill to the west. The effect was to create a strong sensation of the rotation of the heavens (or the earth, according to taste).

South of the Grenadines lies Grenada, with its beautiful harbour of St George's where we lay for several days. The whole place was visually attractive and seemed unchanged for decades, if not centuries. There had been a heavy rainstorm just before we arrived – 9 inches in 24 hours – which impressed me. Then the day after we arrived Victor fell sick and had to go to hospital. Again the yacht club members were very friendly. One of them told me, perhaps more than once, how he had an (extramarital) child conceived during a game of cricket, while he was retrieving the ball from long grass.

When Victor recovered we sailed for Trinidad. Our passage through the Dragon's Mouth into the Gulf of Paria was spectacular. With high land on each side and no wind we were treated to the blackest thunderclouds I have ever seen, accompanied by vivid lightning and torrential rain. We manned the halyards, prepared for anything. But nothing happened – a helpful tidal stream carried us through.

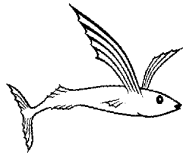
As a retired Naval Officer I was entitled in those days to passage in Fleet Auxiliaries. Victor went ashore, used his remarkable talents for dealing with people in ports, and found me a berth in an Admiralty tanker about to sail for Gibraltar. Luckily the destination was later changed to Plymouth. I was less lucky with the attitude of the captain, who had had more than enough of retired admirals and their wives taking free passage from wintry Britain to sunny climes, and return. Despite my comparative youth and amiability I was totally banned from the bridge, and told I should keep well away from him at meals. The other officers were very friendly, however, and used to smuggle me up to the bridge from time to time.

The ship docked just a few days before I was due back at work. It had been a wonderful few months and I was very grateful to Victor for having me as his guest. Later he met up with a young West Indian who wished to crew, took him on board, and trained him up

in all things nautical as they went on round the world. Stanley is now a retired ship's captain, I believe.

As for *Solace*, in the South Pacific a sudden change of wind wrecked her while she was anchored in the lee of Palmerston Island, outside the reef. The amazing tale of the islanders dragging her across the lagoon and rebuilding her is told in Victor's book. Further work was done in Auckland, and Victor continued his voyage. Now, 50 years on, she has been taken over by a nephew who hopes to get her sailing again. Victor, who is approaching his 95th birthday and is believed to be the club's oldest member, lives in Somerset.

(*I was lucky enough to acquire a copy of Victor Clark's* On the Wind of a Dream *recently, and would be happy to lend it to any member willing to pay the return postage – and to swear on oath that it WILL be returned. Ed*)



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WILD LIFE AND WILD PLACES – VAGRANT IN ALASKA
Bill McLaren

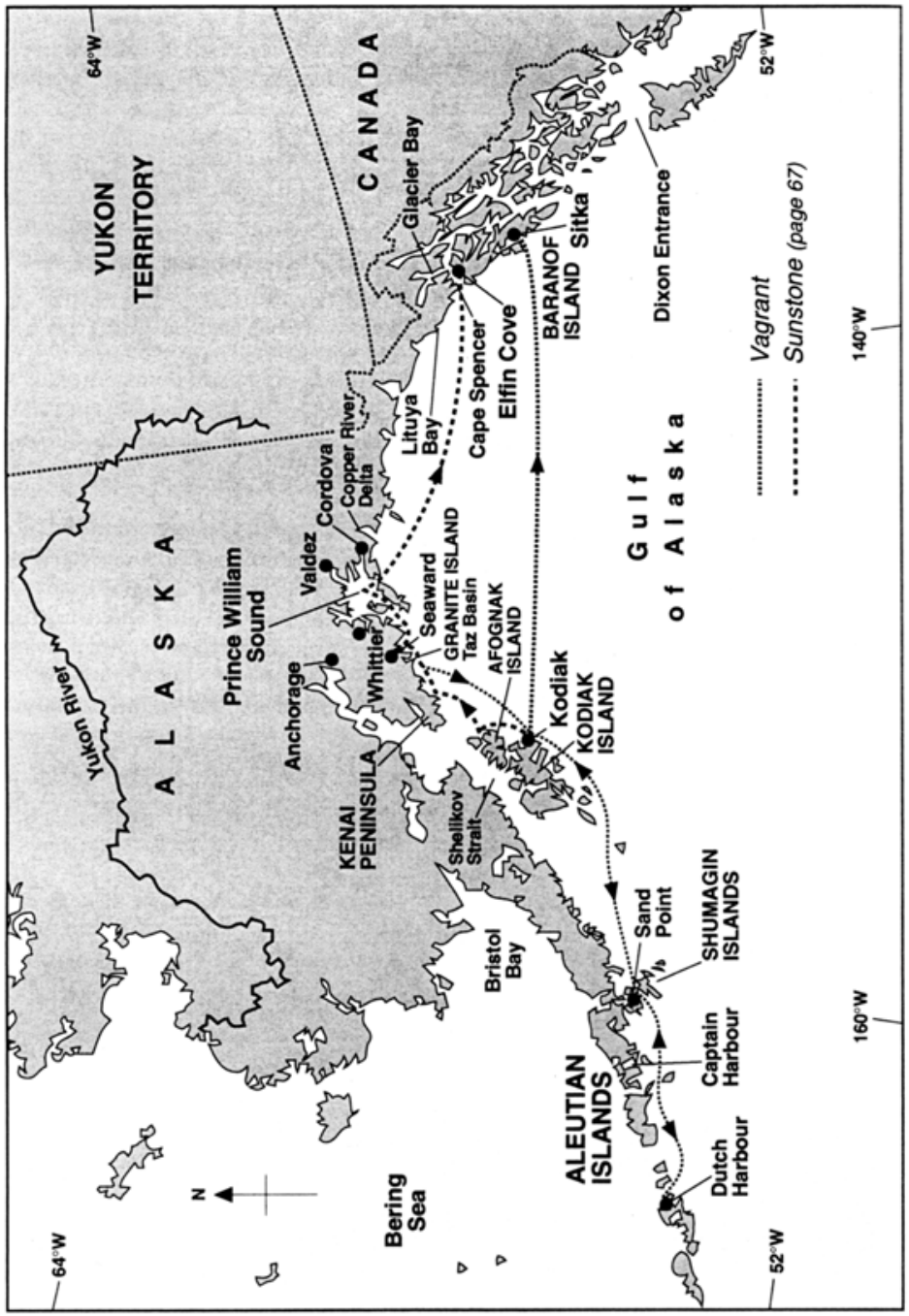
(*Bill has written for Flying Fish several times since he and Jane set off transatlantic in 1996 aboard their Bowman 40,* Vagrant of Clyde.)

It is a wet day in the last week in August and we lie at anchor in a bay on Baranof Island in South East Alaska. We are witnessing the annual miracle of the salmon run. Thousands upon thousands of salmon are coming home to this one river to spawn and die – and the story is repeated in a thousand rivers in a thousand bays throughout the Pacific North West. The bay is alive with jumping fish and the river is thick with them. They head upstream slowly, often resting in the shallows, and finally the female selects just that perfect patch of gravel and scrapes a hole to lay her eggs. Once the eggs are laid and fertilised, the job is done, the circle of life is closed, and within a few days the exhausted salmon are dead.

There are legions of predators enjoying the surfeit of easy food. Offshore the whales and orcas patrol and the commercial fishermen spread their nets. In the bay the seals work the river mouth, the bears and eagles pluck the fish from the shallows, and upstream the sports fishermen cast their flies. The sea birds squabble for the dead and dying fish and enjoy the caviar of the new laid eggs. It is a bonanza, a rich harvest, and it seems

Vagrant passes Popoff volcano in South West Alaska







Bill checks out a glacier face

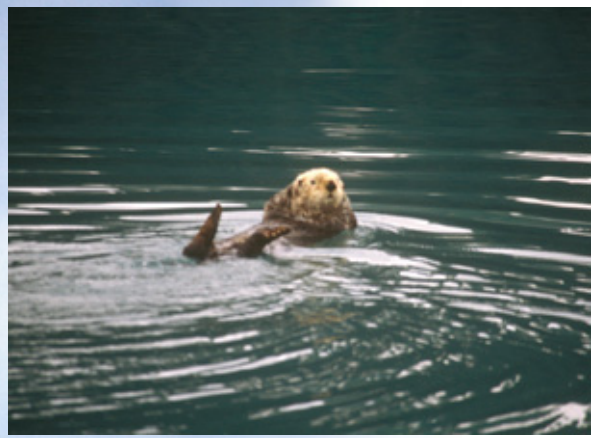
impossible that enough salmon can survive to maintain their numbers. But somehow enough eggs hatch, enough young fish make it to the ocean, and enough mature salmon come home to complete the cycle again and again and again. We walk ashore amidst the detritus of the feast and to a chorus of protest from the seabirds, and with her bare hands Jane guddles a couple of fine salmon for our supper. It is that easy – no wonder the bears look sleek and prosperous!

But such wild and wonderful places were far away as we planned our cruise for the summer of 2002. The idea was to start early from Vancouver and to push north against the tail of winter so that we could explore the classic sheltered route of the Inside Passage to Juneau and Glacier Bay before the cruise ships and tourists arrived. We would cross the northern Gulf of Alaska to Prince William Sound in early June, and then move southwest down the Alaskan Peninsula until the early autumn gales told us it was time to sail once more for the shelter of the Inside Passage. Our goal was to visit the Aleutian Islands and hopefully to make a brief foray into the Bering Sea, but we had no illusions. The round trip would be just short of 6000 miles of mainly coastal cruising – it would require a benign summer to achieve our aim.

Much has been written recently in *Flying Fish* about South East Alaska and the wonderful glaciated wilderness of Prince William Sound, so we will fast forward a couple of months to Tonsina Bay on the Kenai peninsula where we met up with Tom and Vicky Jackson in *Sunstone* (see *Flying Fish* 2002/2). From here onwards, as we explored the Alaskan Peninsula southwest towards the Aleutian Islands, we were in territory not

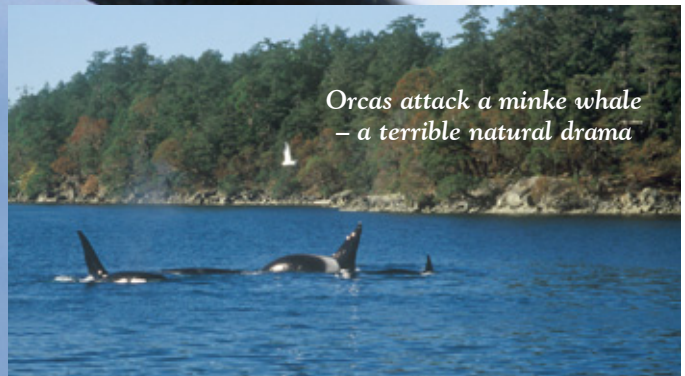


A black bear checks us out



A sea otter – like an old gentleman snoozing by the fire

Bald eagles are everywhere



Orcas attack a minke whale – a terrible natural drama

often visited by cruising yachts. A few, like *Sunstone*, pass through eastbound from Hawaii or Japan, making quick pit stops at Dutch Harbour or Kodiak on their way to Prince William Sound or SE Alaska, but we believe that in 2002 *Vagrant* was one of just two boats which came out specifically to explore. The other was *Andromeda*, a beautiful 50ft aluminium ketch, with whom we were to share many a convivial anchorage.

The sheer scale of South West Alaska is stunning. After a month of working down the Peninsula from Kenai, the unreachable far end of the Aleutian Island chain still remained nearly 1000 miles away to the southwest, some 5° of longitude into the Eastern hemisphere. It is a wild place, full of beauty and redolent of the long history of its many peoples. The first people here were the Aleuts, for whom the island chain is named. They came from Asia across the land bridge that once filled the Bering Sea, and lived here undisturbed until the Russians arrived in the 18th century and discovered sea otters and the value of their pelts. Over the next hundred years the Russian colony grew and became prosperous on the fur trade (while the otters approached extinction) and Russian Alaska dominated the Pacific North West. There was a university in Sitka when San Francisco was but a village, and the Russian American Company rivalled the Hudson Bay Company in its exploitation of the north.

The scenery is grand and mountainous with many – occasionally active – volcanoes. In the northeast of the peninsula the land is clothed with forests of spruce and hemlock, but further southwest the cover becomes more sparse and is reduced to low-lying shrubs of alder and willow which hug the sheltered spots to avoid the incessant winds of winter. There is endless tundra with grasses and wild flowers which splash the land with pinks and blues and yellows. It is beautiful and wild and wonderful and the sun shone more often than not.

We found good anchorages down the coast and amongst the islands, although anchoring depths are normally far greater than usual. At times we had to anchor in deep water on a very steep slope and then take a stern line ashore to make sure the anchor always pulled uphill. There was limited detailed charting and no cruising guide, so we had to rely on the official US *Sailing Directions*. These were wonderfully out-of-date, apparently uncorrected since the 19th century. We read of bays 'only accessible by pulling boats' and often the book described villages and canneries which had long since returned to nature.

We visited Kodiak, the only town of any size on the peninsula, and there found *Northabout*. They had recently come through the Northwest Passage (see *Flying Fish* 2002/1) and we enjoyed the company of the Irish band of Jarlath Cunnane, Paddy Barry and their crew for a convivial and musical evening aboard *Vagrant*.

The Alaskan Peninsula is sparsely populated, and beyond Kodiak there are only about five permanent settlements. These exist solely for the fishing and just a few years ago they enjoyed great prosperity. Stories abound of small boats coming in with several thousand dollers in cash, having sold their salmon to the tenders cruising offshore. However, like farmers, fishermen always complain, and the current gripe is the salmon price, which has collapsed to a fraction of its earlier figure. The problem, say the fishermen, is the Japanese who have bought up all the fish processing plants and for some inscrutable, oriental reason are bent on forcing all the fishermen out of business.

It's hard to follow the logic, as what's the use of a fish plant with no fish?

The other side of the story came from the cannery manager at Sandpoint in the Shumagin Islands. We were invited to lunch in the canteen and joined some of the three hundred or so workers, mainly Mexicans and Filipinos, for a very good meal. Of course the fishermen have it all wrong, said the manager – they couldn't possibly pay any more for the fish and stay in business. It's the Chilean salmon farms which dump cheap fish onto the market that are the real problem. It was a little ironic to discover later that the fish offal from the Sandpoint plant is ground up into meal and sold to Chile for fish farm feed. It's a funny business, is business!

We were welcomed in the harbours and particularly enjoyed Sandpoint, where we were finally forced to refuse gifts of fresh fish because there was no room left in the fridge. Mainly the boats were seine netting and long-lining for salmon, but some of the big Bering Sea crabbers were also there. These can be up to 40m in length and operate at the heroic end of the fishing business throughout the Bering winter. We heard stories of crews spending eighteen hours fishing in storm force conditions with heavy icing and twelve hours ice chipping – the rest of the day was for themselves!

All summer we enjoyed the privilege of sharing our cruise with the animal world. Bears were always about and we often saw them on the beach. There is something

The Russian Church in Kodiak



absurd about a large brown bear digging for clams. He stands with his back legs apart and his front end disappears ever deeper into the mud as the debris from his digging flies out between his legs. Sometimes they lie sunning themselves on a rock and occasionally you see mum and a couple of cubs at play. They don't seem to recognise people in a dinghy as any threat and you can get really close as they calmly get on with bear business. But they are big animals and potentially very dangerous. The trick, we were told, was to make lots of noise when hiking and nine times out of ten they will go away. It's the tenth which is interesting and there is much advice on how to respond to bear attack. We particularly enjoyed the theory that you should go armed with a large club sandwich and a pistol. If attacked you throw the bear the sandwich, which distracts it long enough for you to shoot yourself!

On a smaller scale, we were amazed to see rufous humming birds so far north. They were ravenous, and as they are attracted to anything red they were seeking food everywhere – from Coke vending machines to Coastguard ship hulls and, on one occasion, to the red scarf around my neck.

But perhaps the most entertaining animals were the sea otters. Much bigger than their river otter cousins, they were hunted almost to extinction in the 19th century for their pelts. However a few colonies survived, and now they flourish particularly in Prince William Sound on the western side of the Gulf of Alaska. They tend to float on their backs with their fore legs crossed on their chests and their hind legs sticking out of the water, for all the world like an old gentleman enjoying an afternoon snooze before the fire. The image is enhanced by their quizzical, heavily-bewhiskered faces, which peer at you from between their feet. Often you see mothers with kits lying on their chests, and sometimes they carry a rock which they use to crack open shellfish.

By mid July we had made it to within 50 miles of the end of the Alaskan Peninsula and were riding out a blow in Captain Harbour, a totally enclosed bay surrounded by mountains and tundra. On our way in we saw a dead brown bear on the beach. We went ashore to investigate and found that it had been recently shot, obviously from a passing boat. This is, of course, totally illegal, but we heard later that a child had been taken by a bear in a nearby village and as a result the local people shot every bear they saw, a sad but perhaps understandable reality of life in these remote places.

The weather became revolting, with heavy rain and gale force winds. There was also the excitement of williwaws, which roared down off the mountains and hit the boat with gusts from any direction, often with a big vertical component. It was a good time for writing, and for admiring the glow of the diesel stove, but not for much else. We were in the weather melting pot between the warm Pacific and the cold Bering Sea, and the weatherfaxes showed an endless chain of depressions heading our way from the southwest. It was a pretty clear message that the northern summer was over and that we were at the end of our westerly journeying. It was time to be gone and to seek once more the shelter of South East Alaska some 800 miles to the east across the Gulf. It was a mild disappointment that we hadn't achieved the goal of making it to the Aleutian Islands and into the Bering Sea – but so what!

We stopped off in Kodiak for a day or two and then made the Gulf crossing to Sitka, arriving on 10 August. Sitka is an interesting little town with a large fishing fleet and a

larger tourist industry. As New Archangel it was the capital of Russian Alaska, and boasts one of the very few buildings in the state which dates from those days. This is the Bishops House, the home and headquarters of Bishop Innokentii, who subsequently became the Metropolitan of Moscow and was by all accounts a truly great missionary leader. Now a museum, the building served as church, accommodation, school and hospital, and had all the substance that you would expect of a house built by shipwrights. Much of the original timber is still visible and the scarfed joints and caulked planking are just as you would have seen in a ship of that time.

There was also a museum which brought together art and artefacts from the various native peoples who had inhabited this harsh land for so long. It was fascinating to see the sophistication of the society they had created in a world largely free of metal. There were tools and fishing gear subtly constructed from ivory and bone, exquisite carvings, and beautifully decorated furs. They had waterproof clothing and full immersion suits made from sealskin, and their kayaks were perfectly adapted to the conditions. With hindsight it is remarkable that the white man looked on them as savages and did not adopt the techniques for arctic living which they had developed over the centuries. (I have just been reading a book on the exploration of the North West Passage, and never did the western explorers seek the advice of the native people who over the centuries had migrated throughout the region. There is a story that Admiral Mackenzie, on telling a native chief of the discovery of the great river which bears his name, received the reply that the chief never knew it had been lost. Apocryphal maybe, but it sums up the gulf in understanding.)

We left Sitka on 19 August and headed south slowly, exploring the inner channels which we had passed by so quickly on our way north in the spring. We saw busy logging operations with, in one case, a large two-rotor helicopter being used to extract the logs. We were told that it was only economical to use a helicopter if it took no more than 2½ minutes for each round trip with a log. As a result there was some spectacular flying to watch, and we heard that only daredevil and agile youths could do the job of hooking on the logs, as they had to leap for their lives when the helicopter powered away.

We discovered some of the intricate routes between the islands, all with strong tides and often with shallow water, but at this time of year the shoals tended to be marked by long, trailing streamers of kelp so we managed to find our way through without problem. By taking these backwoods routes we kept clear of the main passages and avoided much of the unpleasant weather kicked up by the autumn gales, and once more we found that we had the place to ourselves as most yachts were long gone. And so in early October we returned to Vancouver from where our Alaskan journey had started some six months previously.

But it wasn't quite all over, and as a finale we were to witness a terrible natural drama. We were in Ganges Harbour on Saltspring Island when a pod of four orcas (killer whales) drove a minke whale up onto the beach right by the harbour breakwater, where it lay bleeding from its wounds and periodically struggling to get afloat. Meanwhile the orcas patrolled offshore, waiting for the tide – and for lunch.

An hour or so later we sailed, and along with ten or twelve other boats watched the



These are big animals – the dead bear on the beach

last act. The minke, who was about 9–10m long and probably weighed about 10 tonnes, had won free from the beach and had swum out to its inevitable death. The biggest orca – who was a bit smaller at perhaps 6–7 tonnes – powered in from below, striking hard with its battering ram of a head and half lifting the minke from the water. The smaller killers struck from the side and the minke blew bloody spouts from its blowhole as it struggled for air. At times they pushed it down into the water, preventing it from blowing. It had a huge gash across its back behind its dorsal fin and we could see it slowly tiring. All this was taking place just metres away from *Vagrant* and the other boats, but the whales seemed oblivious to the human presence. We were told that it was a unique spectacle and that none of the local people had seen its like before. By the time we left to head for our winter quarters at Sidney on Vancouver Island the end was close – the minke was doing little more than wallow on the surface under the ongoing assault of the orcas.

It was indeed a gruesome sight, but in some way a fitting end to a long and fascinating summer of wild life and wild places in Southwest Alaska. We had much enjoyed this special and little-visited place. It is one of the few remaining 'last frontiers' in the western world, where the trappings of our modern consumer society matter little, and we will long remember the generous warm-hearted people who dwell there.



If you can find a path with no obstacles, it probably doesn't lead anywhere. Frank A Clark

THIS PAGE CARRIED AN ADVERTISEMENT

SONG OF THE SEA
Iain Simpson

(*Iain and Janet are amongst the club's newest members, having been elected in February this year. Their 46ft sloop* Song of the Sea *is a Najad 460. Her route can be followed on the plan on page 30.*)

On a beautiful summer's afternoon we slipped our lines in Falmouth to make for Sada Marina on the northwest coast of Spain. We had been advised that this was better than Coruña, and so it turned out to be.

The weather in 2002 had been unreliable, and despite the sudden respite in mid July we were mindful of the volatility of the Bay of Biscay, particularly as a deep depression was approaching the British Isles from the west. I telephoned the Met Office for a forecast, and was told that if we made haste we would be far enough south to avoid the worst of the weather and, in fact, enjoy a good lift from the strong northwesterly winds.

So, in a northwest force 4, on 22 July we headed south-southwest past the Lizard for the Bay of Biscay. Falmouth Coastguard wished us well and I let them know I would confirm our safe arrival in three days time. Then Jan and I settled down into a three-on, three-off watch system with *Song of the Sea* speeding along at 7½ knots under our delivery sails (a dacron main and jib). We had a full complement of high tech spectra sails in the fo'c'sle bins, but weren't prepared to use them until we were in the Caribbean.

Visibility was good and the weather fair. However, off Ushant the weather started to deteriorate and we were creaming along with a reefed main in a westerly 6. The boat revels in these conditions, and cut through the turbulent sea at 8 knots like a knife through butter. Sleeping off watch was difficult, but you can't have it both ways! We cheered ourselves with the thought that the more southing we made the more clement conditions would become. However nobody forecast the 'pea soup' fog we hit 20 miles off Coruña, and it wasn't until half a mile from Sada that we first saw Spain. The 435 miles had taken 62 hours and we were thrilled with *Song of the Sea*'s performance.

Having savoured our first delights of Spain we headed west for Camariñas, a small fishing village in a dramatically beautiful estuary just north of the fabled Cape Finisterre. We should like to have lingered longer, but felt a compelling drive to round the notorious Cape before Father Neptune turned sour. On setting out from Camariñas the weather necessitated use of the motor, but this was not to last and we were soon enjoying an exhilarating northwesterly force 7, flying past this sentinel of northwest Europe. We were in the company of several yachts both big and small who had been waiting for a weather window, and it was satisfying to see how easily we overhauled them under whisker-poled jib and full main.

With time in hand, we whiled away the lazy summer days in the Spanish *rías* for 3½ weeks as we meandered down to Bayona. The weather was hot and sunny, but this gave rise to fog – the curse of this coast – which was to haunt us down the whole of the Iberian peninsular. The cities of Porto and Lisbon are absolute 'must visit' locations. We based ourselves first in Póvoa de Varzim and then in Cascais, both marinas which we would

recommend to others. We had been led to believe that the Portuguese officials would be officious, but this turned out to be a fallacy. From customs officers to taxi drivers we found them a charming and hospitable people. In sailing down this coast one must keep a close eye on the Atlantic weather for depressions, as these can bring about strong southwesterly swells which create havoc in the west-facing marinas.

Lagos is a popular marina in which to leave a boat and fly home. It is also the most convenient departure port for Madeira. We had a slow sail to Porto Santo in light northeasterly winds, covering the 413 miles in three days. On arrival we found the marina full so anchored in the harbour. Here we met with a close encounter when another yacht inadvertently snagged our anchor on leaving while we were ashore, and sent *Song of the Sea* careering for rocks off the harbour wall. Fortunately the marina launch came to the rescue in our absence and put her on a mooring.

Porto Santo is charming, but we decided to make for Isla Graciosa at the the northern tip of Lanzarote in the Canaries after only a couple of days. There was a deep depression approaching – Madeira would have to wait for another visit. On a moonless night we laid a course of 155° in a northerly force 6 under full main and jib. The sea was as black as ink as we charged through the night at 8–9 knots, beset by squalls and heavy showers.

The 246 miles were covered in 39 hours and we were further impressed by the Najad 460's scintillating sailing performance. She just loves strong winds and big seas, like a runaway stallion with the bit between his teeth. However on rounding Isla Graciosa we made the mistake of winding in the furling main on the wrong tack. We have since learnt the importance of winding it in from the natural side so it is not dragged around the slot, and also not to power it out but to wind it out manually on the winch, which allows the wind to do most of the work.

Our objective for this part of our cruise was Puerto Calero, Lanzarote which I would recommend. It's a well-managed, upmarket marina with excellent boatyard facilities. However one is advised to book six months ahead for an autumn berth. It is possible to make inexpensive flights home and leave the boat in secure hands.

On our return from the UK we had a memorable moonlit passage to Las Palmas in a northeasterly force 5 and an appreciable northwesterly swell, covering the 100 miles in twelve hours. On arrival we were shoehorned into a berth on the wall by zealous ARC officials, like sardines in a tin. There was exactly one week to the ARC start and it was stressful finding adequate time to attend to the informative lectures plus provisioning the boat and preparing her for the Atlantic crossing. When the big day came there was hardly a breath of wind until the Sunday evening, when it blew a gale. *Song of the Sea* was in her element and sailed through the fleet with relish. However this turned out to be a disadvantage, as we were down to 24°N before we heard that those behind had turned for St Lucia at 25°N on the strength of an ARC weather forecast and made considerable gains westward.

The rig we adopted was twin high-clewed jibs set on the single foil/halyard, plus mainsail. We set a course of 255° for Rodney Bay and split the jibs on our two whisker poles. What with this and full main we flew along in east-by-north or east-by-south force 5–7 and a heavy Atlantic swell for 16 days, 9 hours, 41 minutes and 41 seconds. For the passage we had taken on a third crew member to give Jan and me the luxury of



Iain and Janet Simpson's Najad 460 Song of the Sea enjoying the Caribbean



Song of the Sea

three hours on and six off. The winds were unusually strong during the 2002 ARC, which enabled us to sail the whole course without recourse to the engine.

At 1230 UTC on 30 November we experienced the sickening plea of a Mayday over the SSB when one of two brothers aboard a 51ft Formosa went overboard and was drowned. The survivor completed his passage with crew borrowed from two other competitors. Of less distress, two crew and their alsatian dog had to be picked up by another competitor when their Hunter Legend 450 had to be scuppered following the loss of her rudder.

This aside, Jan and I loved our Atlantic experience and were sorry when it came to an end. We were happily ensconced in our maritime environment and didn't miss the land one bit. The Najad 460 was an absolute dream to handle. She converts wind pressure into forward speed and was easily managed in all weather by one watch-keeper. We never reefed, but if we needed to our plan was to let the weather jib fly to leeward. After this we would have wound the two jibs up to leave just the main, which could also have been wound in. It was never necessary.

We only suffered two incidents. The first was when the guy to one of the forward whisker poles parted, breaking the pole (I should have spotted the wear on my daily rounds). However on resetting the remaining pole to weather, sufficient wind was captured to keep the leeward sail filled. The second was when the swivel on the jib halyard car metal fatigued and one of the jibs tore, which meant one of us having to go up the mast to capture the stranded car and repair the sail. The solution was to use a stronger swivel to take the strain of the twin sails.

The only thing I would do differently next time is to sail in the racing division. Having said this, though, I would still carry the same sail plan. Now we are in the Caribbean and loving it, but that's another story.

BETTER BOOMS
Ian Nicolson

(*Ian is a founder member of the OCC, having qualified back in 1952, and has long been Port Officer for the Clyde. He combines dual careers as a technical writer and a designer of yachts and all things related to them – see page XXX for a review of his latest book,* Understanding Yacht Design *– but frequently champions the principle that 'simplest is often best'.*)

In a world a-whirl with clever electronics, we still have age-old problems. Gybing in a severe breeze is not something that can be smoothed over by a little black box full of micro-volts. Unwary heads in the cockpit are still vulnerable to a raging boom crashing across without giving due warning. It's a wonder the government has not brought in laws against chinese gybes. Those of us who live in the real world have to expect a little risk, so here are a couple of ideas to make life afloat safer and even more fun.

Figure 1 shows an improvement on the usual small cushion on the boom to protect crews' heads. This is a lengthy pad, extending down one side of the boom, across the

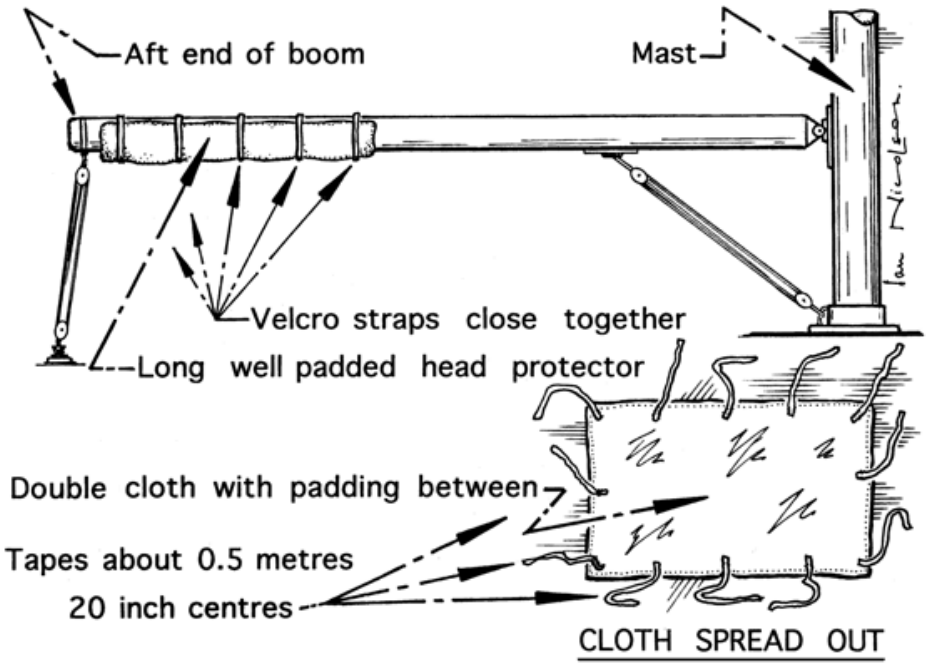


Figure 1 – This boom pad's main job is to stop the crew being bashed on the head. However it has a lot of other uses and it is cheap as well as easy to make.

bottom and up the other side. The length is the full standard cloth width of that bright orange pvc cloth used for winch weather-guards and vent covers by the RNLI.

An area of day-glo orange this size shows up well in thick weather, so it enhances the chances of being seen before being hit by a big brutal ship. The size also makes it a screaming warning to the crew as the boom starts to swing across in a gybe or tack.

The cloth is in two thicknesses, stitched together all round the edge and across the middle, with a layer of closed cell foam buoyancy about 6mm (¼") thick in the middle. At each corner, and at about 50cm (20") intervals round the sides, there are long lengths of thick, soft 12mm (½") wide terylene tapes. The cloth is folded and secured to the boom with velcro straps at the ends and along the length, roughly every 50cm. This means that in a shrieking emergency the cloth can be whipped off the boom quickly.

It has a lot of secondary uses in addition to protecting heads when gybing:

- As a waterproof insulated cover in a dinghy or liferaft.
- As a temporary sail, for downwind progress in dinghy or liferaft. The internal padding will enable the sail to set downwind, after a fashion, without spars.
- As something large and highly visible for waving, to attract help in a crisis.
- As a rain catcher. Here the double thickness and the interior padding will minimise the support needed to form a trough.
- As a back-up or even a substitute for a lifebuoy or lifejacket. A 2m (6ft) length of this padded cloth has more buoyancy than a lifejacket or lifebuoy.
- As a fender, used single or double (or more) in thickness.
- As a marker float on a line extending down to the crown of an anchor. No one is going to pick up this cloth, as they sometimes do when a small fender is used to mark an anchor recovery line.

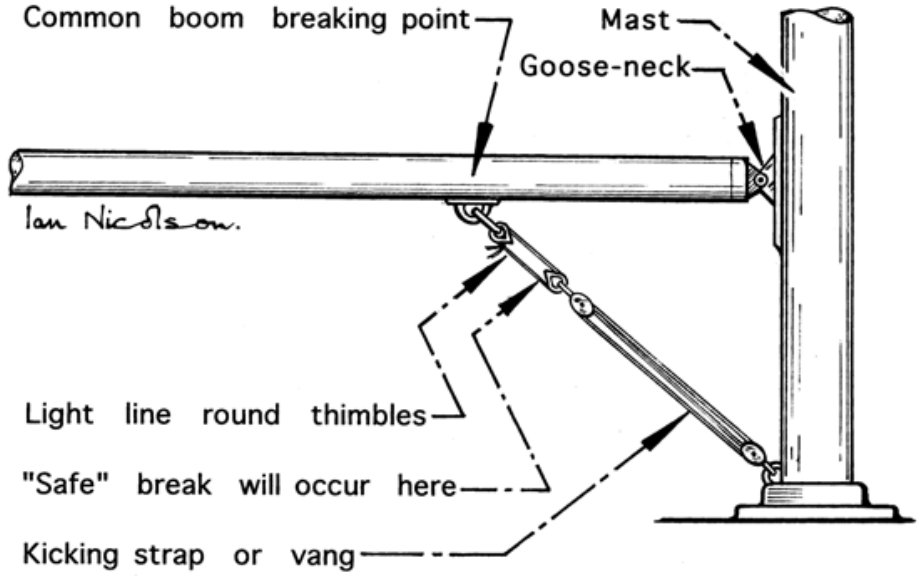
... and so on. It will even make a temporary cockpit cover to keep off the sun, rain or snow.

Figure 2 shows another safety gadget on the boom – a low-strength stretchy lashing on the top of the kicking strap (or vang as they say on the eastern side of the Atlantic). This has a dual purpose:

- In a stressful situation it stretches and reduces the shock loading.
- In the final count it breaks instead of the boom. The rope to use here is nylon and the size as well as the number of turns is given in the following rough guide:

Approx mainsail area	Max. sensible tension	Suggested rope	Typical breaking load
20sq.m (220sq.ft)	1300kg (2900lbs)	4 turns 4mm (3/16") dia.	1280kg (2800lbs)
24sq.m (260sq.ft)	2000kg (4400lbs)	6 turns 4mm (3/16") dia.	1920kg (4200lbs)
30sq.m (330sq.ft)	3500kg (7700lbs)	4 turns 6mm (1/4") dia.	3000kg (6600lbs)

Figure 2 – If a boom is going to break, the chances are it will be at the kicking strap fitting. Deliberately putting in a 'weak link' at the top of the kicker is a super-simple precaution.



Note: This arrangement is designed so that the kicker top lashing should break before the boom does, assuming the boom is ruggedly made for deep-sea cruising. This means that rope failure must not come as a surprise in severe conditions. When it occurs the aft end of the boom will go skywards. Beware!



Houses are but badly built boats, so firmly aground that you cannot think of moving them. They are definitely inferior things, belonging to the vegetable, not the animal, world, rooted and stationary, incapable of transition. The desire to build a house is the tired wish of a man content thenceforward with a single anchorage. The desire to build a boat is the desire of youth, unwilling yet to accept the idea of a final resting place.

Arthur Ransome, *Racundra's First Cruise*

THIS PAGE CARRIED AN ADVERTISEMENT

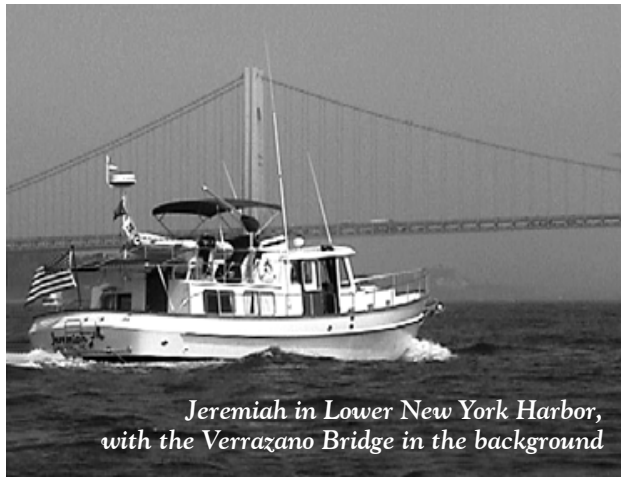
THE INSIDE LOOP
Roger Wormell

On 18 May 1902 the intrepid singlehander Howard Blackburn set out from Gloucester, Massachusetts aboard his 25ft Marconi rigged sloop *Great Republic* on the voyage that the *Gloucester Times* came to refer to as 'The Inside Loop'. Having twice demonstrated his ability to subdue the Atlantic, Blackburn visualised this excursion as a different sort of conquest, a far greater test of his ingenuity and, frankly, rather more fun. It would be in the nature of a leisurely odyssey, with plenty of time to pause, to see strange and interesting places and people, to admire and be admired. In short, it was to be a lark.

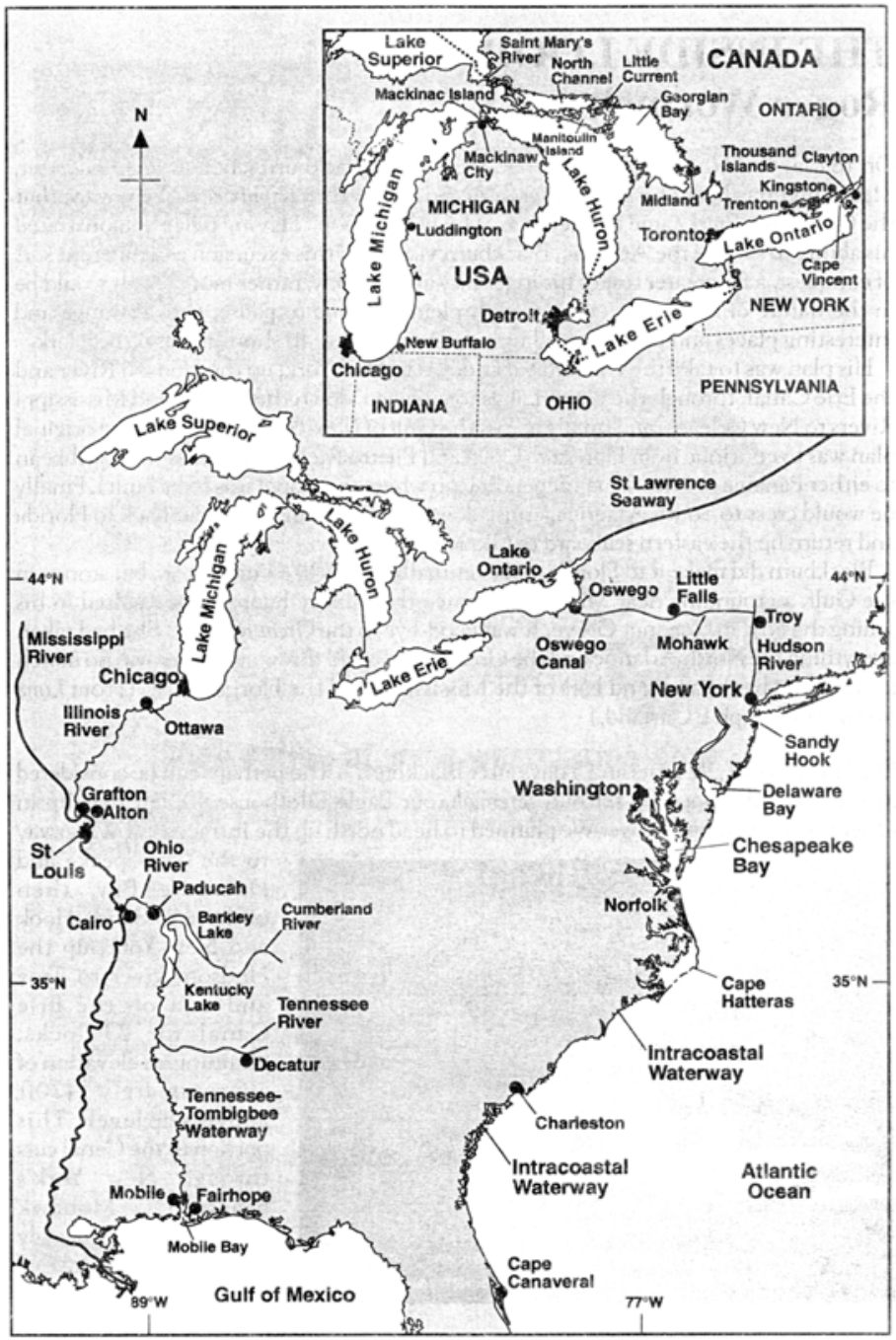
His plan was to take the *Great Republic* down to New York, up the Hudson River and the Erie Canal, through the Great Lakes to Chicago, down the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans, and finally across the Gulf of Mexico to Key West. The original plan was to continue from Florida to Cuba and Puerto Rico, then across the Caribbean to either Panama or Nicaragua (depending on where the Canal was to be built). Finally he would cross to South America, cruise down the Brazilian Coast, cut back to Florida and return up the eastern seaboard to Gloucester.

Blackburn did make it to Florida and eventually to Key West under tow, but storms in the Gulf, a grounding near Miami and some other bizarre happenings resulted in his selling the boat in Coconut Grove. It was good-bye to the *Great Republic*. She had taken everything the North Atlantic and the Great Lakes could throw at her, but was no match for the mud banks and sand bars of the Mississippi and the Florida coast. (From *Lone Voyager* by Joseph E Garland.)

On 21 May 2001, 99 years and 3 days after Blackburn – who perhaps can be considered as the original 'Looper' – set out, *Jeremiah*, our Eagle Pilothouse 40, left her slip in Oriental on a similar voyage. We planned to head north up the Intracoastal Waterway to the Chesapeake and Delaware Bay, then offshore to Sandy Hook and New York, up the Hudson River to Troy and east on the Erie Canal for 23 locks, attaining an elevation of approximately 420ft above sea level. This portion of the Canal cuts through New York's beautiful Mohawk Valley, paralleling heavily travelled stretches of Amtrack's Albany to

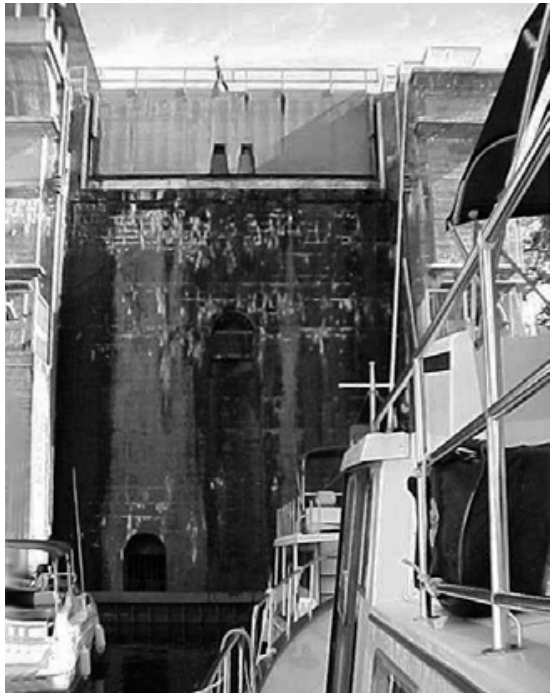


Jeremiah in Lower New York Harbor, with the Verrazano Bridge in the background



Buffalo run, where it wasn't unusual to hear the throaty whistle of a passing diesel locomotive. When *Jeremiah* responded with her own horn we would get another whistle and a wave from the train.

On 20 June, at Little Falls, New York (mile 81 on the Canal) with rain just starting to get serious, we tied to a wall with a number of other boats. It rained on and off for the next two days, heavily at times, and when we awoke on the 23rd we found the water in the Canal had risen almost five feet, enough to put one boat on top of a dock fastened to the wall, and the rest of us almost over the wall on to pilings or ashore!



Awaiting entry to Peterborough Lock

The current in the Canal was estimated at 3–4 knots, and floating debris including whole trees, tyres and several navigational buoys from somewhere to the west of us was ripping by. Floodgates and locks were closed and the Canal was shut to all traffic indefinitely. On 27 June, a week after tying to the Little Falls Terminal wall, the water was down, the gates were scheduled to become operational again, and we were advised that we could proceed 'at our own risk'. *Jeremiah* brought her lines aboard and cautiously resumed her journey westward.

At Three River Point we hung a right and headed northwest up the Oswego Canal, with its seven locks, to Oswego on the southeastern shore of Lake Ontario. Lake Ontario, the smallest of the Great Lakes at 194 miles long and over 50 miles wide, is also the deepest. Aligned almost east-west, with prevailing winds from the southwest and few natural ports anywhere other than in its northeast corner, it is a serious body of open water to cross when heading north from Oswego to Kingston or the St Lawrence Seaway. We had been watching a falling barometer and, on arrival at Oswego, our barograph was recording impressive lows and the forecast was for bad weather. That night, 1 July, and the following day brought more heavy rain, thunderstorms and strong winds. Walking down to the harbour on 2 July, with waves crashing against and over the stone breakwater, throwing spume 50 or more feet into the air, was more than enough to make believers out of *Jeremiah*'s crew. We weren't going anywhere that day!

By 1000 on 3 July, although the barograph was still uncomfortably low, the heavy winds had abated and we entered Lock No.8 to be dropped 8ft to lake level. We cleared

the Oswego breakwater, and ran the 50 miles across the southeast corner of the Lake to the St Lawrence Seaway, tying up that afternoon at the town dock in Cape Vincent. Next day we continued east on the Seaway to Clayton, put *Jeremiah* in a marina and, taking a busman's holiday, booked passage on a 'tour boat' for a relaxed trip to Boldt Castle and then through the Thousand Islands.

On 7 July we departed US waters and cleared Canadian Customs. Reversing course we ran west, back up the St Lawrence to Lake Ontario, stopping briefly at Kingston and later continuing through the Bay of Quinte west to Trenton, Ontario and the Trent-Severn Canal. We transited 41 locks and 240 miles in the Trent-Severn, including the unique, 63ft high Peterborough lock – the highest hydraulic lock in the world – the Kirkfield hydraulic locks, and the 98ft x 24ft Big Chute marine railway, which drops your boat 57ft in a run of only 600ft and was originally built to provide a barrier to prevent the migration of harmful marine life from Georgian Bay into Lake Simcoe.

The Trent-Severn, at its summit in Balsam Lake, is 840ft above sea level, the highest point in our voyage. Although the weather seemed okay, the low barograph continued to worry us with readings around 987mbs (hurricane values!). Lying in bed that night, what should long ago have been obvious to an ex-pilot suddenly hit me – there was nothing wrong with either the weather or the barograph – we were at 840ft elevation and had been up and down at over 400ft for the past three weeks or more. The, barograph, being nothing more than an altimeter with a fancy name, was accurately reflecting our altitude above sea level. Promise you'll never tell my old flight instructor...

Transiting lock 44, the westernmost lock in the Trent-Severn system, on the morning of July 20, we entered the southeast corner of Georgian Bay. We had been hearing stories of extremely low water levels for the past few weeks and wondered just how true they really were. It appeared extremely questionable, with *Jeremiah*'s 4□5ft draught, that we could navigate the popular and most direct Potato Channel route to Midland, Ontario where we hoped to be able to catch up with our mail. Exercising what turned out to be unnecessary caution, we elected to take the alternative Waubaushene Channel. To our dismay however, the buoys marking this route had been moved (due to low

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Top right: ***One of the few remaining manually-operated locks on the Trent-Severn Waterway***

Top left: ***Peterborough Hydraulic Lift Lock on the Trent-Severn Waterway – essentially a giant steel bathtub***

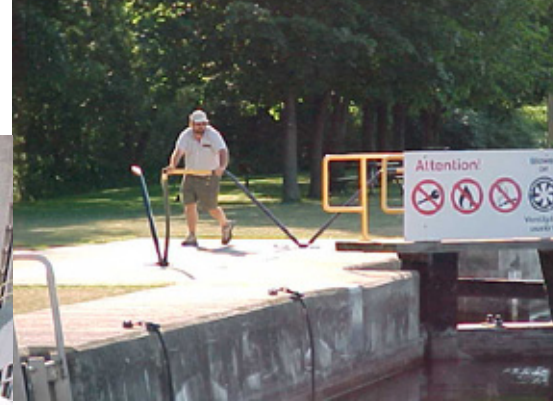
Upper right: ***The Big Chute Marine Railway***

Middle left: ***A picturesque anchorage at the eastern end of Bay Fine on the North Channel***

Lower right: ***Berthed on the inside wall at Chicago's Dusable Marina***

Lower left: ***The view through the pilothouse windscreen in downtown Chicago***

Bottom right: ***Hoppie's Marina on the Mississippi River, the only 'marina' between Alton, Illinois and the Ohio River***














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water) and did not even come close to agreeing with our charts. Even so, after a bit of teeth grinding anxiety we did muddle through with our running gear unscathed, and were able to regain the main, clearly marked, channel.

Tying up a short time later at the Midland Government Dock, we were quite surprised to notice the handsome sloop behind us was flying the OCC burgee! Here, hundreds of miles from the closest salt water, we first met fellow members Jane and Bill McLaren aboard *Vagrant of Clyde*. Later that same evening, in an anchorage east of Beausoleil Island crowded with Canadian boats enjoying their holiday, we enjoyed their company aboard *Jeremiah* for cocktails.

For the next week or so we proceeded up the picturesque eastern shore of Georgian Bay, anchoring each night either in secure harbours or behind islands and rarely having to share any anchorage with more than one or two other boats. Although the water level was several feet lower than it had been in recent years, it was still very near chart datum and we found that by paying attention to our charts we did not get into any trouble. The folks that were dinging propellers, bending shafts and knocking off rudders seemed, more often than not, to be the 'old hands' who had sailed these waters many times in the past and were used to taking short-cuts that were no longer deep enough and clearly shown as such on the charts. Georgian Bay is said to have 30,000 islands above the surface and 100,000 rocks just below it, all waiting for the unsuspecting passer by.

Little Current, on the northeast shore of Manitoulin Island, marks the entry point to the North Channel when leaving Georgian Bay towards Lake Superior. This island, claimed to be the largest island in a fresh water lake anywhere in the world, protects the shores of northern Ontario from the fury of Lake Huron and forms the southern shore of the 70 mile long North Channel. We spent about a week in the North Channel and found it to be even more remote and picturesque than Georgian Bay, with many uninhabited islands and secure anchorages. At the time of our passage (late July and early August), the clear waters were even warm enough to enjoy swimming and checking *Jeremiah*'s running gear and bottom – along with some big, curious, large-mouth bass that seemed to be doing the same thing.

Thessalon – at 46°15'N the northernmost point in our voyage – was the last port on the North Channel as well as the last port we visited in Canada. Leaving Thessalon at 0935 on 4 August, we re-entered US waters at 1126 and cleared US Customs via telephone from De Tour Village, Michigan. De Tour Village is at the lower end of the Saint Mary's River, which joins Lake Superior with Lake Huron. From there we entered Lake Huron and headed west via the Les Cheneaux Islands, Mackinac Island and Mackinaw City. On 8 August, departing Mackinaw City, we passed under the impressive Mackinac Bridge, the longest suspension bridge in the world, and entered Lake Michigan.

Lake Michigan is approximately 350 miles long and 80 miles wide. We chose to follow its eastern shore, mainly because of the numerous harbours and boat-friendly facilities along this stretch, and over the next 25 days had the opportunity to visit many of them. One of the most inspiring events we witnessed was in Ludington Harbor, about half way along. It was a perfect summer evening with a brilliant red sun starting to set on the western horizon across the lake. The hulking 4244 ton car ferry SS *Badger*, with her stack belching black smoke, was sailing outbound from Ludington into the setting sun.

On the highest point of her afterdeck, clearly visible to all in the harbour and hundreds of spectators on shore, stood a kilted bagpiper playing *Amazing Grace* on his pipes.

On Sunday 2 September (Labor Day weekend), we made a pleasant 45 mile run from New Buffalo, Michigan to the Dusable Marina in Chicago where we tied alongside an inside wall for $0.75 per foot (no water or electricity, but still one of the least expensive city marinas we experienced on the entire trip). Chicago is a cruiser's delight. Dusable, Chicago's newest marina, is located just south of Navy Pier and the Chicago Harbor Lock. Virtually the entire Chicago lakefront consists of well-kept parks with almost 20 miles of bicycle paths facilitating easy access to a myriad of commercial and cultural attractions. On 6 September, somewhat reluctantly, we cast off our lines and proceeded through the Chicago Harbor Lock into the Sanitary Canal where we had the thrill of navigating *Jeremiah* through the canyons of downtown Chicago.

Five days later, at 0905 on September 11, approaching the town dock in Ottawa, Illinois about 90 miles down the Illinois River, we heard the shocking news of the events happening at the World Trade Center. We first heard of it over the VHF in a conversation between a tug captain and a lock tender who were uncertain whether or not the locks were going to be closed. We tied up for the day and were finally able to contact our family and thankfully determined that all were safe. The 'cruise of a lifetime' took on a somewhat different light after that.

On my birthday – 17 September – 330 miles and eight locks down the Illinois River from Chicago, we intersected the Mississippi River at Grafton, Illinois. That night, securely tied in a marina in Alton, I enjoyed a somewhat subdued birthday celebration with a number of other cruisers. Just being there, in relatively good shape, was more than enough of a birthday present. Since St Louis has no decent facilities for berthing and none at all for anchoring, we rented a car in Alton and spent the following day sightseeing in the city, about 30 miles away. Security measures through the locks after Ottawa and at the Gateway Arch in St Louis, continued to remind us of the events of 9/11.

We found the Mississippi portion of the journey to be somewhat stressful. Charts don't show water depths or bridge clearances as such, instead showing elevations above mean sea level. Latitude is shown in 05' increments and longitude in 02□5' increments (with no easy way of finding where you are in between) with north seldom at the top and rarely ever shown in the same direction. There are no contours and few topographical details. Currents on the river vary from 1–2 knots to 5–6 knots, or even more. Even the direction of the current can reverse itself overnight in some of the small river tributaries (if you can find one and are fortunate enough to find room to anchor in it). Pool depths (water depths between dams that are expressed in feet above mean sea level) change frequently, as hydropower requirements vary or if heavy rain occurs even hundreds of miles away. There are no buoys or channel markers, although there are lighted markers on the shores as well as an occasional mile marker nailed to a tree. Stone or concrete wing dams protrude well out into the river on many of its twists and turns, and while the location of these is shown on the charts, they can be just a few feet below the surface during high water conditions. Add to this the floating trees, limbs and all sorts of other debris that may, or may not, be visible from the helm.

Marinas are scarce and anchoring can be dicey due to the current and round-the-

clock commercial river traffic. And I haven't even mentioned the tows. These are intimidating, high-powered tugs that sometimes push forty or more 100ft x 30ft barges made up into tows that can be up to six barges – 180 ft – wide by seven or more – 700ft – in length. We did find the tow captains to be helpful and friendly, though, and without question they are capable. Obviously however, tows this size are neither manoeuvrable nor easily stopped. These guys own the river. Pleasure boats had better stay out of their way! On a lighter note, some of the tug captains have quite a sense of humour as indicated by the following radio conversation between *Jeremiah* and the captain of a big tow we were trying to pass:

"Tow boat Honey Bell, this is the pleasure vessel Jeremiah on your stern."
"Go ahead, Jeremiah."
"Yes sir, we would like to pass. Would you suggest a one whistle pass or a two whistle pass?"
" Cap – either side. If you can see daylight – Go For It!"

On 21 September at Cairo, Illinois, about 175 miles downriver from St Louis, we reached the junction of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. Turning upriver on the Ohio, we transited two locks and 46 miles, and tied up for the night to the narrow, unstable floating docks of The Big E Marina in Paducah, Kentucky.

The following day we had a decision to make, as there are two possible routes from Paducah to the Tennessee River – to turn off the Ohio River at Paducah, or continue about 12 miles further on the Ohio and turn up the Cumberland River. The latter, although a longer route, seems to be preferred and is usually recommended for small boats due to frequent delays on the Paducah route caused by heavy commercial traffic. These delays can sometimes necessitate lengthy and even overnight waits at the Kentucky

The paddle-wheeler Belle of Peoria, a familiar sight on the Illinois River



Lock and Dam on the Tennessee. Based upon what we had read and heard we elected to take the Cumberland River Route, transited the 57ft Barkley Lock, and tied up at 1630 in Green Turtle Bay Marina. On arrival we found that several boats which left Paducah at about the same time as we had were already at the marina, claiming that they'd been there in time for lunch. Knowing that some people may not always be truthful in such matters, there is room for doubt as to which route really is quicker.

Green Turtle – a full service marina in a great location, incidentally – marked a new phase in our journey. The intimidating Mississippi was behind us, mileagewise we were about halfway through the voyage, and we were eagerly looking forward to the rivers and lakes of the Tennessee Valley Authority system. But first we did as many others do, and took a week of R&R to clean up the boat, enjoy the area and recover from the stresses of 'river navigation'.

Barkley Lake, Kentucky Lake, the Cumberland and Tennessee Rivers – all part of the extensive system of TVA lakes and dams – make up what we felt was the most enjoyable cruising area we visited on the entire trip. We spent over a month on them and it really wasn't enough time to come anywhere close to seeing all of it. A side trip, further up the Tennessee River to Decatur, Alabama, took us through several more locks including the Wilson Lock with its 93ft lift.

We were well into the third week of October, however, and were beginning to think about finding a safe place to 'park' *Jeremiah* and return to Oriental to spend the holidays and visit grandchildren. Thus we found ourselves focusing more on getting to the Gulf of Mexico and on to Florida than enjoying this beautiful area which had taken us five months and 3630 miles to reach.

From the junction of the Tennessee River and the Tennessee-Tombigbee Waterway, near Pickwick Dam, Tennessee, it was 450 miles to Mobile, Alabama and the Gulf. This part of our journey took us through 12 locks, the first of which, the 84ft Jamie Whitten Lock and Dam, has the highest lift in the Tenn-Tom system. It is a beautiful, sparsely populated area, but with few marine facilities and up to 70 miles (a long day's run at our speed) between suitable anchorages. We arrived in Mobile nine days later, on 25 October, and crossed the shallow Mobile bay to Fairhope, Alabama to berth and refuel at the Eastern Shore Marina. Back in salt water after 19 weeks – it was a good feeling.

Tim and Sue Stein, whom we had first met in September of 1988 while cruising in the Chesapeake in our previous yacht, *Gloworm*, had graciously offered us the use of their dock for *Jeremiah* while we returned home over Thanksgiving and Christmas. They live in Wewahitchka, Florida, about 30 miles east of Panama City, and we made the 280 mile run from Fairhope in four days. The last 6 miles were up the twisting Wetappo Creek, which has good depth but in some spots isn't much wider than twice our beam. Tim assured us, and we totally agreed, that it had to be hurricane proof.

On arrival we had travelled 4375 safe miles (mostly in unfamiliar waters), transited about 100 locks, and put 492 hours on the engine without any breakdowns or other boat problems. *Jeremiah* was at a secure dock with good friends to keep an eye on her. Even Howard Blackburn and the *Great Republic* could not have asked for more.

THIS PAGE CARRIED AN ADVERTISEMENT

SUNSTONE IN ALASKA, Part 1

Tom and Vicky Jackson

(*Tom and Vicky are exploring the Pacific aboard* Sunstone, *their classic S&S 40. Their route can be followed on the plan on page 8.*)

Our arrival in Kodiak, after a 16½ day passage from Honolulu, coincided with the start of the commercial salmon fishing season – yet the harbour was packed with 'seiners', the 42ft boats which, in combination with their powerful 20ft skiffs, use purse seines to scoop up salmon. A good haul in one of the many inlets around Kodiak and Shelikov Strait to the west might be 20,000 lbs of fish, and with hauls this size a difference of even a few cents per pound can make a big difference to fishermen's incomes. The reason the boats hadn't yet started work is that they were striking against the price offer from the canneries. Apparently this is an annual ritual.

While learning about the salmon fishery we also managed to recuperate from our long trek from New Zealand. Marty, the harbour master, and his wife Marion (amazingly, the gardening correspondent for the local newspaper!) kindly helped with fish, hospitality and the loan of a car to explore a bit. Having been TV-less for 30 years we launched ourselves into the technology of the new millennium by watching a couple of rented films on DVD on the new computer. With the help of several locals we also tried to make a start on planning our cruise up the eastern side of the Kenai Peninsula and into Prince William Sound. We would have liked to spend more time exploring Kodiak but the local wisdom – later proved correct – is that you need to be south of Dixon Entrance and into Canada by mid-September. Despite a fairly early arrival, this gave us only three months cruising time in a huge and varied area. Something had to give.

As a result, we stopped only twice on our way to the Kenai. In doing so, we met Ed and Britta, whose life may not be typical of rural Alaskans generally, but is a kind of model for the Alaskan life style. Their house, guest house and a growing number of out-buildings on a promontory overlooking Whale Island, are all built by Ed from timber he has cut and machined himself. They fish, hunt and grow much of their own food. They are neither completely isolated nor completely self-sufficient but, by contemporary standards, instant communication and gratification touch them very little. Ed's 'internet site' is a shed at the head of his dock – full of fishing nets.

From Seal Bay on the northern shore of Afognak Island, Kodiak's neighbour, we headed for Tonsina Cove on the Kenai. Four years previously we had met fellow OCC members Bill and Jane McLaren aboard *Vagrant of Clyde* in Newport, Rhode Island. We met again at Tonsina in the way of the passing meetings of the cruising global village. We drank in the shortest night of the year with tumblers full of Chateau 'Carton', and drank it out with tumblers of Scotch.

Tonsina was Tom's introduction to the pleasures of Alaskan anchoring. Certainly his determination to remain windlass-less was heavily challenged. Locals from Seward speak casually of anchoring in 120ft of water with shortish lengths of chain and lots of nylon. Using normal scope is out of the question, as the boat would swing a circle about



Cruise condos

a quarter of a mile in diameter. All this took some getting used to, especially as we had to weather 40–50 knot winds in our third anchorage on the Kenai, at Midnight Cove. Fortunately our two-anchor system worked well and we moved not an inch, despite being battered by 50+ knot williwaws. Yes – Alaskan weather, even in summer, is pretty volatile. Much of the time it is grey and murky, but when the winds come light from the north everything clears magically and you can see snowy peaks 60 to 70 miles away.

Taz Basin on the western side of Granite Island is a natural, cliff-bounded amphitheatre, entered through a kelp-strewn 30 foot gap. Entering in calm weather is no problem but is a bit of a gamble – if a westerly swell gets up, your stay could be much longer than planned. Given the 100ft depths it isn't realistic to swing to an anchor, so we put out a stern line, a New Zealand practice we find ourselves using more and more.

We shared anchorages at Tonsina, Midnight and Taz with *Perspective*. Dave, Karen and their two children, Daniela and Jaden, seemed to us quite a typical Alaskan family – they live in the only big city, Anchorage, but get out in the wilds all they can, sailing, kayaking and hiking, much of the time 'bush-bashing' their way along bear tracks. Even in unpleasant conditions the whole family was cheerful and upbeat, always game for new experiences and learning from each one. It was a pleasure to get to know them.

One of the experiences that draws you to Alaska is viewing glaciers. Our first such experience was in Northwestern Fjord. Most Alaskan glaciers have receded considerably from their furthest points of advance, where they deposit a terminal moraine, a reef of gravel and rocks. Sometimes these are completely dry with marsh and forest behind. However the tidewater glaciers, which are the ones you can sail to, usually have a

lagoon behind the terminal moraine, accessed through a pass of varying depth and width, with no navigational marks and often a very strong tidal flow.

Once your heart rate has settled a bit after the challenge of the moraine channel you can start worrying about the ice, which becomes steadily thicker as you work towards the glacier. Tidewater glaciers are constantly calving bits of ice, much of it in the form of small avalanches of brash ice. Most of this is not dangerous – even to our varnish work – though a few pieces can be big enough to make a nasty dent. The next size up are 'growlers', which definitely should not be hit at speed but which can, if necessary, be pushed very gently and slowly out of the way. 'Bergy bits' should be avoided, and it is best to stay well away from actual bergs, which can be very unstable in summer when they are melting quite quickly.

Working through all this ice is a slow process unless you have a very robust metal hull. We had considered fitting a sacrificial bow guard to save the wood and varnishwork, but on good advice from several locals decided against it – we wouldn't have got any closer to glaciers with one. Usually the ice is either scattered enough to pick your way through, or packed so tightly that pushing through would be bound to cause damage. Having gathered our first bucketful of glacier ice for evening rums, we ended up spending the evening in the convivial company of local cruisers at Bulldog Cove while cruiser children toasted marshmallows over a driftwood fire in the dying sunlight at 2330.

By rural Alaskan standards, Seward (population about 2500) is a big place. During the summer it gets even bigger – more than doubles in fact – because two huge cruise ships add their thousands, changing each day. We were there for the 4th of July, when Seward stages the Mount Marathon Race. Men, women and juniors run up the steep, 3000ft mountain and slide most of the way down the scree-lined slopes. The men's record for this crazy race is 43 minutes. This was a bit less than the time it had taken us to climb halfway up four days previously. Tom then sensibly chickened out, while Vicky courageously (foolishly?) went on to the top in the company of a veteran. For quite a few Alaskans the race is 'a bit of 'fun', which first-timers have to pay up to $900 to enter. Lots of Alaskans are tough. Even the cruising guide we later used for Prince William Sound required interpretation when referring to 'easy' hikes, which turned out to be orienteering nightmares through dense bush and over steep rock faces.

After the excitement of the 4th of July celebrations it was a dramatic change to sail into the peace and isolation of Prince William Sound (PWS). Though most of the local cruisers also head for PWS, you'd never know it. Once through the channels at the western end there were hardly any sailing yachts in evidence, only a very few power boats and commercial fishing craft, and even these few boats were so dwarfed by the scenery as to be almost unnoticeable. You might see a small white boat against a green, snow-dappled mountainside some distance away – then a quick glance with the binoculars would reveal that it was a monstrous P&O cruise ship. Even these leviathans made little impact. At weekends there were a few more boats out fishing, but we rarely had to share an anchorage.

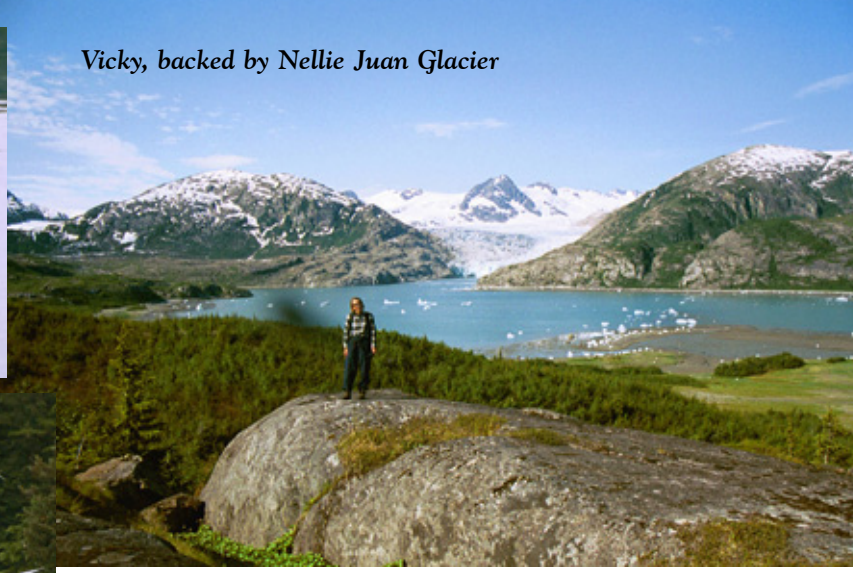
Both the 1964 earthquake and the 1989 *Exxon Valdez* oil spill had devastating affects on PWS, its environment and wildlife. For the one-time visitor there is no obvious evidence of either, but locals say that the wildlife of the Sound in particular has not



Berg!



Sea otter watching us watching him watching us…



Vicky, backed by Nellie Juan Glacier



A young black bear hunts for his dinner at Long Bay on Prince William Sound



Vicky atop Mount Marathon



Cruiser children toast marsh-mallows at Bulldog Cove



Sunstone in Home Cove on the Kenai Peninsula

recovered to its earlier levels. Nevertheless, with the salmon running – and in some streams even climbing over each others' backs – there was plenty of wildlife to watch. There were flocks of bald and golden eagles, sea lions and seals, and lots of sea otters – often mothers with pups precariously balanced on their tummies. Though we had seen whales and orcas (killer whales) on our way to PWS we saw very few in the Sound itself, though one humpback whale off Knight Island made up for this with a spectacular display of repeated breaching. We even had two completely unexpected visits from rufous hummingbirds, which are apparently regular summer visitors to the area.

Though Glacier Bay in South East Alaska is the usual destination for viewing rivers of ice on the move, in fact PWS has far more – and more spectacular – glaciers. The whole western rim of the Sound is littered with them, so our three weeks was punctuated by icy intervals. Nellie Juan Glacier hides in a dog-legged valley behind a large berg-filled lagoon, which is too shallow to enter except with a dinghy or kayak. We parked *Sunstone* in a delightfully intimate anchorage, entered through a cleft in the rocks to the east of the lagoon. Having twice failed to walk round the lagoon to the glacier, we took the dinghy in through the pass, dodging the grounded bergs. With an active glacier like Nellie Juan there is constant calving, with occasional large swells sent out into the lagoon and a brisk downslope wind off the ice. In the dinghy we didn't dare get too close, but it was still pretty impressive.

About a week later we visited Barry Glacier further north. It was a calm though grey day, and as we drifted slowly through the brash ice about 500–600 yards from the glacier face we could hear the constant groaning and tension of the ice as it shifted and broke, moving steadily towards the water. From a little further away you get a truer

Whale tail





The Million Dollar bridge

impression of the huge natural forces at work, because you can see the immense snowfield high above the glacially carved valley where the cracked and wrinkled surface of the ice makes its way to the fjord.

Our visits to glaciers alternated with idyllic wooded anchorages, many with evocative names – Seven Fathom Hole, Snug Cove, West Twin... In most we were anchored in the shadow of steep mountains patched with snowy valleys, but in others we tied shore-lines to trees on small islands. With the large tidal range in Alaska, we met with reversing tidal falls from lagoons at the head of anchorages like Ewan Bay. Toward low tide there would also be a great gathering of fish-feeding wildlife along the banks of the salmon streams which fed most coves. Each day Vicky would go on 'bear alert', hoping to spot bears catching a meal. Unfortunately the bears refused to co-operate until we reached Long Bay on the north shore of the Sound. Though she paid a heavy price in bug bites, she returned triumphant after a row to the head of the bay having watched a young black bear catch his dinner, surrounded by wheeling gulls and bald eagles.

The three towns on PWS are functional places. Valdez is primarily an oil terminal, where supertankers load up from the southern end of the TransAlaska pipeline. Though it has a population of only about 200, Whittier, at the western end, is a primary supply port for Anchorage to which it is linked by rail and more recently by road. Originally it was a military base, and thus almost the entire population are housed in a single 14-storey tower block, dropped down in the wilderness!

The third town, Cordova, is different. Though it is also a one-function town, in this case fishing, it is so isolated that it is a much more integrated and lively community. Despite its frontier atmosphere there is wide-spread devotion to arts and crafts, and a

very interesting and hardy group of liveaboards who endure the fierce winter in the marina. Through the generosity of one couple we borrowed a car for the drive along the gravel track through the Copper River Delta. As the name indicates, the area was heavily mined at one time, but is also an extremely important wetland habitat and one of the richest salmon fishing grounds in the Pacific. Despite the threat of rising flood waters we made it to the end of the 50 mile road, where 'Million Dollar Bridge' crosses the Copper River. The bridge was built at high speed in very adverse conditions to carry copper ore back from the mines, but a span collapsed in the '64 earthquake and the image of the broken bridge has become something of a symbol for Alaskans. A one mile walk along the river from the bridge brought us to the bank opposite Childs Glacier, the face of which rose 300ft above the water no more than 200 yards away – virtually nowhere else in Alaska can you get so close to the face of an active glacier. Bergs regularly calve into the river below, and a sign on the bank near where we stood warned that waves occasionally, but regularly, wash over the bank to a depth of 10 or 15ft. We didn't stay too long.

PWS was such a fascinating cruising area that we spent longer there than we first intended. As the end of July approached we realised that we would have to press on if we were to follow the received wisdom and get south of Dixon Entrance by early September. Like locals everywhere, Alaskans have two favourite bits of water with which to threaten visitors with doom and destruction – the northern Gulf of Alaska, and Dixon Entrance at the southern end of the SE Alaska Panhandle. To be fair, both stretches of water are capable of producing really vile conditions, but in settled, summer weather, they can also be delightful – or even flat calm. The latter was the case for our passage from our last PWS stop, Garden Cove, to Elfin Cove, our first stop in SE Alaska. For much of the time it was not only calm but sparklingly clear, giving us a wonderful view of the spectacular mountains which plunge from snowy summits at over 15,000ft directly into the sea, with huge glaciers in the broad valleys which punctuate the peaks. The only downside to the 350 mile passage was having to motor all the way! However, by this time we were well used to this – there are good reasons why most cruisers in Alaska are in power boats. When there is wind there is usually too much, and the rest of the time there is little or none.

We picked up one amazing story about this stretch of coast. There is a small bay, Lituya, about a day's sail north of Cape Spencer. It is surrounded by cliffs and very high, steep peaks. In 1958, three commercial fishing boats were anchored there when a huge chunk of one of the mountains broke off and fell into the bay, sending a wall of water over 100ft high sweeping through the bay and surging nearly 1800ft up the opposite side. One boat was immediately overwhelmed and never seen again. The second was overturned but the crew survived, clinging to the wreck. The third was swept out to sea by the monster wave – and then swept back in again by the counter wave, where they picked up the survivors from the second boat. A full account of the event appears on the website of the USC Tsunami Research Group at www.usc.edu/dept/tsunamis/alaska/1958/webpages/.

(The concluding part of *Sunstone in Alaska* will appear in *Flying Fish* 2003/2.)

THIS PAGE CARRIED AN ADVERTISEMENT

AN 80th BIRTHDAY PRESENT
William G R Marden

(Fancy Free *is a 52ft Taiwan-built ketch, which Bill has owned since she was built in 1980.*)

This is not written because I consider myself an expert on the subject. It is written rather as a complaint against the humdrum and uninteresting lives most of us lead, which we call modern society. Nearly all of us are fenced in by what we call the standard of living.

In an ever-increasing number of families both the husband and wife work to make ends meet. The computer age with its plastic has put many of us into bondage – we are unpaid workers for the banks. Can I pay with my *VISA*, with my MasterCard, and how much do I owe those other ones? This is plastic destruction of the inner soul. We are chained to what is commonly called the 'rat race', or 'keeping up with the Jones'. This was written for those who might consider breaking their chains, leaving the servitude of society, for the lower standard of *living with freedom*. What is freedom worth? For many, some wild adventure will be the only way to find out. The sea makes no distinction between colour, race, class or religion. Poseidon treats us all exactly the same.

Part I: Now I Know Where the Dragon Lives

It all began after New Year 2002 with the realisation that 1 June would be my 80th birthday. I had always heard that famous line, 'Life begins at 40'. What about 80? Surely there was something left, something challenging and interesting that this octogenarian could do. A call from a telemarketer contributed. My wife, Anne, who took the call, did not like his attitude or his style. It was a call made at suppertime to sell funeral insurance. There was a slight exchange.

"I am not going to need a cemetery monument, ever,"

"How is this?" said the telemarketer, *"We are all going to die."*

"I will not need one as my husband is going to die at sea," she replied.

From this telemarketer's impertinence the idea grew. I would sail my 52ft ketch, *Fancy Free*, back to Texas from Trinidad alone, a 3000 mile voyage. I am not an inexperienced sailor. I sailed her back from Taiwan, where I supervised her construction some 22 years ago, a two-season voyage that took me from Taiwan to Durban, South Africa the first year, and from Durban to Trinidad during the summer Margaret Thatcher sailed her armada to the Falkland Islands. This year, to celebrate my 80th, I would sail to all the major Caribbean Islands and then home to Galveston, Texas.

People sometimes ask how I manage to sail such a large boat alone. My answer is always 'because I have it'. It would be a long trip and yet I felt it would be a suitable way to celebrate my birthday – to hell with the rocking chair! However, I would have to be careful. Once the idea took shape, it had to be planned like a military campaign. My vessel had been lying on the hard, covered by a tarpaulin, for an entire year. Boats don't like this kind of treatment. She would need extensive maintenance, painting and



Fancy Free, with tropical backdrop

mechanical work before she would be ready for sea. It's a bit like a one-man navy – every department would have to be looked at and overhauled. To keep expenses from getting out of hand I would have to do all the work myself.

Thus, on 12 March 2002 I was up at 0400, assembled with two sea-bags, each weighing 70 lbs, and a carry-on bag of 40 lbs. Only about 15 lbs of this was personal luggage, mostly clothing, all the rest being for the yacht. At 0615 I flew from College Station, Texas to Dallas, but not before the airline had removed several hemostats and surgical scissors from my medical bag as too dangerous to take aboard. From Dallas I flew to San Juan, Puerto Rico and then on to Port of Spain, Trinidad, where it took some explaining and showing of papers to convince customs that 180 lbs of baggage was proper for a foreign yachty to bring into the country. (It's amazing just what one can get away with by proving to customs that one is, indeed, a real yachtsman – go up the chain of command until the head customs inspector is convinced that all this is really to go on a yacht in storage.) However, all this took time. We landed at 2100 and it was after 2200 before they let me out of the door. Getting a taxi to the boatyard took another hour in the mulchy tropical heat. By just after 2300 my baggage and I were beside my boat. I had now to find a ladder in the dark and haul everything up to the deck nearly 20 feet above the ground. Then down the hatch went the sea bags and me, 19 hours after getting up at

home in Texas.

What a change in lifestyle, environment and outlook on the world, and there was much more to come. As the first rays of light crept into the sky I was out of my bunk, hooking up the gas bottle, getting five gallons of fresh water and making a pot of strong coffee before getting to work. That first cup would jump-start my new project. It was more than I expected – I was watching the stove intently and impatiently when, with an horrendous bang, the oven door blew open and three foot tongues of flames shot out. At the back of the oven I could see the dragon's eyes, all flame and fury at being disturbed. Now I know where the dragon lives but, alas, I had no coffee!

Investigation revealed that, after many years of hard use, the stove manifold had rusted through and was leaking gas directly into the oven. As I had to live onboard, no stove meant no food. Building a new manifold would not be difficult, except for one problem – in all the lesser-developed areas of the world specialised tools can be very hard to find. No-one had small pipe cutting and threading equipment, not even the only plumbing store in Port of Spain which had a selection of British steel piping. Steel pipe is now obsolete – everyone uses PVC.

There was nothing left to do but to build a manifold by joining a series of nipples together to get the correct length, and find a small pipe tap to drill and thread my old valves into place. It took two days in town to find the bits and pieces – I was told at every plumbing and appliance store that the small sizes I needed were no longer available. Finally, at the bottom of an old rusty box, we found the necessary materials. When it was all done and assembled I had my first cup of real coffee – three days late! Now I could eat, but the dragon had killed my oven. On a project like this you can't tell what's going to happen next. By the way, most yachts have a hidden dragon somewhere.

Part II: Preparation

The work to be done was formidable, and all work on the hull had to be finished before we got launched. She needed new paint, white with blue stripes – a big job for one person. It took 18 days. I caused considerable interest in the boatyard, because it is not only unusual for the owner to paint a boat of this size alone, but using a paint brush and doing it by hand is now far from ordinary. Actually I painted by hand for the very good reason that I was using special two-part epoxy paint which, in the tropics, has a pot life of less than ten minutes. The secret was to paint a small piece at a time. When the work was finally finished even the yard professionals complimented me on the result.

The yard always becomes my fitness club. I'm out in the fresh air and can get all kinds of exercise – sanding and painting with one hand, and holding on with the other – a 15 foot drop if I slip! By the time the day's work is done and supper is cooked, I have no trouble getting to sleep. The work goes on seven days a week and by the end of a month I'll be getting into top physical condition. The only expenses at this top-notch exercise club are the materials used on the job. And materials can cost a lot. Only the best will stand up to the rigors of the sea. Put your money into the very best, it pays hands down, the best is none too good.

In Trinidad, which is now a worldwide cruising destination, there are yachts from all over the world laid up side by side. Every owner living aboard is the real thing – not a

yachting cap amongst the lot. These folks sail across the Atlantic or to Australia at the drop of a hat, and many have circumnavigated.

Let me also mention the children. I've met a lot of them, and to my mind they're among the best-educated kids in the world. They are knowledgeable about most everything, impressively informed about current world events, often bilingual by the age of five or six, and, oh, how they can swim! I'm always amazed how responsible they become at such an early age – perhaps it's because they have to be!

Part III: The Voyage

It took a month of work to have *Fancy Free* ready to launch and safe to sail. The first leg of the voyage would be one of the toughest, from Trinidad to Rodney Bay, St Lucia. One is close-hauled into the northeast trade winds and at the same time battling the southwest-setting current, a double whammy that would make for a very slow trip. The weather, furthermore, is seldom helpful – intermittent rain and thunderstorms at best. As the crow flies the passage is only 218 miles to St Lucia, but with the adverse wind and current my estimate was that nearer 300 miles would have to be sailed. As it turned out, it was one of the worst trips I have ever made and much worse than I anticipated.

The autopilot could not hold the course. With the engine I could get an extra 5–10° to windward, but one minute of inattention and the bow would have made a 180° turn and be running downwind, heading for Panama. I had to concentrate on trying to hold the best course I could make, hand steering non-stop for over 50 hours – the longest I have ever been at the wheel without relief.

Such cruising becomes my physical fitness challenge each summer, though at times the weather calls the shots. On this windward struggle I could not cook or even make coffee, as in seconds *Fancy Free* would be round and gone. As the hours passed the squalls and rain increased their intensity, and I was soaked to the skin despite my foul weather gear. I was pushed west away from the smaller islands where I could – and should – have found shelter, anchored and waited it out. However, I had been pushed out into the open sea and there was nothing left but to battle on towards Rodney Bay.

If I had had a second person aboard it would have been more bearable and there would have been relief and food for us both. Alone, I was to make St Lucia or else somewhere in Venezuela or Columbia. I was determined to make St Lucia. Time at the wheel went on ... day turned into night and then into a second day. The squalls became more and more intense and the black clouds became lower as they swept by. But slowly we were making progress, and in the small hours of the second night I started to see some lights near the south end of St Lucia. As I approached, the current started sweeping me towards them. At about 0300 strange lights started to come and go as we were struck repeatedly by squalls. It was now that my physiological limit was reached.

Hallucinations started to take over. They came in two forms. With every squall, the clouds swept in just above the mast and the wind blew rain violently in horizontal sheets. In my exhausted condition, the clouds appeared to have developed long roots that went down into the sea. My mind saw mangrove swamps on all sides, with large tangled roots going up into the black storm clouds. I knew that they were not real, but it was very hard to hold a steady compass course and sail right into them head on. Next



The author … and his ship



appeared a large housing development of expensive mansions. Each had a breezeway and a patio in the middle. The development went on and on, so placed that my small ship had repeatedly to sail right through the central breezeway – the little vessel cutting through the stone, like Harry Potter taking the train to school. To have one's mind and vision playing tricks, showing very real dangers that were not there at all, was more than difficult. Obviously, it was mandatory that I must stop and rest, but it was 0300 and I was at sea with lashing horizontal rain coming every 15 minutes. If I could hold on until 0500 it would start to get light, and by 0600 I should be able to see where I was.

Then the squalls started to abate and a grey mist came from every direction, not exactly fog but just a grey blanket of heavy haze. There was no St Lucia – even the famous Pitons were nowhere to be seen. Around 1000 part of the island started to appear, and I found myself well south of where I thought I was. The current during the storm must have been extremely strong. Gradually the sun melted the haze and Rodney Bay, with little Pigeon Island, could be seen in the distance. At 1500 the anchor was let go, just 57 hours from Trinidad. What a ride, the longest watch of my life!

(As proof that this story is not fantasy, the storm stretched all the way down into Venezuela – the top general of the Venezuelan Air Force was killed in a crash during it. The squalls were the fiercest I had ever seen.)

From now on going up the island chain would be easy. Just island hopping, generally during daylight hours, and anchoring each night at spots I knew well. In addition the course was improving as the island chain gradually turned to the west. However it was obvious that to complete over 3000 miles alone I had to have a functional and reliable autopilot. I'd already installed the latest electronic Seltrec computer package – it's fantastic just how well its software self-adapted to the yacht – my trouble was that while I had bought one of the best electronic steering computers, my old hydraulic steering pump was just too small and too tired. These little pumps are very expensive so I decided to steer by hand as far as St Maarten. There I would look over what might be salvaged from the hurricane disaster of several years ago, when many hundreds of yachts had been destroyed in the lagoon. Perhaps someone had a salvaged pump that I could buy relatively cheap. It was my best shot – if there was one to be had, St Maarten was the place to look.

From St Lucia it was only a four hour run to Ste Anne and Le Mann, Martinique. The weather was fantastic, and for a week I enjoyed the food and getting familiar with the euro. Le Mann is now the best yacht destination on Martinique, and a real experience of France. It was here that for the first time I saw a new business – a transporter ship for yachts. When flooded you just sail your yacht aboard. When loaded, the water is pumped out and, crammed with boats of all sizes, they head for Europe. My curiosity got the better of me and I looked into what a yacht *Fancy Free*'s size, 17m, would cost to send to France. The answer – US $25,000 one way. This yacht freighter has been in service for about ten years and they seemed to have plenty of business.

Next I sailed from Martinique to Prince Rupert Bay, Dominica. It is strange, but of all the open passages between islands, the Dominica passage nearly always has the worst

weather. It takes only four or five hours at the most to cross, but a year previously I'd had five white squalls in less than three hours between the two islands. For this reason I only carried my No.2 jib. In singlehanding a big yacht, the secret is to never have more sail up than one can get away with in the worst conditions – you have to sail right through whatever may arrive, without touching a sail or leaving the wheel. All you can do is luff up a bit in the worst of it. A white squall seldom lasts more than a few minutes, but even with only a No.2 jib it is still a wild ride while it lasts. Once I started to get shelter from Dominica conditions improved rapidly. At the north end of Dominica is Prince Rupert Bay, which is a good anchorage, often used by the British Navy during the 18th century. From there it is only a matter of a day to sail to the Saints or to Guadeloupe, where the best anchorage on the leeward side of the island is again at the northern end, at Grand Anse. This bay provides a good overnight anchorage, unless it is crowded and one has to anchor at the back when dragging can be a problem.

From Guadeloupe it was off to Montserrat with its active volcano. Passing to the south of the island can be a bit dangerous if the volcano is having one of its active spells as the gasses from the eruptions are carried that way. At night, in the moonlight, the island has an eerie, almost moon-like, appearance and the old capital, Plymouth, is now almost completely covered with ash. I kept my distance from the smoking Montserrat, my destination being Nevis where there is a nice anchorage at Charlestown. From Nevis it was only a day sail up St Christopher and over to Groote Bay, St Maarten, where autopilot work took precedence.

After two days of inquiries I had found only two men who worked on yacht hydraulics. One, a Frenchman was based in a small ship-container at the Timeout Boat Yard on the French side of the island. My luck was in – he had a reversible 12 volt steering pump made in France. The motor was good but the pump itself was damaged. Just maybe I could do something. I bought the pump, had him make up some new hoses, and returned to the boat. Again my luck was in. The small pump I had could be adapted to the strong reversible motor with but a few alterations. It became a French-English alliance, with the French motor joined to the British pump and for around US $300 *Fancy Free* ended up with a working hydraulic autopilot. Would it work? I could not see why not. However the real test would be how dependable it was, and the only way to find that out was to use it. It would have been better had I also fixed my oven so I could cook too, but for the rest of the voyage the autopilot continued to steer, and at least I could now hold a course without hand steering.

(The second part of Bill's account, from St Maarten home to Galveston, Texas, will appear in *Flying Fish* 2003/2.)



The man who believes he can do something is probably right, and so is the man who believes he can't. Anonymous

THIS PAGE CARRIED AN ADVERTISEMENT

A NIGHT IN THE RAZ
Eve Bonham Cozens

(*Eve and Michael are both vastly experienced sailors who have cruised and raced all over the world in a variety of yachts.*)

Cape Horn to Port. These were words at the top of an invitation I received recently, asking us to a party to celebrate a 50th birthday combined with 25 years since rounding Cape Horn in a Swan 65 during a Round the World Race. I went, and so did eight others of the twelve-person crew, one of whom was Sam who had celebrated his 25th birthday on that momentous day a quarter of a century earlier. It was a genial and gentle evening and, interestingly enough, none of us really mentioned the race or rounding the Horn at all. I think this was healthy, as it shows we have all moved on and are now concerned with our children, careers and current activities.

However, I did have conversations with a couple of people which followed the fairly predictable lines when people meet up again after a number of years – the type of entertaining and often illuminating discussions which are prompted by such general questions as: 'What was the most frightening incident in your life?' 'Have you ever felt completely at one with nature or had a sense of the sublime?' 'What was the most exciting or fulfilling moment in your life?' It was surprising how often the answers to these big questions (when addressed to someone who sails or travels) involve an incident at sea or in a boat.

This prompted me to reflect on these questions as they related to my own experiences. The retrospective view is often best examined after some time has passed – I suppose it's all about evaluating experiences, and sometimes this can be done more accurately when the pain or the pleasure resulting from the event has subsided. The most exciting and fulfilling incident in my life prior to my meeting Michael might well have been rounding Cape Horn under sail or crossing the finishing line in the Whitbread race. I'm fairly clear that giving birth to our children was the most enthralling and momentous occasion in my entire life (not very original – many women would say this).

The better story would be my most frightening experience, and here I find it hard to choose between an incident in the Chenal du Four on a sailing vessel in 1988 and a nasty experience back in 1971 while I was travelling alone in Sumatra when I got stoned in a small town called Bukkitinggi (in those days the centre of a matriarchal but Moslem tribe). I emphasise that I do not mean 'stoned' in the 'high on drugs' sense – I mean it in the biblical sense, 'a crowd of people throwing stones at me', for what reason I did not wait to discover. I escaped by running, though I was very badly bruised and battered. I used to sprint for my university and was quite swift, and when I thought that my life was at stake I ran very fast indeed. However, I had only myself to consider and no-one else depending on me to make the right decision.

I think I was probably more frightened in 1988 because, although I was with Michael, we also had on board our daughter aged two-and-a-half and our seven month old son, plus a young woman called Jo who was not a sailor. We had been cruising in northern

Spain aboard our 40ft cutter *Gemervescence of London* (known to the family as *Little Gem*) and were sailing north in late August *en route* to England. We were waiting in the Anse de Ste Evette, near Audierne in Brittany, to catch the tide through the Raz du Sein and Chenal du Four, when we heard from a nearby French boat that a southerly force 9 was expected in 6–12 hours. We had the choice to remain where we were, in a shallow bay open to the south with poor holding, and perhaps get caught like a rat in a trap, or else to make a run for it (when the tide changed) and hope to get through to Camaret (open to the north) before the storm broke. We decided on the latter, but had to wait another nail-biting three hours before we could leave the anchorage, slipping through the Raz at slack tide at around 2300.

The gale moved faster than anticipated and caught us as we were crossing the Baie de Douarnenez, and within an hour we were in a howling maelstrom in total darkness. I had the easier task – I was on the helm, and once we had shortened sail down to three reefs in the main and a tiny storm jib, all I had to do was helm as I was bidden by Michael, who had the unenviable task of deciding what to do and where to go. We were running fast before the wind, and decisions had to be made quickly. The most frightening thing was that we were in such restricted waters – a gale in open sea holds no such terrors. There was no question of attempting the Chenal du Four – visibility was nil because of darkness, driving rain, and spume off the waves. Remember this was 15 years ago so there was no GPS, and neither did we have radar.

The wind speed was probably more than 50 knots, but I was working hard trying to helm a straight compass course to aid Michael's calculations. *Little Gem* has a tiller, and though I am very strong it was tiring work. Michael was very busy at the chart table below and adjusting sails on deck. I had to trust Michael and he had to trust me – we kept to our respective tasks – we are a good team. With wind and current it would have been so easy to get it wrong, and it was sobering to realise that those precious people below depended on our getting it right. I was afraid, but fear concentrates the mind and I stuck to my helming with grim determination.

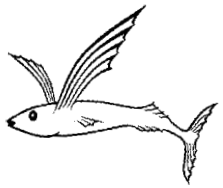
Michael decided that we would go into Brest, as there would be no turning south in the Goulet de Brest for Camaret, and hopefully we would pick up the buoyage when we went in. There was no question of closing the land to go through the Chenal de Toulinguet. We would go round La Parquette lighthouse and avoid the shoals and rocks a mile or two to the east of it. The dead reckoning was not easy, and Michael had to decide when to turn east-northeast and hope that we had left La Parquette to starboard or close on port. The gap between the lighthouse (which we never saw) and the cliffs on the shore to the north is only 3□5 miles wide. The night was very black and very wet. The shrieking of the wind and the slooshing noise on the hull as we raced along was very unnerving – and I had a curious, illogical feeling that there was a massive cliff dead ahead which I could not see.

At length Michael told me to turn onto 070°, and then the boat stopped lunging from side to side and started heeling over and shipping lots of water, so he dropped all sail and we were still shooting along at 6 knots under bare poles. As we headed into the narrows at the entrance to the Rade de Brest we finally picked up a light on the mid-channel shoals of the Plateau des Fillettes. Because of the leeway and windage on the

hull we were heading about 090° and just making 070°. We had decided to keep to the starboard/windward side going in, but it was truly horrifying to discover that we were barely clawing our way off the shoals. A nasty moment, that.

We finally passed the danger and then the Pointe de Portzic Lighthouse on port, and at length skittered alongside the harbour mole to enter the main harbour. Yachts do not normally come in here, but we had no intention of fighting our way up the shallows to the marina beyond. It was still blowing 45 knots when we approached the quay. Although we had been sailing for only a few hours, we were exhausted and with some difficulty we tied up alongside a pilot vessel. My arms were twitching with fatigue and my heart was thudding with relief that we had come safely through. After half an hour the pilot told us that he had to go out on a call, and so we moved wearily to tie up to a supply vessel for the Ile de Sein, who were very kind and helpful. Then we were able to crash out – it was nearly dawn. We told Jo, who had been lying awake and frightened in her bunk during most of the stormy night, to keep an eye on the children when they woke (our children always slept well, blissfully unaware of any bad weather or danger). It was sobering to think that their lives had depended on our making the right decisions, and how easy it could have been to miscalculate. As Michael said the next day, we made it 'By guess and by God'.

In retrospect we should probably have made for the open sea, to ride out the bad weather there, but we really thought we would have time to get to Camaret and be safe there before it hit. We have had, in common with all sailors, many worrying and frightening experiences whilst sailing in far flung places, but this incident, so close to home, could well have been our nemesis.



They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depth: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, to that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

Psalm 107, verses 23-30

OF ATOLLS : THE TUAMOTUS, COOKS & MALDIVES

Tim Le Couteur

June 2002 – Tuamotus

Hesperine, our Hallberg-Rassy 42 ketch, had carried Ginny and me many safe miles since we set sail from France. We were now on passage from the Marquesas, in French Polynesia, towards the 77-atoll chain of the Tuamotus, which cover 1000 miles of ocean. These were formerly called 'The Dangerous Archipelago' on account of their variable currents, mixed weather and low visibility. We had sailed through these islands in 1973 on our way to New Zealand, where we now live, and had spent many hours practising star sights for the northern landfall, Takaroa. In those 'pre GPS' days a passage through the Tuamotus was quite an undertaking.

Now we knew exactly where we were, and wanted to explore this fascinating island group more extensively. An examination of the chart and cruising guide – *Charlie's Charts of Polynesia* – shows 15 atolls with good passes north of the 17°20' restricted area. A yacht with less draft than *Hesperine*'s 2□1m would find a few more. Ideally, with the southeast trades blowing through the group, one should harden sheets as much as comfort will allow and make landfall at the southern end of the group. This will enable fair wind cruising to Rangiroa at the north western end of the atoll chain.

However an easterly wind and bumpy conditions meant that our intended landfall of Makemo was not possible without tacking, so we eased sheets for Kauehi. Yachts who spent time in Makemo reported a wonderfully sheltered anchorage in the south of the atoll, which is not shown in *Charlie's Charts*. In fact, from comments received, Makemo was voted the most popular atoll for the 2002 season. Others managed to lay further south, making Raroia their first call – this was *Kon-Tiki*'s landing. We nervously approached the only pass in Kauehi, on its south western corner, timing our entrance for slack water and a noon sun. As it turned out Kauehi pass was wide (0□5 mile) and clear of dangers, but as those cruising this area soon learn, timing is vital and should not be taken lightly. Six miles across Kauehi's lagoon lies the only settlement, Tearavera. Good light is desirable for this passage, although the coral patches were usually well marked by the excellent red and green lit beacons that now prevail throughout the Tuamotus.

The 'black' pearl has revived the flagging nacre industry and has created new-found wealth in the few atolls where the growing conditions are suitable. Kauehi is one of these and here we met Michael Yip, the 'Prince of Pearls'. Michael has six farms on different atolls, and told us that the one on Kauehi produced an annual crop of 30,000 pearls. We enjoyed a morning being shown the various stages of pearl farming, and now understand what a navigational hazard the surface buoys represent, hiding a maze of hidden growing lines beneath the water. In common with most of the other larger atolls Kauehi, is linked to Tahiti by air. The day after we met Michael, he flew out for Papeete laden with a rucksack full of pearls – less the few that we had purchased!

Another unforgettable experience was attending Church on Sunday, with four guitars strumming and the haunting Polynesian singing echoing through the banner and shell-strewn pale blue and pink interior.

Convergence zones are the bane of the weather in this part of the world, with the disturbed air that they create often covering many hundreds of miles. We were weatherbound for five days in Kauehi, as the wind boxed the compass and the rain fell. This showed how important it is to choose one's anchorage carefully, and how relatively few anchorages are truly safe in these atolls. Our anchorage off Tearavera village pier was perfect for the prevailing southeast or easterly conditions, but became a dangerous lee shore when the wind swung around to the southwest. Graham Morfey (OCC) had visited these islands two years earlier and, fortunately for us, had found a better anchorage for these conditions. This anchorage is not shown elsewhere so I repeat Graham's comments:

> 'The position is north of the village in the 'inner' lagoon. One needs to skirt the reef but the entry is easy. This is one of the safest anchorages in the Tuamotus, effectively giving protection from all quarters. Anchor with the church at 172°M and the end of the *motu* (last bush) bearing 226°M.
>
> *Warning*: there is a large coral head just awash with the church at 171°M and the end of the motu at 235°M.'

With the sun shining once again we made an early start bound for our next atoll, Fakarava. We wanted to visit the southern part of the atoll as we understood the diving was outstanding. Passe Tumakohua, one of our hardest of this cruise, was made more difficult by entering too early! Tide times vary considerably between atolls, with quoted times for Ahe being 1½ hours after quoted times for Tahanea which is 2½° further south and east. Our mistake was that a further hour should be added for a southern pass, where the distance to the northern pass is considerable (15 miles in the case of Fakarava).

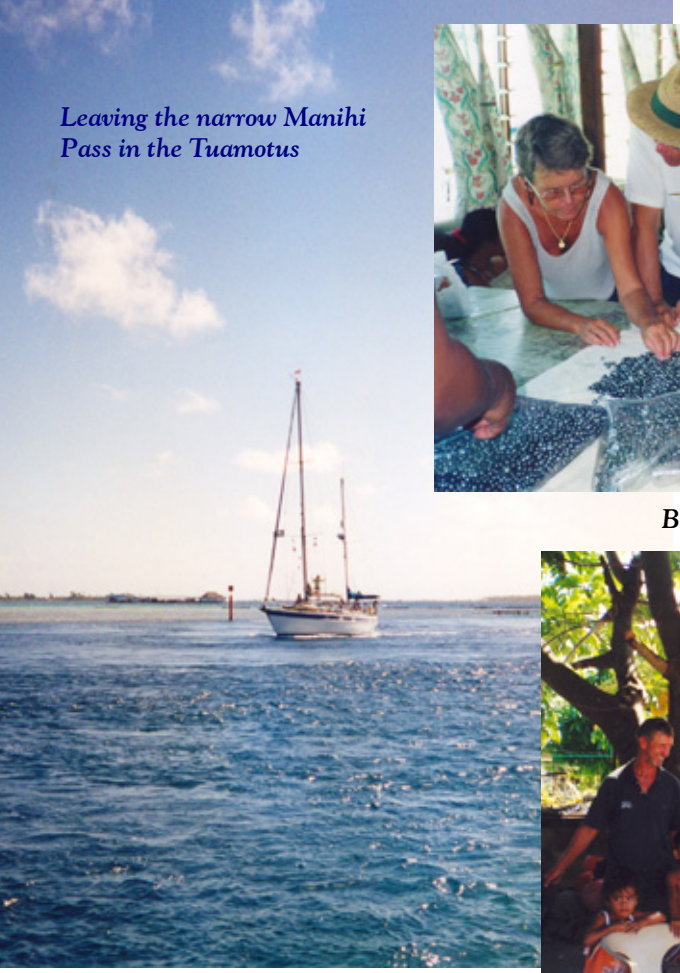
The strong outgoing current we encountered in Passe Tumakohua had been accentuated by the recent bad weather, which had overfilled the lagoon with sea coming over its windward side. Inside the lagoon we found one other yacht in the process of retrieving their coral-bound anchor. In the bad weather they too had been on a lee shore, and the seas had been so bad that their bow-fitting had been ripped clean off the boat! The anchorage near the diving resort was indeed a problem – too deep, at 20m, with towering coral heads. We snorkelled around to try and find a clear spot, but really took our chances that the good weather would hold for our wonderful three day stay. Scuba diving and snorkelling the southern pass exceeded our expectations, and nine months later we have yet to see better! Up to a hundred blacktip reef sharks on one side of the pass, and on the other a myriad of colourful coral and marine life, including the great Napoleon fish.

The passage inside the lagoon, between the deserted southern Fakarava village and the populous northern one of Rotoava, was marked all the way with new red and green lit beacons. This said, we still manned the ratlines and travelled with good light, as

there were many coral patches dangerously close to the rhumb line between beacons. Indeed, a short way south of Rotoava a pearl farm straddled the rhumb line. We watched and felt the growing lines just hitting the bottom of *Hesperine's* keel as we glided over

Anchoring outside the reef at Palmerston Atoll in the Cook Islands





Leaving the narrow Manihi Pass in the Tuamotus



Black Pearls at Kauehi



Old friends at Ahe, our favourite atoll



Uligan wharf in the Maldives

them! The airport at Rotoava was on the scheduled service from Tahiti which, we learned, was the reason why so many of the villages around the larger Fakarava lagoon had been deserted. Consequently the village shop at Rotoava held untold luxuries, which supplemented the usual frozen baguettes, tinned tuna, corned beef and rice.

We would have liked to visit the Toau and Aratika atolls to the northwest, but instead needed to make an overnight passage to Manihi to meet our next guests (had we known that airstrips were everywhere, this could have been done in Fakarava or even Kauehi). We had visited Manihi on our first cruise through the Tuamotus in 1973, and had been fortunate to lie alongside the quay which was the centre of village life. This was no longer possible, and instead it was necessary to negotiate the very narrow pass into the large lagoon which was strewn with black pearl farms. The recommended anchorage rates as the worst that we encountered in the Tuamotus – 15-20m of cloudy water and huge coral heads. Nick, our resident scuba diver, was kept busy freeing anchors – including that of one yacht three times! The busy village was a one mile, wet, dinghy ride away, but the local baker provided a change from frozen baguettes and also sold petrol for the outboard. One other dubious highlight was the 'island night' at the Pearl Resort Hotel by the airstrip on the other side of the lagoon. They sent a fast boat to collect a group of us, and gave us a thrilling moonlit night ride back, dodging the coral patches at 30 knots!

So to our favorite atoll, Ahe, where 30 years ago we had spent a month living with the villagers. *Wei-Hai* our 28ft Harrison Butler-type cutter had lain by herself in the perfect shelter of their inner lagoon. These sheltered anchorages are few and far between, so once again Ahe was our favourite atoll as we re-met many old friends.

Finally to Rangiroa, the largest atoll in the South Pacific, where there are several large, expensive hotels including the very beautiful, US $350 per night, Kia Ora Hotel. This was rather out of our league! We preferred the epicurean delights of Relais Josephine at the edge of the pass, where we watched a school of dolphins playing the overfalls of the ebb tide. This completed our three week Tuamotian circuit. Tahiti and airline schedules beckoned. Given more time, a stop at nearby Tikehau was reputedly really worthwhile.

August 2002 – The Cook Isles

There are eight atolls in the 750,000 square miles of Pacific administered by the Cook Isles. Of these only Suvarov (Suwarrow) and Penrhyn have lagoons deep enough for yachts. The great circle course from Bora-Bora to Samoa takes one close to far flung Palmerston Atoll, so we chose to stop there. Our two day stay at this unique place was also one of our most unusual anchorages. The atoll is too shallow to enter, so one drops anchor on a shallow patch 50m from the outside of the reef on the leeward side of the island. In retrospect it was probably an advantage that we had strong southeasterlies for the two nights that we sat on this precarious perch, as they held *Hesperine* off the reef. At the time, with the wind gusting to 40 knots and the rain deluging down, we decided to keep anchor watch. It was only slightly better than being at sea in such conditions!

Palmerston's sixty or so inhabitants are all relatives of the famed William Marsters, a Lancashire man who settled on the atoll with his three Cook island wives (who were all

sisters)! By his death in 1899 he had sired 21 children, whose descendants still follow his strict codes for intermarriage and land division. One of the traditions is that whichever family comes out to welcome you becomes your assigned family for your stay. We were met by Jimmy Marsters, and would probably have sailed off again had Jimmy not assured us that this open anchorage would be alright.

Our visit ashore was brief, as the weather was very unsettled. Of particular interest was the 500m by 500m pit which had been hand-dug into the coral in the centre of the island. This pit penetrated the natural water table and formed a marsh out of the area, thus enabling the growth of root crops like taro, yam and kumara. Also still standing was William Marsters' log cabin, built from shipwreck timber. This small community has a precarious existence, particularly now that copra is no longer harvested due to the market decline. We suspect the financial mainstay is remittances from relatives living in New Zealand, but Jimmy told us that he could earn enough by catching the plentiful parrot fish to sell in Rarotonga.

February 2003 – The Maldives

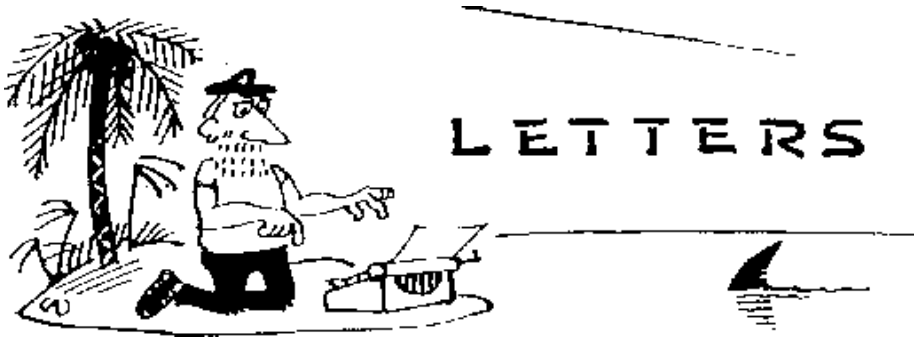
With fond memories of Malaysia, Thailand and Sri Lanka, *Hesperine* was now bound for her third group of atolls in eight months – The Maldives. Two hundred and seventy miles southwest of India's southernmost point, the Maldives are a group of 26 atolls which straddle 8° of latitude from 7°N to, and across, the Equator. The structure of these atolls is very different from the tight coral rings of their Pacific counterparts – in fact one could describe them as loose rings of *motus* divided by wide channels leading into the lagoon. This means that, from a cruising point of view, shelter is even harder to find. The saving grace is that most people cruise the Maldives during the northern winter northeast monsoon, whose winds rarely exceed force 4. Most of the 250,000 population live in Male, the capital and the centre for the tourist industry.

Until recently all visiting yachts had to clear in and out at Male, but now a Customs post has been established at Thiladhunmathee, on Uligan *motu* in the northernmost atoll. This lies just south of Eight Degree Passage, our natural course from Sri Lanka to our next destination of Oman. The entrance into Uligan is wide and coral free but nevertheless, as with all coral anchorages, it is desirable to have good light the first time that one enters. The anchorage off the 450-strong village is well sheltered from winds from northeast through to southeast, but one must be prepared to anchor in 15m or more to find a sand patch free of coral. The water was beautifully clear but sadly much of the coral was dead. Landing at the pier amidst several rod fishermen, we wondered aloud why they were catching small fish in ones and twos from the vast shoal that blackened the turquoise sea. Easy they said – if you net them the fish will go away!

This approach typified the well-ordered Sunni Muslim society that we found ashore. The Customs had laid down strict rules which were designed to minimise the yachts' impact on the islanders. We could only applaud, since rules like 'no one ashore between the hours of 2300–0600', 'no alcohol ashore', and 'no locals to visit boats' all seemed very sensible. That said, the locals frequently organised fish barbecues for the passing yachts and went out of their way to help with fuel, water and other supplies. In all a perfectly charming place, and one of the highlights of our cruise.

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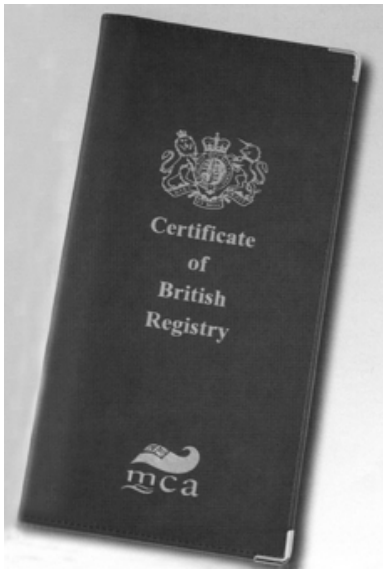
BRITISH REGISTRATION

Michael Jones, Bandol, France **March 2003**

You may recall my letter, printed in *Flying Fish* 2001/1, about the problems I encountered in renewing the British registration of my 11□1m yacht *Mowgli*. I learned then that, as a British national resident in France, I could not renew my Small Ships Registration but would have to transfer to Part 1 of the UK Register at a total cost – including measurement survey, 'engraved plate', correspondence and phone calls – of approximately £700.

Recently I wrote to Peter Heath, Business Manager at the MCA who administer both Registers, reminding him that he had said that changes were being considered for owners of small yachts in my position. He has now replied that he is hoping 'to put forward options for changing registration regulations later this year' and that his proposals will be put out for consultation (I hope the OCC will be on his mailing list). He also gave me the good news that I will only be required to pay around £65 to renew, not £700, which came as a very considerable relief.

I hope his proposals will include changes to the size of the actual certificate, since the present one – a plastic laminated A4 sheet – is totally impractical and requires a briefcase for transport.



And the good news:

I visited the MCA stand at the London International Boat Show in January, where I was shown the smart new 'BLUE BOOK' which has recently been introduced. It appears to be well-made in mock leather with protected corners, though somewhat pricey at £25.00. A suitable gift for the owner who has everything?

To obtain one send your current laminated certificate, plus cheque, to the MCA at: Registry of Shipping and Seamen, MCA Cardiff, Anchor Court, Ocean Way, Cardiff CF24 5JW, Wales, Tel 029 2044 8800, Fax 029 2044 8820. Ed.

FOLLOWING COLUMBUS'S ROUTE
Larry and Maxine Bailey

Let us introduce ourselves. We are Larry and Maxine Bailey from Seattle, Washington and are currently cruising aboard *Shingebiss II*, our 13m fibreglass cutter built near Vancouver, Canada. We have been members of OCC since 2001, when we met David and Annette Ridout in Chesapeake Bay, having met them previously in Britain. They invited us to an OCC gathering in Annapolis and sponsored us as members.

We left Seattle in May 1992 for a shakedown cruise to Alaska and the Aleutian Islands before returning to Seattle. From there we went to Mexico for the winter, then south to Costa Rica, the Galapagos, Easter Island and the Chilean channels. We crossed the Drake Passage to Antarctica, and then visited the Falkland Islands and South Georgia before island-hopping north to the Mediterranean, where we spent three years. We then continued to Britain, wintering at St Katherine's Haven, and on to the Baltic for another winter before returning to North America via the Faroes, Iceland and Greenland. We then sailed down the east coast of Canada and the US, and last year visited Cuba.

We've been remiss in writing about our travels because we've been busy travelling (and most of our photos are in Seattle), but we've enjoyed both *Flying Fish* and the *Newsletter*. At this time we're reporting on a route that most of you know well, but it's our most recent and the one for which we have photos – following Columbus's route east across the North Atlantic to position ourselves for a sail to South Africa.

Maxine in a hydrangea path, Faial



We didn't spend much time in Bermuda, but did take advantage of transportation passes to visit The Dockyard Fort, returning to St George's via Hamilton, where we admired the Newport-Bermuda Race boats tied up at the Royal Bermuda Yacht Club. We had our own personal guides at the Aquarium/Natural History Park – scuba diving friends who knew all the fish – and we hiked with them along an old railroad trail, so it was a relaxed and pleasant time.

Our return to the Azores was special. In '95 we had only visited



Larry at Capelinhos crater, Faial

São Miguel and Faial, plus ferrying to neighbouring Pico. This time we visited all the islands except one. Friends had said that they spent too much time in the Canaries and not enough in the Azores, and we had time for both. We started in the northwest, at Flores, and ended in the southeast, at Santa Maria, making land trips via rental car or cab. We loved the blue hydrangea bushes mixed with pink roses and vibrantly-coloured canna lilies, and the tree-capped mountains. Each island has something unique and wonderful. São Jorge's villages on the waterfront *fajas* formed a frame for a double rainbow against the water below us. Graciosa's sulphurous lake in a huge cave inside the *caldera* was a highlight of our trip. São Miguel's sights and hot springs are worth a couple of driving days.

Columbus visited Santa Maria, our last island, on his return from the New World. He and his men had vowed to give thanks at the first place where the Virgin was worshipped. He allowed only half of his men ashore, and they were promptly arrested. Pirates and slavers harassed the islands, so it's no surprise that the islanders were suspicious of strangers. He had to go to São Miguel to arrange their release. The literature is vague on whether he came back to the church himself, but there's a big statue of him there. Larry liked this island the best. It's beautiful, very much up and down with forests on the peaks, and sandy beaches in addition to the usual Azorean black rock beaches.

In the Madeira islands *Shingebiss* stayed at Porto Santo, which we toured by taxi. Columbus lived there when he married the governor's daughter, and his first son was born there. The building claimed to have been his home is now a museum. We flew to Madeira, rented a car, looked around Funchal, and then stayed in the first *pousada* in

Portugal. We loved watching the clouds flit among the mountains and the view of the village below us. Madeira and the Azores have the only remnants of forests that date from the Tertiary period – once covering much of Europe, they were wiped out by the last ice age.

Madeira's early settlers built terraced fields, irrigating them with water via *levadas* (stone ditches running from the mountains to the valleys). Hiking trails now follow them. We drove up the curvy single lane roads to the plateau/ridge at the centre of the island, enjoying the views into isolated villages and of the sea on both sides. The second *pousada* is above the tree line on the third highest peak, with a fantastic outlook. On our way there we took a *levada* hike. It was beautiful, with moss and ferns on all the rocks, huge huckleberry bushes (higher than our heads) along the path, and hydrangeas blooming in the clear places. Madeira reminds us of Hawaii – everything grows there, from cacti to fuchsias, succulents to moss.

En route to the Canaries, we visited the Ilhas Desertas, a nature reserve of tall cliffs and caves where monk seals breed. With the Ranger's permission we stayed overnight on the mooring, and Larry hiked 400m up a staircase carved into the steep rock face of the cliff. Next day a weather system came through with a violent front and we returned to Porto Santo, sailing right into the eye of the storm. When the front hit us, 35 knots of southwesterly wind suddenly switched to 40 knots from the northeast. The jib wouldn't roll up properly, and in the strong wind it flogged itself to pieces. We finally anchored at 0200. Gusts in the harbour had registered 72 knots. A bright spot was that we saw a seldom-observed phenomenon, a moonbow. We'd heard about them, and with the almost-full moon and squalls roaring through, we were watching. There wasn't much colour to it, but it was a clear, glowing, bow across the sky – stunning!

Cruisers advised us to have a new jib made in the Canaries, so we tanked up on fuel and left again. That poor old jib had 70,000 miles on it, so it had served us well. We had been hoping to nurse it until we reached New Zealand, where they're known for their sails. At Las Palmas in Gran Canaria we were lucky to be able to stay on a dock belonging to a sailing school – the marina was reserved for over 300 ARC (Atlantic Rally for Cruisers) boats that had priority. The jib was made before they all crowded in, and we're happy with it. We had the boat hauled and the bottom repainted. The harbour has diesel floating on the water, which killed the grass on the hull, but the bottom was covered with tubeworms, which had to be scraped. Ugh!

We enjoyed visiting the Canaries. Las Palmas has a lovely old section. It's not known whether Columbus actually stayed at what is now the Columbus House Museum, which was the home of the Governor at that time, though he did stop for a visit. The museum examines the effect of Columbus's voyage on the indigenous people of the Americas, as well as on the Canary Islanders. The indigenous people of the Canaries, who mummified their dead, are believed to be of Cro Magnon and Mediterranean origin. They built houses of stone, or lived in caves in the mountains, to which they retreated when they saw a ship – which would be either a pirate, a slaver, or later a Spanish military ship. It took the Spanish 90 years to defeat them.

The shores are deserted crags interspersed with beaches backed by high-rise hotels and condos. The display of beefy bodies has to be seen to be believed – like the



Halloween in Las Palmas!

Sunset in the South Atlantic





Renewing our wall painting at Horta (a passer-by remarked that Mecca is in the other direction)



El Teide, Tenerife

elephant seals in South Georgia. We enjoyed one beautiful drive through the mountains, with steep cliffs and valleys among the trees and a view of El Teide volcano on Tenerife, and another to Bandama, a nearby crater, where two men were releasing homing pigeons. We did see canaries, which are named for the islands, not vice-versa. In fact the islands were named for the wild dogs found roaming there. Think of the constellation Canis Major, 'big dog'...

We visited the upwind islands of Fuerteventura and Lanzarote by ferry, stopping overnight on each island and renting a car. Fuerteventura is known for its fine beaches, but we chose a route through the mountains where chipmunks and birds begged for handouts. We drove through the most barren nature reserve we've ever seen. There were 'deer crossing' signs, but we couldn't imagine what they feed on or where they find shelter.

Admission to the Volcano Park in Lanzarote includes a bus tour with a recorded commentary. Most amazing to us was that the series of eruptions, which covered 200^{2}km with lava, began with the overnight formation of a mountain with flames shooting from its summit. At the parking area the ground is warm to the touch, and is said to be 400°C at a depth of only 6m. Meat is barbecued over open pits 3m deep. I loved the blind white crabs, 6–12mm across, which are visible in the shallow pool of a lava cave. They are related to crabs that live 1100m below the surface of the ocean. How they reached and adapted to this shallow pool mystifies me. We flew back to Gran Canaria.

On Tenerife we visited El Teide, Spain's highest mountain at 3717m (interestingly,

the Azores contain Portugal's highest mountain, Pico). We drove to the end of the road, 1006m from the summit, and waited with the crowds to ascend in the cable car almost to the crater. We did not obtain permits in advance, which were required to make the brief ascent to the crater itself. The path was a series of steps cut in the scree. We could smell sulphur and see steam coming from a couple of vents. At that elevation the slightest incline had us puffing, but it was worth it – we could see all of the Canary Islands. We'd been warned to take jackets, though, and were glad we had as there was ice in the shade.

Another drive took us along the northern peninsula on a ridge that was no wider than the road. It's really amazing to look down both ways at once! It gave new meaning to ridge running. There's an astounding mix of succulents, cacti, ferns, palms and flowers.

Our last stop was La Gomera, a lovely island with many walks. Much of it is National Park covered with *laurisilva* (laurel forest), evergreen trees adapted to high humidity and mild temperatures. The mist-zone climate, a result of the condensation of rising, wet trade winds, occurs on the north facing slopes of the islands between 700 and 1200m and contributes to the refill of underground water sources. We rented a car for a day with local friends, who took us to their favourite areas. It's also easy to travel by bus, hike a trail, and return by bus or small ferry. Columbus had a home, which is now an art gallery, in San Sebastián. Señora Beatriz Bobadilla, thought to be his mistress, also lived in the town. He took on water for his ships, and worshipped at the church before leaving, though it has been rebuilt several times.

We left the Canaries on 4 December for Cape Town. It was a relatively slow trip, taking us 48 days to cover 5691 miles, but at least it was mostly a comfortable sail. We bypassed the Cape Verde islands, sailing between them and Africa, and missed both the strong southwesterly winds and the calms that plagued those crossing to the Caribbean. We then headed west to about 29°W, near St Paul Rocks, to cross the Equator. We had no visas for Brazil, though we were prepared to go to Punta del Este if necessary, but in the event the wind allowed us to sail directly south. At 25°S we swung east, and were able to sail direct to Cape Town. Yes, we know this usually can't be done – the weather gods may take the odd jib, but sometimes they hand you a shortcut. We had a couple of fronts cross us as we neared Africa, but nothing severe.

For the first time ever we spent Christmas and New Year at sea. I (Maxine) decorated the boat during my midwatch on Christmas Eve. Then at midnight on New Year's Eve we rang the ship's bell and tooted the horn to properly welcome in the New Year. We crossed the Equator and Tropic of Capricorn aboard *Shingebiss II* for the third time. (Trivia from Maxine, courtesy of *The Stars* by HA Rey: 'the two tropics, the points of the summer and winter solstice, were named for the Zodiac signs in which the sun turned on those dates a few thousand years ago. Now, because of the earth's wobble, the sun turns in Gemini and Sagittarius, but the tropics have never been renamed.')

We are now moored at the Royal Cape Yacht Club, making plans for 2003. We intend to visit some of the game parks and see a bit of South Africa before sailing on towards Australia.

COMING OUT
Kitty van Hagen

(*Kitty and Simon are circumnavigating – slowly – aboard their 45ft* Duet.)

Coming out around the world! *Duet* is not easily laid on dry land. No, in common with all fast ladies she is happiest when dashing across the oceans of the world. Resting at anchor is fine, but when the barnacles get beyond our reach, or the weed too dense around her topsides and the antifouling has almost disappeared, then she must be taken out of the water and placed ashore.

So where's the problem? Surely a good, around-the-world-especially-designed-for-us, cruising yacht should be able to dry out at any time, any place, anywhere? The problem is her keel. Not for us the long straight number which takes the ground like a lady born to it, nor is it deep but flat on the bottom and no, there is no way that 'legs' would be of any use either. *Duet*'s legs are indeed long, but that has nothing to do with propping her up once out of the water. She draws 2m and has a fin with a bomb-shaped bulb with wings. There is no way that the wings can be weight-bearing as they would distort. Therefore coming out of the water can present problems unless we have access to a hoist of some sort.

In Trinidad there was Peaks yard. This was by far the easiest haul-out we have ever experienced. The travel-lift there is a gigantic hoist which regularly plucks superyachts from the water as though they were toys in a bath. A 45ft yacht presented no problem. The hoist was so large that we didn't even have to remove the forestay. A bevy of lads dived under the hull to check that the slings were in the correct position, a whistle blew and, like Venus, *Duet* arose from the water. She was then deposited onto a long truck which trundled her to the allocated space ashore where, with the use of hydraulics, she was moved into the awaiting cradle and suspended until she was chocked off. That was all. The whole manoeuvre took about one hour. I can't remember the cost but I don't suppose it was that cheap. It was a smoothly operated job and we had no worries that our beloved home was going to fall over. The yard was spotlessly clean and constantly sprayed with water to keep the dust down. The downside was that they did a dreadful job of antifouling, so we had to come out of the water again much sooner than planned.

From Trinidad we sailed a long, long way before we could again take to the land, this time in Hawaii. Here was a small hoist and a wheezing tractor, which meant that we had to remove not just one forestay but both. This is not as easy a job as it sounds. Slack off the backstay, pull out the cotter (split) pins and there you are. First of all the two roller headsails have to be removed, folded and stowed. Then the outer stay is slacked off followed by the inner one, the attachment point for which is in a well below deck level (so that the drum is protected and the sail sets as low down the stay as possible). This is not a cutter rig, but two forestays parallel to each other. The outer stay takes the No.1 lightweight genoa which is either fully out or in and can also be poled out. The inner takes the working genoa, which can be rolled down to a small area. This one is the deck-sweeper, and with its attachment points below deck level is tricky to remove. We

managed with a number of curses. Actually replacing it was far more difficult, as Simon had to pull down on the stay while I got my hands down the hole to link it all together. Our shore stay in Hawaii was rather costly as far as I can remember. It was also the dirtiest yard we have ever been in.

From Hawaii we fled to the North – Alaska and British Columbia – but it was on Vancouver Island that we decided to leave our moving home for the winter whilst we returned to Europe to catch up with family and friends. Coming out was again on our minds, as there was no way we wanted to leave our aluminium home in a marina. We travelled around and looked at the various options, and Simon talked to the yard managers as we also needed a bit of work done on our fair lady while we were away. The majority of the yard facilities had some kind of a rail with a sledge and pulley affair. We didn't fancy this – the keel, you know. Eventually we came across Canoe Cove, which had a small hoist and also seemed very capable of carrying out the work we wanted. It was a small and friendly yard who did excellent work on the boat at a very reasonable cost. Of course the forestays had to be removed, but this time around we knew how so it took us a lot less time. The only downside was that it was very cold working on the boat in March. We sailed away – fabulous antifouling so we slipped along at speed – and it wasn't until we reached San Francisco that we were again in need of a hoist. This time it was because the rudder bearings were grunting and grinding and there seemed to be rather too much play in the rudder stock for comfort, so a check on the rudder seemed appropriate.

Would you believe that it was difficult to find a berth in a marina for a 45ft yacht? It was also virtually impossible to store her ashore for any length of time. With the aid of friends we did find a yard, but again the hoist was barely large enough. It was never going to be particularly easy, as this time we had to have the boat lifted high enough to drop the rudder, a massive 2m barn door. However the very creative yard manager – of Dutch origins, Simon was happy to discover – decided that if we were to back into the hoist and be lifted out stern first we would not have to remove the forestays at all. This also meant that the hoist could lift us high enough off the ground to drop the rudder. At one stage I think I suggested it might be quicker to dig a pit beneath her, but this was not deemed practical. A good idea mind you. All went fairly smoothly, the bearing on the rudder stock was replaced, and she was back in the water within three days. We enjoyed a trouble free sail down to Mexico, and then yet again *Duet* had to take to the land.

This time, 2001, we decided that the Mexican summer heat was not for us. It was unbelievably hot, a dry, dusty, desert heat that didn't cool off during the night. Frequently the wind blew hard off the mountains, but instead of cooling it was the breath of a hair dryer on full heat in your face. For various reasons we elected to put her ashore in La Paz. There was no hoist, just a sledge and a pulley. "No problem!" we were assured, "this we have done many times". Simon explained the problem with the keel and Carlos shrugged, "I fix the blocks myself, no problem".

The entrance to the slip was narrow, the depth shallow and the wind strong. A team of lads were on hand to take our lines and to hold us in position whilst Carlos dived into the water to fix the chocks under the keel. It took several attempts to wedge blocks of wood under the bulb so that *Duet*'s weight was on the blocks and the bulb and not the

wing tips. Not an easy job to do underwater. Several times he thought he had it right and the hydraulic arms on the sledge were fixed in place. Carlos then would peer underwater and no, it was not quite to his satisfaction, and he'd have another go. Eventually he was happy, and with a jerk and a shudder *Duet* was slowly towed up the ramp, four hours after we first entered the slip. They took the utmost care to make perfectly sure that she was stable, and we were impressed with the thoroughness of Carlos and the lad who operated the truck. The ramp, which formed part of a trolley, was then slowly rolled into the slot where she was to rest, stands erected around her to take the load and *voilà* – she was safe on dry land.

Safe was only relative, really. The dry storage area looked perfectly okay to inexperienced eyes, but we learned that the area is sand over rock and in some places mostly sand, and could become unstable if there should be torrential rains which washed serious amounts of the sand away. Of course this type of rain only ever occurs if there is a hurricane, which is rare in La Paz. Looking around our neighbours ashore we were stunned by their carelessness. We noticed several yachts which not only still had their sails bent on but also dinghies in the davits. Of course that year, 2001, Murphy's law prevailed and La Paz was hit by a hurricane. A cascade of twenty yachts crashed to the ground, but fortunately *Duet* was not amongst them. It seemed that where she stood the ground was solid, as quantities of sand was washed away from under the supports of several of the yachts that did fall. A narrow escape in La Paz.

We crossed the Pacific in 2002 and had absolutely no intention of coming out again until we reached New Zealand. Father Murphy had other plans. We were motoring slowly out of the harbour of Bora-Bora in the Society Islands of French Polynesia when there was an appalling judder and a shudder. A quick dive over the stern showed that one of the three blades of our propeller was missing. That put paid of our plans to visit various islands and atolls *en route*, but that's cruising for you. Fortunately we can e-mail from onboard and a new Gori folding propeller was ordered from Denmark. (Incidentally the prop took five days to reach Auckland and three weeks to get to Tonga!)

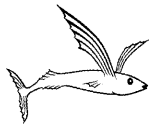
Under the swaying branches of a mango tree, sandwiched between a bar and a boat shed, was an ancient and rusty railway track. An antique engine and winch lay at the head of this track. It looked as though its use-by date had long ago expired. A 25ft fishing boat had been cranked up the slip, and even a boat that small looked too big for the equipment. John, who ran the yard, assured us that it would be possible to get *Duet* out of the water and that they had handled yachts her size before. As this was the only way we were going to be able to replace the propeller we had no alternative. It was with much trepidation that we were manoeuvred into position.

The 'sledge' was a rickety affair, with the supports clamped loosely on the edges. The four supports that would act as a cradle for *Duet* were uprights with rusty metal plates. On a more modern piece of equipment these plates would have been padded, but these were just bare metal so we had to wedge pieces of wood between them and the hull. This was even trickier than it sounds. No sooner had I managed to get one support steady forward than the blocks on the aft one would fall out. In the meantime, several boys in the water were trying to fit more blocks under the keel, not made any easier by the muddy water. It was hot, frustrating, and clouds of mosquitoes added to the irritation.

As soon as the boys declared that the chocks under the keel were in place the signal was given to the winchman. The winch coughed into life and, with a belch of smoke, began the slow process of raising *Duet* from the water. As the water ceased to support her the weight was transferred to the keel. We held our breath as she lurched to one side and the chocks fell out from under the supports either side of her hull. She didn't fall over, but our stomachs lurched in sympathy. The winch line was released and she slid slowly back into the water. No harm done!

The whole laborious process began all over again. Three more attempts, and each time either the hull supports fell out or there were not enough blocks under the keel and she was in danger of sitting on the rudder. We began to think we'd never achieve it, but finally everything held and *Duet* was cranked up the track. There she sat, dripping, under the mango tree. Whilst Simon and I removed and replaced the propeller, John scrubbed her bottom and applied what antifouling we had left. As dusk fell *Duet* was ready to slide back into the water.

That was without doubt the most nerve-wracking coming out to date. At the moment (January 2003) *Duet* is afloat in a marina in Auckland, but in a month's time she will be coming out again...



THIS SPACE CARRIED AN ADVERTISEMENT

LOUISBERG, NOVA SCOTIA
Andrew H Gantt

The wise navigator tells us that the shortest distance between two points is a great circle route. On 1 June 2002 we set off from Annapolis, Maryland on just such a route, bound for St Katherine's Dock, just below Tower Bridge in London.

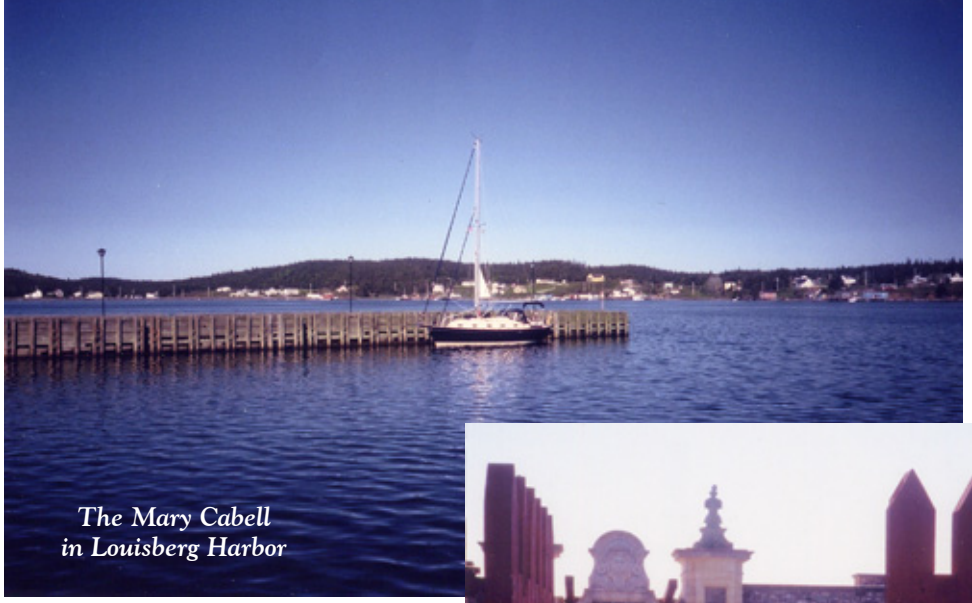
Imagine our puzzled expressions then, when out of the fog – and much too soon by our calculations – loomed LAND. It was Louisberg, Nova Scotia. Set back only a bit, and not wishing to go the extra mile, we pondered the possibility of portaging our 16,000 pound Island Packet 350, *Mary Cabell*, across the remainder of Nova Scotia.

The natives told us that, over the centuries, other worthy navigators had also encountered this obstacle in their voyages to and fro, but had also been pleased to discover this ice-free and commodious natural harbour on the south shore of Cape Breton. In the early 18th century the French established a base. The English were also milling about in these waters at that time and, as was the custom then, when they met French forces the two battled. Clearly, two parties cannot occupy the same point on a great circle route simultaneously, and thus these clashes occurred. And this is the story of Louisberg, the off-and-on French Provincial capital of the Maritimes in that century.

Louisberg is often passed by – the inland lakes on Cape Breton, the Bras D'Or, are too pleasant to miss. Canada, however, has gone to great expense to reconstruct the fortress at Louisberg (the British demolished the original in 1760). Some 700,000 records were discovered describing the original edifice, with detailed plans of buildings and

Louisberg Harbor from the fortress





The Mary Cabell in Louisberg Harbor



An 'English spy' interrogated – Digna at the entrance to Louisberg Fortress



A fisherman's cottage at Louisberg Fortress

inventories of personal effects, and these provided a more than sufficient basis for the rebuilding that has taken place.

The Canadian Park Service welcomes the visitor at a commodious exhibition hall. Most impressive though, at each relevant building within the fortress, staff dressed in the habits of the 18th century, and speaking as if they were living then, describe their lives and events current to the time – the 'Captain's wife' sits using bobbins to make lace, the priest in residence speaks of the travails of his congregation, a fisherman talks of his cod-fishing exploits.

Cod and politics are the foundation on which the fortress was built. Some 30,000,000 lbs (13,180 tonnes) of cod were caught annually, reduced by drying and salting to 10,000,000 (4400 tonnes) or so. Most of this was transported to France, a trade which employed 100 vessels. Louisberg was, at that time, the third largest port in North America. This commerce, and the French political presence in this capital of the Maritimes, were protected against British incursion by 150 cannons facing out to sea.

But all was not well at the Louisberg fortress. The Governor, responsible for its defence, did not control its financial resources – that responsibility fell to the *Commissioneur Ordonnateur*. Both reported separately to France. Troops were ill-paid and morale low and, crucially, the fortress was not defended from land attack. The population was required to import all consumer goods from France, and thus a successful blockade of the harbour could be devastating. So when, in 1745, an attack on French shipping to Louisberg was combined with a land attack by Sir William Pepperell and 4000 New England militiamen, the fortress fell relatively easily. The cannons proved worthless. Three years later the Fortress was regained by the French (in exchange for Madras), but in 1758 a second British land and sea attack provided the final *coup de grace* to French interest in the area.

Coming back to the present ... within the harbour a free city dock for visiting yachts is adjacent to a small recreational vehicle park where showers are available. Water can be obtained via a long hose (not provided) and 110 volt electricity is also available on the dock. Diesel may be negotiated from tanks used by local fishermen, but groceries are basic. The harbour is totally protected from the ravages of the local weather, giving ample opportunity to reflect on the necessary deviation from the perfect great circle route between the United States and the British Isles.



> It is most plain, from the confusion all these people are in about how to make good their reckonings, and the disorder they are in, it is by God's Almighty Providence and great chance, that there are not a great many more misfortunes and ill chances in navigation than there are.
>
> Samuel Pepys, 1683



STORM TACTICS (VIDEO / DVD) – Lin and Larry Pardey. Distributed in the UK by Biograph (*tel* 01626 201888, *e-mail* biograph@eurobell.co.uk) at £19.95 + £1.50 p&p; in the US by Paradise Cay Publications (*tel* 1-800-736-4509, *e-mail* info@paracay.com) at US $29.95; and in New Zealand by Boatbooks (*website* www.boatbooks.co.uk) at NZ $39.95. Further information on the Pardeys' own website at www.landlpardey.com. 84 minutes running time. ISBN 1919214-10-3

This is the visual companion to Lin and Larry's *Storm Tactics Handbook*, subtitled '*Modern Methods of Heaving-to for Survival in Extreme Conditions*' and published in 1995, and follows exactly the same brief.

Firstly the benefits of heaving-to – balancing a boat so that she lies about 50° off the wind, stopped in the water and drifting gently downwind in the lee of her own slick (turbulence) – are made clear. Then Larry draws it all on paper, speaking with an authority based on experience which is all too rare, and finally a yacht (albeit not in storm conditions) is used to demonstrate the technique.

Once the point has been made – and even in moderate winds the 'slick' can clearly be seen to break up the oncoming waves – then various sail combinations are considered, including the useful windage created by a fully rolled headsail, neatly making the point that heaving-to is not limited to cutters or those who cruise with hanked-on headsails. Trysails for both bermudan and gaff-rigged yachts are also considered, together with their sheeting arrangements, as well as ways to ensure that the deck remains a safe place to work in all conditions. Surprisingly, though, there is not a single mention of self-steering gears, surely one of the cruiser's greatest friends.

Finally the Pardeys introduce the parachute anchor, the ultimate weapon for heaving-to (and in particular for preventing a yacht fore-reaching). All aspects of its deployment and sheeting, including the importance of avoiding chafe, are demonstrated, even to the point of watching its movement from underwater – think of a super-giant jellyfish...

Lin and Larry believe very strongly in the methods they are describing, having lain hove-to with or without a para-anchor on several occasions, and this more than compensates for any lack of professionalism in their presentation. (How many film or TV stars have sailed their own boat around Cape Horn?) Incidentally, while they talk to the camera seated below in *Taleisin*, take the opportunity to admire her varnished interior, complete with manual coffee-grinder mounted on the main bulkhead!

While a modern cruiser is used for demonstration purposes, there is also some excellent footage of *Taleisin* at sea in rough conditions, her owners talking from the depths of their foulweather gear. Bearing in mind that this was presumably filmed using a hand-held camera it is remarkably steady. There is also the occasional shot of *Taleisin* at sea, taken from another vessel, and others in exotic anchorages.

On the purely technical side, the DVD which I received for review had somewhat muted colours and rather low sound, but this may well have been due to my computer (I have not had the opportunity to watch it on video).

Thinking of sound, thanks heavens the Pardeys do not appear to cruise with a full orchestra aboard, the occasional background music being supplied either by their own voices or by local musicians – including a skilled guitarist. Commercial film-makers take note!

AOMH



UNDERSTANDING YACHT DESIGN – Ian Nicolson. Published in paperback by Fernhurst Books at £14.95. 126 pages with many diagrams by the author. ISBN 1-898660-82-4

As editor, my first thought on receiving *Understanding Yacht Design* was to mentally list the professionals amongst our membership and consider who to approach for a review. Then Ian – a very old friend – told me that as this book is intended for those with no design knowledge at all he would like it reviewed by just such a person ... preferably me! It wasn't long before I realised that I would have been missing out in a big way if this book had gone elsewhere.

Ian, a founder member with vast experience both at sea and behind the drawing board, is well known for his technical writing. He has the gift of making his subject both intelligible and interesting – I didn't know until I read the back cover notes that he also lectures at two universities, but I envy his students! – and blends theory, experience and sheer commonsense without ever being condescending.

While the assumption is made that most readers will actually wish to design a yacht, even if without the expectation of it ever being built, I defy anyone, and particularly any owner, not to gain some useful insights from Ian's explanations. Even the space devoted to suitable tools, from lead pencils to computer programmes, throws light on the designer's task.

Further, there is much 'spin off' information – thinking of re-engining? Read chapter 10. Unhappy with your yacht's performance? Consult chapters 7 and 8. Balance problems? Chapters 6 and 8 may help. I can see *Understanding Yacht Design* becoming a well-thumbed reference on many bookshelves.

My only real criticism is of the design and layout. Someone forgot that – unlike the computer screen at which they were doubtless working – few books lie truly flat when open. Ian's line drawings and diagrams are models of clarity – check pages 53 and 55 of this issue for examples of Ian's work – and could easily have been reduced to fit onto a

single page. Instead drawings are distorted (pp. 38-39), graphs go awry (pp. 48-49) and captions become unreadable (pp. 46-47). The only real fault in an otherwise excellent – and sensibly priced – book.

AOMH



COMFORTABLE CRUISING – Liza Copeland. Published in paperback by Romany Publishing at US $17.95 and £11.95. 307 pages with track charts, colour and b/w photos. ISBN 0-9697690-4-0

This is the third of Liza Copeland's cruising trilogy. The first two books *Just Cruising* and *Still Cruising* tell of the Copelands' six year circumnavigation with their three young sons. After some years back at work and with the boys grown, they set off again for a voyage around North America – from British Columbia southwards to Central America, then to the Caribbean and finally north via the eastern seaboard of the USA to Canada and the Bay of Fundy.

If you have friends who are thinking of going cruising but can't quite summon the courage, then this is the book to make them leave the dock. Liza writes as she talks, and she bubbles with enthusiasm for the cruising life. We read of the fun of frequent meetings with fellow cruisers, and of the amazing network of contacts, which we all experience. Throughout the cruise they apparently enjoy an endless stream of visitors, with at one time nine onboard their 38ft Beneteau for the Christmas holiday. Lesser mortals would flinch, but Liza makes it look easy.

She writes of perfect tropical anchorages on both coasts of Central America and of many meetings with local Indian people. She tells us of idyllic passages – and of some less idyllic ones, particularly the difficult windward route from the Panama Canal into the Caribbean. And she tells us about the changes they experienced. For instance, in Cuba they found things very different from their 1991 visit with tourists, 'dollar' shops and people no longer frightened of talking to visitors. (This fascinating country is rapidly becoming a must for Caribbean cruisers, but go there before it is too late.) And always throughout her travelogue story there is an undercurrent of good commonsense cruising advice.

The final chapters of *Comfortable Cruising* cover the eastern seaboards of the USA and Canada, and here, as throughout the book, Liza's easy style mixes descriptions of cruising destinations with stories of their travels inland and some interesting and well researched historical background of the places they visited.

The book's title says it all. Liza is no spartan follower of Tilman and she believes that modern cruising should be fun – and comfortable. Although it is in no sense a cruising guide, there is much of interest for anyone planning a similar cruise and there is a useful series of Appendices covering route planning and resources.

WRMcL

(Lisa received the Geoff Pack Award for 2002, awarded to 'the person who, by his or her writing, has done most to foster and encourage ocean cruising in small craft'.)

SOUTH ATLANTIC CIRCUIT and HAVENS & ANCHORAGES – Tom Morgan. Published by On Board Publications and distributed by Imray Laurie Norie & Wilson Ltd, at £29-95 and £19-95 respectively.
South Atlantic Circuit : 170 A4 pages between soft covers, with two pages of colour photos, and numerous b/w photos and plans. ISBN 0-9541900-3-3. Havens & Anchorages : 140 A4 pages between soft covers, with numerous b/w plans and eight pages of colour photos. ISBN 0-9541900-4-1

The first editions of *South Atlantic Circuit* and its companion volume *Havens and Anchorages* are very much up to the high standard of other pilots and cruising guides offered by the RCC Pilotage Foundation.

It is timely that these guides are now being offered. The South Atlantic is a cruising area of the future. As popular North Atlantic areas become increasingly crowded and costly, cruising yachtsmen who 'have been there, done that' are on the lookout for new and unexplored destinations. The South Atlantic offers year-round sailing with moderate winds, no tropical storms, generally friendly indigenous people, secluded and unspoiled anchorages, good service and sensible costs.

The *South Atlantic Circuit* volume by itself is only suitable for voyagers contemplating a counter-clockwise circular route or a relatively rapid passage through the area. It does cover details of the major ports on both sides of the South Atlantic, but if extensive cruising along the east coast of South America is contemplated, the *Havens and Anchorages* volume is also needed.

The *Circuit* volume devotes about a third of its content to 'Preparations and Strategies' for the area. Some of the topics covered under Preparations include the advantages of self-sufficiency, crew strategy, watch keeping, maintenance, navigation, paperwork (including ship's papers, insurance, passports and visas, charts, tables and reference books). Other subjects – such as provisioning, local formalities and customs, currency, sports and entertainment, health, shopping and security – are broken down by country. Under 'Strategies' one finds thorough sections on winds, weather and currents, routing options and communications.

The balance of the book is devoted to descriptions of specific destinations in Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina, South Africa and Namibia, as well as some of the South Atlantic Islands. These sections are complete with interesting photographs and well drawn chartlets. However, each chartlet has only one line of latitude and one of longitude – a horizontal distance scale is shown, but it is metric. It is, therefore, awkward to measure a nautical mile or a tenth of a mile, which becomes a more complicated procedure than I would like to face to find the approximate lat/long position of a headland, an island, or a lighthouse. I realise that these chartlets are clearly marked with the usual 'not suitable for navigation', but I would hope that future editions would show lat/long scales on the edge as has been the general practice in other Pilotage Foundation guides.

Each destination has general comments on the port, directions for approach and entry, anchoring areas, berthing facilities, a description of yacht facilities and services, transportation, communications and health services. The companion guide provides an additional 70 'Havens and Anchorages' on the east coast of Brazil, Uruguay, and

Argentina, stretching from Natal, Brazil in the north to 45° south in Argentina.

My comment on the absence of usable Latitude and Longitude scales on the chartlets again applies, but this volume introduces another questionable practice. There are numerous positions of lights, anchorages, villages and islands listed in degrees and minutes. In some cases, there are no accompanying drawings to locate the actual position. In many, but not all, cases it is not clear exactly what the position is – island, a town, an anchorage, or what? There is no specific identification of the position. I think the author expects the prudent navigator to plot the given position on the relevant chart. I would strongly recommend, and I am sure it is Morgan's intention, that the positions given should NOT be used as waypoints, blindly, without actually plotting and verifying each position on a proper nautical chart.

As in most First Editions there is room for improvement but we have to start somewhere. In my opinion, this is a very good start but I would suggest that, when these volumes are updated, the following changes be made:

1. Incorporate the two books into one comprehensive volume.
2. Several significant islands are ignored and not even shown on the overall charts – namely South Georgia, Ilha de Trindade, Gough Island and The St Paul Rocks (these latter are actually located north of the Equator, but are a significant navigational waypoint coming and going from the South Atlantic. There is even a reasonable anchorage there).
3. The Falkland Islands deserve more attention.

These guides fill a gaping void in a truly beautiful and unspoiled cruising ground. I think Tom Morgan and the RCC Pilotage Foundation are to be commended for a superior effort on a very major project.

PMP



WORLD CRUISING ROUTES (5th Edn) and WORLD CRUISING SURVEY (2nd Edn) – Jimmy Cornell. Published by Adlard Coles Nautical at £45.00 and £25.00 respectively.
World Cruising Routes : 624 pages, with b/w route plans but no photographs. ISBN 0-7136-6211-5. World Cruising Survey : 242 pages with some b/w photos. ISBN 0-7136-6360-X

Do you already have a copy of Jimmy Cornell's *World Cruising Routes*? If you have you might not feel bound to buy the latest edition, but if you have not it is an essential read.

Many of us will be familiar with this book. This new edition is updated and in the same format as the previous publication, with the waypoints as a valuable addition. The logical lettering and numbering code of the routes and waypoints make for ease of use, making this valuable book simple and straightforward. I also particularly like the first three chapters, which refresh one's knowledge of weather, currents and routing.

This is a must for anyone planning an ocean passage, however short it may be.

When planning what may be a long-dreamed-of voyage *World Cruising Survey*, by the same author, is a very informative and helpful addition to one's reading. The author has used both his own and other people's information and experiences to produce a very well-balanced projection of the whys and wherefores of cruising. Shared knowledge is important, and Jimmy Cornell gives us an insight into a huge number of subjects, ranging from the type of yacht to the highly important human aspect, so often overlooked.

Though he states that 'cruising is only 25% based on experience and the rest is commonsense', I would suggest that a significant share is preparation and planning – which is where *World Cruising Survey* will make a large contribution. We are all looking for the ideal cruising yacht and the implementation of the perfect passage plan, and while we know that this is hard to achieve, the views and suggestions in this book go a long way to help us towards our goal.

In the Appendix at the back of this volume is a table of some of the skippers who helped in the survey, and their yachts. This is interesting, as the views on 'essential features' of the ideal yacht are extremely varied. It also gives one an insight into how the cruising yacht has changed over the past few decades, in terms of size of yacht, electronics and the high living standards now expected on board – the K.I.S.S. motto seems to be dying!

Having said all that, both World Cruising Routes and World Cruising Survey are a real asset to the ocean sailor, whether experienced or newcomer.

RET & SET



RED SEA PILOT – Elaine Morgan & Stephen Davis, 2nd Edition. Published by Imray Laurie Norie & Wilson at £37.50. 280 A4 pages between hard covers, with hundreds of carefully drawn b/w anchorage plans eight pages of colour photos. ISBN 0-85288-554-7

The *Red Sea Pilot* is a must have book for any one contemplating a voyage through the Red Sea, no matter how it is attempted, whether nonstop or in nice easy stages as the authors suggest. In fact I have seen the first edition on the bridge of a luxury cruise liner, and the Master told me it was invaluable to him. The second edition is a great improvement on the first in layout, style and content. It also now includes a colour photo section in the middle, which gives a good feel for what to expect.

I particularly like the detailed background information given in Parts I and II. The advice given is sound and one can easily tell that it is written by genuine cruisers who have been there and who understand the difficulties. The authors also have a feel for the Islamic culture, which many do not understand. The inclusion of a ship's letter of introduction in Arabic which one can photocopy, fill out, and give to the many officials one meets, is a bonus for those who do not speak the language.

There is a new section entitled 'Problems' which gives commonsense advice on the risks of sailing the Red Sea. The threat of mugging on the streets of London or New York

does not prevent us from going about our business – one takes simple precautions. So it should be with sailing these waters. The advice given here is not overstated and does, to my mind, put the whole thing into its proper perspective.

The inclusion of Ulligan Island in the Maldives in the planning guide section was another good idea, and one I would have appreciated during my crossing, as I had next to no information about the place. The passage planning and routing advice is good, as are the details on reefs and anchoring. The warnings given about navigation and GPS plotting – which are repeated often – is sound advice not only for the Red Sea but an excellent reminder for all navigation purposes.

The detailed passage plans are arranged from south to north, as the majority of cruisers will be coming up from southeast Asia. Those who contemplate a north to south passage need only read the book Arab style from back to front. There are many more plans than in the first edition and they are of a higher quality, making them easier to read and understand. The inclusion of a pullout section with two large-scale sketches of the North Sudanese coast helps greatly in the orientation of the many *marsas* that are available there. If one remembers the many warnings given by the authors about GPS positions, and that the original survey (the detail of which has been lost) was carried out more than a hundred years ago, then the sketches are more than adequate, providing one keeps a good eye out, preferably from aloft.

The inclusion of dive site information – and for 'diving' read 'snorkelling' as one can do both at these sites – is also a good idea, and one which many cruisers will benefit from, as this is still one of the best areas for diving and snorkelling in the world.

All in all this is an excellent book, and one worth having even if one never makes the passage.

AT-C

Footnote: The Internet moves faster than most yachtsmen, so it will come as no surprise that the German website listed by the authors as the best site for weather information now has an English equivalent. The direct link is: http://weatheronline.co.uk/sail.htm – all other details are as stated in the book.



WIND, WAVES AND A SUICIDAL BOAT – Chris White. Published in paperback by Black Spruce Press at US $11.95. Available from the author at 6015 Baldy Mountain Road, Sandpoint, Idaho 83864, *Tel* 888 280 7725, *e-mail* cwhite@coldreams.com, *website* www.istbooks.com. 110 pages with b/w plans and photos. ISBN 0-7596-8820-6

Chris's father Larry, an OCC member of very long standing, suggested that *Flying Fish* be sent a review copy of *Wind, Waves and a Suicidal Boat*. To be honest I wasn't sure what to make of it at first – if I'd picked it up in a bookshop the combination of a somewhat introspective prologue plus all the hallmarks of self-publishing would have seen it back on the shelf within seconds.

I'm very glad I had cause to persevere, though. Once Chris gets going he turns out to be a fine storyteller, and he certainly has some tales to tell. During his 25 years as a commercial fisherman in Alaska two boats sink under him (not entirely surprising, when one learns their history), a 'maximum intensity' 100 mph storm assaults the Bering Sea crabber on which he ships for the winter season – a season brought to an abrupt halt when they get rammed by a fellow fisherman – and all is rounded off by a lee-shore stranding in a rising gale ... all one's worst nightmares, in fact.

Not all is gloom and doom, however. Chris's writing style is fresh and candid, with a strong undercurrent of self-deprecating humour and an ability to sketch character in just a few words. On the other hand, the book contains a sprinkling of irritating errors and non sequiturs which really should never have seen the light of day.

Above all, though, *Wind, Waves and a Suicidal Boat* offers a window onto a world which most of us will never experience, and almost certainly would not enjoy if we did. Somehow, though, everything rings true and one gets the feeling that nothing is added for effect. If I – a professional writer – could fish nearly as proficiently as Chris – a professional fisherman – can write, I'd be more than satisfied.

AOMH



REED'S MARITIME FLAGS – Peter Johnson. Published by Thomas Reed Publications (A&C Black) at £25.00. 128 pages between hard covers, with many pages in full colour. ISBN 0-901281-01-8

Reed's Maritime Flags is a well presented and highly readable book which gives expert guidance on flag etiquette. It is probably rather large for the average yacht bookshelf, but highly suitable for a Club Library or at home.

It gives guidance on the use of all flags and from most nations. It is good to see, under the chapter heading *Rights and Wrongs*, accurate guidance on the use of ensigns, particularly in this day and age when unofficial 'ensigns' are appearing. It is pointed out that a fine of £1000 can be the penalty for sailing under such an 'ensign'.

The author has done a lot of research into the law relating to many maritime nations, and the book contains a complete list of all national flags. Although seldom seen nowadays, it is also good to see the flags of the International Code of Signals together with their meanings.

Just one small criticism – how unfortunate to spell the name Gibraltar incorrectly, in two places.

MPG



GALE FORCE 10: The Life and Legacy of Admiral Beaufort – Nicholas Courtney. Published by Review (Headline Books) at £14.99. 340 pages between hard covers, with eight pages of colour and a few b/w line drawings. ISBN 0-7472-7210-7

That generations of yachtsmen have connected the name of Admiral Beaufort almost solely with a scale of wind strengths would almost certainly puzzle this wide-ranging man greatly – and not least because the Beaufort Scale was actually devised many years earlier and by someone else entirely. Beaufort's enormous contribution to the safety of navigation lay far more in his gifts as a nautical surveyor, culminating in a long stretch as Hydrographer to the Navy.

Having first gone to sea in 1789 at the age of 14 – and survived his first shipwreck – he returned the following year to join the Royal Navy as a midshipman, at a time when promotion was more often based on influential connections than on merit. From the first his ability at maths and astronomy drew him towards navigation, but he was also a very active and successful officer, rising to lieutenant by 1796 and receiving considerable prize money. Friendship with Alexander Dalrymple, the first Hydrographer to the Navy, allied, in 1805, to his first command, allowed him to undertake occasional surveys whenever the opportunity offered. Then, in quick succession, promotion to captain was followed by his first, and only, commission as a practical hydrographer, an 18 month survey of the south coast of Turkey, sections of which form the endpapers of the book.

Sadly this work – which he clearly enjoyed – was brought to a sudden close by injury, and he was forced into retirement. However charts had to be prepared from his surveys, and at the same time Beaufort experienced his first taste of family life since leaving home 23 years earlier. But soon frustration set in and he lost no time in applying for the post of Hydrographer to the Navy when it fell vacant in 1823. He was unsuccessful, largely due to political infighting, but applied again in 1829 and was appointed. He was to remain in the post for nearly 26 years.

During this time, and sometimes in opposition to the wishes of his superiors, Beaufort expanded the remit of the Hydrographic Office almost beyond recognition. When he took over, the majority of surveys were of British home waters employing chartered vessels. By the time he retired, ships of the Royal Navy had surveyed much of the accessible world and 1437 entirely new charts had been drawn. Beaufort's gift for administration had proved every bit as good as for practical surveying. Tides, meteorology – even the choice of ports to be served by the expanding railway system – received his attention.

Promotion to Rear Admiral came in 1846 and a knighthood two years later, but perhaps the greatest accolade came in 1854 when, at the age of nearly 80, he wished to retire but was informed that he could not be spared. He finally stood down in 1855, dying just three years later.

There is a great deal more that could be said about *Gale Force 10*, not least that it is both authoritative and thoroughly enjoyable. The serious student will find an impressive bibliography and list of sources; those with a more general interest will quickly warm to this humane, hard-working man, and be fascinated by the many glimpses of life in the early 19th century navy which his life story offers. All readers will appreciate Nicholas Courtney's lively and lucid style.

And that title – why '*Gale Force 10*' when we all know that it should be 'Storm Force 10'? Read it and find out!

AOMH

THIRD TIME LUCKY
Fay Garey

(*Fay and John are amongst our most experienced members, having circumnavigated during the early 1990s in their Nicholson 35,* Subtle.)

The Bay of Biscay is one of those stretches of water whose very name conjures up visions of storms and mountainous seas. Open to the prevailing southwest wind and the Atlantic swell, its long flat coastline offers little refuge – even if it were safe to approach such a lee shore – while the weather in the area is unpredictable and subject to rapid change. To add to its mystery, Biscay has some of the deepest water in the world, plunging from the Continental Shelf to an abyss of nearly 5000 metres.

We first crossed this great divide in 1990, at the start of what turned out to be a five year circumnavigation. We rashly wrote Madeira as our destination in the log and scoffed at the thought that it might be unlucky to depart on the 13th (of September), for we had yet to acquire the superstition of sailors. Like many yachtsmen, I suspect, we began the actual voyage with a shake-down cruise, which was to reveal flaws both in the boat and in ourselves. In fact, apart from one overnight crossing of the Channel, we had never made a passage of more than eighteen hours as a solo couple. Excitement was tinged with trepidation – a heady mixture.

Leaving Dartmouth was easy enough, with a fine northeasterly in pursuit and a farewell link call to my father as we passed the Lizard into the unknown. By the following morning we were hurtling along under a pocket handkerchief of foresail, with the wind gusting to gale force and heavy seas astern. At this stage we were so unprepared that we had not even rigged up the self-steering gear, but my log records the exhilaration of helming, and particularly the novelty of doing so at night under a star-lit sky and with an escort of dolphins. Before breakfast the next day John announced that he must be hauled aloft in the bosun's chair in order to disentangle the main halyard which, to our shame, had wrapped itself round the mast. I had a private weep as I watched him suspended above the heaving ocean. (If only we'd known how easy it was to solve the problem by using a fender.) No sooner was the task accomplished than the sea died down to a flat calm and we had to motor until evening, with the autopilot (a power-draining Autohelm 6000) steering. We were relaxing over happy-hour drinks when we suddenly noticed that the batteries were not charging. John set to work, with the boat uncomfortably hove-to, and eventually extracted a shredded fan belt which he replaced with a new one. The whole operation was supervised by a warbler that had settled in the cockpit – it was the night of "Don't tread on the bird!"

Of course, there was not enough power to start the engine and we drifted throughout the day in the non-existent wind. At suppertime, John looked at the sky and said "I'll get the main down". The sea had become a deep purple and we were just in time to meet the blow, which persuaded us to alter course for La Coruña about 100 miles away. By the following evening we were within sight of the Torre de Hercules, the lighthouse built by the Romans at the entrance to the *ría*. Then the wind slackened and we were stuck,



John and Fay in La Rochelle after the ordeal



La Rochelle



Subtle flying all her flags on her way up the Beaulieu River, September 1995

only three miles from the harbour, bereft of engine, lights and radio, and so tired that we were hallucinating. Just before dawn we dropped the anchor and all 40 fathoms of chain, in the forlorn hope of catching some sleep while waiting for the wind to freshen.

The rolling was intolerable and John decided to set off in the dinghy in search of a spare battery and jump leads. Hours later, as I was hanging out some washing, I looked up to see a large steel vessel emblazoned '*Cruz Roja*' thundering towards *Subtle* with John on board. Captain and crew were apparently determined to carry out a rescue – especially one involving a woman, for, as John told me later, they had been astonished when he said that the only person on board was his wife. A monkey-like man jumped across and tried to pull in our anchor chain, while his fellows threw a tow-rope which immediately became wrapped round their own propeller.

Desperate to get back on to his own boat, which was no easy matter in the swell, John was stripping off his clothes. Unfortunately our command of Spanish was minimal at that time, although it would not have made much difference with all the shouting and gesticulation. Our impatient saviours wanted us to abandon the anchor and chain, but after a lot of effort we managed to retrieve both and were towed at breakneck speed into the welcoming embrace of the Club Náutico Real.

I became fond of La Coruña – or Corunna as it is called in English. Sir John Moore of that ilk, immortalised in the poem ("Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note..."), lies buried in a garden near the yacht club, in a tomb built most touchingly by his French foe, Maréchal Ney. The club steward, Roberto, was such an imposing figure in his white jacket and gold braid that we took him for the commodore. He handed out papers with much ceremony – then meekly did our washing for us! The city itself, our first taste of Spain, charmed us with its elegant esplanade of tall windowed buildings, its hidden squares, and its steep cobbled streets in the old quarter.

Our second crossing of the Bay of Biscay was in 1995, homeward bound this time and with nearly 40,000 miles under *Subtle*'s keel. We had planned to be back in our home port by 7 September, the fifth anniversary of our departure from the Beaulieu River in 1990, but we soon realised that we would never be able to make the deadline. At anchor in the little port of Finisterre, beneath the infamous cape of that name, we listened gloomily to forecasts for northeasterlies of up to force 7 and decided to stay put. In the morning we woke to a blanket of fog, and at mid-day Finisterre radio issued a hurricane warning! The omens were not good, and we were further dispirited after meeting the crew of a Norwegian yacht that had suffered a knockdown the previous night, some 60 miles to the north. At least by now we had learned not to write the destination in the log – which was just as well.

After a short tack up the coast, in a wild sea and heavily reefed, we diverted in despair to Camariñas, a fishing village on a pretty *ría* behind Cabo Villano. Again, we were forced to wait a couple of days for better weather. Monday dawned calm and clear, the forecasts held nothing unusual and we set off for England – under motor. By Tuesday morning, we were plain sailing in a gentle southeasterly and making excellent progress. However the BBC had issued severe gales warnings for Biscay and Finisterre, which were repeated throughout the day, so we decided to head east, away from the shipping



Leaving the Beaulieu River in September 1990, the start of the adventure

lanes and hopefully out of the direct path of the depression. That night saw us hove-to under trysail alone, in reasonable comfort considering that a force 8–9 gale was howling above and the waves were buffeting the boat and sometimes breaking over her.

The grey light of morning revealed a frenzied sea, white with spume and with waves so formidable that I dared not look. The forecasts were predicting storm force 10 – *tempêtes* – and, sure enough, as the wind veered to the southwest, it strengthened still more. The wind vane on the self-steering, which had coped manfully, was broken, and soon even the tiny trysail was too much and had to be taken down, leaving us lying a-hull with the rudder lashed hard to starboard. I felt wretchedly sick, frightened and incapable of doing very much except lie on my bunk, dozing fitfully. Somehow I managed to bake a loaf of bread, which was all we wanted to eat, and I also became rather religious. I packed a panic bag (which I had been meaning to do for nearly five years) in case we had to abandon ship.

In the early hours of Thursday the wind reached force 11 or possibly 12, in our estimate, with a crescendo of whistling and screaming. The waves hurled themselves against *Subtle* with horrendous bangs – the most terrifying were the ones that you could actually hear preparing their assault, with a sinister hiss of breaking water before they hit the hull or descended on top of us. Although it is easy to exaggerate, those monsters really were halfway up the mast and thus 30ft or more. It happened to be 7 September, the date when we should have been celebrating in Beaulieu. Instead, we were experiencing the most extreme test of the entire voyage – with less than 500 miles to go.

The ordeal was almost over, but the longer it went on, the less worried I became. (I even took a perverse pleasure in reading Adlard Coles' *Heavy Weather Sailing*.) *Subtle* was magnificent, totally resilient to the incessant pounding inflcted on her, and the only damage we suffered was the shattered wind vane and the loss of the wind direction

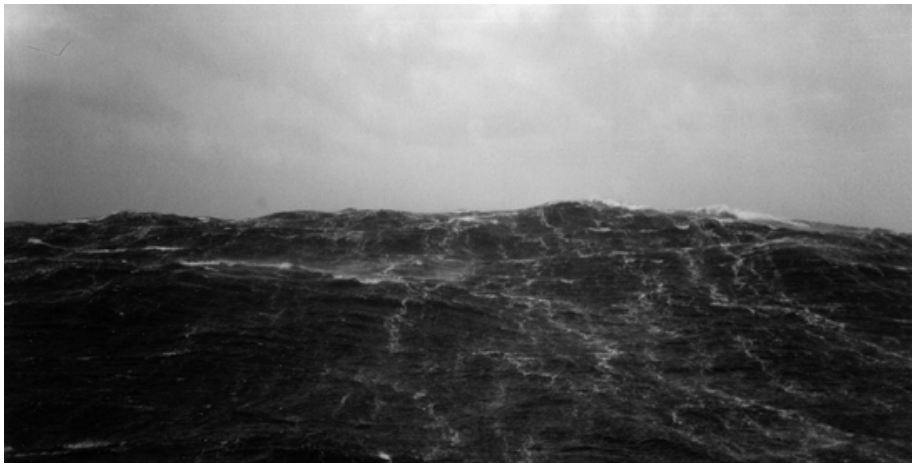
indicator, which was simply blown off the top of the mast. One of our spare gas bottles in the aft locker got turned on, so John had to crawl out into the cockpit in the middle of the night to put things right. However the strength of the wind kept the mast at a nearly constant 35° from the vertical to starboard, so conditions were quite bearable, even at the height of the gale – once one got used to them.

On the Friday morning we were up before dawn in a mood of optimism, matched by the fact that the wind had moderated to force 6 although the seas were still enormous. By the following afternoon we were snugly berthed in the *vieux port* in the centre of La Rochelle, anticipating dinner ashore and a dreamless sleep – which we duly had. In the end we reached Beaulieu on 28 September, exactly three weeks late. As we rounded the bend of the river into Bucklers Hard, a tremendous hooting of fog horns erupted, led by the harbour master who, together with my father, was waiting on the pontoon with a bottle of champagne. On a large notice board was written 'Reserved for *Subtle*. Welcome home. Well done!' We had arrived!

Our third crossing of the Bay of Biscay was made in 1999 and, not surprisingly, we chose July rather than September for the trip. Leaving Plymouth in a heatwave, we soon found a northeasterly which carried us beyond Ushant. Then the wind vanished and the sea was reduced to the proverbial millpond, with only the ripple of the southwesterly swell to remind us where we were. We proceeded under engine and autopilot, carefully avoiding any mention of how well everything was working. Schools of dolphins raced the boat and, on several occasions, we were inspected by northern bottlenose whales.

On the fourth day we were not far from our position during the storm of 1995, which was recorded on the chart as a pathetic semi-circle – the course described by the boat while she lay a-hull at the mercy of the elements. It was hard to believe that conditions could be so different. The approach to La Coruña naturally reminded us of our frustrating experience in 1990, when the sea had seemed to stretch interminably uphill as we

Storm in the Bay of Biscay, September 1995





Home in Buckler's Hard, 1995

attempted to gain the harbour. Now, the only problem was to identify the breakwater against the myriad of lights on shore. By the very early hours of the morning we were tucked in behind the mole, at anchor and at peace after our third – and certainly our most uneventful – encounter with the Bay of Biscay.

OBITUARIES & APPRECIATIONS

Michael Badham

Mike died on 6 September 2002 at his home in Bath, Maine. He had been a member of the OCC for more than 40 years, joining in 1961 after a transatlantic passage from the Canaries to Barbados aboard the 41ft *Westering*.

He was born in Australia, but came to England with his family at the age of three. Ten years later he gained a scholarship to the Britannia Royal Naval College, Dartmouth, and by 1943, at the age of 17, was serving as a midshipman in the battleship *Duke of York*. He later transferred to submarines, commanding several, before returning to the Royal Naval College as a member of staff.

Together with his first wife, Anabel, and their two children he crossed the Atlantic in *Westering*, a converted lifeboat, and spent several years chartering in the Caribbean during the 1960s. Later, with his American-born second wife, Ann, he spent some time boatbuilding in Ireland before emigrating to America and settling in Maine, where he became established as a yacht designer and writer. Two of his books – *Sailor's Secrets*, and *My Road Leads Me Seawards* (an autobiography) were reviewed in *Flying Fish* in the late 1990s. In addition he wrote for many of the leading nautical and sailing magazines.

He is survived by four children and six grandchildren.



Mrs Polly Baker

Polly (Beale) Baker of Millis died on 7 December 2002 in her 94th year. She was the daughter of the late Arthur Messinger and Louise Miller Beale, and the wife of Talbot Baker who died in 1967. Born in Barnstable, Massachusetts in 1909, Polly grew up on Beacon Hill in Boston where she attended Winsor School.

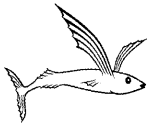
She had a life-long love of sailing, spending summers on the tidal waters of Barnstable Harbor and later on Wings Neck, Pocasset. She was an active participant with her husband in the Cruising Club of America, as well as being an active member of the Buzzards, Beverly and Ocean Cruising Clubs. Polly loved sailing in Buzzards Bay on the New England coast aboard *Barcarole*, the family's 33ft sailboat, and also made several cruises in Europe. She qualified for the OCC in 1985 at the age of 76, sailing transatlantic with me aboard my Nicholson 40, *Torch*, from Madeira to Bermuda.

The Bakers moved to Millis in 1939, where for many years they had a small working farm. Polly was an officer and instructor in the Women's Army Defense Corps during World War II, and was on the original steering committee of the Charles River Watershed Association. She also devoted countless volunteer hours to many favourite organizations – the MSPCC (The Glad Rags Thrift Shop in Westwood), MSPCA, and The Winsor

School among others. She was a member of the Vincent, Chilton, and Harvard Clubs as well as The Colonial Dames.

Polly is survived by her brother Benjamin Beale of Westwood. She leaves three sons and a daughter, five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Toby Baker



John E McKelvy Jr

John died on 28 December 2002 at his home in Dedham, Massachusetts at the age of 65. He was a history teacher, author and sailor, and held a master's degree in political science from the University of Pennsylvania. He wrote two books about his sailing adventures, *Transatlantic Summer* and *Broad Reach*, edited the *Cruising Guide to the Nova Scotia Coast* and, with his wife Nancy, edited the journal of the Cruising Club of America.

Together they explored the Canadian Maritime Provinces as far north as Labrador, and made four voyages to Europe during which they visited Ireland, Scotland, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Spain and Portugal. To quote his friend Bill Cook: "Such was John's dedication to cruising that in the nearly 40 years he and Nancy were married, they sailed outside the US in all but about five of them".

In Nancy's words: "In spite of failing health, John was extraordinary and optimistically planned to cruise as long as he was able, courageously pursuing cruising plans with *Whizzbang*, the Cook 53 motor sailer built for us in 2000 in Thomaston, Maine. In June of 2001 we sailed her from Massachusetts to Scotland, continuing that summer through the Caledonian Canal, up to Orkney, across to Stavanger in Norway and then threading our way along the beautiful Norwegian coast to Oslo. We left her in western Sweden for the winter, at the Martinsson Yard near Henan.

In May 2002 we eagerly returned to pick up *Whizzbang* and cruised east through the Göta Canal to the Baltic and on through the archipelagos to Helsinki, Finland, where we left her for three days to fly to St Petersburg. Upon returning to *Whizzbang* our 11-year-old grandson joined us, and we retraced our route through the islands to Sandhamn in Sweden and back through the Göta Canal. We kept to a really tight schedule with stops in Scotland, on the east coast of Ireland, and a passage down the Iberian Peninsula to Lagos in Portugal. The final leg was out to the Canary Islands, where a crew of four friends would join us to sail west to the Caribbean.

Whizzbang was berthed in Mogan, Gran Canaria while we returned to Massachusetts for Christmas, where we enjoyed a wonderful Christmas at home with all the family together. December 29th was to be our 40th wedding anniversary, and the previous afternoon he went to have a nap ... and didn't wake up. Although much too brief, he lived a complete and satisfying life. Sailing was his greatest pleasure when I met him, he taught me gently and patiently, and since then we have cruised thousands of miles together, often just two of us aboard, first in *Aeolus*, a Concordia yawl, then *Grafin*, a Hinckley 48, and most recently with *Whizzbang*.

We both joined the Ocean Cruising Club in 1990 after sailing from Massachusetts to Ireland aboard *Grafin*. I plan to keep up my membership and look forward to seeing OCC fellow members on the water and ashore."

Nancy W McKelvy

Graham Payne

Graham suffered a stroke in late February aboard his and Jean's Oyster 435 *Deception* in Palma, Mallorca. He was the very example of all that is best in cruising folk – nobody was quicker to offer valuable help, a kind word, brilliant engineering experience or friendship. Wherever one came across Graham one would find him assisting a fellow yachtsman with patience, tenacity and enthusiasm.

There are stories of Graham removing an engine from a stricken yacht in the Azores, repairing it, and sending the owners successfully repaired on their way; curing electrical problems for several boats taking part in ARC rallies; and only recently he gave me great help with a difficult watermaker.

We met first in the Canaries ten years ago, saw each other regularly in the Caribbean, Guernsey and Annapolis, and then, when Graham and Jean established a base in Palma, we met up regularly there. I valued those meetings greatly and always will.

Jean may continue sailing their Oyster *Deception* – it is early days for her to decide – and our thoughts go with her. Graham was a wonderful person and will be much missed.

Julian Mounter,

George Socrates

George slipped away unexpectedly soon on 17 March 2003 after succumbing to a chest infection whilst being treated for cancer. It was typical of him that, in the few days he was an in-patient, he managed to endear himself to all the staff who knew him.

George and I both joined the OCC as Associate Members in 1999, after meeting Rozy and Peter Barton aboard *Rose Rambler* in Gibraltar where *Nereida*, our Najad 361, was being made ready for her first Atlantic crossing later that year (our qualifying voyage). George had taken up windsurfing in 1990 and dinghy sailing the following year, but it was not until June 1994 that we both had the chance to take a RYA Competent Crew course on a Sigma 33 in the Solent. We were both hooked and, with great enthusiasm, went on to improve our practical expertise and theoretical knowledge up to Ocean Yachtmaster standard over the following few years.

George was a Senior Lecturer at Brunel University, specialising in Spectroscopy (he gained his PhD in NMR and is author of a major work on Infra-red and Raman). He later also turned his attention to fire retardancy, and was proud to act as scientific



George and Jeanne Socrates aboard Nereida in the southern Caribbean

advisor to the Fire Brigades Union on safety matters. When, in 1997, the opportunity came to take early retirement he revelled in the thought of spending his remaining years sailing. *Nereida* was bought as a result, her maiden cruise taking her from Sweden, up to Norway as far as the Lysefjord, and back to the Hamble via Denmark, the Kiel Canal and the Netherlands.

In June 1998 *Nereida* left the UK to cross Biscay and cruise down the Iberian coast to Morocco. We took part in the Gibraltar Regatta of 1999, preceded by the Ceuta-Gib race, the main aim being 'not to come last'! ARC '99 was followed by voyages down to Trinidad and up to New York via Bermuda, where we joined the Commodore's Millennium cruise from Manhassett Bay to Nova Scotia, returning via the East Coast to the Bahamas and Cuba.

Diagnosed with cancer in Grenada in September 2001, George returned there from the UK in May last year and sailed away to Tobago and Trinidad, and thence to Venezuela and Bonaire. Although things became increasingly difficult, his love of the sea and sailing meant that he was only really happy when he was on board *Nereida*. How lucky that he was able to 'sail the dream' and didn't wait until it was too late.

Jeanne Socrates



Robert Niblock

Bob died on 31 January 2003 at the age of 67 from complications related to carcinoid cancer. His love of the sea and sailing thereon was exceeded only by his zest for life.

Born in East Liverpool, Ohio, Bob's first contact with salt water was with the US Navy. Educated in journalism, he spent his entire professional career in ocean-related pursuits, first at the Newport News Mariners' Museum, then as executive director of the Marine Technology Society, as editor of the Undersea Technology magazine, and for two years on the staff of the Oceanographer of the Navy. In 1974 he was recruited by the US Congress to serve as a technical advisor on ocean-related issues, a position which he held for 21 years until his retirement in 1995.

An avid scuba diver as well as a sailor, Bob and his wife Janet sailed their Whitby 42 *Pisces* on the Chesapeake Bay and up and down the East Coast to Maine and Canada. His sailing skills and personality also made him much in demand as a mate on other OCC boats. He sailed several times with *Dovka* to Bermuda and through the Caribbean to Trinidad, and in 2001 sailed transatlantic with Pat and me in *North Star* to attend the OCC rally in Horta, and then on to Lagos in Portugal. Last year Bob and Janet cruised Corsica and Sardinia with us – we shall miss him this year as we continue to Croatia and Ionian Greece.

Jim Curlin



Arve Osmundsvaag

Arve, who in recent years lived on his farm at Moyard, Connemara overlooking the beautiful anchorage of Fahy Bay, died quite suddenly in his mid fifties. The son of a well-known Norwegian who owned a fleet of ocean trawlers based in Maloy, from a young age Arve learned about the sea and everything to do with fishing. His sailing career began with extensive cruising of the Norwegian Fjords and the Baltic Sea.

Arve came to Ireland in 1981 and set up one of the first salmon farming businesses in Connemara, later moving to Scotland to develop a fish farm in Loch Leven near Fortwilliam. While in Ireland he enjoyed exploring the West and South West coast in his Scampi one-tonner, *Priority*. He always joked about what was to be his 'second priority' – and in 1991 it turned out to be Jeanneau 47.

He and his wife Ursula sailed *Skarv av Stad* to Norway in the Banff to Stavanger Race, returning home via the Western Isles and then Tory Island, that most remote of Ireland's offshore islands. He was particularly keen on visiting the islands off the West coast, especially Inishbofin. A good weekend took him to Dingle, a passage of 120 miles each way, while a good week was to Schull, a mere 180 miles each way! *Skarv av Stad* became a serious party boat and Arve was well known at various anchorages, especially if there was a nearby hostelry. An entertaining night was always assured, complete with trademark pipe, and if it was really good the trumpet was brought out late into the night with 'Galway Bay' or perhaps something from 'The Duke'.

In 1992 Arve crossed the Atlantic to the Caribbean, taking in Brittany, Spain and the Canaries *en route*. He then continued up the East Coast of the States to New York, Newport and Halifax, returning home the following year. In more recent years he crewed with Dave Fitzgerald, Commodore of the Irish Cruising Club, exploring the Spanish rías, the Ile d'Oleron and the Basque Country.

Three years ago Arve succeeded in buying back his first boat, *Lady Salope*, a traditional 30ft sloop. Her passage home from Norway took in not only the Classic Malts Millennium Cruise, but also Tory Island, where they still remembered his visit more than a decade earlier. In Ireland we will all remember him for many years to come. So much sailed, yet so much more to be done.

Peter Haden and others



> No man is an Island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind; And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee.
>
> John Donne (1572–1631)

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INTO THE ORINOCO
Rosemarie Alecio

(*Rosiemarie and Alfred are eight years into an extended cruise aboard* Iron Horse, *their 39ft Colin Archer.*)

Sailing north from Brazil and French Guiana, our plan to venture into the Orinoco Delta from the Atlantic side was thwarted by a cracked engine mount. Several years on we were in northern Trinidad and less than a day's sail away from the entrance to the Río Macareo, part of the great Orinoco Delta. Its mouth opens on the north coast of Venezuela at Boca de la Serpiente (The Serpent's Mouth), the narrow sea area separating Trinidad's south coast from Venezuela. The river is deep, except at the entrance, and for many years it was used extensively by commercial traffic to and from Ciudad Bolívar, the original capital, and other large towns in the Orinoco Delta. Now only shallow-draught traffic can gain access. The shifting sandbar, no longer dredged or buoyed, grows ever larger across its mouth, but once over it deep water allows navigation for hundreds of miles inland. *Ironhorse* draws 6ft (1□8m) and there is often not much more than this through the tortuous and narrow route into the river.

Friends visiting from UK expressed interest, but before we committed ourselves we needed to know if the configuration of the sandbar would allow us a way in. A little research indicated that an oil company needed access for their vessels, most of which needed at least as much depth as we did, and with perseverance we obtained a poor photocopy of a survey of the entrance made for them about twelve months previously. This indicated that, so long as the riverbed had not changed too much, we ought – with careful concentration – to be able to find a way through. However it was August, almost the height of the rainy season and, for many reasons, probably the worst time to try. The temperatures were HIGH, it was almost unbearably humid, and there was often no breeze other than in the strong squalls and thunderstorms, of which there had been many in Trinidad since our arrival in June to avoid the hurricanes further north. The Macareo would be swollen and, although an increase in depth would be an advantage, the resulting increase in flow was not so appealing and could bring additional difficulties, especially at the sandbar.

These conditions encourage major diseases such as malaria, yellow fever and dengue, all of which were reported as rife in the area, but following our time in West Africa and South America we already carried prophylactics, mosquito netting, and lots of insect sprays and creams. Having equipped ourselves with visas for Venezuela there was nothing to stop us from at least attempting it. Our first hurdle, finding our way through the maze of unlit oil fields off the southwest coast of Trinidad, would be the least of our problems. We set off just after noon, having obtained permission from Trinidad Immigration to stop overnight in the southwest, some 40 miles away, where, at dusk, we anchored at Pointe Pierre.

Before sunrise we were passing between the two markers at Icacos Point and into The Serpent's Mouth, heading towards the entrance to the Río Macareo 25 miles to the

southeast. The water was relatively flat, enabling us to see and avoid the mass of floating vegetation carried out of the river. Near Punta Bombadero we began to use our 'oil company photocopy', on which we had been able to establish some precise GPS positions – something we could not do on the British Admiralty chart as this area had not been surveyed. It was luxurious to have extra crew, for the depths dropped rapidly to 3m and we needed 'all hands'. From then until we were inside the bar it was a case of total concentration on plotting position, watching our course, balancing our speed against that of the current, and watching the depth-sounder – quite a juggling act, for there was little room for error on either side of the very narrow, convoluted and unmarked channel. It was about half-tide and dropping, and we were stemming quite a strong current.

In the event we found no less than 2□3m over the bar (on our way in), and were rapidly into 10m and more once inside, bucking a current of at least 2 knots throughout our stay. We hoped the engine would remain reliable. Avoiding flotsam and finding a spot to anchor where the current was weakest were our immediate concerns. Our first night was spent near several low islands. The holding in deep mud was excellent, but it was necessary to check the chain constantly for trapped vegetation and release pieces before they became a problem – the worst being a multi-branched tree which took us over 30 minutes to clear. At times small islands of mud and grass – chunks up to 20ft and more across, broken from the riverbank – came floating down. However, our efforts were rewarded by the myriad of birds – scarlet ibis, pelicans, herons and skimmers – which coloured the evening sky as they came to roost in the mangroves covering the islands. What a picture!

The following morning a dugout canoe carrying several men approached us. They lived in the nearest village upriver and warned us to check that snakes were not boarding *Ironhorse* from the flotsam. They also gave us a delicious fish from their catch. We moved upriver each day. Holding was good in the thick river mud – almost too good. One morning, after working for almost an hour to clear the anchor, we thought we might have to leave it there, it was held so fast. We finally did raise it, but wondered if perhaps we'd hooked a sunken trunk or similar obstacle. The flies and mosquitoes did not disappoint us either, arriving at dusk and dawn. Our netting did sterling service except for the one night of rather violent winds, which lifted it from its fixtures allowing for an unpleasant invasion at dawn. Beautiful colours, but nasty!

The region was extremely remote, and in the two weeks we spent in the Río Macareo we saw only three commercial vessels, each on their way upriver. They each sounded their foghorns and the crew waved as they passed. There were no other pleasure craft such as ours.

Probably our most fascinating memories are of the small villages of the indigenous Warao Indians, three of which we passed as we made our way upriver. Their simple wooden dwellings, open sided with thatched roofs, were built on stilts at the water's edge. Behind them was dense forest, so their only form of transport was by water, in their dugout canoes. Passing by the first of these villages we were taken by surprise as an armada of canoes, many carrying complete families, paddled furiously towards us against the swift current. Some approached simply out of interest to see our unfamiliar craft, but several came with goods to exchange, happily coming alongside and holding on. Spanish

was not understood by most, their remoteness having ensured that the language of their ancestors has been preserved. Lots of gesturing and demonstrating seemed to work for our basic needs with communication. Fishing hooks were in demand, as were short lengths of cotton fabric. Flour was most acceptable, too, but the most frequent request was for T-shirts. Interestingly, when offered a new shirt – button front with collar – it was rejected in favour of a T-shirt that one of us had worn for painting the boat!

No safety equipment on board these shallow draught craft! Skilled though they obviously are in handling them, we wondered, as we negotiated with one family, how often lives are lost to the river. The canoe, less than 20ft long, carried mum with a tiny babe at her breast, dad, two small boys, and a girl of about twelve with a two-year-old in her arms. Each time we passed a village we were approached for trading, and were delighted with our mementoes – a colourful necklace, small woven baskets, a model canoe and some delicious rainforest fruits, freshly gathered. The tiny cockroaches that ran out of the woven baskets and onto the coachroof were not welcome, however! Cockroaches are one of my biggest fears onboard, but luckily we dealt with them promptly, placing the baskets in plastic bags and spraying and sealing them to ensure the remainder (surely there would be others?) would not become a problem.

Our limited time allowed us to travel only about 30 miles up the river. Nevertheless, we were all thrilled by this experience We observed at very close quarters the colourful gold and blue macaws, the toucans that called from their treetop perches at dawn, and enjoyed the busy chattering of the green parrots flitting across the sky in twos and threes throughout the day. Amazonian pink river dolphins regularly visited us – exciting to see for the first time, but odd, primitive-looking creatures. Often in pairs, these were a buff/dirty pink colour, and rather lethargic in their movements compared with the more familiar ocean dolphins. A rather noisy snort is emitted as they lift their bodies laboriously above the surface of the water to breathe, and then disappear. They seemed to have no fear of us. Yet, in spite of their close proximity, photographing them was not easy since it was always a guessing game estimating just where they would next emerge.

Possibly our most alarming experience was the noisy awakening we had one morning. Overnight we had anchored close to the bank and tree line and it was already light, although the sun had not yet risen, when a distant rumble broke the peace. It was not unfamiliar, being a sound we had heard from the troops of howler monkeys that inhabit the forested area rising above Scotland Bay in Trinidad. However, the volume rapidly increased to a terrifying roar apparently very close to the adjacent shore. We hurried into the cockpit to take a look, but could see nothing except movement of the foliage accompanied by swishing noises and the continuing roaring. We had watched troops of monkeys high up in the trees along the river each day and they had not appeared to be bothered by us, but perhaps we had inadvertently invaded the territory of this group and they were taking exception. They need not have worried – we had no plans to venture into the forest.

Sadly, our time was up. After breakfast we weighed anchor and, reluctantly, returned downriver. Now, with the current in our favour, a speedy trip was promised, and by late afternoon we were at anchor by the mangrove islands, preparing our evening meal and



A Warao village



Family, canoe and trading goods



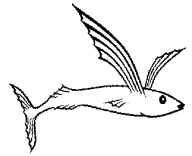
A young indian girl alongside



A family of traders

anticipating another wonderful display from 'our birds' arriving to roost for the night. They did not disappoint us and, after eating, we prepared for our departure at first light. We reviewed the charts, checked the state of the tide and carefully planned our exit – I would only relax when we were in the deep water of The Serpent's Mouth once more. The night gave us another thunderstorm and heavy rain – sufficient for a hair-wash in fresh water! – and though it had stopped by the time we set off, with flat land either side of the mouth there was no protection from the high wind. I hoped *Ironhorse* would not be blown off course, for there was little room for error in the shallows.

We had timed our exit close to high water and navigated a precise reciprocal of our entry. In spite of this we found less depth and touched bottom more than once, sweating profusely and with our hearts beating rapidly. No rescue services in these parts to tow us off! Finding deep water seemed to take forever, and it was with some considerable relief that eventually we did. We returned confidently towards Icaco Point, Trinidad, which we rounded a few hours later to anchor once more in Columbus Bay We had experienced a brief taste of a hidden culture, the memories of which will remain forever.



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A BRIEF ENCOUNTER WITH GEORGE WASHINGTON

Graham and Avril Johnson

It was not until February this year that our mail finally caught up with us (or did we catch up with it?) at La Gomera in the Canary Islands. Naturally one of the items of greatest interest was the latest *Flying Fish* which, now that we are cruising ourselves, has even greater relevance to our lives. One article that particularly struck a chord was that by the Rev Bob Shepton, whom we first met in the Azores many years ago when Graham spent a fairly unsuccessful day trying to cure a leaking injector problem in *Dodo*'s diesel. The account of the exemplary conduct and communication protocol of the Canadian patrol craft reminded us of an incident involving the neighbouring navy that we had monitored during our passage south.

Whilst cruising down the Atlantic coast of Portugal, an unseasonal southwesterly gale diverted us into Lisbon, where we moored in Alcântara dock to await fairer winds. It also provided a little-needed excuse to spend many happy hours with the various friends in the area we still have from the time we kept our previous boat there. So it was that we left at the beginning of October to sail down the river Tagus and continue our passage south. It was a clear and pleasant day, and as we passed under the suspension bridge where the passing traffic sounds like a swarm of angry bees overhead we first caught sight of that leviathan of the oceans, the USS *George Washington*. This immense aircraft carrier, which probably contains more planes than the entire Portuguese airforce, was moored in the centre of the river some distance downstream from the Belém tower.

As we drifted gently downstream towards it the radio crackled into life:

"Maritime Police, Maritime Police, this is *George Washington, George Washington.*"
Silence.
"Maritime Police, Maritime Police, this is *George Washington, George Washington.*"
Still silence.
And again with a serious hint of irritation: "Maritime Police, Maritime Police, this is *George Washington, George Washington,* do you copy me? I have an unidentified vessel fine on my port bow."
Finally a response: "*Sim.*"

We looked around. There did not appear to be much about and we were some reasonable distance away. There were various RIBs around the ship and a couple of fishing vessels on the far side of the river, but otherwise it was rather quiet. We remembered that there had been some kind of general declaration by the American Navy regarding exclusion zones around their vessels. However to enforce such a zone in this instance would probably have involved evacuating several Lisbon suburbs, a cement works and half the oil terminal. It seemed unlikely that it was being enforced. We drifted on.

"Maritime Police, Maritime Police, this is *George Washington, George Washington.* Are

you investigating the unidentified vessel on my port bow?"

Again silence. We looked at the fishing boats and there alongside one of them was a *Policia Maritima* patrol craft. The crew appeared to be drinking coffee and smoking with the fishermen.
Once again the call: "Maritime Police, Maritime Police, this is *George Washington, George Washington*. Are you investigating the unidentified vessel on my port bow?"
Finally a response: "*George Washington, POLICIA MARITIMA, Sim*!"

All seemed well until back on the air again we heard a rather suspicious sounding voice call:
"Maritime Police, Maritime Police, this is *George Washington, George Washington*, are you investigating the unidentified vessel on my port bow?"
"*Sim,*" came the reply.

The following dialogue ensued:

"Maritime Police, Maritime Police, this is *George Washington, George Washington*. Is the unidentified sailing vessel on my port bow a friendly?"
A further three calls along the same lines finally elicited the well worn response: "*Sim*".
Some moments later, following the usual call: "Are you sure the unidentified target is a friendly?"
The usual response – silence. A further, obviously very annoyed, call received once more the now familiar response: "*Sim*".

We noted the rather alarming change in status from vessel to target and again on looking around could see no craft posing any threat to this mighty ship. Could it be us that was causing such concern? If it was we were glad we had been confirmed as a 'friendly' no matter how this had been achieved. However we did not like the prospect of being a target. This became particularly worrisome as, on closing with the ship, the air was filled with the sound of loud rock music. We decided to head across the river to the far bank to give as great a distance as practical between ourselves and this now menacing ship.

The final radio dialogue and events went as follows:

"Can you confirm that the target is a friendly?"
"*Sim*".
"Are you certain you have investigated the target?"
"*Sim*".

The patrol craft finally left the side of the fishing vessel and started across the river towards both us and the *George Washington*. "Vessel approaching the *George Washington*, you do not have permission to close with me!!"
This was obviously too much for the Portuguese, who simply headed off down the river.

"Maritime Police, Maritime Police this is *George Washington, George Washington*. Are you maintaining responsibility for the security of *George Washington*?"

Inevitably there was no reply, and so the final call went out: "All units, all units, this is *George Washington*. Assume immediate responsibility for security of *George Washington*".

By this time we had drifted by, and all went quiet. We would have taken a picture, but that really did seem to be pushing our luck!



I forwarded this account to our US Rear Commodores and others with US Navy connections, with the request that they put it in context. I can do no better than to quote Peter Passano's reply:

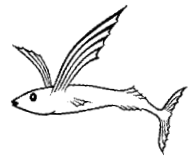
"The concern of the US Navy about small boats approaching their warships developed as a result of the terrorist attack on the destroyer USS *Cole* at Aden in October 2000, when 17 servicemen died.

Probably some junior officer had been put in charge of seeing to it that no unidentified small craft got too close to the *George Washington*. The Lisbon Maritime Police had undoubtedly been tasked to check boats out and they were using their common sense – a British yacht moving down river to the sea is commonplace and obviously not a threat to a massive warship. My read is that the poor Naval officer was undoubtedly young, inexperienced and feeling tense at being solely responsible for a billion dollar nuclear aircraft carrier. He was just trying to do his assigned job.

The USS *Cole* incident caught the US by surprise because we, as a nation, find the terrorist practice of using suicide bombers incomprehensible. It is beginning to sink in ... we are learning the hard way. I also doubt whether the Portuguese Police really appreciate the tactics the terrorists are using, and the associated danger. The practice is so foreign to western culture.

I am surprised that the Johnsons didn't come on the air and identify themselves as a British yacht. An English voice assuring the warship that their intentions were non-hostile would have probably defused the incident straight away."

Fred Hallett, Rear Commodore USA South East, added that, "I, for one, give US warships a wide berth, recognising that a misperception of hostile intent combined with a nervous gunner could create big trouble".



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