



WATERLINES

VICTORIA SHADOW ASSOCIATION

An association of Sail & Motorcraft owners

WATERLINES SPRING 2000

NUMBER 17

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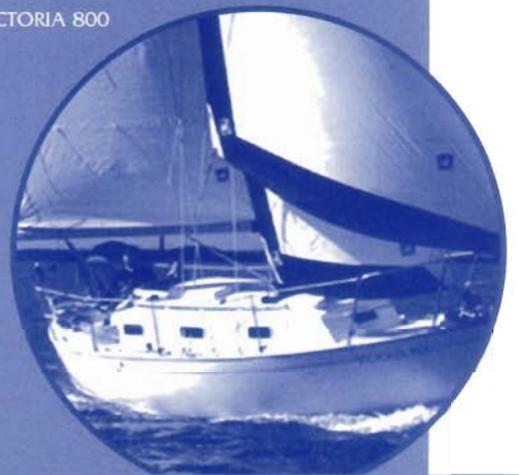
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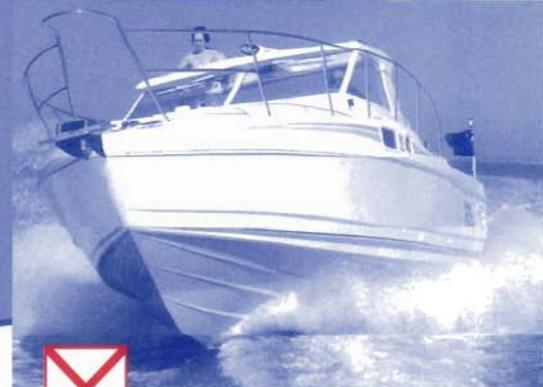
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SHADOW 33



FRANCES 26

NEWS & VIEWS

AROUND THE WORLD

VICTORIA SHADOW ASSOCIATION
c/o Stone Pier Yard, Warsash, Hampshire S031 9FR
Telephone (01489) 885400

The New VICTORIA 38

This yacht will turn heads. A yacht with poise, character and presence. A true blue water voyager with real pedigree. She is a versatile cruising design that provides the ultimate sailing base for long distance voyagers - a modern high performance ocean cruiser wrapped in a traditional, aesthetically pleasing profile. Possessing a tall, powerful rig, low centre of gravity, state of the art Chuck Paine keel, and many features aimed at security and long term value - the Victoria 38 is the pride of British yacht building.

New

VICTORIA 800



Length Overall 26ft. 0in. 7.9 metres



The Victoria 800 offers a truly delightful combination of modern sea-going practicality and nostalgic character. Below, her 4 berth layout offers a private forward cabin, comfortable saloon, comprehensive galley and a separate head. Like all Victoria Yachts, the Victoria 800 is the unmistakable hallmark of a true, long range, blue water ocean cruising yacht.



Length Overall 37ft. 6in. 11.43 metres

VICTORIA 34 MASTER CABIN

The new Victoria 34 Master Cabin a truly delightful combination of seakindliness and owner's luxury. She inspires confidence both under sail and power with a long keel providing excellent responsiveness and directional stability.

New



Length Overall 34ft. 3in. 10.44 metres

FRANCES 34 PILOT HOUSE

A genuine pilot house yacht designed for serious cruising people. A versatile cruising design that retains all the delightful sailing characteristics of her sistership, the Victoria 34. The pilot house area has full internal steering and controls, a half Admiralty chart table and full size, comfortable sea berths.



 VICTORIA YACHTS

Victoria Yachts Limited, Shore Road, Warsash, Hampshire SO31 9FR, England. Fax: 01489 885340. <http://www.marinedata.co.uk/victoria>

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The Victoria Range: VICTORIA 800 • VICTORIA 30 • VICTORIA 34 • VICTORIA 38. The Frances Range: FRANCES 26 • FRANCES 34 • FRANCES 38
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SOUNDINGS

Here we are at the beginning of a new millennium and a new season. What better time to remind ourselves that we go sailing for pleasure. Difficult to credit, I know, as we look out of the window at the rain pouring down and the trees bent by the wind, but there it is - we sink our savings into our boats for the pleasure which we derive from them and from the opportunities which they give us.

Perhaps it is appropriate therefore that much of this issue is given over to tales of members' voyaging, both far afield and in local waters. We are pleased to be able to bring you a variety of reports from both regular and new contributors, old and young. Different perspectives, different occurrences, events planned, events wholly unplanned, but all with the one common theme. Please read and enjoy them all - enjoy your own sailing this season - perhaps you too will feel moved to share an experience with your fellow members in the next issue?

Both Peter Allen's account of an unfortunate experience on an outing with *Volante*, and Bob Hathaway's account in the last issue of *Bluebell's* accident, remind us of the RNLI. We are all aware of this entirely voluntary organisation, though thankfully most of us rarely need to call on it for help.

A new venture sponsored by the RNLI is its "SEA Check" (Safety Equipment Advisory Check) service. This aims to provide a quality advisory service to leisure boat owners and, through raising levels of safety awareness among boatowners, reduce the number of preventable marine accidents. Some of you may have already taken part in this initiative. Most of the work is done by volunteers who tend either to be leisure boat owners or to have a RNLI crew background. I have recently volunteered as a SEA Check Adviser and hope to be able to tell you more in a future edition of *Waterlines*.

Chris

Please note!

**Copy date for the Winter
edition of *Waterlines* is
15 September 2000.**

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OBITUARIES

Dr Alan Stewart

I am very sorry to have to report the death of Dr. Alan Stewart, owner of *Victoria of Lymington*. Alan was a regular attender, with his wife Elizabeth, at South Coast rallies and socials, and will have been known to many of you. He was a quiet man, with a lovely turn of humour. He owned one of the early Victoria yachts, but she was kept in immaculate condition - a sign of Alan's great love of sailing.

We extend our condolences to Elizabeth and hope that we may still see her from time to time, as she has friends in the Association.

Roseanne Leigh

Sadly too I have to report the death of Roseanne Leigh. She sailed, when first a member, in the Solent area, but then moved to Lancaster to look after her mother until her death. Roseanne continued to live in the north, but then sailed with Martin Bridger on a jointly-owned boat, until Roseanne too became ill, as a result of which she had not sailed for some time. Nevertheless, she remained interested and active in the association, attending some of the social events when she could, on her visits to the south.

Olive Hathaway

VSA REGALIA

Don't forget that, following the decision taken at the AGM, VSA regalia (polo shirts, sweat shirts etc) is available.

Contact Olive Hathaway for further details.

VICTORIA COMPANY NEWS

David Bartholomew writes from Stone Pier Yard

Victoria Yachts have had an extremely busy Autumn and Winter since the last verbal report to the Association at the AGM.

There have been substantial amounts of repair and refit work going through the yard varying in size from the very small to the repair of *Bluebell*, which is proceeding as I write. She has had a very large hole cut in her starboard side, which is currently being filled with a newly moulded section, after that we will be spending the next month or so replacing the damaged internal joinery and fittings. I believe that when she leaves the yard she will be as good as new.

On the new boats front, we have had some considerable expressions of interest, however we have yet to close a sale. I believe that we have a lot of ground to make up since the closure of Victoria Yachts Ltd. We are also facing considerable competition from imported boats. The strength of Sterling militates against us. However, I believe that there is a market for the Victoria genre. We have also been concentrating on getting the repair business up and running as this provides the 'bread and

butter' while the new boats will represent the jam.

We have recently welcomed on board Jon Gale as Technical Manager. Jon has a great deal of experience in the industry and I am delighted that he has come to join us and strengthen the team. He has settled in extremely fast, and is already making his presence felt in the company. Otherwise the staff remain as before.

It is almost exactly a year since I bought the assets of Victoria Yachts Ltd. To date I am extremely encouraged with the way that the company is progressing. Being new to the industry, I have made some mistakes along the way and my learning curve has been very nearly vertical. However, I have had more than one customer walk away with the comment that they will be back next year, and that they would not take their boats anywhere else after the way that they have been treated. I am obviously thrilled when I receive this sort of feedback. There is still a long way to go, but I feel that we have made a very good start.

A CHRISTMAS TREE - BUT IT'S MID-CHANNEL AND IT'S MID-SUMMER!

Chris Hulland ponders the unlikely

Where to this year, Peter? Peter Weston, the "old soldier" always likes a week away from domesticity and he loves an overnighter across Channel. We'd done Cherbourg, Ormonville and Alderney last year (He chuckled when he recalled me chauffeuring him round the island in a golf buggy whilst referring to him to passers-by as "The Queen Mother".)

"Normandy, I always enjoy Normandy." - it's all to do with military history and mussels and chips - and so the passage planning began. *Fruss*, my Frances 26 is a superb sea boat and the English Channel is no barrier given a reasonable forecast.

We decided to do the long leg first, heading first for Honfleur, just inside the River Seine. That way gives you the ease of need port of Le Havre if the going gets tough.

For a boat averaging 5 knots, the distance of 120 miles takes - well - a long time - in fact 24 hours. By leaving Lymington on the ebb at around 0830, with a decent South Westerly after rounding the Needles, we should be able to keep starboard tack all the way over. We'd sail all through the day and the following night, approach the French coast identifying the lights and make landfall soon after dawn.

Do you know what - it worked exactly to plan. We even had the cruising chute out during the day to help us on our way. During the night we took 2 hour watches on the tiller and cat-napped in between.

When we entered French waters, we broke out the larger and very impressive "Red Duster" together with the a slightly smaller tricolour from the crosstree.

Picking out the marks for the River Seine entrance is somewhat confusing in the morning mist given the many marks applicable to Le Havre to the East and we

had to pick our way amongst the many anchored ships waiting to enter that major port during the morning.

We'd timed it right and entered the river on the last of the flood.

Now major vessels use the river as far as Rouen and it is rather unnerving to see them pass by at a rate of knots fairly close with massive bow and stern waves. Keep well clear.

Honfleur lock is on the starboard side of the river just before the new and magnificent suspension bridge, Pont Normandie. We were accompanied in the lock by three fishing boats who had some very nasty protrusions and a Russian schooner that just fitted inside thanks to the fact that its bowsprit fitted over the forward lock gate.

We moored in the fishing harbour to await the lifting bridge operating to allow us into "Le Vieux Bassin". This gave the two of us the time to "crash out" to recover lost sleep.

At 1730, we entered the old harbour and moored alongside the starboard hand quay on a floating pontoon, just below the cafes and the "mussels and chips". Honfleur is a beautiful little place with terraced properties of up to six floors. A magnet for painters and tourists and *Fruss* must feature on many pictures and photographs against the picturesque backdrop.

After a shower etc. which are available close by, courtesy of the local sailing club at a nominal cost, we headed for the cafes not 10 metres away.

Instead of the usual vin rouge, we decided to imbibe the local cider with our mussels and chips and this is highly recommended.

It was while we were nicely seated at the

outside table that we saw another English yacht (that shall be nameless to protect the innocent - but it's a charter boat often seen on the Solent) It was powering into the mooring at a rate of knots that would surely wipe out the pontoon and my boat with it.

We tore away from our meal in order to prepare to fend off the intruder and left a very worried waiter wondering who was going to pay. We returned soon after for coffee and to the Frenchman's relief.

During the evening, whilst we were playing a mean game of cribbage in the cockpit, an itinerant band ambled around the harbour with a somewhat limited repertoire. When you've heard "Midnight in Moscow" twenty times, it somehow loses its appeal!

We were joined by two other larger visiting yachts, one German and one French. Their crews had a common language - English! You see - they do need us in Europe. We left Honfleur and locked out with them. The Germans kindly invited us alongside in the lock to protect our topsides and the French suggested we follow them out into the river to dodge a shallow patch on the port side. The camaraderie of the sea!

Our next port of call was Port en Bessin, very much a fishing port to the west of Arrormanches and the remains of the Mulberry Harbour. This area always brings to mind the horrific happenings during the D - Day landings which occurred in those parts within our lifetime. Port en Bessin took some recognising at dusk but the leading lights are unmistakable when they come into view. We arrived at low water and therefore anchored in the outer harbour until we could lock in. Mooring was free but then again there appeared little in the way of facilities.

The following day we headed with the west going tide towards St Vaast la Hougue and came upon the Iles St Marcouf. These are two very small islands where "holding is poor on pebbles and kelp and exposed to Southerlies". We sneaked round from the north and through a narrow channel with overfall, to

moor off not 20 metres from drying rocks. With a fender floated from the stern on a line for safety, it was time for a swim in the cool clear waters.

Now I have a "Jacob's Ladder" on board as a safety feature and this was the first time it has been used for real. Its design meant that it bends and consequently it followed the contours of the hull of *Fruss*. This meant there wasn't a lot of room for toes! I was glad I wasn't sailing solo as I often do.

After an overnight visit to St Vaast, a good meal at the Café du Port and an expensive visit to the emporium of Monsieur Gosselin, (at least you get a free lift back to the marina in his van!) we left for the overnight trip home.

The crossing of the shipping lanes is always interesting and this time also. Conditions were so crystal clear you could see the looms of Barfleur, Cap de la Hague, the Casquets, Anvil Point and St Catherine's Point. (We've crossed in fog before now and not seen a thing!)

We were approaching the east going traffic when, suddenly, a search light beam lit up our mainsail. It appeared to come from the stern of some sort of vessel with any number of lights - mostly red - strange considering we should have seen his starboard green.

"A Christmas Tree - but it's mid Channel and it's mid Summer!"

It is on these occasions that discretion is the better part of valour. I turned 120 degrees to port so that my red would change to green - and the searchlight went out.

As it headed up Channel, we came to the conclusion that the vessel was a tug boat with an oil drilling rig in tow (or a Christmas Tree!).

The Needles were rounded at 0800 with the tide starting to flood. Through Hurst Narrows like a train - and moored in Lymington by breakfast time.

Another great week in the company of an "old soldier" and a Frances 25.

DIARY OF A CRUISE 1999

Sally Langford, junior crew on *Tigger*, gives her view of a week in Brittany

Friday 6th August

We left for the yacht today at 10:30am stopping at Port Blanc on the way for one last swim. The surf was huge, and when I say huge I mean humungus, massive even! However we soon left deciding to keep the tragic parting brief.

One hour later we were at Port la Foret. I walked past *Tigger* several times before actually finding it (I wasn't wearing my glasses) and by the time I was finally aboard my bare feet were aching and my toe nail varnish was chipped! I was very cross, I only put it on yesterday! That's 30 minutes wasted! Despite my anger I decided not to redo the polish as it would soon chip again, no doubt.

We went ashore for crepes this evening. I was appalled! The crepes were lovely but the fact that they were served by a woman in her 40's wearing a tight black top and ridiculously high heels disgusted me. If I were a waitress I would at least try to look respectable! I was going to say something but she gave me a sharp look and Nan said she might be the lady in charge so I was quiet for the rest of the meal!

Must stop now mum's getting impatient.

Saturday 7th August

We sailed to the Glenan Islands today. I steered some of the way. I must have grown a lot because I can now see out of the cockpit! I was very careful when moving around as it was very rocky and I certainly didn't want to end up in the sea! It was 25m deep!

After lunch we went ashore to explore. Needing the toilet Dad and I went into the nearby WC. It was disgusting! Dirt everywhere and no light. Thank God it had decent loo roll. It had a weird flushing system too - sort of a turning bowl with chemicals! I don't know how people on that island stay clean with toilets like that! When he came out of the toilet Dad said "Well it's better than most 'Froggy' toilets!" What he didn't know was that a young French girl was waiting for the loo! I told him she'd been waiting 5-10 minutes. He was dead embarrassed!

Anyway I'm off to play Cluedo!

Sunday 8th August

Woke up after stormy night to blaring music and loud voices. No one slept at all for all the noises. You could have made a song out of them:

rrrrrrrrrr,
click clang,
bang bong bang,
BING!!!

It was awful.

Anyhow, the bad weather proceeded to plague us. The torrential downpours and gale force winds rocked our fragile mooring vigorously.

Tom threw up.

I threw up.

Everyone felt sick except Nan and Grandad who have iron stomachs.

I lost to Dad at Scrabble 278 to 269. I got the game's highest score (48 with Quiet). Lost at cards twice and won "strip Jack naked".

Sail to Santa-Marin tomorrow at 12:30. The weather will be good I hope. Oh well I will retire to my bed.

Monday 9th August

We sailed to Santa-Marin after minor problems with the toilet. Why is it always me? The minute I walk into a toilet it decides to break down! I think this is the 3rd time in 3 visits I have broken the toilet on this yacht. Grandad got it working though.

I was very pleased when we arrived at Santa-Marin. I had slept most of the way courtesy of the sea sickness tablets but I was now wide awake and dying for a shower. After a family swim in the sea I washed my hair and body in a warm cascade of water. It is the first proper wash I have had in 2 days. It is amazing how much people take cleanliness for granted. After this we set out for the creperie. I wore my blue, tie-dye, strap dress and short sleeved cardigan. We tried 2 creperies and a restaurant but they were all full and after much searching we seated ourselves in a pizzeria. I felt slightly over-dressed in the relaxed surroundings but the food made up for it.

I must go now. I am wanted for bed.

PS The toilet has just broken down..... again.

Tuesday 10th August

Eclipse day tomorrow! We still haven't made our pin hole cameras.

We spent the whole day on the beach soaking up the sun and swimming.

Apart from that nothing else happened.

Came home,
had a shower,
went to bed.

Wednesday 11th August

The eclipse was truly a disappointment. The only eclipse I will see in my lifetime unless I live to 102 and it was cloudy therefore wasting all time and efforts spent making pin hole cameras. Not only that but it didn't even go dark. It was just like a normal dull day!

After witnessing the historic event we set off for Port la Foret. It was a pleasant voyage and we sailed most of the way. Once we had arrived Mum and I went for a shower. The shower was lovely and cold! Freezing cold!!! The most positive thing that could be said is that it was refreshing!

We then went for crepes. I had my usual orders, ham, sausage and chocolate.

I am too tired to write more.

Thursday 12th August

We left the yacht today. It has been a very memorable week. The storm in particular was especially exciting (I have never been aboard in a storm before). I also enjoyed the crepes and pizza and Santa-Marin.

I must remember which showers are cold next year and play more Scrabble so that I can beat Dad.

The journey from Port la Foret has exhausted me. I am too tired to write more

VOLANTE AND THE NET

Peter Allen bravely shares with us an unfortunate incident

My crew for the weekend 8th / 9th August 1998 was Mike Bishop-Leggett who had previously sailed with me on *Stealaway* a 27' Bangor 'S' class cutter, which I had owned for more than 20 years. Due to other commitments, this was to be Mike's first trip on *Volante*, my cutter-rigged Victoria 800. As I wanted to give Mike a good sail, I decided to take him to one of my favourite East Coast anchorages, Walton Backwaters, which even during high summer can be very quiet and relaxing.

We left Burnham Yacht Harbour and after passing through the Spitway, set course to pass midway between Walton Pier and the Medusa buoy off the Naze, a trip I had made on many occasions in all sorts of weather during the last forty years or so. That day the weather was near perfect. A nice full sail breeze, sunshine and a forecast of more to come the next day. As we approached the Naze, the wind gradually died, the tide eased and the sea became silky smooth. Absolutely idyllic (so we thought). As the tide was now setting against us and I was anxious to impress Mike by cooking one of my speciality evening meals, I decided to down sails and proceed under power up to the Pye End buoy, which was now several miles up tide of our position. Proceeding under power would also allow me to prepare for our evening feast.

Having settled on a course for the Stone Banks Buoy, and checked we were not going to run aground on the Naze ledge and keeping a weather eye out for lobster pot buoys, I stood for a moment gazing around enjoying idyllic conditions. This situation was not to last. I suddenly spotted a tight blue rope amidships on my port side, running ahead of *Volante* and I instinctively yanked the engine gear lever into neutral. This was followed about two seconds later by an ear-

shattering bang and *Volante* shuddering. In total disbelief, I then noticed that *Volante's* rudder was rapidly disappearing overboard. With superhuman speed I managed to throw myself over the stern and grab the rudder, followed by a few anxious moments when I was not sure if I would be able to hold on whilst at full stretch.

Having pulled the rudder on board, I then decided to drop the main anchor whilst we assessed the situation. Given that we had the rudder, which had no visible damage, on board I decided that our predicament was by no means hopeless. Unfortunately, due to the buoyancy of the rudder it quickly became obvious that we were not going to be able to rehang it. Although on such a balmy evening we were in no real danger, I decided that I had no option but to advise Thames Coastguard of our predicament. They were very reassuring and arranged for the Walton and Frinton Lifeboat to be launched.

Whilst we waited helplessly and in disbelief for the arrival of the lifeboat I reflected on the position I now found myself in. As a long time advocate of the advantages of a long and full-length keel it had never occurred to me that on such a lovely calm and clear evening I would be sitting there rudderless. The worst I had ever considered could happen was that the tiller would break or that the rudder head would fail. One never ceases to learn.

The arrival of the Walton and Frinton Lifeboat produced mixed emotions - relief that expert help was at hand, but also acute embarrassment that after more than forty years of cruising, I was in this predicament. I was also somewhat apprehensive as to the attitude of the crew whose Saturday evening I had now ruined. Also whilst I

was an Offshore member of the RNLI, I felt that I should at least have my membership card with me!

I was quickly put at ease by the coxswain, Brian Oxley and all the members of the crew. They ascertained that my rudder had been ripped off by an unmarked (yes, no buoy) fishing net. An 18mm rope securing it had become jammed in the small gap between the bottom of the rudder blade and the bottom pintle. The only way the pressure could be released (short of ripping the rudder fittings off) had been to force the blade upwards, and in the process, guillotining the securing pin. As a result the rudder was then free to float away.

Having made fast a tow rope, under orders from the lifeboat, I recovered my anchor, which allowed *Volante* to be towed to Titchmarsh Marina at Walton on the Naze. En route, the lifeboat crew showed us round the lifeboat which somehow seemed more real as we were under way at the same time. I will never forget that experience aboard the lifeboat. What a wonderful group of men, and how fortunate we are that they are there to give their expert help when we need it.

When we moored up at the Titchmarsh Marina, a very helpful lady who took our lines promised to send her husband along the next morning to help rehang the rudder, as he was a diver. The next morning after more than two hours work we managed to rehang the rudder. Fortunately, as it was to turn out, just as we were about to leave, the diver arrived. I initially thanked him for his trouble, pointing out that we had managed to rehang the rudder. He insisted on checking that the rudder was on the bottom pintle, which he quickly confirmed was not the case. With the considerable help of our diver

friend, and some thirty minutes later, we managed to rehang the rudder correctly and continue our journey back to Burnham Yacht Harbour. The relaxing weekend had proved to be anything but relaxing.

On reflection, we had been extremely fortunate that our encounter with the fishing net had occurred in daylight in very benign conditions. Imagine a similar incident occurring in the middle of the night in a gale of wind and rain. Lobster pots are something we all seek to avoid, but nets strung below the surface are, in my view, a much more serious matter. What a pity the RYA's attempts earlier this year to force 'UK fishermen' to mark fishing gear have failed. One wonders how many lives will have to be lost before the powers that be recognise that this matter must be addressed. I firmly believe that fishermen, amateurs as well as professionals, must be made to accept responsibility for what they are doing. Fishermen do not have a monopoly of the sea and in particular have no right to endanger the lives of other people.

Lessons learned:

- 1 Accidents can happen when you least expect them
- 2 If it can happen, it will happen
- 3 All yachtsmen should join the RNLI Offshore. You never know when you might need assistance!

Volante has now 'grown' an epoxy extension to her keel, covering the keel/rudder gap. In this way I hope to have ensured that any rope or chain running along the bottom of the keel will now be deflected onto the bottom of the rudder blade and away. So far so good or have I just been lucky?

CLOSE SHAVE

Sally Smith brings us up to date with the adventures of *Jack Nesbitt*

Jack Nesbitt is now in British Columbia, having traversed Canada by land on a great big truck. We crossed the continent by train and enjoyed every moment of the 4,000 mile journey. We arrived in British Columbia last November and settled ourselves into a marina in Port Sidney, about 15 miles north of Victoria on Vancouver Island. Here we have whiled away the winter, mostly avoiding the incessant rain, but also doing some boatwork.

Our big project this winter was fitting a new heating system. We have ripped out the old Mikuni warm air heater and installed an Espar hot water heating system instead. It was a huge job involving about 100 feet of radiator hose. We had some stainless steel radiators made to fit, just $\frac{3}{4}$ inch pipe bent into elegant curves. The longest one, which stretches the length of the face of the starboard berth in the saloon, looks like a double trombone fully extended. We have a small one at the foot of the V berth in the forecabin, and another in the heads. These are passive radiators, and are supplemented by one active radiator installed in the locker next to the mast. This one has a small fan which blows air over hot pipes. We don't use it all the time, only when we want to boost the ambient temperature.

The radiator hose runs from the boiler which is situated in the lazarette, through the engine compartment, into the quarter berth just aft of the engine access hatch, around the quarter berth under the bunk cushion, through the locker under the chart table, through the wet locker, into the space under the starboard berth and onto the starboard radiator. From this radiator it goes through the hanging locker, through the locker under the drawers in the

forecabin, around the V berth under the mattress via the forward radiator and through the bulkhead into the heads onto the heads radiator. From the heads radiator it travels under the heads, into the locker next to the mast to feed the active radiator, then on aft under the port settee berth, under the cooker and out into the big port cockpit locker. From here it travels back into the engine compartment and returns to the boiler in the lazarette. We have taken a secondary circuit off the main one to feed a new double coil hot water tank.

We learnt a few things during this installation. The main one was that although the manufacturers of maralon T pieces and elbows maintain that their products can withstand the temperatures of a hot water heating system, in fact they can't. Ours distorted and eventually leaked, but not until after the unit had been running successfully for two weeks when we suddenly lost all our antifreeze. We subsequently found most of it under the quarter berth around the fuel tank and were able to reuse it. We redid every joint three times before we obtained a satisfactory result, and that was only achieved by having stainless steel joints made to measure. We also learnt that even with a burp valve at the highest point in the circuit, other than the header tank, i.e. in the forward radiator, it is extremely difficult to get the air out of the system and the water circulating freely when you first prime it. We did it in the end by temporarily plumbing in our power blaster deck wash pump and forcing the air out. During that process we realised that we needed a gate valve on the secondary circuit. We emptied and refilled the system four times in all during this learning curve. The professional heater installer we were using as our guide

and mentor said he used mains water pressure water to fill the systems, then when all the air was out, poured antifreeze in the top and drained water out the bottom until he had the desired mixture. He had only fitted these heaters in very large power boats where access is easier and the low points are above the floor of the hull!

Did you know that the only way to get the hot water tank out of a Victoria 34 is to take the engine out? We took the engine out, took the old tank out and squeezed the new double coil tank in, but only just. We had to remove the forward cockpit drain completely to get the tank in. While the engine was out we changed the cutlass bearing which had been in situ since 1994 and wouldn't budge. As a result we learnt how to remove the shaft housing. It unscrews once the two retaining bolts have been removed, but we had to phone Bob Hathaway to find out.

We removed the engine ourselves using several blocks and tackles. The first was from a cross beam across the main hatch and onto a winch to lift the engine. The second was from the cross beam, forward around the mast and back onto a winch to stop the cross beam sliding aft and falling off the hatch. The third was from the main block and tackle across to another winch to keep the main block and tackle on the centre line of the boat. With one of us playing the three winches and the other guiding the engine we lifted it up and popped it down on the galley floor. Putting it back in place required one extra set of hands under the cockpit floor to guide the exhaust back on as the engine was dropped into position.

The new system is a huge success. The boat is a nice ambient temperature without the stuffiness you get with a hot air system. The installation is discreet. The lockers are warm and dry. The engine is always warm and starts immediately. The propane bottles are warm enough for the oven to reach cooking temperature in the winter. Condensation has reduced

enormously.

To celebrate all this wonderful warmth we took some friends, Derek and Cathy and their son Tristan out on Jack for the day in January, so they could do a dive. They dive, we entertain Tristan and act as mother ship. They dive in dry suits as the water is very cold here all year and they dive in the winter because getting into a drysuit in the summer is a hot sweaty exercise. This trip nearly turned into a disaster.

We only ventured a couple of miles from the marina to a rocky, kelp covered "seamount" in a channel between two islands. It had been blowing a bit in the morning but the wind was forecast to back to the northwest and ease right off. As is usual between storms in this part of the world, the weather was clear and bright and absolutely flat calm when we headed off from the marina, so we figured that the forecast was right. With such a settled day and a short trip the dock lines were coiled on the side decks, and the usual collection of work-in-progress junk was stuffed under the sprayhood awaiting sorting at a more convenient moment. Most of the gear down below is well stowed anyway as there is so little space for it to be anything else. It is very rare however, for us to move off anchor or away from a dock without stowing all external gear.

We anchored between the two islands only three miles from the marina, in a flat calm with a bit of current running and were just getting the divers into the water when the wind started to pick up. The current picked up as well and the divers were struggling to get from the dinghy to the anchor chain to start their dive, even with the help of a knotted rope. Cathy decided to call off the dive even though it had taken over an hour to get kitted up and into the water. By the time we had them back on board however, it was blowing fifty knots straight down the channel over a three knot current, and we were plunging bow under at anchor. We had to leave the dive bottles in the dinghy

as there was no way we could get them up on deck.

We managed to get the anchor up by motoring at full revs into the wind. It took two of us on the winch to retrieve the anchor rode, an inch or two at a time. Derek stayed on the foredeck holding the anchor rope and chain down while we pulled it all aft into the cockpit. Alan managed to turn us down wind in between two breaking seas and headed back towards the marina which was down wind and seas to start with, but involved a dog leg across wind and seas to avoid two small islands and a reef. During the brief lull behind the island Derek crawled back to the cockpit.

By this time it was gusting sixty knots over a three knot current with fairly big seas. The dinghy was weighed down with dive bottles but stayed upright even though it got dumped in several times by breaking waves and was full of water. We were lucky not to lose it though. We couldn't make our marina across the seas and were fearful of the entrance as it was directly exposed to the building seas. We changed course and headed for another marina further north and round a headland in the lee of the land. We still had to cross the seas and had several cockpitfulls as green waves broke clean over the side of *Jack*. One caught me when I was on the side deck retrieving a rope to stop it going round the prop. I was actually completely submerged in green water in mid winter without oilskins....brrrr.... and narrowly missed being swept overboard. Derek reached out and grabbed me by the hair but I was crouched down on the side deck hanging on to both grab rail and guard rail. The divers were still in their drysuits so were warm but Alan and I hadn't stopped to put heavy weather gear on. We were soaked to the skin and up to our knees in water – no wellies. None of us had harnesses on as they were in the depths of a locker down below for the winter.

Anyway we made it to safety without any mishaps and no damage. Young Tristan (aged 10) was a star. He stayed on his own in the cabin without a murmur, being showered with flying fruit and the odd dollop of water through the main hatch while hell raged outside. He said afterwards that his only worry was that one of us would go over the side and that we should have been clipped on. How right he was. It was so sudden and not forecast. Next time we venture out here we will have the storm jib hanked on in case and everything properly stowed. The forecast had been for the breeze to back to the west and die, and it suddenly veered to the southeast and blew. Nobody expected it to and lots of boats were caught out. There were several broken masts amongst the racing fleet, the rescue services were run off their feet and the ferries stopped running.

We were very lucky. If Derek and Cathy had been down below the surface a few minutes earlier there would have been no way of letting them know what was going on up top. We would have had to wait till they surfaced an hour later at the height of the blow. We would have had great difficulty getting them on board. That doesn't bear thinking about.

That was our first trip out since we arrived here in Sidney in November. We remain undaunted though and have taken our friends out again since for a successful dive. Tristan came along too, brave fellow. We were however, better organised and properly prepared. We had oilskins, harness and storm jib at the ready. It remained flat calm all day but we will never again take the weather for granted in British Columbia, or anywhere else. It was definitely our most dangerous encounter with the weather since we left England, although we have experienced blows of that severity at anchor in the Bahamas, the Intracoastal Waterway of America and in the Bras d'Or Lakes in Nova Scotia. Isn't cruising fun!

TALIESIN HEADS WEST

Deborah Tolson recounts a successful Atlantic crossing in company

Participating in the ARC had been an ambition of ours for many years.

We had previously owned a Victoria 34 called *Caladh* but felt that we wanted something a little bigger and better equipped to do the crossing and so after much debate we decided to indulge our passion and have a 38 built.

Taliesin of Warsash was launched in September 1998. There seemed to be no end of agonising decisions to make about the systems we were going to use. In the end we chose SSB because we wanted to be able to speak directly to other boats. We went for a cruising chute because it was easier to handle and our downwind rig was poled out main and jib. We also went for a Fleming wind vane - again another agonising decision.

We got the boat down to Falmouth at the beginning of August and sailed across Biscay and stopped at San Senxo in north Spain, Lisbon, Lagos, Pronto Santo Lanzarote and finally Las Palmas.

My responsibility was for the provisioning and oh, boy, what a task that was! I felt as if I spent my entire time in the supermarket buying food.

It was great fun though. Every morning I would get down there and meet up with fellow voyagers all trying to get to grips with taxing problems of how many loaves of bread to get for a minimum of 25 days, and how many potatoes to buy. Would we really eat corned beef in an emergency? Surely we wouldn't get through 50 cartons of fruit juice? I was convinced that we would not be able to store all the food and that we would not get through it. I was proved wrong on both grounds.

Taliesin's interior was transformed into a vegetable market because we hung netting baskets from the ceiling and filled them with fruits and vegetables. I think I made a mistake with the number of cabbages I bought. We don't really eat them at home so why should we eat them on the boat? They travelled well though and when we got to St Lucia we still had half the supply!

So the provisioning was completed, final preparations on the boat were completed. Our other two crew members arrived and so we were ready!!

Excitement was mounting along with apprehension with the impending start date. The atmosphere in the marina was great. 250 boats full of like minded people all with the same concerns about the trip.

We had some great evenings before we left - a party on one boat and a sing song on a Norwegian boat. That is what is great about the ARC - the camaraderie amongst the boats.

There was a remarkable story already going through the fleet about a rescue (something that was going to recur later in the trip). A Norwegian couple (who we became friends with after meeting them on the way to Gran Canaria) had come across a young boy from Senegal floating in the sea about 5 miles from the coast of Gran Canaria. They discovered him whilst they were sailing there. His story was remarkable. He had stowed away on a ship leaving Senegal to try and make a life for himself in Gran Canaria. He had no family apart from his sister and no money. The boat he was on had thrown him overboard about 5 miles out from the coast. He had effectively been left to die. Not only was he

rescued but was taken under the wing of our friends. They in turn made contact with a wealthy businessman in Las Palmas. He was so moved by the story that he took the boy under his wing - gave him a job and a home and now the boy is starting his new life in Las Palmas. The night before the start came our crew had a hearty meal in the local yacht club which was followed by a spectacular firework display over the marina. We went to bed at midnight with a feeling of trepidation as to what the following day would bring.

The big day arrived and brought with it blue skies and a brisk wind. It was quite a feat to get 250 boats off their moorings to get to the start line, but achieved it was, and *Taliesin* found herself in a good position for the start. Then came the countdown. 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 - off went the cannon and off we went! It was a spectacular sight! *Taliesin* rose to the occasion and with all her sails up she romped away amongst the other yachts.

Within about 4 hours the fleet had spread out. Some boats, including us, headed south towards the Cape Verde islands where we would then turn right towards St Lucia. The remnants of Hurricane Lennie were still hanging about so, by going south we avoided the major storms that were raging in the Atlantic. Other boats took a more direct course.

The first few days were a roller coaster ride - tradewinds at their best! *Taliesin* surfed down the waves and consequently we made excellent progress. The waves were huge but fortunately behind us. They were like a magic carpet lifting *Taliesin* up and carrying her along. At first it was quite daunting because the wave height seemed to swamp her - but in fact they posed no threat and were a real bonus to our speed. The downside was that living aboard was little uncomfortable because of the motion.

After a few days the winds died down and in fact the Trades did not properly return for several days. We however

settled into a routine. We had a watch system which was imposed at night (6pm - 8am) Two would be up on watch for 4 hours whilst the other two slept. The days went by so quickly. The structure of the day centred around meal times and radio contact with the other boats. All the boats were divided into 4 groups and at certain times during the day there would be a roll call for all the boats to relay their position to a control boat. The roll call would be followed by general chit chat of the goings on during the day.

It was during the roll call one day that the awful news came that a man had gone overboard. It was the low point of the trip. The seas at the time were big and it seemed impossible that he could ever be found. However about 24 hours later the good news came through that he had been rescued by none other than our Norwegian friends who saved the young Senegalese boy. He had been in the sea for 17 hours after having been knocked overboard by the boom. The search for him had been coordinated by the Norwegian boats in the ARC. It was very moving at the prize giving service when the young man who was saved hugged his rescuers who were presented with a trophy.

One of the highlights of the trip was seeing a pod of whales. After about five days at sea we found ourselves surrounded by whales in what seemed to be their feeding area. It was a spectacular sight - particularly when one whale took more of an interest in us. He obliged our camera by doing a backward flip in front of us. Then he decided to take a closer look at *Taliesin*, thinking, I suppose, that she was a fellow whale. He got very close to us and as he did so we realised that he was bigger than the boat and one whack of his tail against the hull could inflict serious damage to the boat. So although it was great to see him so close up we were quite relieved that he lost interest in us and swam off!

Another highlight was catching fish. Gerard, our French crewmate was in

charge of the fishing. He brought all the tackle. He trailed a fishing line behind us at the end of which was a brightly coloured pink squid. At first we had no success. Then after a few days he caught not only one but four!! As a result, Gerard, made the most amazing fish soup for us as well as Sushi!

And so the days passed by - we saw the most amazing sunsets and had wonderful night sails with the sky lit up by stars and the moon.

We were dogged by flukey winds and for many days the winds were very light and so progress was slow. However it had its compensations - we had plenty of sleep and were able to read and play games. It was a very pleasurable time. We had a little bit of bad weather which produced squalls. Fortunately we did not have problems with them. In fact we were able to increase our water supply. At the onset of the squall we were out on deck with saucepans collecting rain water. The crew took advantage of the free showers and beforehand everyone soaped themselves down and stood on deck waiting for the rain to rinse themselves. It was quite a funny sight seeing everyone covered in soap suds standing on the deck looking up to the sky waiting for the rains to fall!

Before we knew it we were only a few miles from the finishing line. We all felt a little sad that the adventure was coming to an end.

We finally arrived at Rodney Bay marina at 11.30 pm local time on the 14th December having been 23 days at sea. We were greeted on arrival with a glass of rum punch and a bowl of fruit and a crate of Heineken beers.

After the festivities of the ARC finished we headed north and cruised Martinique, Iles Saintes, Dominica, Guadeloupe and ended up in Antigua where *Taliesin* is currently moored.

We were delighted with *Taliesin's* performance. The arrangement of

poled out main and jib produced a very powerful and stable rig in very rolly seas. She was a joy to sail and in fact we hand-steered all the way!! When the Trades brought winds of Force 6 *Taliesin* surfed the huge waves. At one time we clocked up 178 miles in 24 hours!!

Although she is a small 38 compared with other 38-footers her interior is so well suited to life at sea. She is extremely comfortable and when the motion is severe you feel quite safe down below because there are so many hand holds, and no sharp edges which some boats interiors have!

I would certainly recommend participating in the ARC. I was really daunted by the prospect of the trip but it was made easier to be able to talk to others who were doing the same crossing. The Atlantic is a very lonely and awesome place and although we hardly saw any other boats throughout the crossing, it made all the difference to be able to chat to other boats on the ARC net on SSB throughout the crossing. I would certainly cross with the ARC again when we cross the Atlantic again.

CANNING AND PICKLING

Sally Smith provides practical hints and tips and notes of caution!

In my last food article I mentioned that I canned my own meat and chicken in preference to eating the commercially produced tinned versions. Several people have since asked how I do this so here it is. To start with, "canning" is the American term for "bottling". What I do is "bottle" the food. In America, and probably in Europe you can purchase canning processors which are in fact, large pressure cookers. I have successfully bottled meat and chicken using my everyday pressure cooker on the boat.

Before we start, however, a strong word of caution, which cannot be stressed enough.....rather than go obviously bad, canned/bottled food can develop **BOTULISM**. **There is no cure for BOTULISM, you DIE**. So :

everything must be kept scrupulously clean

you must process the food for the required amount of time

you must reprocess, or eat immediately, any jars which do not seal

you must bring home-canned food to boiling point and simmer 15 minutes before even tasting it

after emptying a jar, flush it with boiling water, then wash in the normal manner

do not allow a utensil that you have used to empty a jar, to come in contact with any other food or your mouth until it has been scrupulously cleaned.

This sounds tedious but in fact it is

quite a simple set of rules to follow, and we are still here to tell the tale.

Still interested? O.K., arm yourself with the following:

- a number of 1 pint Mason jars with new lids, or Kilner jars with new rubber rings
- a kettle
- a pressure cooker
- a large saucepan, in which to immerse the jars for sterilising
- tongs
- several dish towels
- knife
- cutting board
- timer
- clean sponge
- lots of water
- detergent
- a good bottle of wine
- a good book
- a free afternoon or preferably a free day.

Of course you also need the meat, chicken or fish. It is a waste of money buying the best cuts of meat for bottling, as the prolonged processing renders the toughest cuts tender. I avoid using any flavourings at all as they shorten the life of the end product and the flavours tend to intensify over time. I find it is better to flavour the meat with a sauce of choice when we come to eat it.

There is some preprocessing to do with chicken. I usually buy whole chickens, and poach them in water only. I then strip the meat off the bones, and strain the stock to remove any fat or other extraneous bits. The chicken can then be bottled in the resulting clean stock. Or you can roast the chickens and keep the drippings, strained of fat, to

cover the chicken in the jars.

For beef or pork, the meat should be cut into cubes and all the fat removed. Cubed meat is bottled raw. Ground meat (mince) should be lightly sauteed to remove the fat. I have bottled lamb, but found it very strong and not to our liking.

I haven't tried bottling fish as commercially tinned fish is both cheap and palatable. I have eaten home bottled smoked salmon, which was bottled dry, i.e. no liquid, and home bottled fresh salmon. Both were delicious, but I have found a source of commercially processed tinned smoked salmon which is as good so haven't tried to do my own. If you are keen to try, there are some methods listed at the end of this article.

When the meat/chicken is ready, check all the jars to make sure that they are free from cracks and chips, and that the rims are absolutely smooth. Wash the jars, lids and rings in hot soapy water, rinse well, then pop into the large saucepan of boiling water to sterilise. A word of warning, do not leave Mason jar lids in the boiling water too long as it can prevent them from sealing. I dip them in for a minute just when I am ready to use them. Put a couple of inches of water into the pressure cooker, and set onto medium heat.

Now, with the tongs, lift a jar out of the boiling water, tilt it to empty it and stand it on a wooden board or folded dish towel. Pack the meat/chicken into the jar firmly but not jammed in. Add the chicken stock to chicken, or boiling water to other meat. The liquid isn't actually necessary but it does prevent the meat from discolouring over time. Run a knife around the sides of the jar to release any air pockets. It is important to get all the air out, so you may need to joggle the contents around a bit to make sure there is no air in the centre. Trapped air expands during processing and can force strands of meat up under the rim of the jar,

preventing the jar from sealing. Fill the jars to within a half inch of the rim.

With a clean sponge, wipe the outside of the jar, then run a clean finger around the rim to make sure there are no chips, cracks, tiny strands of meat or any other foreign matter on the rim. Fish a lid/rubber ring out of the sterilising saucepan and carefully place it on the top of the jar using the tongs. Make sure it is properly aligned then add a ring or clamp the jar as appropriate. If you are using rings, tighten the ring down then undo a quarter turn. Never tighten a ring on a hot jar as the average gorilla won't be able to loosen it when the jar has cooled and all your work will be wasted. Put the jar in the pressure cooker, and prepare the next one.

When the pressure cooker is full, usually about four jars, check that the water level is up to the middle of the jars and that there is no air bubble under the jar. I tilt the jars slightly with the tongs to release any trapped air. Lock the lid in place and bring up to 10 lbs pressure. The cooker will be up to pressure when you can hear/see a steady hiss of steam escaping.

Now for the bonus, open the wine and settle down with a good book for 75 minutes, which is how long the jars must be processed for. Start timing only when the cooker is up to pressure. **DO NOT LET THE PRESSURE DROP.** After 75 minutes, turn off the heat and let the pressure cooker cool in situ. **DO NOT COOL WITH WATER OR MOVE THE PRESSURE COOKER AT THIS STAGE.** Have another glass of wine instead and read a few more chapters.

Once the pressure has dropped prepare the reception area for the jars. Fold a dish towel in half and place it in a draft free place which nobody is going to disturb for several hours. Open the cooker carefully without joggling the contents. Carefully lift out the jars and set them on the dishtowel. As they cool

any boiling action in the jars will cease and you will hear a "snud" as the Mason jar lids suck down, the lids will appear concave and sound hollow when tapped with a finger nail. The rubber rings on Kilner jars should be noticeably compressed between the jar and the lid.

ANY JARS WHICH FAIL TO SEAL MUST BE REPROCESSED FOR THE FULL AMOUNT OF TIME, OR THE CONTENTS EATEN THE SAME DAY.

If you choose to reprocess, remove the lid, clean the rim and reseal with a new lid or rubber ring before processing.

When the jars are thoroughly cool, wash, dry, label and store away in a secure place.

If you want to eat the contents cold, remember, **15 minutes at 100C (212F)** before even tasting, then chill for consumption.

Finally, meat will keep for several years, chicken for a maximum of two years and fish for a maximum of one year.....enjoy!

Ideas for fish:

Salmon – stand 1 hour in brine, (1 cup salt/1 gallon water), drain 10 minutes, pack with the skin next to the glass, cap and process 1 hour 40 minutes at 10 lbs pressure.

White Fish – stand 1 hour in brine, drain, pack with skin to glass, put open jars in a saucepan, cover with hot brine and boil 15 minutes, drain 5 minutes, cap and process 1 hour 40 minutes at 10 lbs pressure.

Tuna – steam till cooked. Chill 6 – 12 hours. Cut into jar length pieces. Pack

into hot jars, add 1 tsp salt, 2 tblspns salad oil, cap and process 1 hour 20 minutes at 10 lbs pressure.

Pickled Veg:

After all that, if you now feel like getting in a pickle, here's the recipe I use for pickling vegetables. We eat these vegetables as a snack, straight from the jars, or I rinse them and add to stir fries, or sweet and sour dishes when I have no fresh vegetables to hand. I do some jars of mixed vegetables; carrots, peppers, cauliflower, cucumber, celery, onions, garlic, chillis; and some jars of single vegetables for cooking with. With the single vegetables, I fish what I need for a meal out of the jar and put the lid back on. As long as the pickling liquid covers the veges this is OK. This recipe is for mixed vegetables, but the same applies to single veges.

1 cup salt
1 gallon water
1 quart cucumber pieces, wedges or slices
2 cups carrot pieces (strips or slices)
2 cups celery pieces
2 sweet red peppers in strips
1 small cauliflower in florets
2 cups peeled pickling onions
¼ cup mustard seeds
2 tblspns celery seeds
1 hot red chili pepper
2 cups sugar
6½ cups white vinegar

Dissolve the salt in the water and pour over the vegetables. Stand for 12 – 18 hours. Drain thoroughly. Add spices, sugar, hot pepper to vinegar and boil for 3 minutes. Add vegetables and simmer till just heated. Do not cook. Pack boiling hot into sterilised jars leaving 1/8" head space. Cap with new lids or rings as appropriate. Leave to cool. Store.

TALES FROM THE BALTIC

Robin Guilleret sends reports from Athene's long cruise north and east

Chapter 1: Setting sail

Sitting in Woodbridge Tidemill marina listening to the wind howling through the rigging was not best way of encouraging crew to cross the North Sea, so the smart diners at the Captain's Cabin were somewhat startled to see four scruffy sailors devouring rather good food. Cheerful to say, on emerging from dinner the wind had dropped and the forecast gave us a window of opportunity to sail. Up be times ie 0430 to get over the sill and to catch the tide up the coast we arrived at Amsterdam by Midday the next day after a fast but roly passage. Raymond and Gordon who had nobly only come to help me accross headed back to Blighty by Eurostar no less. Whilst Alex and I cleared the IJsselmeer in one day's fast sailing averaging nearly six knots to anchor outside the lock at Kornswerdzand before dusk. A short sharp sail to Terschelling got us to our first crew change on time.

A magic overnight sail to Nordenay followed, not at all spoilt by being forced aground by a Lady brown boat driver at the top of the Ameland Watt (the inside passage behind the Waddensee islands). We recovered to shoot out from the Seegat like a cork from a bottle arriving in Nordeney by 0930 in time for showers and a day's sightseeing by bicycle. Spiekeroog was one of the few Frisian islands I had not visited so even though it was neaps we turned up off the narrow entrance one hour after low water. Needless to say we ran aground in the middle and retreated somewhat shamefaced to anchor for an hour. It showed 1.3m on chart but like lots of entrances silts up forming a bar to keep out non eastcoasters. Our second go was better so we showed the assembled German boats how not to go astern into your berth before settling down to dinner

and a perfect night instead of the forecast force 6. A lazy sail up to the adjacent mainland and the small Siel called Newharlingsiel. Lunch surrounded by fishing boats calmed weather forecast nerves and we retraced our steps to a recommended anchorage east of the next island Wangerooge. A good one well placed for the last north sea leg to Cuxhaven and the Kiel canal. It was indeed, but full of German boats somewhat reminiscent of East Head in Chichester harbour for all you south coast types and not at all the peaceful spot I had hoped. It served its purpose as we stormed into Cuxhaven the next day in time for lunch, which we could not have done from anywhere else. Even with that head start we made the tidal slot up the Elbe by the skin of our collective teeth and I suspect some of our earlier companion boats finished up in Helgoland instead as things blew up into a stiff ENEaster. Now for the holiday part to follow

Chapter 2: The cruise begins

Jeroen had to get back to work - keeping emergencies under control in Middleberg - and David joined for a three week stint before the mast - after a slow train journey from Hamburg. Nice to know German trains occasionally go slow too! Skipper spent the morning chatting up the sailmaker's apprentice in order to get a repair done to the main ahead of a long queue of Important Cuxhaveners. Luckily it worked and we caught the tide up to Brunspittal and swept into the already open lock. Full sail together with the required motor up the Kiel canal and things were going well until the Skipper got too casual over an early morning cup of coffee and scraped the canal bank. That was after a very peaceful night alongside the lock gates on the Gieslau canal turn off so no excuse.

Instead of going straight for Holtenau we turned off into Rendsburg and a false start at a shipbuilders, where we were promised everything by 1500 and got zilch. We moved on to the RVR Yacht Club where Mike the HM had us out of the Water by 1700. David, who is a boy racer at heart, determined on scrubbing down the now exposed hull assisted by Jim with buckets and the Skipper offering cool beer and sympathy, insisting they should not bother even if it would improve our speed by 0.0025 of a knot. Two small scrapes were repaired and we were re launched by 2000, having kept the club well amused on a otherwise lazy, beery, sunwacked Tuesday afternoon. Cannot recommend the RVR too highly to any of you heading up the Canal.

Despite a swan fight to the death our exit from Holtenau by 1230 meant we should be able to make Fehmarn by nightfall. Wishful thinking. Unannounced German Military firings meant that we were diverted north under protest and after having our polite requests for peaceful passage turned down by our new masters. It was too rough to motor and other boats passing through downwind unimpeded, not to mention a forecast force 6/7 from the SW prompted one of my now well known and very pompous faxes to Her Britannic Majesty's Consul General at Hamburg to complain at our unique treatment. A passing German coast watch vessel agreed with our protests and also promised to report it. If I had a web site you would be able to read the full text. They also said they had no safety circuit and therefore could not stop the firings if they wanted to. That breaks every rule in the book but I suspect it was just a lie in order that we should not hold everything up by tacking slowly to Frenham. One they may regret.

Perhaps because of the German Military forecast things improved and we motored through in a calm under Fehmarn Bridge in the early hours. Numerous unlit buoys preyed on the Skipper's mind and resulted in David keeping watch at the bow in pouring

rain. The first we saw of most buoys was when they were illuminated by our navigation lights, but the transit lights were very good and kept us out of trouble. The SW force 6 arrived a few hours later in time to sweep us down to Rugen at our now customary 6 knots. I thought: I will have to give up passage planning at 3.5 knots in future! Some hope! Calm descended and we finished up motoring up the inside of Hiddensee off Rugen. Into not so sleepy Nuendorf for the night, our first sight of West German and EC cash pouring into the former East Germany. A brand new marina with electronic showers was only spoiled by the thought of the new building to come and the fact there were only two showers for 40 pile berths. Missed the HM for the night and a visit at 0900 opening time elucidated the fact, only after a telephone call, that we had already missed the bridge opening at Stralsund for the morning and the next was not until 1750. Undaunted we set about steaming into the SW wind down the Nemedri channels to the three spires we could see on the horizon, (if you recognise that phrase you are probably as old as the skipper occasionally feels), the mines being replaced by less lethal fish traps. Stralsund turned out to be a Hanseatic delight. Beautiful mediaeval Cathedral, bustling market place, good food and charming if shabby buildings. City gates still in place and friendly people. Builders' cranes marred the skyline so rush to see it whilst it lasts.

Having fuelled from a friendly barge, we joined a queue of 30 sails to breach the bridge - enough beautiful Folkboats sailing through to make Gerald jealous. A storming sail petered out in heavy rain so we gave up thoughts of Lauterbach and turned off to anchor with a solitary Danish boat for company in Glewitzer Wiek, on the edge of one of the numerous nature reserves. Torrential rain did not manage to mar a quite fantastic sunset but did keep the midges away from the skipper's almost famous chicken dinner. Up with the birds who sang us out of a very sheltered anchorage. Early though we

were, fishermen were ahead of us as were the Danes. The best sail so far followed over the 15 miles to Lauterbach where we had missed the Regatta but not the fun fair. A new yacht club under construction, a heavily closed German Saturday afternoon and a visit from the Border Police, reminded us that only some things change in the new greater Germany. Told off for not getting entry papers, I only just refrained from telling the policeman that Nordenay was too far West to be interested enough to give us as well-stamped papers as we got from the East. Yes they did ask us for our crew list as well. Shades of St Petersburg in 1996 passed before our eyes as they removed our passports to their Vessel for checking. However this time we made it without let or hindrance, and set off for Danish Bornholm with relief and, as it proved, into the teeth of a gale despite the Border guards' forecast of a Southerly 2. Diversion was in order and Havn Von Gager was made for us; our fifth port in two days. Our EC money had been spent on ten brand new fishermen's huts with the surplus devoted to a few pile berths for passing yachties. We arrived after the caravan park attendant cum Harbour Master had closed and as there was no sign of him by 0430 when we left I don't know what our port of refuge should have cost us. Jim and David provided good sustenance and *Athene* appeared none the worse for her shaking. The log as usual went into sulks, and refused to record our hard won progress.

The next morning shone fair and a motor up to the narrow exit channel which we just managed to share with the only Merchant ship sighted behind Rugen. The wind blew from abaft the beam for the first six hours just to lull us into a false sense of security before backing slowly to dead ahead, luckily dropping as well, so the first team of Donk & George were brought into play to give us the delights of Rønne by 1800. Unchanged delight - the old fishermen's harbour yielded up a berth under the Church and close to the centre of Town. The new marina, as you might expect, is miles away to the

North of the main harbour but I am sure has excellent facilities. None of our hoarded shower tokens from previous ports worked so Jim had a cold shower and his weaker brethren delayed matters until the HM's man arrived to greet us next morning.

Blissful sunshine greeted the Skipper's belated start to the day. Half his crew had already met a new member from the 0630 ferry. But he had a motive of sorts. Jim left us after getting quite enough night and long passages under his belt for all sorts of RYA qualifications and earning his skipper's grateful thanks for his cheerful company. Coffee and lunch in the Square, basking in sunshine, led to happy memories of Vang just up the coast surfacing in the skipper's somnolent mind and with the full agreement of the crew *Athene* ventured out into the sun-kissed waters for a gentle motor up to that small but perfectly formed port. Not before I had, on foot, covered the whole three mile long harbour from north to south to find a friend of a friend who turned out to be on holiday in Copenhagen. However virtue had its reward, as his employers managed to rustle up a new fire extinguisher to replace the one accidentally set off in the Kiel canal during a particularly hard navigation lesson.

Vang greeted us in the shape of the harbourmaster's 21 year old son replacing dad who had fled to Finland on hearing of *Athene's* approach after a three year respite. Peter bravely stood in the burning sun and directed us to the best berth before joining us in the well used barbeque hut for after-dinner drinks, so it was a late evening; only broken by him having to run the skipper up to a nearby hill top church - not to pray for good weather as you might imagine, but for the more prosaic reason of requiring to get my e-mails in. For the previous residents of the BBQ hut the sunset was just as spectacular and we are just hoping the weather will follow suit. For the strong minded more will follow next week; for those not up to it a simple remove will suffice

to get peace. For anybody joining me - that high is on its way, it only has to push three lows aside first. So another visit to that church may well be required tonight.

Chapter 3 : into Swedish waters

For those of you hoping for more blood on the decks, no luck. Just a quiet gentle cruise to report, enlivened only by the pleasures of familiar ports and well trodden paths across a nodding sea. Well, not quite, but I want the new crews to arrive and enjoy the Baltic high which has been hovering around for the last few days but lacks stickability. However that makes a change from all the bleak weather reports I get from down south - sorry, all you south coasters, it's great up here!

We stayed a second night in Vang as SW force 6/7 winds were forecast and Christianso, our planned stop, was open to that sort of blow. Needless to say it did not materialise so we could have made it over to the Easternmost Danish Island which is run like a Naval Ship - Did I hear a muttering of "just as well or Robin would have taken up keelhauling again"? We settled for dinner at the restaurant Le Port instead, mainly because it was there and the only one. A bit blowy the next morning, but after sharing a weather forecast with our chummy ship "Spray", named after guess who, we intrepidly set off two reefs down and made a swift passage to Utklippen. A small, rock-girt, lighthouse-dominated harbour cleft from solid rock by fishermen in the days when men were men and exceptionally well placed as a stopping off point, so often full of long distance sailors wasting the wind. You don't want to lose, because they haven't learnt only to sail when the wind is abaft the beam and insist in sticking to their pre-made plans. Not that I ever do that of course. The last leisurely start of the week saw us off by 1000 and, with the help of a six hour Spinnaker run, make Kalmar before dusk. In fact in time for several drinks before a leisurely dinner before dusk.

Days are drawing out now and sunset is about 2300. I won't tell you when dawn is but night passages become long day sails. On the way into Kalmar we were rapidly overtaken by a fast stinkpot and *Athene's* spinnaker happy crew were duly warned to stand by for heavy rolling. I couldn't believe my eyes when it slowed down to pass us. A red ensign only partly explained and I was so overwhelmed that I hailed and asked them to take some photos of *Athene* under spinnaker. They went astern and circled snapping. That deserved a drink in Kalmar whose Castle is hopefully the backdrop. A delivery crew for £500,000-worth of boat to a rich Swede who was more interested in having TV sets in each "Bedroom" than a computer navigation package. How the other half live. Never mind, the second stateroom made a good setting for a well earned nightcap.

Over 100 miles in two days heralded a day of rest - for the crew - whilst the skipper arranged for the Scandinavian stern mooring system so necessary for comfort in the Islands ahead. A flat anchor warp on a reel together with a mushroom head anchor all secured to the stern rails makes for easy mooring to the rocks. Stepping ashore over the bow en route to your BBQ means you have to be fairly close in to the steep-to shore line. Luckily all sailors like sharing their favourite natural harbours so as usual I just headed for the scruffiest looking yacht and asked where we should go. Watch out for the throwaway lines like "there is the odd rock awash". It generally means the place is infested with unmarked dangers. So take it slowly. This is not the soft mud to which us eastcoasters are so accustomed, but unforgiving rock and even I don't like running aground here. A long motor up the West side of Oland through the famed bridge which, being under heavy repair, gave us the sadistic delight of passing under stationary lines of cars trying to get across. Nearly as much fun as getting a Dutch motorway bridge to open for you. Dinnertime saw us secured to a sternbuoy in sleepy Byxelkrok, NW

Oland. Much improved from my last visit in 1991 - good showers and a lot more yacht moorings, if that is improvement. Still a few fishing boats but as tomorrow is Sunday we should get a good nights sleep. We did.

Sunday dawned bright and clear, not much wind, so once again *Athene* acts like a motorboat and the 25 miles to the mainland and Vastervik area pass pleasantly if somewhat boringly. A lunchtime anchor in sight of a perfect mooring up rock covered at the moment with Swedish yachts out for Sunday lunch. Great - they depart home at 1600 and we have the little island to ourselves and our first bows-to mooring. David springs across a rather nervous gap and we are there - new line stretching out almost across the bay from the stern. Ashore to stroll our deserted Isle and set up the BBQ. No sooner were we organised that a large Hallberg Rassy rounds the point and heads unerringly towards us. At least a Swedish flag and it is their country. Appearances deceive - a loud Germanic hail shatters the calm and - you have guessed it - a German charter boat secures right alongside. We exchange the minimum civilities as, like everyone else around here, we are fed up with the arrogance of our fellow travellers. This lot are quite pleasant which is just as well as we turn up in their anchorage the next night. Lazy BBQ over and the sun set we prepare for an early start as we have to be in Vastervik some five miles away by 0800 to get George I seen to by autohelm doctors there, George II having had to be brought out of retirement, as his successor had the vapours and would not stop whining. A short circuit suspected - cured by 225 worth of Kronors. Engine serviced, English Sunday papers and shopping purchased, old churches and antique shops visited all before lunch. So off we set for another island paradise. This time Torro, recommended by the boat loving antique dealer. It was, too, and quite large enough to share with the aforesaid Germans who were the only other boat there. Lows to the south so we will head north for one of

our long day sails and more Islands before the delights of Stockholm next week end.

Chapter 4 : the land of the midnight sun

Our long day's sail north turned into a long motor as we had fickle winds til after lunch when they rapidly picked up to 17 knots but luckily from the right direction. Mike did a great helming job and we slipped into our third natural harbour Ringso, not far from Trossa, for a second perfect sunset - this time viewed from high rocks looking out over a chain of islands stretching into the far distance. Heaven - or as near as I am likely to get.

Next day we were due to shop at Trossa, but a perfect wind for Lake Malaren behind Stockholm reminded the Skipper of a previous midsummer when too little wind meant donking far too much, so we did not waste time shopping and headed for the lake and the small reed fringed Slandokav island - Stockholm Sailing Club's summer harbour. Stopped en route for fuel and our last fix of calor gaz as you cannot get the latter north of Stockholm (which our friendly Dane in *Spray* was to find out later to his cost). Denied the Sluis twice in succession by merchant ships we were about to give up on Slando for the night when a friendly hail from a courting couple told us we were next. Sure enough we were through and motored out into the windless lake. Mirrored in the calm was our goal - pushing aside the reeds in the best east coast style we picked up a stern buoy and bowsed into their jetty. Dinner and a near sunset almost coincided - yes we are in the land of the midnight sun a few days off midsummer when the sunset runs into the dawn and you only need to blink once not to know whether it is red sky at sunset or red sky in the morning, so it is no wonder the forecasters get it wrong - or so every Swede tells you. I am just happy that a high has arrived.

We have had such good sailing that

Culture with a capital K just had to strike back, so next morning we drift up to the Viking stronghold of Birka on Adelsö, recently added by UNESCO to the world heritage list so there!

It was in fact very interesting, with English speaking guides, and in the museum a wall map of the Viking speaking world, on which I noticed that the only places noting Rape and Pillage were most of the UK and Rome. The rest of the known world appeared touched but relatively unscathed. They probably enjoyed sacking Rome more than York.

Mike's asthma started to get the better of him so we cancelled another night in Viking land in favour of a splendid sail up to Stockholm town where he soon recovered enough to join David in buying the Skipper a truly splendid dinner in the old City.

Our oft-revisited Navisshavn has gone downhill since Gustav the Cowboy retired and is now open to any old ship's wash. Vasa land beckons next time. Indeed with your Stockholm card you not only get free travel but free entrance to some 50 museums including the Vasa and you only have to do three a day to get your money back and travel free. Too much like hard work so the odd late night club got our hard earned cash instead which in turn led to a splendid fish lunch. But that is David and Mike's tale to be set to music for the Laying up Supper.

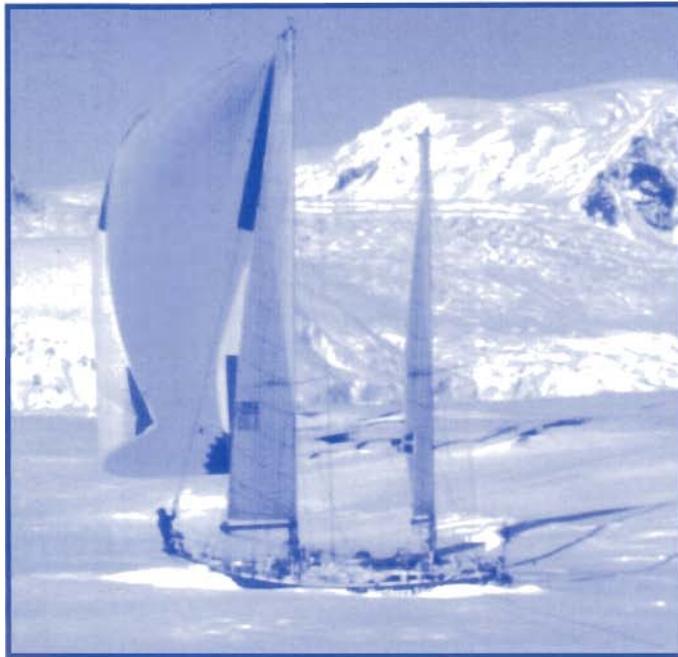
Sadly it was time for them to head Blightywards. David, in particular, having put up with me for three whole weeks deserves a special award at said dinner. William joined on the morrow and we sped northwards through Stockholm's Skagard - with a couple of

dots and an o over the a's it means offshore islands to you and I. Cultured to the armpits and with a following wind to die for we passed close to Vaxholms gloomy ramparts - swept through Stegesundet's beautiful alley - ignored Furusund's mini marina and finally settled tired but happy in tiny, shallow (1.5m max) Riddensholm - c1719 and very welcoming even if it had nothing but a sternbuoy to offer. By one of life's ironies, although in Sweden, it is best shown on the Finnish chart of the Aaland Islands which - surprise, surprise - were our next port of call.

Next day dawned not so bright but with a perfect wind for Mariehamn. Life was going too well, so when the skipper glanced astern to admire *Athene's* spreading wake what should he see but a high speed super ferry carving our track in two - aiming with unnerving accuracy for our dipping stern. To hold on as per ROR or chicken out? Those of you who have come this far know that *Athene* sticks to her rights come what may. Well, she missed us by less than 1/2 cable in an otherwise empty sea. The VHF aerial did not quite touch the wave tops but elicited no reply from the leviathan. However a subsequent satellite telephone call mentioning Mr Sherwood and Sea Containers - who luckily had just bought the offending Ship's holding company - elicited profound apologies from the Captain together with the promise of a full enquiry. Just as well - a downwind turn at the last moment would have seen us across its bows. Mariehamn and its free saunas soon soothed the Skipper's fevered brow and parts that other forms of cleanliness cannot reach.

..... to be continued

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