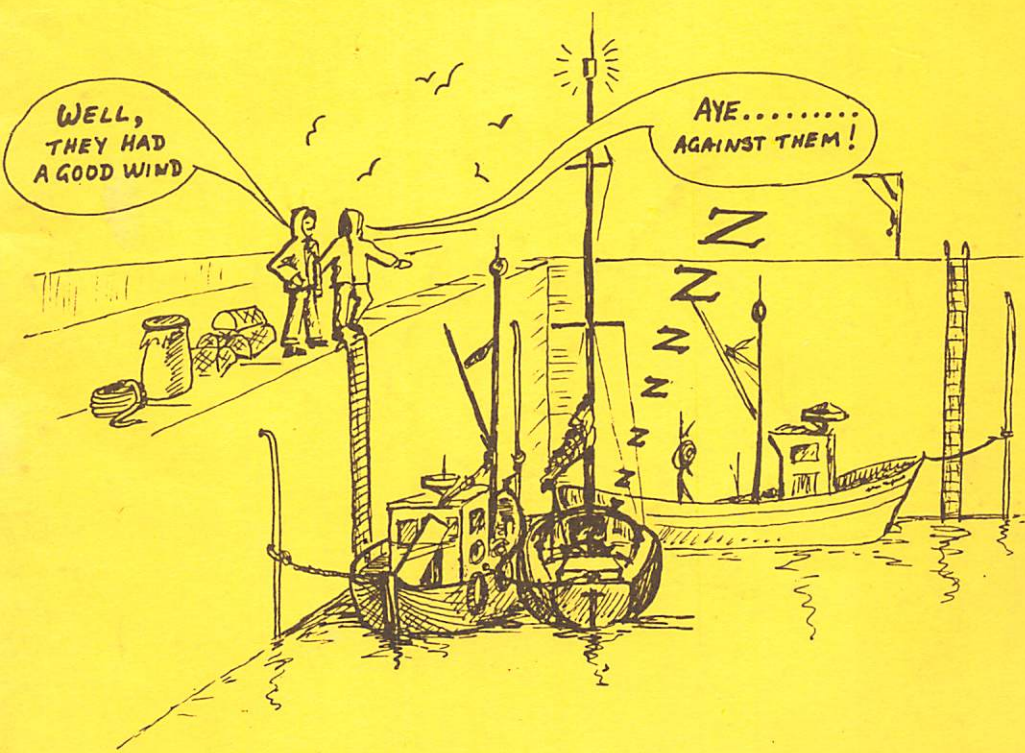


# Atalanta

1989 / 1990



A Short History of the Atalanta and the Atalanta Owners Assoc'n

By George Parker Hon. Sec.  
At the 32nd A C M and Dinner on Jan 13th 1990 it was decided  
that all members and Associate Members on the Register in 1990  
would receive a free copy of this publication. Thereafter the  
booklet would be available from the Hon. Sec. to anyone for  
£4.28 including postage.

1990

Sub:

Due.

ATALANTA OWNERS' ASSOCIATION.

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## Commodore's Message

The Committee and Members were kind enough to discover my birthday in June and to present me with a book I have been looking for - for ages. It is the apocryphal New Testament. It fills in the activities of the Apostles after the Crucifixion and their adventurous travels by land and sea without the now old fashioned aids such as the compass and certainly without the modern electronic gadgets now available at a price which alas take all the fun and skill out of navigation.

I thank you all for that notable present and commend it to you for study. But I do not commend becoming 80 - a dull outlook.

We nearly made a record of three rallies this year but alas, one went wrong and we finished with East and West. But each had the sun.

Next year the Rear Commodore will make the arrangements for the Race at West Mersea, but my wife and I will still lay-on the supper in Gun House Barn.

Our indefatigable Hon. Sec. George Parker has been busy as ever and has produced a history book on the Atalanta and the A.O.A. Many have suggested paragraphs but nobody has yet seen even a galley proof of the finished document.

We hope it will be available at the dinner as a surprise item for a blind purchase and at a modest price. Our thanks go to George as always for all his work, interest and enthusiasm for the A.O.A. Also to Cecile for her equally meritorious support.

Alas, after the dinner we have to say goodbye to our editor, Michael Rowe. (T11) He has with ever increasing success produced our Annual Bulletin with the minimum of fuss and the maximum of efficiency for 12 years. This is a very great voluntary achievement. I shall mention it particularly at the Dinner where I hope to see you.

## Honorary Editor's Message.

The time has come for me to lay down my blue pencil and for another to take over. I've had a most interesting time over the years, even if interest has sometimes given way to near panic. There are times when I've been convinced that there would not be enough material to make a magazine but sufficient always came in, even if at the last moment. The availability of the magazine in time for the Dinner has sometimes been of some concern, although I've only been defeated twice : firstly with a magazine but without either petrol or trains, secondly by 'Flu all round at the most critical time. I'm sorry that there has never been space to print everything submitted over the years, but at least it means that there is always something in reserve : my successor will inherit some "insurance".

My thanks to all those faithful contributors who have made life so interesting and also to those with whom I have had (sometimes quite lengthy) 'phone conversations either eliciting or providing information and opinions. Atalanta owners are ever helpful and rarely short of either opinions or ingenuity!

I'm sure the AOA will continue to prosper and our apparently immortal boats will continue to survive and, moreover, carry on with their substantial feats of navigation.

Very best wishes to you all from Pauline and myself and thank you for your kind messages. We are not disappearing totally from the scene although our immediate future is not at all clear at the moment. Anyone like to buy a slightly used broadcasting organisation?

Mike Rowe.

## NORTH TO ALASKA

(Bill Higgs and Juliet Warren, BACARDI A51)

After two seasons with A51 we thought that she and us were ready for a major cruise.

We live near Victoria on the southern tip of Vancouver Island so the journey to Alaska would cross the whole British Columbia coast line, nearly 500 miles of fiords, mountains and islands. In fact open water crossings can be reduced to just three of 40 miles each. However, winds in the summer are northwest down the channels, tidal currents are strong and advection fog is common in the northern waters so we anticipated lots of motoring; we really needed 6 knots under power and a range of about 200 miles.

A lot of current problems had been with the Stuart Turner. We had eventually located a spare engine for parts and installed this, replacing our other one, adding an electric start. We still seemed short of power. Improvising a tachometer showed 1200 RPM, so we decided to splurge on phone calls to other Atalantas with Stuarts. The Hon. Sec. referred us to J.P.S. Allison A45 who referred us to Martin Bennett as the Stuart specialist. We learned a lot, eliminated the muffler and repitched the prop to 10" x 8". This gave us 6 knots. Unfortunately when the boat was loaded we were down to 5.5 knots.

This all took time and it wasn't until July 4th we left. We were hoping to go to the Queen Charlottes and "Don't try to cross the Hecate Strait after the end of July" is the local wisdom and said often enough to us. The other advice is to be equipped with Loran and Radar. We settled for a hand-held VHF and about 60 charts.

Our first day's run was East along the Southern shore of Vancouver Island to Victoria Harbour at the public docks under the Provincial legislature buildings with Captain Vancouver's statue looking down at us. We would be following his route which he charted and named in 1789.

Victoria's harbour was so busy and noisy that we postponed working on the cockpit drains and left for the next town, Nanaimo.

Leaving the following afternoon on the flood tide for a 25 mile run North in the Georgia Strait stopping at Sidney to find that the government dock had been "privatized". The government docks in B.C. used to be all along the coast at settlements and where the waters were known to be difficult. They are subsidized, fishing boats paying a nominal fee and the fee per foot for pleasure boats is slightly larger. The railways for the gangway are painted red as this is always a welcome sight coming into a harbour. Sometimes boats are rafted together three to four boats deep. In the last few years the government policy has been to sell them off.

On to Nanaimo through the channels of the Southern Gulf Islands. The Smeatons farmed here and did their first sailing. Leaving the Southern Gulf Islands and entering the Georgia Strait is dramatic. There's a narrow pass called Dodd Narrows where at peaks the current is 9 knots. South of the narrows the wind is often in a different direction or no wind at all. The water is calm and it's hot. Turning the corner after the narrows there is a colder wind, a chop, the huge pulp mill, altogether Nanaimo means business. We did two days work there. Sealing cockpit drains and installing detachable plugs, a temporary fix until we can find out how to do it properly.

British Columbia summer weather is usually dominated by a stationary anticyclone ensuing sun and warmth. This summer was a series of weak depressions resulting in light southeasterlies, cloud and occasional rain. The wind was tantalizing, we would start off with the jib, even consider a reef, then unbelievable it would disappear. This is what happened when we left Nanaimo and headed for the Northern Gulf Islands.

We started running under main and genoa. Is this boat self righting with the keels up? (No!:Ed.) Six hours

for 18 miles motoring the last 3 in a dead calm to Lasqueti Island, 10 miles long and 5 miles wide, whose 200 inhabitants have rejected electrification and a vehicle ferry and were now opposing a logging company's proposed activities. The perfect anchorage in a small bay was marred by hundreds of wasps.

On departing next day while threading our way through the maze of channels and islets to open water, we hit a submerged log. This is always a source of anxiety in British Columbia, the coast is completely forested, floating logs, sometimes whole trees are common, night passages in the inland waterways are to be avoided. No apparent damage fortunately, but we worried about our 3/8" thirty year plywood.

Our confidence was growing in the Stuart Turner, re-expressing Hiscocks remarks "The beautifully made Stuart Turner running quietly as a sewing machine!" We were grateful for the addition of electric start, however.

This was a windless hot day, three attempts to sail, and navigation consisted of simply heading for the smoke of the paper mill at Powell River. Powell River is the end of the highway system on the mainland, (thereafter boats and float planes are used) and the beginning of Desolation Sound, the Mecca of boating holidays for Vancouver and Seattle. The name is inappropriate - it is very beautiful, warm water for swimming, oysters on the beaches and different vegetation, arbutus, moss and juniper. Chart names are indicative - Calm channel, Refuge cove, Tranquility Bay. A few miles north up Calm Channel, Whirlpool Rapids, Dent Rapids, Green Rapids awaited us, all to be taken within minutes of slack water. We were lucky with the tides, and were carried up with the flood to the rapids where the tides round Vancouver Island meet. We crossed at slack and the ebb carried us further north through the channels towards the Johnston Strait - deeper and colder, steeper sides, higher mountains, stronger tides, fewer boats. We have had miserable times in the Johnston Strait, it always seems to be wind against tide. Sure enough we retreated from the entrance after two hours



imperceptible progress against the wind and chop. This was the start of 18 hours misery. Juliet was suddenly ill with what seemed to be flu and we couldn't find anywhere to anchor in the 100 fathom plus channels. A hopeful looking bay was full of log booms. We tied up to their dock but after half an hour we were buzzed by an angry float plane, it was apparently his dock, so once more we retreated into the rapidly falling darkness. A small indent in the next bay offered a precarious anchorage provided the wind didn't change. It did though. So Juliet had to be hauled from her sick bed (bunk?) at midnight to motor to the end of the bay. This bay like most from now to Alaska had a drying shelf at the end. We misread the tide tables and sure enough woke up aground in the eel grass. Obviously the only thing to do at 6.30 a.m. on a cold dark morning when you are surrounded by eel grass on spongy mud is to have a cup of coffee. The Primus wouldn't work, the pump was clogged with a restricted jet and it all needed to be taken to pieces. Go back to bed. Get up to check that keels are really up. Eventually at 10.00 a.m. Bill with a horrible burn from the Primus, put the boat together. Coffee made, we pushed ourselves off. The wind had gone and hardly speaking to each other, we chugged (against the incoming tide) to the Johnston Strait. The weather reports had given a small craft warning with southeasterly winds. It wasn't until the radio towers on Alert Bay were within sight that we got this wind. It rose quickly and we were able to sail into the very crowded noisy fishing harbour.

We stayed in Alert Bay for a day owing to a gale. In B.C. it seemed all or nothing - very strong or very light winds and especially in July or August it is rare to get a moderate wind. So often during our trip we would joyfully put the sails up the keels two-thirds down and sail for half an hour, change to the genoa, raise the keels to a third down, sit while the boom bangs from side to side looking at every cat's paw on the water, then finally admit to each other that, yes the wind had indeed dropped and we'd better turn on the engine.

We had hoped for a wind to cross the Queen Charlotte Strait, which is the Northern piece of waterway between Vancouver Island and the mainland. The crossing is 50 miles to an anchorage and 68 miles to a suitable anchorage. This had been our nemesis last year - we had made two attempts but hadn't carried enough gas, so twice had to turn away before Cape Caution, so suitably named. There was hardly any wind, the pin fell out of the water pump and while Bill was mending it, we sailed up to an island and drifted back three times when the engine was working. Again we went slowly in case it had been overheated. The swells were big and we were relieved to be able to get into Jones' cove just as it was getting dark. It was a good cove, we were sheltered from the swell and there was enough depth between the entrance and the inevitable eel grass.

We were now at the start of the inside passage. Looking at a map of B.C. it seems so intriguing, this long inland waterway going as far north as Prince Rupert which is a day away from the Alaskan Border. That first day we had a magnificent sail - at last we had a strong southeasterly wind. It was a broad reach, we raised the keels almost to the top and sailed hard all day. What a dry boat the Atalanta is, in the afternoon it was wind against tide and quite rough but she took it well. We were using a Davis Tube to test our speed and were delighted when we reached almost 6 knots. This was good because the boat was so heavily loaded : we had taken the Seagull, as the engine had only been tested for half an hour after installation, also a large number of unwieldy engine parts, a spare battery, paint and varnish. We always take these and never yet have used them on a cruise as well as 23 gallons of petrol, 18 gallons of water and a lot of tools.

The wind was still good the next day, but it was very wet. There was a trimaran anchored in the same cove who tried to lure us from our intent with coffee and fish, however, we kept on purpose more or less, and went out into the channel again. This time visibility was very poor, there were strong squalls and sometimes

we felt the Bacardi lifting and we would surf for a second or so. The wind was behind us and we went to get the whisker pole to goose wing. It wasn't there and we decided we had lost it the night before (no, we hadn't gone aground), when poling away from the eel grass. We turned back to look for it and had a most invigorating beat back. She sails so well at this point we were sorry to turn into our cove. We didn't find the pole and for the rest of the trip had to use a fibreglass VHF aerial that had been left on a dock for a long time (we hasten to add). This served its purpose very well.

Bella Bella was our first village after leaving Vancouver Island. Apart from lighthouses, we hadn't seen one settlement but had seen a lot of boats. There used to be a large summer population on the coast working at the canneries. The canneries would have their own hotels. Now these are mostly in ruins and as they are all made of wood, rotting fast. The fish is frozen and taken to be canned in Vancouver and Prince Rupert. Besides the cannery population there were also Indian settlements, but since the 1970's it has been the government policy to concentrate Indian settlements into centres where there is a medical centre, a co-op store, and fishing boat facilities. Bella Bella had dirt roads that lead nowhere but there were quite a few cars. We were followed by kids and dogs. Four of the giggling girls asked to see our boat. Last year an eager child had hoisted the sail and was just undoing the mooring lines before we were able to stop him, so this time we didn't tell them which boat was ours until we arrived together. They stopped hopefully at a splendidly equipped 60 foot ketch and asked "Is this it?" I was tempted to say "Yes" and let them swarm over that.

It was fun talking to the people on the other boats. Someone had a newspaper and was reading it aloud on the dock.

The waters around Bella Bella are beautiful for sailing: there are so many channels to explore, the land is low lying so it's easier to anchor and the

Hecate Strait is close. There were rainbows, sun and strong winds when we were there.

After Bella Bella we crossed Milbantre Sound and then into channels going North. These became more narrow with steep mountains to the side. Sometimes there would be patches of snow on top. We had some good winds, always behind us and were pleased that we had some kind of whisker pole. Once when we hadn't seen a boat all day, a ferry passed us and the passengers gave us a cheer. There were no rocks to worry about but it needed constant attention to know where we were on the chart. Everything looked the same, steep sides covered with conifers right up to the tree line and tides are not easy to predict as they meet in the middle.

The last channel before Prince Rupert, Grenville is 45 miles long with stronger currents. It was more crowded and the wash off passing boats was horrible. The fishing fleet in Prince Rupert had been on strike and were going south; they travelled in groups, unwavering in their speed and course. Once when the channel was at its narrowest we were being taken by the current and doing 9 knots by the land. A huge motor boat passed us leaving a swell rather than a wash behind, we used the VHF to "thank you for your wash, Pilar." There were several islets off Grenville channel. They all had a narrow entrance opening, a deep bay which opened into a basin. At the change of tide, we went into Lowe Inlet together with about seven fishing boats. Several fishing boats kept repositioning themselves and we wondered if there were rocks or banks not marked on the chart, can't they anchor? Later on we learned it was to get the best TV reception.

The ebb tide pushed us out of the Grenville Channel into the exposed and shallow waters of the Chatham Sound. (George Vancouver's ships were Discovery and Chatham.) An increasing head wind and the outflow of the Skenna River were causing a miserable slop, so we packed it in for the day and threaded ourselves between the rocks to an anchorage called Gunboat

Harbour. Next day, the Stuart would only run on one cylinder, so we cleaned and set the points, taking four hours and using pages of a book because we had forgotten feeler gauges. Conditions were the same as the previous day, the wind dead ahead, the tide with us and a swell from the side. The rolling was abominable, however we marvelled at the dryness and feeling of security in the cockpit.

Four hours of this put us into Prince Rupert's splendid natural harbour and we had been in wilderness long enough to find city noise and pace disturbing. This was our last town before Alaska and we tried to get the Alaskan Pilot book tide tables and a U.S. flag to no avail. It rained continuously and the pleasure boat dock was a long walk from town. We were snug on board though, with our cockpit cover and Tilley lamp in the cabin. We noticed that in the rain the native B.C. person does not get wet, the rain seems to part before falling on him, and they don't wear any extra clothing, no hat, and appear untouched by the wet; newcomers to B.C. wear raingear and still look soaked.

Leaving Rupert late in the afternoon to take the dog leg channel to the northern harbour, we anchored too close to the eel grass-covered shelf again and, in repositioning, managed to get our line round the prop. Next morning we beached her and were able to reach underneath and clear the prop - no damage - Allah be praised.

The Alaskan border was now close - 54 degrees 40 M. "Fifty-four or fight" was the slogan of the nineteenth century border dispute. There are still disputes about which salmon are Canadian and which are American. We noticed that the fishing fleets were well separated following the annual seizure of a boat from each side. The Gilnetters and Purse Seiners were fishing, both of whom use nets marked on the water by buoys. These nets would stretch from 100 yards to a quarter of a mile. It was like going through a maze. We were standing on the foredeck trying to see where the end of the nets were. Our first U.S. landfall was Foggy Bay, which fortunately was not, just rock-

studded in front of the anchorage. Forty more miles or so and we were in Ketchikan, the first port of entry and the first Alaskan stop for the multitude of cruise ships on this coast. One of Cunard's was disgorging passengers as we arrived. A very efficient voice on the V.H.F. directed us to a vacant berth and friendly customs officials. No charges as we were under thirty feet and arrived between 9 and 5.

We enjoyed Ketchikan for a few days, climbed its 3000' Deer Mountain, talked to the tourists and Alaskan locals who amused us by referring to America proper as "the lower 48 Degrees"

We cruised another 60 miles or so north and touched latitude 56 degrees, then turned south into the Behn Canal, green glacial water, showers, rainbows, completely deserted, not a sight of another boat for three days.

It was time to turn south, for the most part retracing our route. We had considered going "outside" and a non-stop offshore passage, but prudence said otherwise, the scold.

So another 35 days living on Bacardi - more relaxed and confident now. There was magnificent surfing down Laredo Sound. Gradually reducing sail to just the working jib, the boat was steady enough to leave a cup of tea on the cockpit seat. Still sailing, we entered Meyers Passage through a narrow entrance and then so quiet, a flat river-like channel with banks of green meadows looking incomplete without a herd of cows and a village.

Etched in our memories also, the six hours of terror when the fog shut in when crossing to the tip of Vancouver Island and the Egg Island lighthouse didn't appear. We had been waiting for its foghorn, but it is an automatic one. The fog was low and the foghorn above it, in sunlight, so the horn was never turned on. A fishing boat appeared and we were then truly grateful for the VHF. We asked where we were and if we could follow him. He went within feet of the

islets and rocks in the ten foot swell and intermittently he was lost to sight. What a relief when it quite suddenly cleared and we could see Port Hardy.

Then the return to southern waters, sunny skies, warmth, modest twelve foot tides and protected anchorages of uniform three fathoms. And finally our own cove and home.

Well, it was all worthwhile - the hours of repairing keels, stripping down the Stuart again and again.

Next year, Loran C and a spray hood.

Juliet Warren A51.

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ECHO - THE FIRST YEAR  
(Piers Beckett A128)

In a gloomy Southampton boat park a folorn, humpbacked shape huddled under a tarpaulin and awaited our inspection without noticeable enthusiasm. I scratched and sniffed about trying to look wise, scraped some of the weed off the hull, peered into the engine compartment and, shuddering, quickly closed the lid.

"She's sound, but a lot of work. Interesting." I said, replacing the tarpaulin. I was arrested by a steely glare from her ladyship's normally placid features.

"It's nice," she said firmly, so that was that.

The next part of the tale must be familiar to your readers so I'll spare you the grisly details. Scrape off the paint, glue back the laminates, re-wire, make the loo work, sling out the Perkins, insert Yamaha and get into a wicked fight with the keel bolts. If you know which make of five ton bottle jack will work on its side, you probably own an Atalanta.

Rechristened, she was launched on a delightful April morning, frost deep and treacherous on the deck, champagne ready chilled by the freezing air. We tied to Solva quay and handed out heavily-laced cups of tea to the harbourmaster and various fishermen who stood around and looked at our funny-shaped boat.

"Sort of lifeboat, is she?" asked one. I was to hear more of this.

We spent the early part of summer bumbling around St. Brides Bay, and once we took a trip through Jack Sound and up the Cleddau to Cresswell quay. The pub there serves beer straight from the wood and you can only get there in an Atalanta : the river gets as shallow as a bath in drought time.

At dawn on July 21st we left Solva and did a complete Irish Sea crossing in daylight, a pleasant, light weather motor-sail escorted by gannets, puffins, gulls, guillemots and monstrous jellyfish. Madam disapproved of the jellyfish and stared balefully, daring them to come on board. We arrived an hour before they shut the yacht club bar in Dunmore East which was handy because you can drink a lot of stout in an hour.

We slept late and pootled up the river the next afternoon, anchoring at Passage West for tea and then drifting up on the tide to Cheak Point where the rivers meet. They have a pub there, so we stayed the night. We wanted to go to New Ross on the Barrow river but Ireland Railways have put an enormous bridge in the way. It looked an impassible obstacle to me but just another hurdle to her majesty who rowed to the pub and announced on her return that the bridge would now open for us. How she did this I'm not quite sure but open it did and we rolled on up the Barrow with the tide. If you've never been there try and make it because its one of the loveliest rivers I've been on, all trees and herons and rolling low hills.

At New Ross we tied alongside a derelict lightship and



adjourned for stout. The locals in New Ross are red-hot draughts players so if you happen to go there don't challenge them unless you're master class. I'm not and I got hammered but we made some great new friends. That night the resident diddly-diddly band played in the crowded tap room, brilliant music played as casually as a cat walking ridge tiles. We made goodnight to our new friends and tacked blearily down the slippery ramp to our lightship.

I once met a man at a party whose name was John Seymour. He writes books on self-sufficiency and lives next to the Barrow river and he told me to call by if I ever sailed that way. Of course, he didn't really mean it, as people don't at parties, but we went anyway. We wafted down the beautiful river and anchored by a replica of a Galway Hooker at a place where a derelict slip stuck uninvitingly out of the mud. Mr. Seymour didn't remember me but he was a perfect gentleman anyway; he and his lady fed us wonderful fresh vegetables and potent home-made wine until it was time to go. "Echo" looked very pretty swinging around at the bottom of the garden and I showed them over her while she-without-whom-nothing-moves worked her telephonic magic on the Barrow Bridgemaster. When we got there we waited a little and then the cantilever pivoted majestically like a massive doorman and ushered us out into the net-strewn Suir. The next day we sailed for home.

Two weeks later we were back in Ireland again. "Echo" grounded on a rock in Dungarvon and nearly sank, which didn't hold us up for long but by the time we were heading west again the wind had decided to head east, so progress was slow. When we finally reached Cork harbour we tied up blithely to the Royal Cork Yacht Club pontoon at Crosshaven. This is staggeringly expensive but a very good address to mail your post cards from. After a short while I noticed a man staring at the boat and, anticipating more of the "Is it a lifeboat?" stuff I put my polite face on. It turned out he was an Albacore owner who wanted to buy an Atalanta.

I invited him aboard and was just starting to negotiate when Madam came back from the shower and shot me one of those withering looks ladies use to freeze rhinos with, so I gave him George Parker's address and a short homily on keels instead.

Later we moved to East Ferry which is cheaper and waited three galebound days. This is a peaceful spot the other side of Cork harbour, but if you ever happen to be gale-bound there take a decent dinghy because the local stout dispenser is the other side of the river and sweetheart and I came closer to a watery grave over that than we ever have in a yacht, touch wood.

Strong winds and big seas bowled us back to Cunmore where we spent two more days bumping around in the middle of an eight boat raft swapping weather intelligence with the other seven and waiting for the wind to drop below a nine. The third day was Sunday and the Bishop of Waterford came down to bless the boats. It was a very moving ceremony made somehow more significant by the rain that teemed down without pause. The local yachts motored in line ahead across the harbour, the fishermen lined their bulwarks and the visitors stood in their cockpits in the rain and joined in with the music that echoed across the harbour walls. Yachtsmen and fishermen, all rivalries laid aside, joined with the lifeboat and the church to wish a safe return for all mariners.

Next night we were gone, coasting through the night with a following wind and phosphorescence in the wake, all lit by a magnificent harvest moon. A perfect sail, I thought as I took over the helm at three in the morning and, just as I thought it, a school of dolphins popped up for playtime.

## THE SAINT KILDA RUN

(Extract from the log of GRACE, A127)  
(Hebridean Summer Cruise 1989)  
Odet Beauvoisin

Late July, and the weather in these northern latitudes has decided that we have experienced enough summer for one year. Skipper senses that it is about to practice its Autumnal specialities; rain, gales and rain ..... During the first weeks of the summer cruise, Grace made her way to the Outer Hebrides, by sneaking across the Minch in a gentle northerly wind; before that notorious stretch of sea had a chance to develop its discomfoting, hobby-horsing waves.

This summer, the full complement of crew is aboard, consisting of the Skipper: Abe Beauvoisin, the Mate and rough-weather cook: Odet Beauvoisin (temporarily named "Peg-leg" after twisting her ankle whilst ashore on Skye), the newly promoted Leading Seaman: Allon Beauvoisin (15 years old), two Pandas, one Piglet, one Teddybear and the Teddybear's dog, (!!!) and Thumper - Grace's BUKH DV10 diesel engine.



### SATURDAY 22ND JULY (Piglet's Birthday)

Departed Loch Maddy in North Uist with the intention of exploring the intricacies of the Sound of Harris on a falling Spring tide. The area is renowned for fast tides of unpredictable direction, shifting sandbanks, and vanishing navigational buoys ..... just the sort of area that delights our Skipper and ideally suited to the Atalanta's special talents.

Engined west through the Cope Passage, on the southern side of the Sound of Harris; buoy-hopping - until it

became evident that number 10 (of 12) buoy was missing. Turned south, and eventually tied up in the new harbour on the Isle of Berneray. This island, at the Atlantic edge of the Sound of Harris, is the last of the inhabited islands on this route to Saint Kilda.

Escaping from this harbour must be done with at least half tide under the boat, as there are three rows of rock reefs to cross over before you squirt, cork-out-of-bottle-like, through the gap blasted in the great reef, on an obliquely-running tidal current of 7 knots (12 in Springs). With high enough tide the current is only 4 knots, much of its force spilling over the rest of the reef.

#### MONDAY 24TH JULY

09.00 Poor visibility, with blotches of denser fog. Wind nil. Forecast states variable 2 to 3, becoming SE 3 to 4, with fog patches in the north.

We know, from previous experience, how rapidly the weather can deteriorate here. Only the day before, the Skipper had been caught relining the forehatch seal with a neoprene strip ... expecting heavy seas?

By 9.30 it should be high water here with just enough slack for Grace to pootle through the reef without being swung violently sideways on the current. The gap is a good 10 metres wide - but looks far narrower when approaching it at speed.

09.05 Thumper started.

09.18 Left Berneray Harbour: the reef-gap markers on the other side of the Bay barely visible and the denser fog closing in rapidly.

09.30 Successfully negotiated the reef. Local ferry disappeared in fog 50 yards away. We envy them their big radar scanners.

10.00 Course for North of Berneray 330 Deg.M. The edge of the island occasionally shimmers through the

fog, less than 3 cables to port.

10.15 Definitely on Dead Reckoning only! Ah well, Skip has always wanted a real test of his navigation. Judged to be clear of Berneray. Course altered to 345 DegM, aiming to find the coast of the next island westward - Pabbay. Mate and Leading Seaman on look-out duty: especially since Pabbay's east coast has 3 cables of reef poking its bony fingers up through the sandbars. The depth is often only 6 feet hereabouts and we appear to have missed the "End of Cope Passage" buoys.

10.30 East Point of Pabbay sighted through a thinner piece of fog - bang on target. Altered course to round north of Pabbay and clear of the reef.

10.40 11 miles out of Berneray. Position between Pabbay and Shillay. Fog dense. Wind non-existent. Large Atlantic swell running in from the southwest, totally unhindered by land.

11.05 Visibility improved. Lying a-hull between Pabbay and Shillay, a gap of one mile, to check tidal direction and rate: and to stow the anchor (which had been left on deck just in case the fog became impossible).

At this point the skipper called a crew-conference. He stated that he was now convinced of his navigational skills, so there was no compulsion to continue to St. Kilda if any of the crew would prefer to turn back ..... Short pause ..... Hoots of disbelief, followed by an unanimous decision to head for St. Kilda as long as the weather continued fair. The Walker Log was ceremoniously un-boxed. It refused to clip into its proper doofer on the stern, so was lashed on top of the large, inflated car tyre inner tube (which serves as a lifebuoy-cum-fender) on the port guard rail, aft of the cockpit ..... from whence it functioned perfectly on both tacks.

11.22 Underway, under engine. Both keels fully up. Visibility clearing to about one mile. Tide beginning

to ebb. Course 280 Deg.M.

11.37 Log streamed as Grace left Little Shillay astern. Nothing but Atlantic surge between us and St. Kilda now. Westward Ho. Began our watch system. Leading Seaman taking 2 below, to the accompaniment of jazz tapes. Skip on helm. Mate on standby. Radioed Stornaway Coast Guard with our T.R. "Grace: leaving Pabbay, Sound of Harris. Bound St. Kilda. 3 persons aboard. ETA late evening" ..... but lost contact half way through the broadcast.

12.20 The Army boat, the "ARDENNES", appeared astern on its fortnightly supply-run to St. Kilda. Skip radioed them, to check that our VHF was working and they relayed our T.R. details to Stornaway C.G.

12.30 Increased Thumper's throttle: only making 4.5 knots up till now. Greased the stern gland. (This has to be done every hour while Thumper is running). Skip went below to brew tea. It must be reasonably calm!

13.15 Heard local shipping forecast over the VHF, predicting Variable 2 to 3, going south to south east 4 to 5. Visibility moderate (!) becoming poor tonight.

13.55 BBC Radio Shipping forecast speaks of a low, west of Sole, moving rather quickly north to west of Bailey by 07.00 Tuesday. Malin and Hebrides expecting SE 4 to 5 going 6. Occasional rain and fog patches.

13.37 Change of watch. Mate below. Leading Seaman on helm. Skip on standby.

14.10 Overheard the "Ardennes" radio the army base on St. Kilda, requesting details of visibility and craft in the anchorage.

14.15 Skip called the "Ardennes" to query the visibility in St. Kilda's Bay ..... Reply:- "One Cable .... If you need any help give us a shout."

14.30 Tea and pieces (sandwiches) all round. Leading Seaman on the helm and singing loudly. Visibility reduce again to 1 cable (approx) or 1.5 swell-lengths. There is the occasional fly-past of gannets and odd buzz by a curious fulmar.

15.37 19.5 miles out. Mate on helm. Leading Seaman on standby. Skip below after issuing instructions to note the depth sounding at regular intervals.

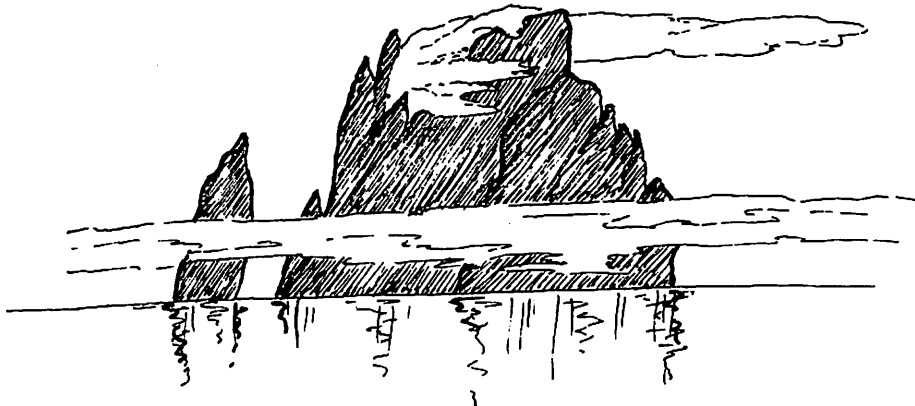
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17.44 29.5 miles out. Sun breaking through overhead. The fog must be shallow here.

17.50 BBC Shipping forecast now predicts veering W 5 to 6 increasing to 7 at times. Occasional rain. Moderate with fog patches, becoming good." for Rockell - Oops!

18.00 LAND sighted bearing 300 Deg.M. (Hawk-eye, the Mate, again). Proved to be Boreray, the cluster of stacks 5 miles NNE of the main St. Kilda group, poking it's 1,260 foot peak through the fog. Hirta's humped shape is discernable due west under a folded blanket of fog: right on course. Visibility improving markedly. Celebrated with instant soup, bread and tea.

18.25 East wind arrived, force 3. Genoa up.



18.30 Leading Seaman below. Panda up in the cockpit surveying Boreray and getting his ears into the photographs.

19.15 Refilled the diesel tank from the drum stowed in the aft cabin. (It's amazing what will fit up those tunnel berths.) Boreray visible at sea-level and at peak-level, but has a broad belt of fog across the middle.

19.39 Boreray clear and Hirta's peaks becoming becoming visible as the fog rolls back in front of the wind.

19.50 Radioed St. Kilda Bay, giving ETA one hour, and asking if the conditions were favourable for anchoring. The reply was unreadable. The E wind is beginning to kick up a cross sea against the Atlantic swell. Tide is at half flood out here.

20.21 Entering Village Bay, Hirta. The "Ardennes" is leaving. Skip radioed thanks for their help and wishes them safe home. One other boat is in the Bay: a large twinmasted ketch, called "English Rose".

20.42 "English Rose" called "Grace" for details of fog conditions and wind direction "out there" as they are leaving tonight. Complimented Grace on her courage, saying they rarely see such small yachts at St. Kilda. They had engine all the way from Barra (Southern tip of the Hebrides) the previous day in a flat calm and dense fog: practising their Decca navigation.

20.43 Anchor down in 20 feet, firm sand. SE to E wind, 2 to 3, blowing straight into the anchorage. Leading Seaman thinks that the scend is already as choppy as our mooring at Helensburgh.

Thumper off. Log reads 44 miles run.

20.45 Shelved the decision to go ashore in favour of a quick meal: meatballs and beans on toast. It is hard to believe we are here. That fog cleared magically as



Skip came on watch and kept on clearing off the awesome cliffs.

22.30 Radioed St. Kilda Bay: gained permission to tie up to one of the huge mooring buoys in the Bay. Sea distinctly lumpy. The Base also gave us detailed local weather forecast ..... which included "S to SE 5 increasing 6: becoming rough."

22.31 Thumper on.

22.48 Anchor up. Unanimous decision to depart immediately for Berneray, in case the Bay becomes untenable before the wind veers SW. There is another bay on the north of Hirta: but its sheer cliffs and rocky bottom do not encourage small yachts to stay. The weather shows signs of deteriorating for the next 3 to 4 days. It would be a long wait for suitable conditions for the return trip to the Hebrides.

Streamed the log. Radioed St. Kilda Bay with details of our intentions and asked for this to be relayed to Stornaway C.G. - ETA Berneray midday Tuesday. The Mate was sent below for a kip. Leading Seaman on the helm. The Base switched on their intermittently flashing leading lights - which provided an accurate stern check to our course for the next 10 miles. Skip rigged a tiny light bulb under Grace's sprayhood to light the compass, and shielded it from the helmsman's eyes with the spare duster. Decided to motor straight for the Sound of Harris rather than tack, in order to get as close to the Hebrides as possible before the strength of the wind becomes nasty. Course 110 m, to allow for leeway.

#### TUESDAY, 25TH JULY

00.15 Moonrise in the east; big, orange and spinnaker-shaped, puzzling the Leading Seaman for a while. Motoring into choppy seas over contrary swell. Lowered port keel to 2 feet to ease the roll for the helmsman.

00.33 BBC Shipping forecast warns of SE 7 for a time,

and showers becoming rain. Glad we did not attempt to stay the night. Watch change. Leading Seaman below for a well earned rest.

01.30 Skipper's note. "Progress is slow. Sea is lumpy and occasionally Grace thumps into a big one on the bow, sending spray flying. The Mate is happy helming while I attend to the engine and navigation. Leading Seaman is fast asleep. He has done well this far.

03.00 Only 15 miles out from St. Kilda. Head wind. Head Sea. No further comment.

03.45 Watch change. Skip kipping. Daylight beginning. Marsbars for breakfast for the Leading Seaman. (They are easy to eat at the helm.)

04.16 Peaked into the forecabin. Skip asleep under a blanket on the port bunk. Definite improvement in the quality of daylight - permitting the Leading Seaman to duck when a comber breaks over the bow, 'cos he sees it coming. Skip and Mate had been getting facefuls of Atlantic.

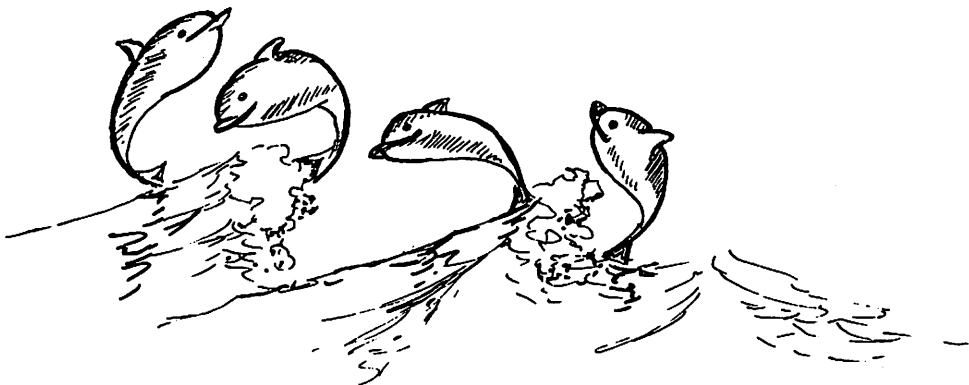
04.55 21 miles on the log. Wind SE, force 4. Leading Seaman resumed helm after 15 minutes catnap. He suggests that our next TR to Stornaway C.G. should read "2 damp and bedraggled adults on board and one zombie."

05.22 Glowing red balloon of a sun rose up between cloud layers. Impressive, until the rain clouds smothered it. Made marmalade pieces and put the kettle on the hob, ready to wake Skip with tea.

05.48 Watch change. Skip helming. Mate below. Leading Seaman on standby.

06.03 Four pied dolphins playing off our bow and alongside. Radio reception pathetic.

BBC Shipping forecast unreadable.



06.07 Skip and Leading Seaman changing jib sheets from genoa pulleys to the forward ones for the smaller foresails. Working well as a team out there.

06.08 Skip on foredeck. Leading Seaman in the cockpit, working the halyards. Pegleg the Mate stowed below on the cabinsole, where she cannot hurt her foot. Slowed Thumper. Hauled in log temporarily and set the working jib. Tightened halyard with the winch handle to get it bar tight for closehaul and quick tacking in strongwind. Removed the genoa into the galley. Sighted land to S.E. - Haskier Rocks off the west-coast of North Uist.

06.15 Working jib set and pulling well. Skip back in cockpit.

06.20 Underway with Thumper as assistant. Log re-streamed.

08.00 Watch change. Leading Seaman below. Mate on helm. Skip on standby. Grace is travelling substantially faster - wave jumping like those dolphins: slapping sea over the cabin roof and landing dollops on the helmsman - Blessings on the sprayhood!

08.35 Sailing past fishing pot-buoys. In transit refueling under way, before Thumper gets an airlock. Average consumption still 4 hours to the gallon, 3/4 throttle. (Diesel, not tea) Visibility good, but rain

working its way up from the south. Pabbay on the bow, bearing 110 Deg.M. Perfect navigation.

09.20 Broken radio-forecast (local) reports SE 6 in this area. Little Shillay dead ahead. Grace fighting windward to clear SW tip of the rocky island. Have to admit that Grace has some leeway even with Thumper on.

09.48 Cleared Little Shellay. Bore away for the north of Pabbay. Wind SE 5 gusting 6. Sea steep. Plenty of white horses and streaking. Leading Seaman asleep on the forecabin sole - to avoid being hurtled across the cabin when Grace tacks. Drizzle has set in.

10.10 Changed down to small jib in the lee of Pabbay. Pulled in the log. It reads 43 miles.

10.30 Leading Seaman up to help with short-tacking across the north of Pabbay, and over to Berneray. Rain pelting down in earnest. Skip finally put on an oilskin jacket, but forgot it had a hood until after it had filled with rain.

10.59 Port keel up to 3 feet. Still short-tacking towards Berneray in a stiff SE wind. No signs of the Cope Passage buoys. (Suspect they have joined no.10 buoy, which has been reported beached on Cape Wrath.) If Grace makes it to Berneray before midday there still should be enough tide to get through the reef, across the Bay and into the harbour.

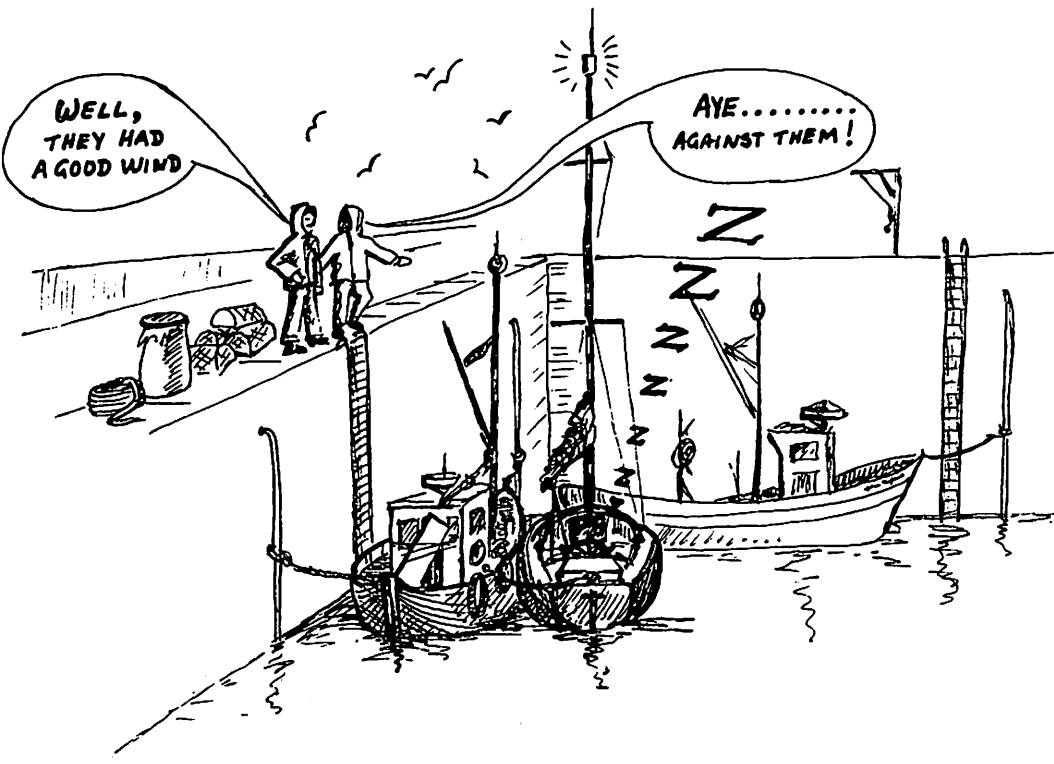
11.47 Round the north of Berneray. Heading for the gap in the reef on port tack. Need all the power Grace can summon.

12.07 Made it! Tied up in Berneray Harbour. Barometer has plummeted from 1014 mb to 1006 mb in 10 hours.

12.13 Thumper off - valiant engine.

Tea and pieces (and bamboo from the Isle of Gigha for Panda) Then we all crashed out for 4 hours, oblivious to the local comments and the fact that the Mate had

left the navigation light on.



P.S. Distance:- 120 miles

Time:- 27 hours

Instruments:- Walker log, depth sounder, compass

The SE wind rose to 7 gusting 8 for the ensuing 48 hours. Grace stayed put.

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1989 EAST COAST RACE  
(Peter Davies, BABY SEAL A137)

It seems rather odd that after so many alarms and excursions, including pulling the pulpit out of the dock in a lock on the Leeds to Liverpool Canal, fouling the propeller on assorted flotsam ranging from

discarded rope to a black plastic bin liner, and then motoring to Lowestoft before night sailing to Harwich in a brisk F6, Baby Seal was actually late at the start line.

Somehow, inertia overtook all but Bluster (A183) which seemed to get away on time. Jaunty (A100) missed the tide and only arrived at Mersea long after the start. Oddly, nobody seemed to recall that "time and tide wait for no man" and Baby Seal (A137), Kooka Burra (A168) and Atalanta (A1) were very tardy in leaving the posts at Mersea. A contributory factor was the last minute panic engendered by the race information given to all that "There is a sketch plan of all the numbered local race marks in your Regatta Programme". What Regatta Programme? It was not with the race instructions and that was for sure. Fortunately Kooka Burra had one and much frantic copying ensued.

The wind was a very light S. Easterly and as, Baby Seal motored toward the start line, it was possible to set the sails even as we passed between the lines of moored boats in the channel. The tide, however, was flooding quite strongly. So at the 10 minute gun there was still a good cable to go to the line. Off with the engine and sail. Baby Seal crossed 11 mins 20 seconds late. This was too late to see the flag indicating which course to sail. The VHF came to the rescue and we made for the first buoy. As we did so we saw Kooka Burra start behind us and Atalanta, still flying its ensign, apparently motored straight past the start line outside the committee boat. A sudden turn to port by Atalanta indicated that they had spotted their error.

From this time on, approximately 09.30, it is impossible to describe the race. Unlike last year, when all the boats were within hailing distance of each other at the outward mark, this time they separated almost immediately. After some half an hour of sailing Bluster was seen to be on a parallel course. About an hour later we were within hailing distance but were both looking for No 2 buoy. We did find No 5 buoy (which was not on the course) and

sailed against the strengthening tide for a good thirty minutes without moving away from it. As this was a mark for many of the dingy classes we were continually hailed by incredulous dingy sailors "Are you racing?". We were there so long that I fully anticipated becoming a racing mark. Ultimately we fetched No 2 which was off St. Peter's Chapel. No other Atalanta was in sight. Finally the binoculars allowed a possible sighting : it turned out that the Atalanta seen close by the power station was Kooka Burra retiring.

The search was now on for No 6 buoy. This seemed elusive and, after nearly an hour, the radio was used to ask the committee boat for the buoy's position. Their answer was unhelpful as they gave a position line with no indication of distance. Finally we found it and started back towards St Peter's flats and No 10 buoy. This was a repetition of the previous cross tide crabbing in a contrary light wind. The only difference was that the location of the mark was relatively easy to spot.

Once No 10 was safely rounded, we headed away for Colne Bar. By this time there seemed to be remarkably few boats anywhere in sight. Not even the binoculars could help us to spot another Atalanta. After rounding Colne Bar Buoy we headed off to North West Knoll. Around this time the tide finally turned, but it would now be against us for the return leg. However, we now had a following wind so I decided to hoist the spinnaker. This is not my favourite sail. First time up, it wrapped itself round the forestay in quite a pretty hour glass shape. In getting it down, a small misjudgement led to part of it going in the water where it rapidly became a full sea anchor. Finally, it was unshackled from the halyard and the starboard sheet let go so that it trailed astern, meanwhile twisting itself into a most colourful mess. Once retrieved it relented and allowed itself to be hoisted : the pull it produced made it worthwhile but even then, owing to the contrary tide, we made only 4 to 5 knots over the ground.

At approximately 16.00 hrs we were met by the committee boat who announced that they were packing up : would we note our own time? No other Atalanta was in sight and the committee boat went off to search for them.

Baby Seal finished at 16.50, the race having taken seven and a half hours. When the remaining two boats finished I do not know. Bluster was believed to be some 30 - 45 minutes after me, ahead of Atalanta, and by enough for Atalanta's 30 minute handicap not to alter the placings. Of course if would not have mattered, Atalanta was still flying her ensign and should (technically speaking) have been disqualified.

It was a long day and a hard race. More of a time trial really. Still it was enjoyable and the day ended with the traditional hospitality at Gun House.

However, I am not in a position to comment exhaustively upon this event as my wife and I only managed to join the festivities around 9.30. On returning to the posts I found my dingy inverted; bailing revealed it was also minus one oar. Everyone was most helpful but the ensuing delays ensured that we missed the transport to Gun House. I could comment on the traffic chaos in West Mersea : the way in which our taxi (the taxi) was directed round and round a fully closed one way system by the police who were autonomously controlling the various road junctions. Anyone who obeyed the law must have circled until dawn.

Whatever the problems of a course that meandering, a permanently foul tide and sailed in a breeze created by passing seagulls, the day was thoroughly enjoyable. Perhaps next year will see a larger entry, more wind and a course better suited to the boat. If so, perhaps the account will be shorter : this one has been written to match the course. Perhaps you will all agree that it is overlong.



MERIANDA A78  
(Danny O'Neill)

1989 was a good season for me even though I was not able to travel any great distance : I got great use of her locally. My usual cruising area is the South Irish sea, across to Cardigan Bay and the South Coast of Ireland as far as the Fastnet. But in 1988 I went North for a change, due to the weather. It turned out to be my best sailing season so far, in spite of the weather.

I had planned to motor through the Grand Canal in Dublin to the Shannon, so I stripped Marianda's rig down, lifted the keels and ran into a lot of trouble in the canal. Due to debris and weeds in the Canal, I damaged the prop. on the main engine and broke the shaft on the O.B. As the wind was blowing from the West, I rigged a square sail on the sweep, with the boathook as a yard, and sailed back down the canal to Dublin.

On arrival back in Dublin I re-rigged the mast and sails. I sailed up the Irish Coast as far as Carlingford Lough, then across to the Isle of Man and back down the Irish Sea. Due to the adverse weather and as I had no engines it took me the best part of a month, but I enjoyed every minute of it. My crew had left me in Dublin, so I was on my own for the rest of the time.

I have made no changes whatsoever to the boat since I got her. She has a 17 HP Kubota engine, which goes well. I find her very easy to handle alone, with the assistance of an Autohelm.

Recently, I have been bringing out a few youngsters and introducing them to sailing. I find her an ideal boat for this purpose, with the mid-ship cockpit, and very safe because of her steadiness and stability. She makes a fine training boat and is a good introduction to boating and sailing. I hope to get many happy years of pleasure out of the Marianda in the coming years.

