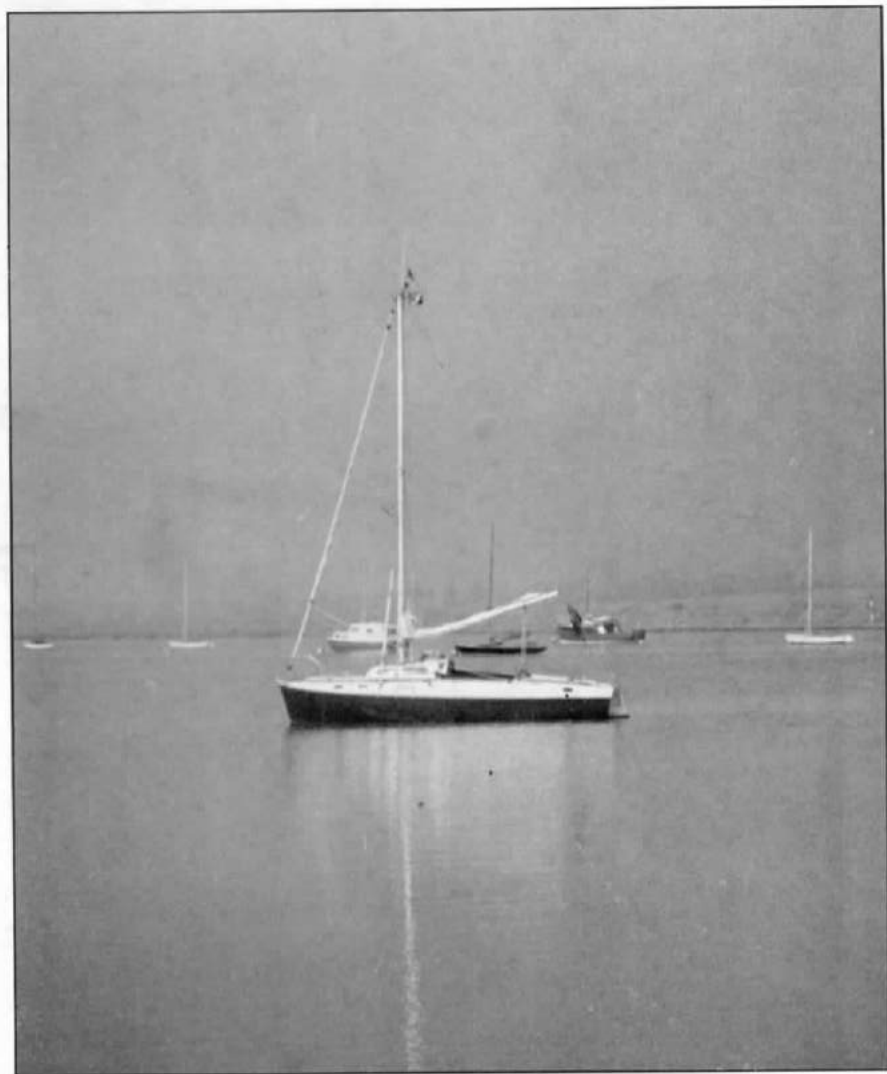


Atalanta

1995 - 1996



ATALANTA OWNERS' ASSOCIATION

37th Edition

1995-1996 BULLETIN INDEX

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 Patron: Maj Gen W Odling CB OBE MC DL

Commodore: Charles Currey Esq

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Hon Secretary: Colin Twyford Esq

Hon Editor: Michael Roberts Esq

Drawings Master: Maurice Donovan Esq.,

Engines: Adrian Rivett Esq

Frontispiece: *BLUSTER* At peace, Aldeburgh

COMMODORE'S MESSAGE

Charles Currey

1996 will see the 50th Anniversary of the start of Fairey Marine operations at Hamble. It is also 41 years since Atalanta A1 was launched. Some of us may remember that she was to establish the class name and was the very first of the true 'trailer sailers' - sea going cabin boats, self-righting and safe for family crews.

The production of the 26 foot standard boats and their derivatives are getting on a bit but certainly remain worthy of the care and effort needed to refurbish them.

The annual party, this time at our patron's lovely home near West Mersea, was the usual cheerful get together. Well attended but lacking the presence of Colin Twyford, our determined secretary, left, we understand, blown high on the mud on a lee shore in the dark, blowing force 7 and without power in A95 Hiran. Such is sailing - just another challenge to be overcome.

Between the 12th and 14th July 1996, there is to be a regatta at Hamble Point where it is hoped to muster as many Fairey boats of all types as possible, to celebrate Fairey's 50th Anniversary. We will keep you informed.

So let us hope for another splendid summer and good sailing for us all.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

I always thought that the North Sea and the East coast were bleak inhospitable places, always grey, swept by Northerly gales and littered with the corpses of polluted creatures.

I was in for a surprise when I went sailing there with Ted and Jane Stearn in April. The River Deben, bathed in the clear spring sunlight, was a sight to behold and a gentle breeze carried only the sound of water lapping on the shore, and the occasional seabird's cry. On a wide and quiet stretch of water, elegantly spaced out and stemming the tide, a host of yachts; and somewhere among them Bluster, waiting. Beyond the water, fields and farms and woods stretched away to the horizon. My idea of paradise.

My three day introduction to the East Coast then included a visit to Aldeburgh via much tacking and two groundings in one of which Something Nasty grabbed the rudder and dislodged the rig. Thank goodness for Atalantas. They just carry on. It wasn't all sunshine either. We got a bit of everything. Wind, perversely, on the nose. Rain, and oilies for a while, then back to sunshine again. I wouldn't have missed it for anything. East Coast OK. Thank you Ted and Jane. I was now ready for the Mersea Regatta.

In between I sailed a GP14 on the Keyhaven River with a friend. Yachts on the Keyhaven River, unlike the Deben, are moored nose to tail, and weaving your way between them in a dinghy in anything more than a Force 3, is both

exhilarating, alarming, and at my age, exhausting. The larger pieces of tupperware, particularly, seem to resent you being anywhere near them and take a swing at you as you pass them under their sterns.

So to Mersea and Classic Park. But you don't know where that is, do you. It's where John Searle keeps his Atalantas and Fulmars, and one or two others as well. Hooks Farm. All timberframe and four hundred years old. And in amongst all this hallowed antiquity and in a meadow hard by are Jaunty, Sherpa, Noggin, Touch, Taka Maru, all waiting for the tides of fortune to carry them away. If I win the lottery maybe I would have Sherpa back.

Blue Belle, however, was afloat, at Brightlingsea. Blue Belle is a Fulmar, and in Blue Belle we were going to win the Atalanta race at the Mersea regatta. There was, however, a problem. Barnacles. But John knows how to deal with barnacles - with half a Fray Bentos tin, and scrub with the open side. A ghastly job. But watch out all you little barnacles, Fray Bentos is after you. There was another problem too. The mooring warps between the poles got caught up with our keel, and we missed our start time for the race. So we darted about the course all day taking photographs of the contestants. Kookaburra won. We didn't. But it was a pleasant day's sailing.

Wishing you all a very pleasant year's sailing in 1996. And thank you for your support for this Bulletin.

PS Did you see the 24 page "Classic Cruiser" supplement in PBO No 347 of November? It contains an excellent article by Sir Michael Joughin on the restoration of METHUSELAH, A87. The article, oddly and abruptly, appears to end in the middle of a word! Unfinished Symphony?

EAST COAST RALLY AUGUST 12TH 1995 By Norman Dorrington KOOKABURRA A168

Six Atalantas hoping to arrive,
One's engine let him down,
Then there were five.

Five Atalantas on the trots did moor,
One got tangled in,
Then there were four.

Four Atalantas made it out to sea,
The wind dropped around the buoy,
Then there were three.

I wish I could continue this ditty until Kookaburra is standing proudly alone but I'm afraid that would be as unfair as it would be untrue. After a race of over seventeen miles the time separating the three Atalantas was measured in seconds.

This was in spite of a race in which, having used the glasses to see how far Bluster was astern, I later had to use them to see how far she was ahead. Each boat excelled on different parts of the course. If there had been one leg more or one leg less then the result would have been different.

There was the usual chaos on Kookaburra whilst waiting for the start. We sailed round the back of the stake boat and saw a large figure 5 hanging on the bows, which we took to be our course for the race. Unfortunately this must have been where they hung the spare boards and the front of the stake boat was showing a figure 3. We didn't notice this as we were concentrating on the code flag which they were hoisting. We knew this should be "C" and a quick trip to the galley confirmed that it was. (We have a tea towel with all the flags of the alphabet).

We had the good fortune to be the first Atalanta over the line but this rather spoiled our race plan, which is normally to follow any Atalanta we can still see. Course 3 and course 5 were the same to the first buoy but different on the second. We were completely baffled when the leading boats of those that started with us were heading in the wrong direction after the first buoy. However we guessed that they knew more about it than we did and just kept following.

The course zig-zagged round the buoys and at number 12, which was well up river from the power station, the wind was light and the tide was strong. Just as Baby Seal reached the buoy the wind dropped altogether and they were swept down onto the buoy on the wrong side. To get back was fairly hopeless and they decided to abandon the race.

We then had a long period of just enough wind to stand still. Eventually it picked up and we had a very exciting run down wind to buoy number 10 with Emma Duck, Bluster and Kookaburra more or less neck and neck with only a few feet between us. Then a reach up to buoy number 6 led by Emma Duck, and finally a beat to the line, where Kookaburra just got her nose in front, followed by Emma Duck and Bluster.

It was good to return again to Gun House for supper, especially on a lovely summer's evening in beautiful surroundings, and we were all pleased to see General and Mrs. Odling and to discuss the Atalantas with Commodore Charles Currey.

After a very enjoyable fish and chip supper we managed to return to West Mersea in time for the presentations, which this year were very nice decorated plates.

Our thanks go to General and Mrs Odling for their hospitality and to John Searle and Ted Stearn for making all the arrangements. Our condolences go to Baby Seal, Hiran and Blue Belle and wish them better luck next year.

NORTH SEA ADVENTURE IN BABY SEAL A137

By Michael Thorley (continued from last year)

After rewarding ourselves with a can of beer, David went ashore to make telephone calls, to his wife and to his good Dutch friend Jan, who was to meet him on our arrival. These calls, together with a chance meeting I had with a shopkeeper in Maassluis, threw a new light on our epic journey.

Back at home, our wives had expected to hear that we had arrived in Holland by Tuesday evening, that being about fifty five hours after our departure from Heybridge Basin, and in Holland, so had Jan. As recorded earlier, we left the Orwell on Monday, logged out with Thames Coastguard at 1900 hours and arrived at Maassluis 50 hours after that. Checking with the Coastguard, Janice was (mis) informed that we had logged out on the Sunday, and that we were reported by Jan as being overdue. Further enquiries at home revealed that the British and Dutch Coastguards, in touch with each other, were very worried about us. Sarah's attempts at shore-to-ship radio calls were fruitless. Back in Holland, David's call to Jan was just in time to forestall a Dutch Coastguard spotter plane search for us. The following day, on a whim, I entered a canal-side shop to buy some fish hooks and became engaged in conversation with the shopkeeper. Eventually he asked if I was from a boat, and enquired of her name. On hearing it he said "yes, Baby Seal. I know her!" It transpired that he was a coastguard three days each week, and had been on duty the night prior to our arrival at the Hook. Small world! To my dismay he added " we were looking for you all night - with the lifeboat, and called every half hour on Channel 16". He also said that the weather was very bad, force 7 gusting 8 with two metre waves. Commercial traffic had been requested to report every sighting of us, but small wonder that we were not seen.

That was my first crossing of the North Sea and I learned a lot. Baby Seal performed admirably when not asked to do the impossible, but did sustain some damage at the bows. This region of the boat had been compressed laterally by about a quarter of an inch as indicated by our inability to lower fully the wooden shelf over the sea toilet. Eventually however, the bows returned to their original shape. The Farymann engine, greatly underpowered as it is, never failed us, running hour after hour, neither did the autopilot, cunningly "weatherproofed" by Peter wrapping it in a supermarket plastic carrier bag held in position by a rubber band and tape. The echo sounder was not so fortunate and was eventually pronounced "dead" after a prolonged attempt at resuscitation. The "Decca" behaved very well and took most of the guesswork out of the navigation, particularly in respect of the effect of tidal streams, but later fell into intermittent decline, perhaps as a result of a lightning strike - or very near miss - or of super-torrential rain getting into the aerial during our stay in Holland.

Just to complete the narrative, Jan whisked off David soon after our arrival, and Janice joined us two days later. It took at least three days continuous

slog to clear up, dry out and effect some repairs. We left Maassluis on the following Monday and arrived at Monickendam in the IJsselmeer on Saturday via Gouda, Braassemmermeer where we actually sailed without the engine for half an hour, Hillegoombrug, where we caught the rudder blade on an underwater obstruction and smashed the (new) stainless steel downhaul cable, Haarlem and Spaarnwoude, a very pleasant and inexpensive yachthaven, where the rudder downhaul was repaired (Peter's first wire "splice") and the drinking water tank burst and was subsequently extricated from its' lair, repaired and reinstalled. After that, we slipped through the adjacent bridge into the Noordzeekanal, turned right and eventually passed through Amsterdam and the Oranjesluis into the IJsselmeer where we sailed once again, using the engine for only the last half hour as we approached and entered a yachthaven at Monickendam, where the engine's reverse gear failed to engage at the last critical moment as we were berthing. Quick thinking and muscle power averted a potentially expensive impact. The gearbox being adjusted, we sailed when the weather permitted, i.e., between gales, visiting Marken and Hoorn.

Our journey home was less eventful, or arduous than outward bound. At the last minute, David was unable to join ship because of a pressing engagement and our having to avail ourselves of a long-awaited "window" in the weather. Janice left to catch a ferry from the Hook and Baby Seal departed Sixhaven in Amsterdam at 0525 hours on 31st August with a favourable Dutch weather forecast, force 3-4 NE. In fact, once set out of IJmuiden, the initial flat calm gave way to a moderate following wind, when Peter felt that Janice really should be with us to enjoy the tranquil sail. We then had a NE near gale and later a Shipping Forecast for force 8-9 NW, which we prepared for by bending on the storm jib and trysail. This was accomplished by releasing the emergency jib stay from its' stowage alongside the starboard shrouds and shackling it to a "U" bolt on the anchor winch, followed by hanking on the sail and attaching the new sheets to the clew. To bend on the trysail, the main was removed from the boom and stowed, the boom was dropped and lashed down securely out of the way, on the quarter from which the severe weather was expected. The trysail slides were slid up the mast track, main halyard secured to the head and tack fixed down and the weather-side mainsheet arrangement attached to the clew. By this means, the trysail could be allowed to blow to leeward, or be handled down tight on the centre line or to winward. The NW gale never arrived. We had an utterly black night with heavy rain and lightning, followed by a sudden wind shift to southerly. The next day dawned, and later the wind veered further to a very strong westerly, when we hoisted the storm sails. Later still it veered again to NW as forecasted. We passed close to the N. Inner Gabbard and then struggled past the Sunk L.V., where we dropped all sail, relying entirely on the engine, against a headwind and strong S-going (neap!) tide. Slowly we crept two miles S of Rough Tower, over the Cork Sands and entered Harwich Harbour, proceeding up the Orwell, cold, wet

and weary, to pick up a mooring at midnight, forty two and a half hours out from Amsterdam. The main events at this late stage of the journey were my inability to recognise Harwich Harbour entrance, overshooting and almost running down Landguard Point beacon on the way back, plus the engine running out of diesel fuel close to Felixstowe container berths, this situation being saved in the nick of time by Peter's never-ending resourcefulness, paraffin and engine oil. I jumped ship the following afternoon, leaving Peter to bring Baby Seal round to Heybridge Basin single handed; a very tiring and not particularly enjoyable journey for him.

I cannot end this narrative without mentioning the Dutch we met during our sojourn in Holland. Their friendliness and hospitality were overwhelming, from beginning to end, and their command of our language excellent. We were helped to find a comfortable berth in Maassluis, a superb town, home of the Smit tugboat/salvage Company. Here we dried out and re-grouped. The young man at the railway station bicycle shop kiosk helped us to make 'phone calls home on several occasions, and late on the night of our arrival introduced us to a pub (the Furies), where they opened up the kitchen two hours after it had closed, to cook us a magnificent meal. The following evening, having failed to remember the time difference with UK, we arrived one hour after the kitchen's close, and again had a superb meal. After Janice's arrival, she and Peter went in search of a launderette for our dirty and seawater wet clothes, towels and bedding: there are no launderettes in Holland. The owner of a commercial laundry offered to "dry" some of our stuff, provided it got to him quickly, before he finished for the day. Some of our stuff was really horrible, smelly and salt encrusted. On seeing them, he commented that perhaps he would rinse them first! They were returned fully laundered and ironed "with compliments". He would take no payment. A Dutchman from a nearby yacht in Maassluis gave us a (used) inland waterway chart, to help us navigate: on this occasion, Peter was able to return the favour with an English one. Everyone was helpful, many had time for a chat, in English of course, excepting one person exercising his dog by Baby Seal in Maassluis, where elementary French was the common language. I felt that people were anxious to befriend us, many enquired about the boat design; others knew of it - "very seaworthy". I visited the charming little folk museum in Marken and had a long chat with the lady, an Anglophile, collecting the entry fee. Before I left she presented me with two traditional-dress dollies for my two small children. Several remembered with affection, Dutch-British cameraderie of the dark war days. At one stage whilst motoring towards IJsselmeer, we were anxious over our diesel supply. Fuelling stations were few and far between and when we did find them, not always accessible on account of other boats crowding round. After one such occasion, we enquired (Janice's enquiries usually produced the best results) of a barge moored nearby where fuel could be bought. We were waved over and our warps taken. "How much do you want?" Our empty jerrycan was returned filled, and we were assured that the owners could afford to give that amount away - it

wouldn't be missed. The list of kindnesses bestowed on us is long. It was a good holiday, and I only hope that we in turn can be as friendly to visitors as the Dutch were with us.

HOORN - WE MADE IT!

By Simon Cooper - Arosa A104

In August 1991 we took Arosa on her maiden cruise (in our ownership) from the Humber to Holland, aiming for Hoorn in the Markermeer, but time ran out and we only reached Enkhuizen some 12 miles north-east of Hoorn (see "To Hoorn - Another Year?" in the 1991-92 edition of the AOA Bulletin). Now on 6th May 1994 we had made it. Daughter Bryony had visited Hoorn whilst inter-railing round Europe and had fallen in love with the port. We were not disappointed. Much of the town is unspoilt with fine medieval buildings. There is a bustling market and a baker's shop selling delicious spicy fruit cake. For train buffs there is even an active steam train society! And, of course, there are any number of traditional Dutch craft moored in and around the town.

My brother David and I had set off for Ijmuiden from Naburn, on the Ouse below York, mid-morning Saturday 30th April. We planned that Bryony and my wife Sue would take the ferry from Hull to Rotterdam and we would all meet up in Amsterdam.

We motored down river with the mast down, and were soon through Naburn lock taking the tide down through Cawood, Selby, under the M62, and past Goole, moored up to the enormous Blacktofts jetty in the late afternoon to raise the mast and await the next tide. On the way down the river we had seen the first swallows of the year, and below Goole we passed a deep keeled yacht high and dry on the bank.

We put the mast up and ate our supper as the tide flooded and the sun set. Whilst eating in the cockpit we noticed the toes of a pair of boots projecting over the edge of the jetty above us. They belonged to the jetty-keeper who had suddenly noticed a mast projecting above his jetty and had come to investigate. He pointed out that there was a fee for mooring but decided that perhaps he hadn't noticed us!

The flood is quite exciting on the lower Ouse; the tide runs for only about three hours so it rises at quite a rate. We had to tend the mooring lines about every ten minutes. About dusk the flood slowed and we cast off and, with a lack of wind, motored into the Humber taking the ebb to Spurn Point where we picked up a breeze and were able to sail and turn off the motor.

The morning, fine and cool, found us heading west on the starboard tack; Ijmuiden was almost exactly upwind. We tacked at 11 am and by 7 in the evening were off Blakeney. We tacked again on to port off Cley, and that night were treated to a splendid display of the Northern Lights. Later the moon got up vanquishing the Lights, then a brightly lit ferry appeared from the north heading

our way. Whether it saw us I do not know: although it would probably have passed ahead my nerve failed me and I put the boat about on to a parallel course. As it swept past I noticed that it was the North Sea Ferry from Hull with Sue and Bryony aboard.

At night we tend to keep Royal Navy-type 4 hour watches. The next morning, 2nd May, David had the morning watch. I half woke at about 7 in the morning, disturbed by a conversation outside the bedroom window that my brother was having over the garden fence with the next door neighbour. As I became more conscious, I realised with amazing perspicacity that I wasn't at home, I was at least 40 miles from the nearest land in the middle of the North Sea, but there was definitely a discussion about the weather going on outside! Unable to comprehend it I turned over and buried my head for the remaining precious hour of my watch below. It transpired that I hadn't been dreaming or hallucinating: two members of the bored crew of an oil safety rig had come over in their inflatable boat to pass the time of day.

Shortly after lunch we went about on to the port tack. The wind increased from a gentlemanly 2 to 3 to force 4. As we were thinking about getting supper the rig twanged and the top part of the mast took on an alarming bend: the port upper spreader, supporting the diamond wire, had folded backwards. We tried setting a smaller jib but it made no difference so we decided to motor sail with just the mainsail. The night was pretty miserable - cold and lumpy with dollops of spray landing in the cockpit.

Mid morning the next day we picked up the Ijmuiden RDF beacon and went about to close the shore. As we finished lunch the engine died.... My thoughts turned to Peter Davies' excellent article in the 1993-4 AOA Bulletin in which he described reaching Ijmuiden with a rope round the propellor, and I tried to remember the procedure he adopted for entering the harbour under sail. On investigation we found that the combination of a lumpy sea and running the fuel tank down had caused a lot of dirt to clog the filter and fill the sediment chamber. The filter was rinsed in white spirit and the sediment chamber cleaned out, the tank was refilled from cans and we were on our way again, much relieved.

Shortly after we sighted the featureless Dutch coast. At about the same time we acquired a visitor. A small brown bird appeared fluttering weakly, circled the boat and alighted on the very aftermost part of the after deck. A little later it ventured towards the cockpit, but a sudden movement of the helmsman frightened it and caused it to fall down the open stern cabin hatch, where we left it with a bowl of water.

We sailed in to the shore then went about to motor-sail the few miles south along the coast to the harbour entrance which we entered at 9 pm. Within 45 minutes we were through the Zuidensluis and tied up at the Town Quay just beyond. We reported our arrival by 'phone to Sue and Bryony, now comfortably ensconced in an Amsterdam hotel, and visited the immigration office. We were

disappointed to find Ijmuiden rather dirty with litter strewn around all over the place: Holland used to be well known for its cleanliness. Our bird, now fully recovered, decided that the forward cabin would be a comfortable place to spend the night; David, however, managed to encourage it to take its leave of us.

We had a bite to eat and then set off along the North Sea Canal to motor the 12 miles to Amsterdam. The canal is enormous! It is 2 or 3 cables wide, probably more in places. We were glad we had a good chart of the canal; although the navigation would pose no problems in daylight, at night in a number of places it was not clear which was the canal and which was a side shoot. We reached the almost deserted Municipal Yacht Haven at 2.30 am tied up and turned in - and had no difficulty whatsoever in sleeping!

Next morning I went to meet Sue and Bryony at the Central Station, only two hundred yards from the Yacht Haven. The Yacht Haven consists of an L-shaped jetty to which boats moor end-on. We had moored to the 'seaward' arm and as I went ashore I noticed the walkway was sagging a bit and that there was a barrier at the end to prevent people walking along it. I met the girls plus baggage and coaxed them round the barrier and over the saggy bit of jetty. We then set off to the other side of the canal to Sixhaven Marina - more pleasant and with facilities! As we passed the outside of the jetty we saw the reason for the damaged walkway; something had collided with the jetty and there was nothing at all supporting the walkway at that point!

In the marina we lowered the mast and found the cause of the spreader failure. Arosa is a mast-head rig *Atalanta* and the spreaders supporting the diamond wires are swept back putting an aft bending load into the spreaders. The spreaders are tubes fitting into brass sockets which are brazed to the brass shoe which is in turn screwed to the mast. The brazing of the port brass socket had failed around the forward side allowing it to bend back; on inspection we found a crack in the brazing of the starboard socket also.

We enquired about having the fitting repaired and were given some rather vague information about a traditional shipyard on the other side of the canal which might be able to do the job, but then we came across John Kuiper (same surname as us but spelt the Dutch way). He had emigrated to Australia many years ago and was back in Amsterdam for a visit. "Come with me - we'll find someone to fix it". We followed him out of the marina and into a small industrial estate. He walked into the first engineering workshop we came to but the foreman was at lunch. Opposite was another engineering business and here we had better luck, persuading the foreman to get the job done right away. A welder took the fitting and returned 20 minutes later having done a superb job. The charge was 25 guilders - about £8 - which I thought extremely reasonable, but not so John who proceeded to negotiate a reduction to 20 guilders because we were paying cash!

In the evening we crossed over the water to Amsterdam to have a meal in town using the free ferry which runs from beside the marina. In Dam Square

we saw the end of the Dutch Remembrance Day celebration at which Queen Beatrix had been present. We ended the evening gorging ourselves in a pancake restaurant.

The next day was Liberation Day and several of the yachts in the marina were dressed for the occasion. The morning was spent shopping (the girls) and exploring (the boys). After lunch we slipped and headed east to the Orangesluis: our pilot book was a bit vague about the procedure for passing through the lock, but we realised that the boats moored to the jetty were waiting for the lock so we joined them, and soon we were all herded into the lock, well segregated from commercial traffic. We were through by 3.00 pm and after a short wait for the Shellingoude Brug, just beyond, to lift, we were in the Markermeer.

A three hour sail brought us to the small harbour town of Volendam on the western shore of the Markermeer. Visitors moor at the north end, berths for local yachts are at the south end; the centre was occupied by several large ketches all with parties of children aboard. There was quite a lot of activity among the ketches as they all spent a lot of time manœuvring, either to let one of them into or to allow one to move out of an inner berth, and we admired the skill of the skippers in handling these large vessels.

We did not like Volendam. No sooner had we secured than the harbour master was with us to receive his dues. The water tap was at the south end of the harbour and it had to be paid for - and it turned out to be seriously tainted. The facilities were overwhelmed by the children from the ketches. That night it rained, and one of our mooring warps chafed through which meant a remooring operation in night clothes in the wet!

We left Volendam without regrets mid-morning the next day. It was still raining and we had a short damp sail to Hoorn, a few miles north of Volendam. The entrance to the port is most impressive, dominated by the medieval Hoofdtoren. It is one of the old Hanseatic League ports and it was from here that Willem Schouten discovered Cape Horn. We berthed in the Vluchthaven, the smaller of the two yacht harbours. We were dragging our keels through soft silt in the harbour which made for very precise ship handling - as soon as one closed the throttle the boat stopped dead. There was an abundance of herons which seemed much more tolerant of humans than English herons.

We found an excellent eating place in the evening - it also seemed to be the in-night spot and as the place filled up the staff were run off their feet to such an extent that we had difficulty in paying the bill, not that we objected as the staff plied us with free drinks until they could get round to totting up the bill.

Next morning we shopped (food shops are one thing the old town lacks, but we did find a splendid baker who produces enormous spicy cakes, one of which lasted the rest of the voyage) and then escorted Sue and Bryony to the railway station who had to depart for home. Mid afternoon Arosa slipped and headed north for Enkhuizen. On leaving Hoorn I was sadly disillusioned about the

skill of the ketch skippers I had admired in Volendam: as we passed a ketch that was manoeuvring I noticed a swirl from the bow - it had a bow thruster which I think was typical of all of them! The passage to Enkhuizen was slow, initially because of the lack of wind, and then because it was from the wrong direction. We reached the Krabbensgat lock at 8.30 pm - it was waiting for us and we were through and into the IJsselmeer in a brace of shakes. We entered the Compagniehaven at Enkhuizen for the night, managing to master the automatic berth allocation and fee collection machine.

The next day, Sunday 8th May, dawned wet. We replenished fuel supplies and departed at about 10.30 am, initially joining a flotilla of classic vessels as we headed north, meeting the eastern shore of the IJsselmeer at Stavoren and following it to Makkum. As we made up the cut to Makkum we saw a new marina on the right-hand side, too new to be in our Pilot. We selected a berth and then made our way to the harbourmaster's office where the young lady behind the desk apologised profusely for the fact that as they did not have any 8 metre berths they would have to charge for a 12 metre berth; the cost however turned out to be less than anywhere else during the whole trip! The "facilities" block was an eye-opener: the entrance foyer, decorated with palm trees and modern sculptures, would not have disgraced a 5 star hotel. Another plus was a comprehensively stocked supermarket attached to the marina which was the only place we found in Holland which sold 'Cuppa-Soup'. That evening we strolled into the very pretty little town and settled down in a quiet bar for a couple of pints.

Our stay in Makkum was enlivened by the antics of Germans in charter yachts. They appeared to have only two throttle positions when motoring - full ahead and full astern. Watching them berth and unberth was a nerve racking experience to those in neighbouring boats but a source of mirth to those out of the line of fire. When the boat next to us set off, one of the four person crew videoed every moment of the throttle jockey's frantic manoeuvring whilst the other two crew members attempted to fend off.

In the morning we shopped at the marina supermarket and then slipped, making short work of the mile to the Konverdezang lock at the NE end of the causeway between IJsselmeer and Waddenzee. We were soon through the lock and the swing bridge, and then hard on the wind in the Inshot channel heading north towards Terschelling. The first part of the channel was pretty shallow and tortuous: we had to wind the keels twice, once in the channel and once when we took a chance and extended a tack outside the channel. We reached Richel, a sandbank with a healthy population of seals opposite the channel between Terschelling and Vlieland, and bore away round its north end to Vlieland, entering the small harbour shortly before 5.00 pm. Despite it being early in the season, the harbour was pretty full and we berthed outboard of two other boats.

Vlieland is a pretty island - really an overgrown sandbank - well known for its horses and for its lack of vehicles. In the evening we strolled down the main

(and only) street of the town, a pleasant tree-lined thoroughfare flanked by wooden houses, some of them quite old, and continued on to the top of the hill and lighthouse beyond.

In the morning we slipped before 8.00 am to catch the favourable tide to Terschelling. En route we were buzzed by Luftwaffe Tornados dropping bombs on the range on the seaward side of Terschelling. We berthed in the harbour at 11 am, where there was plenty of room in contrast to Vlieland. We spent the rest of the morning exploring the town and buying odd items of chandlery (at exorbitant prices) for the journey home, and bottles of cranberry wine for which the islands are famous. Our berth was opposite the Maritime Institute (well equipped with a windmill and banks of solar panels for generating its own electricity) which was having a parents day or graduation. A local dignitary and his wife arrived in whalers, his pulled by an all male crew and hers by an all female crew, with two more whalers in attendance. Whaler races appeared to be a popular sport on Terschelling with some carrying sponsorship advertisements on them. That evening we dined handsomely ashore.

At 10.20 the next morning we set sail for home this time being buzzed by Dutch Air Force Jaguars as we passed the bombing range at the east end of Terschelling. Amazingly the wind was from the east and our course was due west! As we sailed out past the seaward side of Vlieland the wind was light, but gradually both it and the seas picked up. By evening we had reached the shipping lanes where a small German naval flotilla consisting of a depot ship and three minesweepers stopped to let us pass ahead.

Throughout the night and the following day progress was swift but being on watch in a following wind was not too relaxing because of having to concentrate on ones helming to prevent a gybe (not too successfully in my case!) and being unable to leave the helm for more than a few seconds (the brevity of the log entries testify to this). Slightly unfortunately we sailed off the northern edge of our most northerly chart at one stage (poor planning); still we met with nothing untoward. In the evening we sighted the Dowsing Tower (now removed) arriving off the Humber at 1.00 am, where our east wind deserted us. The mouth of the Humber is no place to be becalmed (it must have one of the heaviest concentrations of shipping of our coastline), so we turned on the engine and made our tide-assisted way up to Hull, berthing in the marina at 6.00 am on Friday 13th May after a passage of some 200 miles.

SAIL IT OR SELL IT

By Peter and Frances Martin SEAMAJOR A92

At the end of 1994, three events occurred. I retired from school teaching after more than forty years; my father died and we sold the Fireball racing dinghy that the family had owned and used since 1977. All of these events contributed in different ways to the time available for working on A92 and for sailing it. Thus

1995 saw the resurrection of Seamajor on the Menai Straits after a 10 year gap. This is not quite as bad as it seems as in five of those years we had done a trailaway cruise. A92 has been our family boat for 30 years, but as can be deduced, in a total of 5 years the hull did not touch salt water. Twenty five out of thirty cannot be bad.

After the gap, Seamajor deserved some presents and these were: a refurbished trailer largely involving welding on new steel girders and plates to prevent imminent collapse; "new" (second hand) Brit Sprite inboard engine; 2 new petrol tanks, one for the Seagull outboard and one for the inboard; (A92 is a belt and braces boat - what a pity we can't fit two masts); an EPIRB - a gift from anxious children (youngest 30) NOT so anxious to inherit our money; a new cockpit cover, professionally made, and a new spray hood equally professionally done by Frances. All this was to make up for the years of neglect - sorry Seamajor! How many other owners talk to their boats?

Here are some of the considerations involved in making a circumnavigation of Anglesey. Calling at Holyhead, a place a cruising yachtsman is unlikely to miss; the distance is 72 nautical miles, Bangor being about 36 miles either way to Holyhead. As always to the sail powered yachtsman, tides and wind matter most. Tides, of course, can be predicted, and considering tides alone, anti clockwise is best, for various reasons. One can time ones departure from Holyhead to get the right current around North and South Stack. Similarly, departure from Cemaes (or Amlwch) on the North coast can be timed to get a good tidal squirt round Carmel Head. Other vital tide places are Point Lynas, Puffin Sound and of course the Menai Straits. Regarding the latter alone, clockwise is easier because a rising tide from Puffin to Beaumaris joins neatly on to the ebb from Bangor and Caernarfon Bar. However the straits are sheltered and there are plenty of secure stopping places.

Now that we are confidently given forecasts for a whole week ahead, one might be given either an East or a West wind. Of course the tide races are relatively harmless with a following wind, so a NE wind definitely requires anti clockwise because then three of the main races, Lynas, Carmel Head and the Stacks will be with ebb tide and following wind. On the other hand West wind requires clockwise; but a big snag arises here, namely Caernarfon Bar, dangerous in anything over force 4; at least in my opinion. So all in all I prefer a settled East wind - often the case with summer anticyclones.

Lastly, stopping places must come into the reckoning. The East coast has only offshore anchorages apart from Red Wharf Bay, but this can only be entered near high tide, so leaving this place only works for anti clockwise, and the corresponding difficulty of arriving here from the South at low water! The S West coast from Holyhead similarly has only coves and bays and is not very nice at all in onshore winds. The North coast has Cemaes and Amlwch - both small and suitable for individual yachts but not for a group.

All these arguments may seem to have gone round in ever decreasing circles, like the circumnavigation, but on balance Easterly and anti clockwise seems to give the best chance of a safe comfortable and fast trip. Having gone round Anglesey what next? The Isle of Man, the Isle of Wight, Ireland, Britain, the World!

Monday 31 July

A92 was on its Bangor Pier mooring. This turned out to be another very hot and sunny day. We left home at 1000 hrs and Peter made two trips to Seamajor with our Super Tramp to get all our necessities aboard. I had been left after the first trip to get the boat ready to sail. Peter took the car back home and returned on one of the Bickerton bikes. We left the mooring at 1200 hrs with, surprisingly, a light westerly breeze. (It had been flat and calm until just before we left and the forecast was for Easterly and sea breezes). We sailed to Gallows Point number 7 buoy under spinnaker but, suddenly we started to go backwards with the contrary tide. Ten minutes use of the main motor (which started at the first press now that we have a new engine and the throttle set and marked in the correct position) got us out of the tide and amongst the moorings, and we tacked up to a mooring beside the end of Beaumaris Pier, where we picked up a buoy at about 1300 hrs.

Peter went ashore twice, once for fish and chips and then for a Walls "Feast" each. This started out thus as a gourmet cruise! We left at 1445 as the boats returned from racing - part of the "Straits Fortnight" which started today.

Peter rowed for half an hour until the wind returned and we tacked to Penmon Point, through Puffin Island Sound and up the East Coast of Anglesey until the wind died again and we used the Seagull for 15 minutes to enable us to anchor off the southern end of Red Wharf Bay at 1915 hrs. A quick supper then a good sleep only disturbed by the rain and thunder during the night.

Tuesday 1st August

The faintest of breezes tempted us to leave at 0630 hrs, once again close hauled. By 0800 it had died completely so Peter rowed for an hour and a half and then we anchored off Traeth Bychan to wait for a breeze. It didn't arrive until 1230, so we were delighted to be under way again. Point Lynas with its tide rip was passed at 1530, but as soon as we got out of the tide rip the wind died again. What had become of the NE3 which was forecast? We had been waiting in anticipation of a delightful reach along the next piece of coast: instead we endured an hour and a quarter of sail slatting and rolling swell, with barely enough breeze to give us steerage. At 1645 Peter decided to row again in the hopes that this would induce the wind to come. Alas it didn't until he had rowed for an hour and a quarter. For the last half hour we had a reaching force 2-3 but by now we had decided to anchor in Cemaes Bay. This is the safest anchorage in the area and with such a fickle wind we were loath to push on so we sailed in and anchored at 1830 hrs, as we had only about two hours of weak West-going tide left.

Wednesday 2nd August

We left at 0515 with the longed for North Easterly force four which gave us a run and a reach all the way into Holyhead harbour. We covered 11 miles in two hours, a real delight after all our drifting recently. We tied up to a buoy in the harbour and went ashore to visit the chandlery and the library. However, when we returned we found that a dinghy belonging to the sea cadets had made a four inch square hole in our bow. What could have been a minor disaster was ameliorated by the helpfulness of a lot of people. The leader of the sea cadets at once agreed to pay for the damage and took us to Trinity Marine where Kim, an expert woodworker, soon set about grafting in a patch. There were some useful spinoffs - showers at the sailing club and a quiet night dried out on the slipway.

Thursday 3rd August

Peter went shopping and to the Holyhead library again, and to an old Convent Chapel now used for an art exhibition. I remained on the boat as my catarrh and cough which had been getting worse all week was making me feel very sorry for myself! I slept while Peter was away. The hole was beautifully mended, a coat of primer on and we were ready to leave at the top of the tide. We pushed off the slipway and used the Seagull outboard to get us clear of the moorings. We then set sail, tacked out of the harbour and reached towards the North Stack Race. This was very slight and the South Stack one was even calmer. We had such a good wind that we had to reef, and covered the 23 miles to Llanddwyn Island in 4½ hours. There were six other boats anchored here so we joined them and had a very peaceful night.

Friday 4th August

We left at 0915 as the tide turned in our favour, and tacked from Llanddwyn Island to Bangor. There were no boats moored at Abermenai which always used to be a favourite anchorage: perhaps the increase in numbers of sandbanks has made it less popular. As we tacked towards Caernarfon we reckoned that there were far more sand banks than when we used to come here ten years ago.

The wind gradually strengthened as we approached the Swellies and we changed from the genoa to the smaller jib. It was just as well as our newer winch decided to choose this moment to break! Peter had his work cut out to get the jib hauled in, led across the cockpit and round the port hand winch before it was time to go about again. Going from west to east through the Swellies necessitates using a rising tide; I suppose the advantage is that you can see most of the dangerous rocks, but it does make for some very smart and quick tacking. The tide was really moving fast and I was glad that the wind was pretty constant. Twice we had to back the jib to help us get round and I wondered what on earth boats with no jibs did under such circumstances.

As soon as we were clear of Telford's Bridge we took in a reef, and still sped across the water. About 100 tacks after leaving Llanddwyn, ¾ hours and

14 miles later we picked up our mooring off Bangor Pier. We then reversed the embarking procedure and eventually arrived home.

Here are the usual concluding statistics: 72 miles in four days, all under sail or under oars except for one mile under motor - when patience or wind or both ran out. Fastest speed 6 knots; slowest 1 knot. All stops using anchor except for Holyhead mooring where we were holed.

GELLIE's 1995 CRUISE (T4)

By Michael Dixon

An ambitious cruise programme for this year - going foreign (England), really foreign (Holland!), several crew changes, race deadlines, parade of sail, airline schedules - you name it, I planned for it! There were to be four stages in the three week cruise, down the east coast to Lowestoft, taking part in the Sail 95 Amsterdam events, up through the Dutch canals to the Friesland Islands and finally back home across the North Sea to Stonehaven.

Stonehaven to Lowestoft

There were just the three of us for the first couple of days, Ailsa and David returning for a second time. Adrian was to join us south of the border.

After spending the Friday night on board, we slipped from Stonehaven on Saturday 29th July, motoring into a southerly two. Within a couple of hours the wind filled in and we sailed close hauled in the general direction of St. Abbs. Neither Ailsa nor David were feeling too bright, so I elected to put into Lunan Bay, to wait until the flood tide came away. In the end we spent the night there at anchor. Thick haar developed late on in the afternoon completely obscuring the beach less than a cable away.

The fog had lifted marginally on the Sunday morning, and despite a rather uncomfortable night rolling to the swell, the crew were much improved. Leaving mid morning with the first of the flood, we headed out across the Firths of Tay and Forth bound for St. Abbs. Apart from the marginal visibility, the conditions were fine. Over to the west off the Tay, a full scale search and rescue was going on, with the Coastguard co-ordinating the rescue services looking for an overdue motor cruiser. Sadly we were to learn later that only one of the four crew on board survived the grounding.

It became a long tedious afternoon - bright and sunny overhead, but the poor visibility creating a degree of tension and the drone of the engine doing its best to stifle conversation. Early evening positioned us off St. Abbs but it was far too thick even to attempt an entry as pilotage is interesting at the best of times! It didn't take much in the way of decision making before we altered course to pass outside of the Farne Islands and carry on south.

Thankfully it was a trouble free night. David and Ailsa spelled each other on lookout whilst I alternatively dozed and navigated. Once we smelt the exhaust

fumes from a passing vessel and one of the side light bulbs had to be replaced, but other than that it was an uneventful night. The low lying fog created interesting patterns in the loom of the sidelights - even the stars were reflected in the flat calm. For much of the time there was lots of phosphorescence in the bow wave and the wake and in the keel boxes.

Whilst there are numerous anchorages available in conditions of poor visibility, I had earmarked Amble as the first really suitable harbour. Thanks to the Decca and the echo sounder the north pier lighthouse appeared right on the nose about half a cable off. We drew some incredulous looks from some local inshore coble fishermen who wondered where we had come from. Alongside the marina at 0630 - engine off - ah! the peace of it all! In a rare moment of indulgence we had a beer for breakfast before getting our heads down.

As all boat owners know, you never quite get all the jobs done before you leave and this trip was no exception! As Adrian was expected sometime during the afternoon, it was important to clear his bunk of a horseshoe lifebuoy and a dan buoy! Thankfully by the time Adrian arrived demanding beer, it had been rigged at the pushpit. The rest of the day went downhill from thereon. Ailsa and David cooked a superb meal aided, without a doubt, by the red wine. After clearing away, it was the traditional stroll up to Warkworth to sample the local brew. Maybe nostalgia ain't what it used to be, but I'm sure the beer tasted better two years ago.

Tuesday was fair with a good forecast. The fog had cleared away and I was optimistic that we would have a clear day ahead of us. After topping up with diesel we caught the last of the flood round Coquet Island. GELLIE managed to attract a huge quantity of tiny black flies which persisted in clinging to everything. It was hours before they finally disappeared.

It turned into a brilliant day even if there was nae wind! After rigging the Tillerpilot and setting the main, the crew were turned to complete more tasks on the job's list. After lunch it was I-Spy on the foredeck and cribbage in the cockpit, accompanied by seemingly endless cups of tea and coffee.

As luck would have it, some four miles from Whitby, the poor visibility returned, but so low lying that the cliffs were clearly visible above the bank of fog. We had a slight delay to allow an outbound coaster to clear the harbour under tow - a most odd sight with the superstructures and masts of both vessels clearly visible but with no sign of their hulls.

Whitby was its cheerful unpretentious self and as usual, provided all our needs. One of these days I must stay a few days and re-visit all the childhood holiday spots. Leaving the next morning, we were again plagued by the dreaded black flies. Once more it was a blistering hot day with no wind, but we had to press on - one of the penalties of having to meet deadlines. Eventually we all retired into a semi-comatose heap having exhausted useful conversation efforts above the drone of the engine, as we slowly made our way down the coast, past

Robin Hood's Bay, Scarborough and Filey. Never mind, Flamborough Head eventually heaved up out of the haze on the starboard bow, the tide turned in our favour and all of a sudden life didn't seem so bad after all! Entering Bridlington at 1945, we moored alongside acres of plastic cunningly disguised as a Prout 39 catamaran. Between them, the crew produced one of the finest curries ever tasted on GELLIE and by the time it was cleared away, it didn't seem worthwhile going ashore.

The next morning, Thursday 3rd saw us all busy preparing for the relatively longer passage to Lowestoft. If at all possible, I wanted to avoid deviating into the Humber which would take us a fair way off our direct course. There are no ports between the Humber and the Wash and the Norfolk coast has only a couple of small harbours, both of which are subject to tidal restrictions. We got away as planned at 1030 and wonders of wonders, had the sails up shortly afterwards. The wind was just sufficiently free to allow the brand new, as yet still in its bag, spinnaker to be broken out. In sorting out the rigging for the spinnaker, the spare halyard, which acts as the pole uphaul became fouled round the upper end of the genoa furling gear. Well, you know what it's like - if you don't stop to think about the consequences, going up the mast is a doddle, so it was with some surprise that I found myself standing on the spreaders sorting it out.

The spinnaker set really well and speed picked up noticeably. The new sail carries the acronym SPOIA - Short Period Of Intense Activity - the phrase coined by Terry the previous year after the old sail split spectacularly and got wrapped round the mast.

By mid afternoon the wind had moderated, the spinnaker handed and the engine back on. We continued in this fashion for the remainder of the day. There was a fair amount of traffic about so I was grateful of the clear weather. GELLIE whistled past the East Dudgeon buoy like a train (David still talks about it!) and by 0100 the cloud cover cleared away leaving us with a brilliant canopy of stars. Cromer light came up to be followed by the necklace of lights along the north Norfolk coast. Sunrise was at 0520 and a couple of hours later we entered the channel between the Caister and Scroby shoals. Adrian wasn't too happy about being in the vicinity of the Scroby Elbow buoy - was it contagious we wondered?

Down past Great Yarmouth and Gorleston and into the south harbour at Lowestoft, we moored alongside a Dutch yacht just after 1100. Despite having had an earlier breakfast we went in search of further sustenance. Adrian, a keen advocate of the Rough Tourist Guides, sniffed out a truly awful but quite brilliant greasy spoon cafe with unerring accuracy, where we ate our fill at tremendous value for money.

The North Sail Race and Sail 95 Amsterdam

All along, the reason behind this year's cruise programme was to participate in the Sail 95 Amsterdam festivities. I had been there in 1990 on board the SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL and had been determined to return if at all

possible. After some perseverance, I had established there was to be a feeder race for spectator boats from Lowestoft to IJmuiden, timed to coincide with the arrival of the Tall Ships and the parade of sail from IJmuiden to Amsterdam. In the end it all came together and the arrangements worked out just fine. Being part of the official scene certainly paid off in terms of tangible benefits such as free moorings, receptions, flags, plaques etc.

During the afternoon of our arrival, many more traditional and working craft arrived and by evening there were about thirty vessels present. On signing on for the race I discovered that I was to be the only British entry, the remainder being Dutch. This caused one or two basic problems - like the sailing directions being written in Dutch!

The Royal Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club made us all very welcome and had set up a large marquee on the hard in front of the clubhouse. Friday evening saw the assembled crews enjoying the hospitality. We began to flag quite soon and despite the cordiality of the occasion, we retired to bed relatively early.

Saturday dawned fine - lots of jobs to be done on board - changing engine oil, fresh water, couple of rigging jobs etc. Sarah arrived with her Mum and Dad in the morning and Richard arrived later in the afternoon. It was convenient to have the use of the car to exchange gas cylinders and top up at the local Tesco. Lunch was a very leisurely affair - in fact the entire day was! The evening saw us all back at the Yacht Club for a crew barbecue. Recollection of events during the latter end of the evening became a bit hazy, but I have abiding memories of Adrian trying to out do the jazz band and we have photographic evidence of Stan's involvement with carnations. The skipper and Richard wisely departed long before the rest of the crew who had become embroiled in a raucous game of Tenga with the Dutch table next door.

Sunday morning was subdued! David and Ailsa managed to get themselves up to station in time for their train - more or less in auto pilot, where we bade them farewell. Louise arrived safely and Terry drove across to say hello. It was quite a gathering round the lunch table.

Whilst I had never been too bothered about the race itself, I felt that as the only British entry we had to do our best, and by 1400 we were as ready as ever and raring to go. But we couldn't do anything for the six boats moored outboard of us! Letting go at 1512, we had the sails hoisted whilst still within the harbour, hopefully presenting a fine sight to the "tourists" on the end of the south pier.

The race started at 1615 with a short run to leeward, before rounding the East Barnard buoy to port and heading NNE towards Smith's Knoll. For the first time this trip we had a half decent wind even if it was northerly! Whilst I wanted us to do well, I saw no sense in us thrashing along close hauled on our ears, so soon had one reef in the main to be followed a couple of hours later by the second. The wind was to remain northerly throughout the crossing, hovering around the force four mark and quite often up at a five.

It seemed an eternity to beat the twenty five miles to windward before we were able to round Smith's Knoll. The time was punctuated by moments of high farce (when the skipper pulled the ship's clock from the bulkhead to watch it burst spectacularly into a dozen pieces) and by the odd surge of adrenaline (when dodging suicidal yachts and oblivious commercial traffic). Dawn arrived slowly, a dull and grey morning, to reveal one of the other competitors, a large Dutch botter which proceeded to overhaul us steadily a couple of cables to leeward.

The day passed slowly without incident, good sailing and GELLIE performing well. Sarah had returned to her normal cheerful self and Louise was proving an excellent hand, despite having received a couple of dollops of North Sea down the back of her neck during the night! We ate well even if it was a bit of a relay and we were in good spirits. The Decca continued to play up - a recurring problem which seems to sort itself out after a while. Obviously there is some sort of interference and the previous owner had identified the rotating shaft as a potential source of the problem. Fortunately early evening confirmed our position as the chimneys of IJmuiden appeared ahead. A tiny finch flew on board whilst we had supper to take up residence below. It was very tame and obviously worn out but wouldn't accept any sustenance.

I failed to make sufficient allowance for set and as a consequence, we had a tiresome beat for the last couple of hours - disappointing in view of the overall success of the trip across. GELLIE crossed the line at 0041 on the Tuesday morning. Sails were stowed and the engine started as we made our way to the new Seaway Marina just inside the south pier. Almost before the lines were ashore, the girls were sprinting up the pontoon in search of showers. Richard and I opened the bottle of rum!

Wednesday was a glorious day. We were up and about fairly early so as to get ourselves up to Amsterdam in time to meet Jean and Sheena. The very efficient public transport system delivered us at the central station about twenty minutes ahead of the wives - they'd had a good flight over from Aberdeen. The six of us had a great day in Amsterdam doing the usual touristy things - canal trip letting someone else do the driving, flower market, lunch, sitting at pavement cafes. Calling briefly at the girl's B&B in Haarlem, we made our way back to GELLIE to find hats, a flag and a case of Heineken (the main event sponsors) in the cockpit. Taking part in the official proceedings was certainly paying off! We barely had time to turn round before hot-footing it up to the crew's reception which was to take place in a hastily transformed warehouse. The meal was certainly different - we eventually came to the conclusion it was a Dutch version of haggis and neaps, but then we could have been insulting our hosts to say nothing of the Scots! Ostensibly the reception was for a number of feeder race crews but it was obvious that members of the public were getting in as well, with the result that it became very over crowded and noisy. As soon as the prize giving was over (GELLIE was ninth in her class but first British entry home!) we went back outside

to the relative peace and quiet. Like us, there were lots of people taking advantage of the mild evening to watch many of the tall ships as they came in through the locks.

Thursday 10th August had been the focus of all the planning over the past twelve months and more. We were up early to be greeted by a carnival atmosphere. Even at 0700 it was heaving with small craft manoeuvring and jostling for position and everywhere there were hordes of people preparing either to take part in, or watch, the parade of sail from IJmuiden to Amsterdam. Sarah and Louise went off to do some last minute shopping for fresh supplies and they returned at more or less the same time as Jean and Sheena struggled down. So with the six of us on board we set off to join in the biggest maritime party imaginable. It was crowded, hectic and nerve wracking but very good natured and tremendous fun. The vessels ranged in size from stately square riggers such as SEDOV to tiny family runabouts with every imaginable shape and style in-between. It wasn't quite bank to bank boats, but at times it certainly looked like it. The newspaper next day estimated 8000 boats afloat over the 16 mile stretch of the Nordzee canal.

The closer we got to Amsterdam the more congested it became as all the earlier vessels started to bunch up. The IJhaven, where we were to berth, was temporarily closed to small craft whilst the larger vessels were manoeuvred alongside. Rather than risk another collision (we'd already had one glancing brush with a motor cruiser) I decided to extract ourselves from the melee and moor at the quay on the north side of the canal. As we started to make our way towards the quay I began to doubt my decision, realising how a hedgehog must feel in trying to cross the M25 during rush hour. Once moored - not easy on account of the spectators - we stretched legs ashore. Sheena and Jean found ice creams for everyone and Sarah and Louise found the loos!

After an hour or so the congestion began to sort itself out as the IJhaven was re-opened to smaller vessels. We'd moored more or less inside the bowsprit of a large square rigger, a fact I'd completely ignored when it was time to depart. Thanks to the cries from the crew and nearby spectators, disaster was narrowly averted by going full astern and the spreaders were saved! Twenty minutes later we moored amongst the other official North Sail race entries in the IJhaven. The early evening was quite delightful. We were able to relax on deck and in the cockpit, watching the constant stream of spectator craft watching us and to be rewarded with the most amazing sunset.

The Canals and the Wadenzee

After the hectic day before, the Friday turned out to be very relaxing. The log book records that it was "ABHD" (another b...y hot day) with wall to wall sunshine but a nice breeze as well.

We safely negotiated our way from the IJhaven, retracing our steps towards IJmuiden. Just after noon, we left the Nordzee canal and entered the much

quieter and narrower Zaan river which would eventually take us north via Alkmaar to Den Helder. Mooring to a pontoon to await the opening of our first bridge, Sarah decided she needed to stretch her legs and responded to a race challenge from the skipper, which had the disconcerting effect of completely knacker her!

Our first bridge opened on time and we enjoyed our steady progress through a succession of bridges and one lock where we paid our fees for the entire canal passage (about £3). There was a slight delay at Zaandijk whilst we watched a fleet of traditional boats racing down the river through the bridge. Once through the bridge we passed the windmill museum and entered a much more pleasant rural stretch of river. Supplies were needed and the pilot recommended the town of Krommenie as having useful moorings. What the pilot failed to mention was a line of lethal wooden stakes, just awash, about five feet from the bank, a general lack of water (the joys of lifting keels!) and overhanging trees. GELLIE was to 'wear' a branch complete with leaves in the diamond spreaders for the next six weeks!

Everyone was taking turns at the helm - even Sheena! Louise had the dubious pleasure of executing a flag overboard drill at Markenbinnen, just before we entered the Alkmaarder Meer. This section was very pretty, very rural and lots of wildlife. We passed many canal side properties, each with their own tiny landing stage. At one point we watched two teenage girls scull a small dinghy across the canal, their two bicycles perched over the bows. Leaving the Alkmaarder Meer to join the Noordhollands canal, we negotiated the Akersloot ferry where you have to allow the traction cables to sink to the bottom of the canal. Sarah took us the final couple of miles, though the last pair of bridges of the day at Omval to bring us gently alongside the town quay at Alkmaar. It had taken seven and a half hours to cover the twenty miles from Amsterdam - not spectacularly fast but all agreed it had been a super day.

The next morning, Saturday, Richard and I walked with Sarah and Louise to the station to see them off back home via the Hook of Holland and Harwich. Not long after our return on board, Jean and Sheena arrived after an awful night in their hotel. We settled up with the relief harbour master, topped up with water and moved round to the other moorings described in the pilot book to be nearer the town centre shops. Richard manfully replenished the diesel and we all carried back enormous quantities of supplies from the local supermarket. After a rather late lunch on board, we went our separate ways. Sheena and I visited the very interesting cheese museum and then went in search of local puppets to add to Sheena's growing international collection. It was very pleasant wandering the narrow streets and canal side parks of Alkmaar, making a nice change from chugging along canals. The evening saw us descend on a local restaurant where we enjoyed an excellent Indonesian rice taffel.

Sunday saw a change in the weather with quite a lot of cloud cover and much cooler. Richard and I moved GELLIE as close to the girls' hotel as we could, picking them up as planned ready for the first bridge to open at 0900. It

was not until we had negotiated the first couple of bridges that we became aware of the "apparatus" that the harbour master had been trying, unsuccessfully, to tell us about. It seems that within the last couple of years, many of the bridges have been de-manned. Now groups of bridges are monitored from a central control room by the use of VHF, close circuit television and the "apparatus". This consists of a call button and loudspeaker box attached to a mooring dolphin situated at the approach to each bridge. Once we got the hang of it, the process was most efficient - nudge up to the dolphin, press the button, listen to a stream of Dutch from the loudspeaker, the traffic lights change, wait a couple of minutes for the bridge to go up and you're through.

1400 saw us at the Koegras railway bridge some three miles short of our destination Den Helder. A collection of motor cruisers moored to the east bank suggested some sort of delay, so we moored up as well. Jean and Richard walked along the bank to the bridge to discover that it was shut for the weekend and not scheduled to be opened again until 0700 on Monday morning. Having established the whereabouts of the nearest bus route, we decided to retrace our steps to T Zand some four miles back. It was a bit of a nuisance, but at least there was some civilisation there. We moored alongside a large live-aboard barge learning that it had been originally built in Southwold over a hundred years ago. The owners seemed to have a very relaxed lifestyle with, as we were to discover the next morning, very liberated views on swimming.

Sheena prepared the evening meal which was helped down with copious quantities of wine. After clearing away we made our way to the bank via the barge and a makeshift windsurfer-turned-gangway. Prompt as ever, the Alkmaar to Den Helder bus turned up, depositing us some twenty minutes later more or less outside the girls' hotel. They were to make their way back to Aberdeen the next day, by train to Amsterdam where they planned to do "some proper shopping", before flying back from Schipol. Although there had been some trying moments largely associated with travel logistics they assured us they had enjoyed their time as passengers and I'd kept my promise to Sheena that I would at all times have firm dry land visible on both sides of GELLIE.

Richard and I were up betimes the following morning and shortly after 0700 were on our way to Den Helder, negotiating the two final bridges without problems. Our plan was to find Ian and Jamie (Ian's teenage son), lock out of the canal and make our way over to Texel for the night.

As we'd been unable to reach the agreed marina the previous evening, Ian and Jamie had arrived in Den Helder to find GELLIE nowhere to be seen. The first indication Richard and I had was much tooting and waving from a car proceeding in the opposite direction down the road running alongside the canal. They managed to make their way back and we nosed into the bank. Jamie climbed aboard and the bags were passed over. Whilst we motored on to Den Helder, to moor between posts just below the Burgemeester Visser bridge, Ian returned the

hire car and cadged a lift down to GELLIE. Once again we had a full crew.

1030 had us departing from the temporary berth and an hour later we were clear of the locks and the harbour, engine off and enjoying the first sail for a week. Little more than an hour later GELLIE was moored between posts, bow onto the pontoon at the marina at Oudeschild, Texel. I successfully punched details of GELLIE, the crew, number of nights etc. into the ticket machine, fed in a twenty-five guilder note and was rewarded with a peel off sticky label for the forestay and some change! A little further on was a large compound of hire bicycles, the preferred mode of transport on the island, but we chose to walk round the harbour to the village. Here we found the bank shut (Thursday morning only - reminiscent of Stronsay last year!), but managed to scrape enough guilders together to replenish the milk and bread.

Leaving the berth at 0900 the next morning, Tuesday, I spotted an opportunity and made an abrupt detour to hitch ourselves alongside a floating dock. Nipping up the ladder, I came out just on the same level as GELLIE's masthead where I managed to straighten out the windex - still squint from its brush with the trees at Krommenie!

The wind was quite light, but we did manage a couple of hours sailing including some spinnaker work, much to Ian's approval. Ian is an inveterate tweeker and I had deliberately kept from him the fact that I had a new spinnaker. Some of the local boats were headed along the Texel coast bound for Vlieland or further afield, but in common with many other yachts we headed more or less east following the Scheurrak, Oude Vlie, Inschot and Vliesroom channels. The Wadenzee is a superb expanse of water - too far west for true Riddle of the Sands exploits but, nevertheless, the banks and channels are real enough and despite the lifting keels, I didn't fancy a night ashore so to speak. Among the numerous vessels we passed were some superb examples of lovingly restored barge yachts, many of them charter vessels, often with extremely decorous crews taking advantage of the sunshine.

Approaching West Terschelling up the Schuitengat channel, we made slow progress against the strong ebb tide. Our main concern was to find a bank that was open to exchange some money, so it was somewhat frustrating having to hover whilst the inbound ferry manoeuvred into the harbour. Making our way in as soon as we could, we nudged alongside the nearest quay we could find and Richard made a pierhead jump to head for the nearest bank.

Meanwhile we headed further along where we were greeted by the marina manager, complete with delightfully disreputable dog, in his inflatable. Directed to a berth, we moored outboard of two other vessels. The marina continued to fill up and our trot eventually became eight boats deep. Shortly afterwards Richard arrived with the cash, so I was able to settle the harbour dues.

Holland to Scotland

As arranged the night before, we surfaced in time to allow one of the

inner boats away. After breakfast it was all ashore for final provisions; a tarpaulin muster in the village square turned over all but eight guilders to Ian with instructions to spend it all in the adjacent wine shop! The eight guilders was for final showers. Fortunately only three showers were needed which was just as well as the fresh water hose on the pontoon required a cash injection to allow it to work! The one remaining guilder was put up as 'prize' for the first person to sight the coast of Scotland.

Leaving the berth at 1242, the sails were up almost immediately. Once clear of the harbour the engine was shut down and we were off on the big one - non stop for Stonehaven. Unlike the previous afternoon, we carried the ebb tide with us and made good progress down the Terschelling channel, over the Vliestroom and into the Zuider Stortemelk channel which leads out between the islands of Vlieland and Terschelling to the open North Sea.

It was the start of three days of unbelievably good weather. There was a downside of course; when we did get wind it was light, resulting in long periods under power. Apart from the fog on the final night, we had unbroken wall to wall sunshine every day - great bronzing weather!

Whether sailing in light airs or under power, the Tillerpilot proved invaluable, especially during the night watches. I established an overnight watch keeping routine from 2100 to 0900 - leaving the daytime hours to look after themselves. The night routine was 1.5 hours on watch/lookout, 1.5 hours on standby/dozing and 3 hours below. It worked well and we all arrived at the other end well refreshed.

Navigationally we had the Decca which continued to play up from time to time but never had us lost. Backing up the Decca was Ian's new GPS which was to prove very useful on our approach to Stonehaven. Additionally, I had all the required equipment and tables on board for celestial navigation. Conditions for sights were ideal of course, but it was satisfying to take a couple of sun-run-noon sights as well as a five star fix one evening.

We experienced very little traffic other than during the first twenty four hours as we crossed the separation zones and deep water routes. The lads did call me one morning to take avoiding action for a fishing boat which inexplicably altered course over our bow. Other than that one incident, we maintained our course throughout the trip.

Despite inactivity I can't say I was ever bored. I always enjoy a good book and it's remarkable how normally insignificant events assume an importance out of all proportion. On the wildlife front, we saw three pilot whales and had one visit from a school of dolphins. Bird life was scarce other than gulls, though once we began to close the coast, a number of squadrons of gannets made their way past. Sunsets and sunrises were always a pleasure and one moonrise was very unusual - the huge orange ball of a moon neatly bisected by the horizon. Even the finishing of a packet of rather cardboardy biscuits was noted in the log - no prizes

for who finished them.

Closing the coast on Saturday evening I spoke with Aberdeen Coastguard when we were about forty miles east of Bell Rock. The sunset was particularly colourful highlighting a lot of low lying cloud over to the west. The forecast was for fog patches but for the time being at any rate, it was clear. It was also flat calm - the oily flat calm when it's almost impossible to determine if you can see one mile or twenty. Shortly after midnight, there was no doubt; the fog had returned!

It came in thick and wet. The main which we had set to steady us, was stowed as was the Tillerpilot. All of us were up and about, peering into the murk and listening for anything out of the ordinary. Even when dawn slowly made its appearance, the weather was still thick and grey. The Gods were smiling on us though and at just the right time, the fog cleared marginally, Jamie let out a yell and there was Downie's Point two points on the port bow at half a mile. Jamie had won the guilder! Thirty minutes later we moored at our favourite lets-get-the-boat-sorted-out-and-gear-ashore-berth, whereupon we all grabbed a couple of hours sleep.

Well, that was it. Twenty two days away, covering nine hundred and fifty miles - two thirds under power but that's the way of things. Would I contemplate doing it again? Probably not, or at least not for a while. Whilst all the detailed pre-planning had undoubtedly contributed to an event free trip, the pressure to be at certain places at specific times can and sometimes did detract from the overall enjoyment. Still, I mustn't moan! No-one fell overboard or fell ill; no-one went hungry or thirsty; we never got lost; we sustained no lasting damage (other than the skipper's pride on occasion!); everyone was still speaking to each other at the end and we met some great people. All in all we had a whale of a time!

ROUND IRELAND IN MARIANDA A78

By Captain D O'Neil MM

Last season I went around Ireland in the Marianda. It took me six weeks from Arklow back to Arklow. I would have loved to have taken longer but did not have time to linger. Perhaps this season I may have more time.

The weather was not too bad, with a little bit of everything thrown in, calms, blows, rain and sunshine. About 50% of the trip was under sail with one knockdown off Innishbofin.

Day one was under sail from Arklow to Rosslare in a fine offshore SW breeze. A quiet night was spent there alongside fishing boats, clear of the ferries and close to hotels etc., a nice secure berth for overnight stay. Left at 0500 next morning to carry the tide round the corner and also because the fishermen were starting to move at that time.

Had nice sail to the Saltee Islands and anchored there in lovely clear water to eat and go sightseeing on the bird sanctuary of the Great Saltee. A

wonderful sight and could have spent days there but with the wind freshening it was decided to push on.

From the Saltees we had a good sail as far as Hook Head and with the wind veering around to the West we decided to motorsail and passed Dunmore because of over-crowding and pushed on to the Pier of Newquay, in Tramore Bay. Anchored close off the Pier amongst small boats in good shelter and quiet surroundings and handy to the bars and stores.

Next day was calm with light variables and we motored all the way to the village of Ardmore near Mine Head. This is a delightful old monastic place with a round tower, good walks, lovely beach, fine watering holes and well sheltered in off shore winds. There is a small pier which is usually busy with small boats, so it is better to anchor close off the pier or to dry out on the beach close by west of the pier, as we did.

From Ardmore we sailed and motored to Kinsale and spent one night there and refuelled.

Leaving Kinsale at 0300 hours to carry the tide around the Old Head our next port of call was Crookhaven, which is within sight of the Fastnet. Marianda was run up on the beach at Barley Cove, which is at the head of the bay, on lovely white sand and we spent two days lazing. From Crookhaven we went to Castletownbere having cruised around Bantry Bay and taken in the sights.

Next day we motored inside Durnsey Island, through the Sound and under the cable car, stopping to talk and then on to the Skelligs. There was too much swell to land and we had to be satisfied with a cruise around the Rocks. A lovely six hours sail got us to the Blasket Islands.

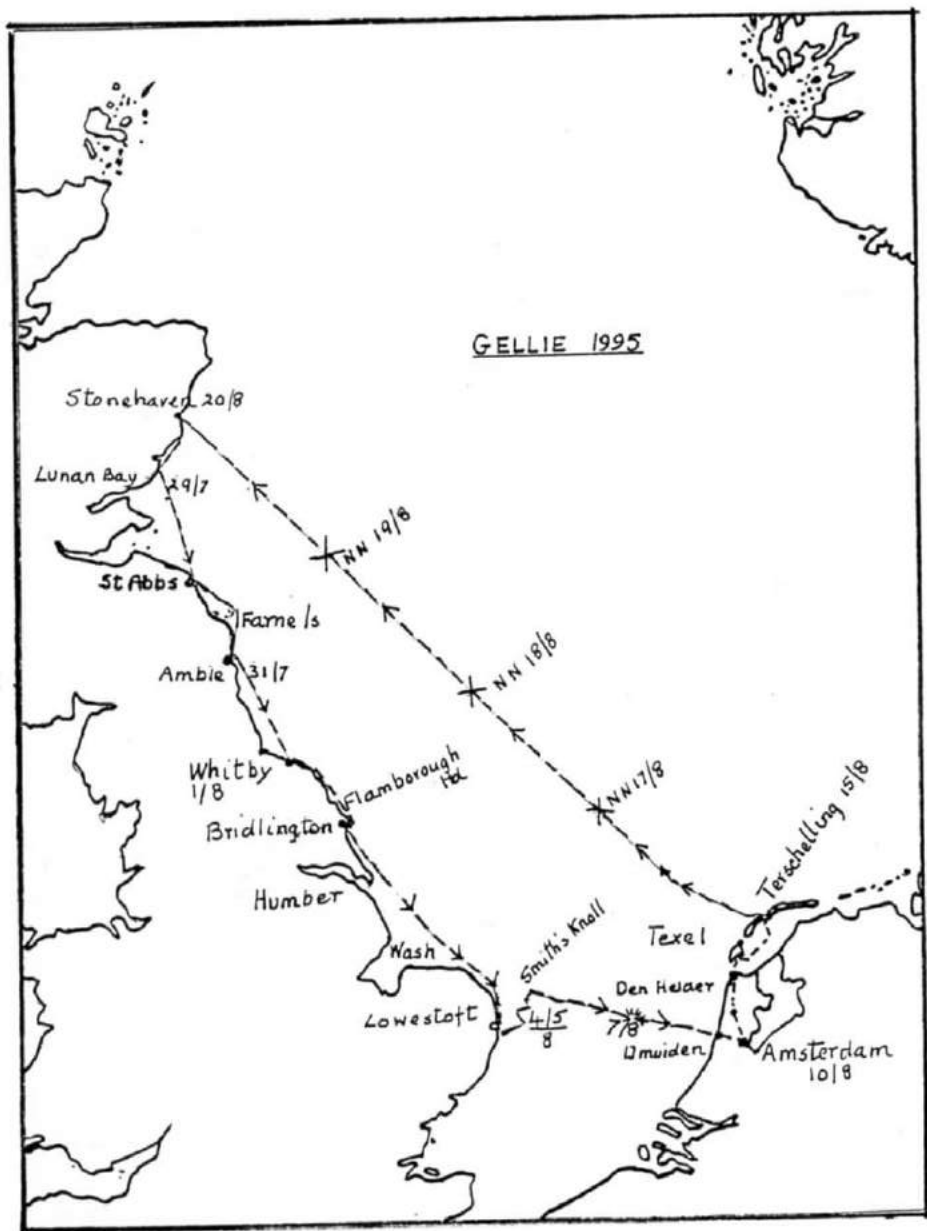
We anchored off the beach on the Great Blasket and explored the Island and its abandoned village and houses.

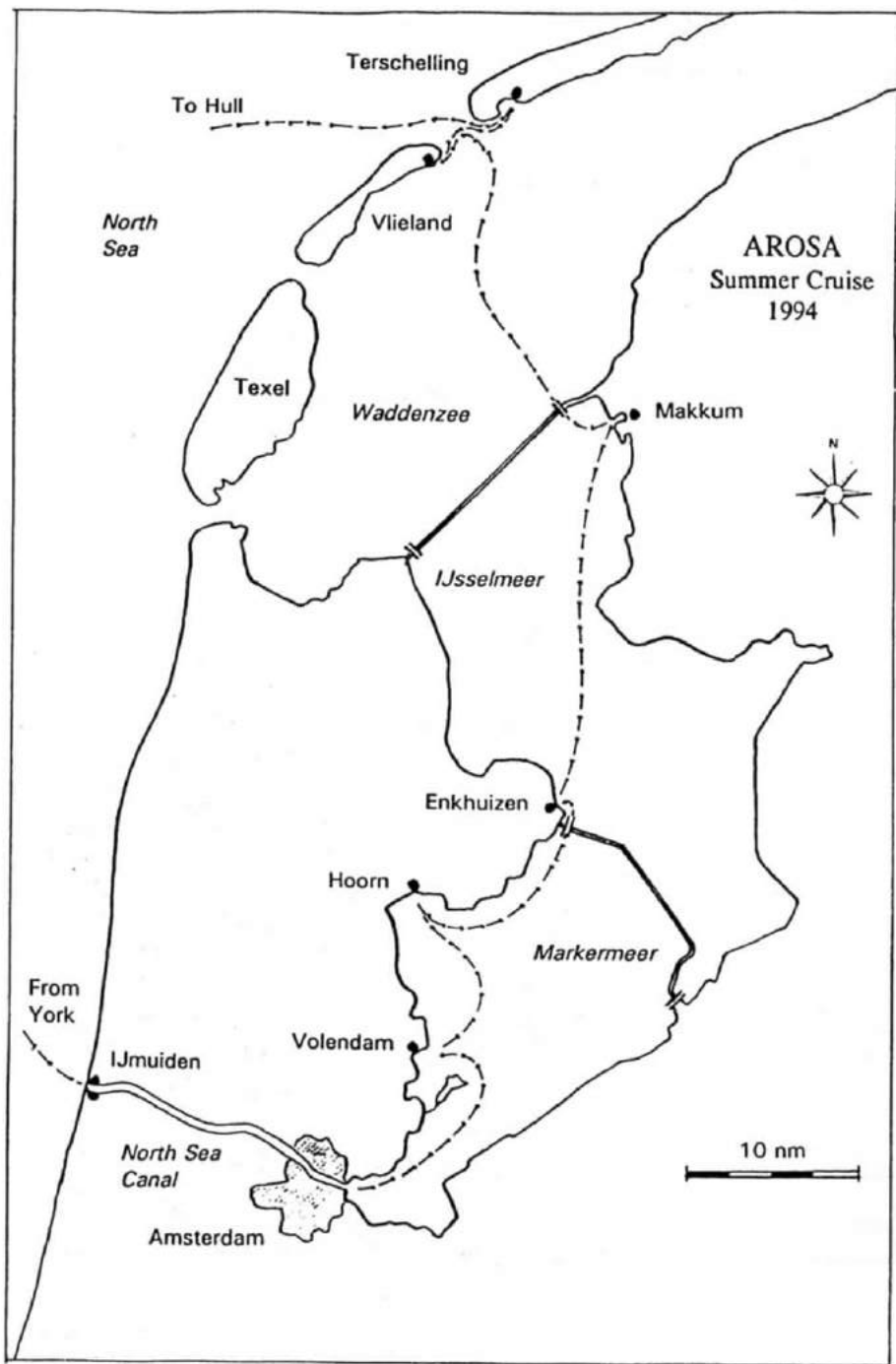
We were so taken and impressed here that we decided for the rest of the voyage that we would call at as many Islands as the weather and time would allow. After our departure from the Blaskets we hugged the coast and sailed as close as possible to the rocks to enjoy some of the most spectacular scenery in Ireland. We called at the village of Brandon for lunch and spent our next night dried out on the beach on the Magharee Island with its ancient beehive huts.

We next called to the Port of Fenit for food, fuel and water, enjoyed the hospitality of the lovely Yacht Club and took the offer of a tour of Tralee, which we thoroughly enjoyed.

Leaving Fenit early in the morning we called into Kilkee for lunch and a quick tour and then proceeded north under the cliffs of Mohar until we reached a position east of the Aran Islands. We anchored at Innisheer Island 1930 hours and just in time for dinner.

The next five days were spent exploring the Arans, sailing, walking and cycling. We could well have spent the whole summer in and around Galway Bay. On the north coast of the Bay we berthed at Strutham Quay, an old Galway







*Left - GELLIE leaving
Lowestoft*



*Below - AROSA waiting for the
Oranjesluis lock to open*



***KOOKABURRA and EMMA DUCK
heading for the finishing line***



BABY SEAL



***The Editor with a firm grip
on BLUE BELLE***



Supper at Gun House after the race





See "A Note from the Editor". Spring rain and sunshine with Ted and Jane Stearn. Problems with burgee, and hauling inshore to repair the rudder.





Party on board MARIANDA prior to the voyage

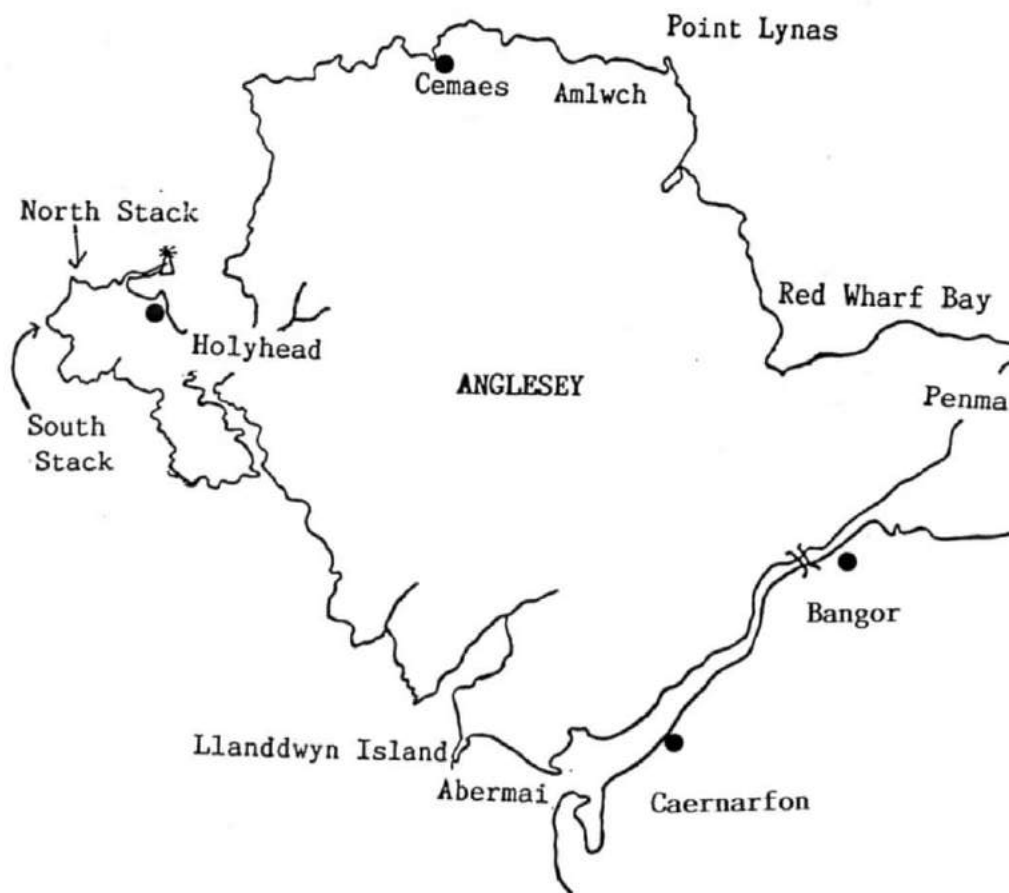


High water at Roundstone Harbour: MARIANDA on her birth

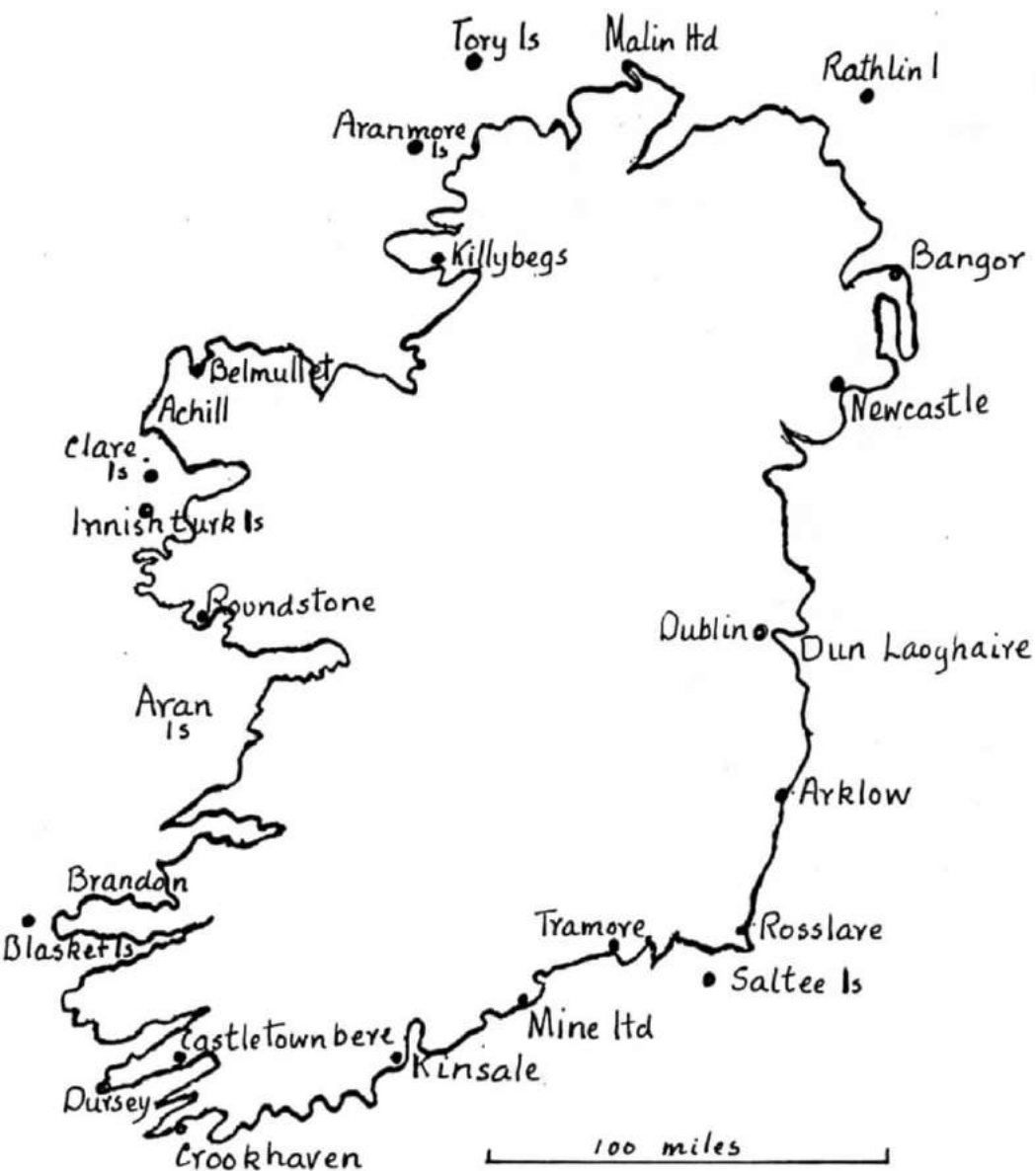


Harbour at high water Inishbofin Island - MARIANDA in foreground

See:- Sail It or Sell It



See:- Round Ireland in MARIANDA



Hooker harbour which dries out, and we walked to the village of Carraroe for the Ceilidh. While at Strutham we were invited to join a Hooker Regatta at Casheen Bay.

Ten Galway Hookers raced here and Hookers must be seen in their own environment to be fully appreciated.

The following day there was another regatta in Roundstone so we followed the Hookers north and enjoyed the festivities there, which went on for three days. During this time the weather blew up at the anchorage so we ran up on the beach in Roundstone harbour, smack in the centre of all the activity and where we were the star of the show, particularly when dried out. Marianda was coming into her own.

One attempt to get west so as to round Slyne Head had to be abandoned due to rough seas and a heavy tide race. Next day we tried again in slightly better conditions and managed to round the Head and its infamous tide race. While just north of the Head the engine cut out (dirt in the fuel) but we were making good progress running before the wind under main and genoa. Wind was increasing slowly and with a large swell from the SW, I should have shortened sail, but I pressed on hoping to make the lee of Innishturk and take the sail in in comfort. It was then Marianda was knocked on her side. I heard the sea breaking astern as we entered one of the many tide races in that area and before I could do anything she slewed round and the breaking sea came over the weather side. I let fly both sheets, (the rest of the crew were below), I was sure she was gone but she righted herself, taking away the lee dodger. Although the fore hatch was off, very little water got below. Needless to say we lost no time in taking in the genoa. It was pure bad boat handling. The boat herself behaved magnificently.

We went into Innishturk and tidied up, then went across to the larger island of Innishbofin and had a night ashore. Again we beached inside the Pier in comfort. At this stage I was beginning to prefer beaching as it was much more comfortable and out of the way of other craft.

Our next isle of call was Clare Island but then we decided to give the other islands in Clew Bay a miss, as there are so many of them. We went direct to Achill Island through the Sound of Achill and thereby avoided the fresh Westerlies. We ran into a slight problem when we reached Achill swing bridge. The run up the Sound was great on the North-going flood. We motored up with the keels slightly lowered and touching the sandy bottom regularly. There are a few rocks about but as the water is quite clear and shallow there was no problem. Within sight of the bridge we had to anchor for about one hour for water to cross the sand bar which was between us and the bridge, and which was dry. Once the bar was covered it was no problem making the anchorage close to the bridge, where we spent the night. Next morning the local Authorities were reluctant to open the bridge and I was about to retrace my steps when the local boat owners and some environmentalists insisted that boats had right of way. They asked me

to stand my ground and lobbied the Authorities. We eventually won the day and, after the party, sailed away to the waves of the crowd on a mad tide through the Bulls Mouth.

We brought up in Elly Bay, on the mainland just north of Achill. Early the following morning we were away on the flood to Belmullet, at the top of Blacksod Bay, where we had to lower the mast to pass under the bridges of the Belmullet Canal. On the other side of the Canal we raised the mast with plenty of local help and spent two days sightseeing.

The weather was nasty with plenty of rain so we decided to push off to greener pastures. We ended up that night in the holiday resort of Inishcrone, which is on the east side of Killala Bay. The sun was shining and the hot sea water was excellent.

Next to Rosses Point in Sligo. Spent four days there, great people and great Yacht Club. My mate broke his toe here so from now on I was on my own.

There was no landing at Innishmurray due to weather, so I carried on to Mullaghmore. Good overnight stay, again on the beach, and the next morning sailed to the busy fishing port of Killybegs. Festival on in Killybegs, too noisy so I went around to nearby Teelin. Beautiful and quiet.

Passed Rathlin O'Bierne and as the wind was northerly, I cut the day short and beached in quiet waters in Rosbeg. Spent two days on the beach here in the back yard of the Rosbeg Hotel waiting for the wind to change.

An easy sail from there brought me to Arranmore Island where the weather was fine again. I could have spent days pottering about here in the fine weather and nice clear waters, but I had to make some shape of getting back home so I had a lovely day's sail up to Tory Island.

One day in Tory, and the next port of call was to Malin Harbour on Malin Head. I was anchored off Malin Pier but as the wind went off during the night, I was forced to run up on the beach and spent a quiet night dried out. Left Malin on a strong east going tide and motored all the way in calm seas to Rathlin Isle.

Two days in Rathlin touring the Island and talking to the locals was delightful and also gave me a good chance to study the Rathlin tide race. I was able to leave there on the slack and carry the tide almost all the way to Bangor in a strong easterly breeze under sail.

Bangor was back to civilization again with its Marina in the middle of town.

A good day's sail from Bangor got me to Newcastle in County Down, under the Mourne Mountains, where I enjoyed the company of the Harbour Master and lifeboat crew and had a grand tour of their new lifeboat house.

I was now in very familiar waters and from here on the pace quickened a bit. One good day's sail brought me to Dunlaoghaire Harbour and another good sailing breeze carried me all the way home to Arklow.

I hope to circumnavigate Ireland again some time in the very near future

and take twice the time. Marianda behaved wonderfully, did everything I asked of her, and lots more besides. We were in places that we could not have possibly visited in any other craft of similar size or dimensions. We hugged the coast, Islands and Sounds. We visited so many strange harbours, bays and inlets, that we could not have possibly carried all the large scale charts we could have done with, and would have needed on a deep keeled boat. Our keels touched rocks and sands numerous times, but I always knew that by lifting them I could get out of most situations, whereas had I been in a keel boat, I would not have ventured: and what I would have missed!

Each Island was unique and each had its own story to tell. With a good boat and time on your hands there are no better waters to cruise.

Repairs carried out to Marianda over some years.

Marianda's wooden mast opened up along the seams about five years ago and this allowed water to get in and also weakened the mast itself. I do not know if it is the original mast, but I suspect that it is. It's built in two parts, hollowed in the centre then glued and clamped together.

To re-glue the mast, I had to strip it of all attachments, saw it through the glued seam from truck to step until it split apart into two full length sections. I then had to carefully remove the old glue, set it up and re-glue. This had to be done under cover and in the right conditions and was a pretty big operation, which took me most of the winter months to do.

Imagine my horror, when at the start of last season, I discovered that the mast was beginning to come apart again and was already taking water inside. It would take me all season to do what I had done previously. This called for some drastic measures. I dug out the broken and cracked glue along the joint and altogether this amounted to about a quarter the length of the mast. I then dried out the mast to the best of my ability. This now left me with about ten openings through the glue, into each of which I could easily shove the blade of a saw.

I then bored holes about 18 inches apart into the hollow part of the mast into which I injected expanding foam until it oozed out through the splits and other bored holes. If I was doubtful about a section, I bored another hole to investigate. As the foam works well in damp conditions, it was not too critical that the inside of the mast was completely dry.

I then dug out the excess foam from the seams and refilled the seam with "Unibond" flexible decorating filler. The filler and foam can be got in any DIY. The mast was well tested last season. While lowering it in Belmullet, it fell very heavily on to the quay wall, and I am convinced that had it not been packed with foam, it would have been very badly damaged. As it turned out, the bronze mast step was twisted and had to be straightened before I could re-step it. A more recent inspection shows the mast to be as good as new, but I shall have to have the step re-done before next season.

Keels

Two years ago, I removed the keel bolts and back plates for inspection and renewing. I did not remove the keels as I had inspected them by lifting the boat by crane with the keels lowered and they appeared to be in reasonably good condition to me. With the boat on her trailer, I slacked off the keel bolts. I then removed the lifting gear cover from the bulkhead and took off the horizontal top boards covering the keel box, both inside the galley, and the smaller section covering the bolts in the cabin. With the keel, bolts and plates exposed from inside, I then built up the keels with small wedges between the lower part of the keels and the trailer, so that it was possible to rock the keels and shake all the bolts. With no weight on anything, and making sure that nothing could move or fall, I made sure that the plates were loose. Next I removed one bolt and through the empty hole, rove a stout rope so that the plate would not fall and jam after the removal of all the other bolts. I used a wire coat hanger to reeve a flat nylon banding strip through the hole. After the removal of all the bolts, the plates were easily withdrawn back into the boat through the galley.

I had new plates built and the bolts rebuilt and galvanized and refitted in reverse order. I did take the precaution of having the plates cut from a slightly smaller thickness steel plate to ensure that I would not run into problems sliding them back into place, and it worked.

I used two pieces of nylon binding tape to reposition the plates, one on each side of the bulkhead, i.e., one through from the forward cabin and the other through the galley. The binding tape slides out easily, even with the bolts in position. I expect to get at least five years out of these repairs before I again have to inspect them.

ECHO IN IRELAND AGAIN

By Piers Beckett (A128)

The last you heard from us was two years ago when we'd just come back from the Bristol Channel with our new crew. Last year we shot down to Padstow, sat on the sand for two gale-bound weeks and shot back again so I left out regaling you with our adventures because there weren't any.

Shortly after we got back she, who will take any excuse for a few months off work, announced the arrival of new crew number 2, who turned up in March and was named Michael. This was an ideal opportunity to do a spot of cruising in early July, a delightful time usually debarred to us by school terms. "You're mental" was the common response when I mooted this idea, but to my surprise two young friends from a previous short cruise agreed to come with us. Mathew and Susan dumped their kit in the back cabin, swallowed hard and buckled-to.

Those familiar with these missives will know about the Tesco pantechinons required to furbish the boat, the water, fuel, torch batteries and a thousand forgettable items. A two-and-a-half year old and a five month old create

an intriguing collage of detailed equipment taking weeks to assemble and three car loads to transport to Solva quay. Long sadly gone are the days when we chucked our sleeping bags aboard and pushed off.

In the evening of June 24th, no more than an hour late, our poor old long-suffering, overloaded boat nosed out of Solva harbour to find a brisk north-easterly and short nasty sea. This sea was cold, too, which we knew because throughout the night lumps of it kept landing in the cockpit via the helmsman's head.

We ambled along under a small jib for a few hours before setting a well-reefed main. The South Bishop came and slowly went, supper was served and we all got used to the idea that we were committed to a cold, dark and bumpy night. Sue beat me by a short head in the bucket race. Mathew shrunk deep into his jacket until just his eyes and his steering hand were visible and her-who-don't-get-sick bustled around in a ludicrously stuffed cabin reading bedtime stories and bathing baby in a jug.

Sue, who had never been out of sight of land, now seemed unimpressed with the sensation of being out of sight of anything at all and slept the sleep of the just. Matt and I shared the steering, blinking at the dim compass, peering round the invisible horizon for invisible ships and peering over the bow for the next invisible, neck-bound wavetop. Sometime in the night I found a small space in the cabin and curled up dreaming of spray hoods or even wheel-houses.

"Echo" is a pretty basic craft. She is mast-head rigged but has no pulpit, pushpit, guard-rails or dodgers; we just don't go on deck too much. The cabin has a cupboard either side at the bow and a small area in-between with the heads that I'm going to chuck out one of these days, covered by a hinged board you stand on to change jibs. This makes a tiny arrow-shaped cabin with mattress occupied by Stevie, three teddies, Sammy the Seal and whatever objects he has squirreled during the day, such as the binoculars or my single-handed dividers. Just aft of the forward bulkhead, on the floor between the bunks Micky lay in a carrycot, fighting to avoid suffocation beneath a huge pile of clothes and bedding. The floor between the keel bolts, which always seemd to get a bit wet, is home to the wellies, waterproofs and can't-find-anywhere-else-to-put-its. On passage we might need to change headsails so Stevie takes Her Majesty's bunk, which has a leecloth, and she takes mine. A shining dawn from somewhere behind us illuminated our misery and drove it away. Sue appeared, stretched and announced that we were out of sight of land; Matt, enlarged an inch or two from his jacket and bacon, eggs, mushrooms and coffee, emerged from the black hole below. The sea sparkled. Two small white whales, which I have since been told were probably Beluga came from the north and sedately dived beneath us. Dolphins popped up every now and then and the breeze came over the quarter. I took the reefs out.

Over the years I have noted a discernable lack of confidence in my navigation emanating from my son's mother, so I wasn't all that surprised to be given a Garmin 45 hand-held GPS for my birthday. Using this, I was able to

pinpoint exactly where we were, an eerie feeling for one who has worked for years on the principle that the larger the cocked-hat the less likely it was to be wrong. This gadget provided hours of fun and shortened passage times dramatically by giving early-warning of speed loss or tide effect.

The day wore on, the breeze dropped and strengthened, the crew politely but unanimously declined my suggestion that we carry on another night, and around 10.00pm we groped our way up the Crosshaven river and came to rest alongside the pontoon of the venerable Royal Cork Yacht Club.

Solva - Cork 120 Miles, time 28 hours.

After a longish trip I always think pootling is the order of the day. I pootled with some silicone in the engine compartment that had somehow let in twenty gallons of the salty stuff on passage (leaky keel-box lids). Matt and Sue pootled around Crosshaven, Josie did Important and Necessary things and Stevie and Michael simply pootled. After a morning like this we trundled gently down river, turned left and ambled into Oysterhaven, where we anchored for lunch within site of a tractor.

"Tractor", said Stevie, admiringly.

Eventually the tractor went about its business, leaving us free to wander on to Kinsale.

Cork - Kinsale 16 Miles, time 8 hours.

Lovely spot, Kinsale, a kind of gourmet's red light district. It's the sort of place where after they've charged you £11 for parking, they hit you for another £1 per shower because, um, its such a lovely spot. Be that as it may, we were glued there all the next day while strong winds whistled and fog blew thickly through the shrouds. Stevie demonstrated what a pain a two-year-old can be if he really tries, Michael came out in sympathy, I moaned because I wanted to move on and couldn't, Mrs Grump moaned at me for moaning and, after heroic efforts to placate the implacable, Matt and Sue betook themselves sensibly to the yacht club where they managed to find a glass of something dark and cheering. We pushed the boggit half a mile in his push-chair before he finally crashed out and we could streak back to join them.

Fortunately the wind dropped a bit overnight and the fog cleared so in the morning we moved out, set all plain sail and rattled westwards propelled by a firm north-easter and a good tide. The Old Head of Kinsale, the Seven Heads and Galley Head steamed by at gratifying speed and in the middle of the afternoon we pulled into Castlehaven, anchoring off Castletownshend.

Kinsale - Castlehaven 40 Miles, 8 hours.

We seemed to have dropped into a climate of heat and fertility, a mirror smooth river winding between sandy beaches at the base of a steep wooded valley. We laboured ensemble up the cobbled hill and collapsed under the shade of a big tree in the middle of a large pub garden. A fine lady called Maria provided pints of the black stuff, Michael gurgled, the monkey climbed the tree and dropped out

of the branches, Sue and Matt let out the odd contented grunt.

We went up the river in the bubble, we swam round the boat and off the beaches and next evening bumped our way through a nasty chop to Glandore, about 8 miles away. This is not quite so secluded but nice in its way; we sat on the cliff overlooking the anchorage and watching the gig crews practise until late in the dusk, all the time fortified from the bar which just happened to be at our elbows.

Sue and Matt suffer from an unfortunate thing called work and needed to be put on a train home. I didn't want to leave them in the wild west, so the next afternoon we pushed off for Cork. This was a pragmatic passage even by our standards, mostly under power with sometimes the sails set for a very close beat all the time into an uncomfortable little lop. It's chiefly memorable for seizing the engine while we were off Galley Head due to a broken water-pump belt. Fortunately it started up again when we'd let it cool off. Later the sea flattened and a beautiful hazy sunset lit a school of porpoises off the Old Head of Kinsale. We went up Crosshaven River in the dark and parked in our old spot at the Royal Cork.

Glandore - Crosshaven 43 Miles, 10 hours.

Up before the lark, we dived into the showers and headed across the harbour and past the long, sombre front of Cobh. We vied for space with container ships up the twisty river Lee and tied up by the customs houses. Stevie and I took them to the bus station and waved them on their way.

Not surprisingly, we felt a little flat. We were warned not to leave the boat unattended in the evening and the area spoke of run down depression though we never actually saw any rats. We walked round Cork, a pearl of a city, and left on the evening ebb, taking care not to let the mooring lines fall in the dank water.

Much later, and in the dark for the third time, I weaved my way up the Crosshaven River. I think I'm getting good at it now. We spent a cheerful day basking in the sunshine, watching the Oppies sail about and the yachts come and go, trying to get used to the idea that we were a long way from home with two very small passengers. We bid farewell to the Royal Cork, most hospitable of yacht clubs, and, at half past four in the morning took ourselves pragmatically off for Dunmore East.

This means engine thump all the way with just a touch of mainsail in the shifts, a short bumpy sea that Atalantas go through instead of over, and cold water in the face. The big advantage is that with the engine running and the steering easy you can trust the autohelm to get the steering right and not drain the battery. Josie played with the children in the cabin, I played with my GPS in the main hatch and we got there OK.

Crosshaven - Dunmore East 62 Miles, 13½ hours.

This always used to be a raft-up situation in the tiny, crowded harbour, but there isn't really room any more and fortunately the Yacht Club was able to

arrange a sheltered mooring for us, which made our three-day stay wonderfully easy and comfortable. They told me about plans to build a marina there, which would be a great asset, since this is the obvious first stop for all boats coming from South Wales. Members were particularly interested in our sailing about the place with small people, and reactions varied from 'you must be mad' (quite probably) to 'you must be very tough' (probably incorrect) to 'why not? We always did'. Members of this last group came up with a wealth of information and useful tips.

Of course, this advice did not prevent the classic accident. While Josie was in town shopping with the baby I motored out in the bubble with the Boggit. A reasonable little sea was running. I went to the front to tie onto the yacht, he went to the back to play with the engine and disappeared. By the time I reached him he was kicking around dementedly in his lifejacket, unamused and holding me responsible. I then had to swim after the bubble, which I hadn't had time to tie on, hoist him and myself in, row back to "Echo" and make two cups of hot, very sweet tea. He's never drunk tea before or since.

Apart from that, things were idyllic: the sun baked down and we swam off the little sandy beach and played on the rocks. One evening I was very kindly offered a trip in the club safety boat for one of their evening races. This was exhilarating stuff while a brisk force six created big rollers in the shallow estuary. The fleet included Mirror sailors preparing for the forthcoming worlds, people who could and did capsize on a screaming spinnaker run and be off again planing within forty seconds or so.

Time to go, and at two o'clock on Friday, July 7, we slipped our mooring and motored out into a light north-easterly. It rarely became strong enough to turn the engine off, but the night was peaceful, children asleep in the cabin and dolphins making regular appearances round the stern. Fog whooshed in at three in the morning, just after I'd sighted the Smalls light, and thereafter the GPS was invaluable as we navigated blind into the bay. Without it I would probably have had to divert to Fishguard; with it we steered right up to Black Scar. We entered the harbour as the fishermen left, picked up the familiar mooring and had a large, noisy hotel breakfast.

Dunmore East - Solva 72 Miles, 17 hours.

MINOR MODIFICATIONS

By Peter Davies BABY SEAL A137

The Standard Atalanta is a wonderful boat, but it does have some distinct shortcomings with respect to moving around it, inside and out. The rounded external surfaces are marvellous for shedding water and they certainly do not allow breaking waves to get a grip on the top sides. However, they equally prevent anyone obtaining a really firm hand hold. The hatch runners offer some slight grip but not the sort of solid hold that is required in a lumpy sea. The obvious solution is to fit external grab handles. Commercially available ones tend to be decorative

rather than useful and offer little more security than that provided by the hatch runners. All my grab handles were made to accommodate gloved hands.

The handles are easy and quick to make provided a jig saw and router are available. Wide variations in shape are acceptable, but whatever shape adopted, it is essential to avoid any short grain which could weaken the handles. On the other hand, the very long arch-like hole often seen on commercial handles can provide a very uncomfortable pinch if the hand slips into the wedge-shaped portion of the grip. Strong and effective fixings can be effected by either using four large screws fitted with cup washers, or by drilling right through the handle and counter-boring to fit bolt heads. The bolt heads can be secured in the handle by bedding them in epoxy resin. I have used both methods and both have proved entirely satisfactory.

Possibly even more useful than the external grab handles are those which I have fitted to the interior. There is one each side of the cabin entrance which provides a firm hand hold while entering or leaving the cabin. Somewhat larger ones are fitted just below the level of the port lights in the galley area. These tend to be the most heavily used ones. A further pair are fitted in the main cabin itself, again at the level of the bottom of the port light and hard up against the main bulkhead. As the main VHF is situated on the starboard side, the handle here gives a firm support while using the radio. The necessity for such a handle became obvious when I demonstrated the hard way that the handset cord and connector are not strong enough to provide support.

The remaining handle, which has proved very useful, is a large horizontal one fixed at the front end of the cabin nacelle. Once in the lower front portion of the main cabin, an upright posture has to be abandoned and some sort of crawling aid has yet to be devised.

I cannot claim credit for the modification to the cockpit seats, indeed the additional seat flaps may have been a standard offering. However, I have been on many other Atalantas and not seen their like, though somebody told me that they had had them and had removed them. I cannot think why.

The cockpit of the Atalanta is just too wide for comfort or real security. At a good angle of heel, it is very difficult to brace oneself firmly in place. My boat is fitted with two hinged mahogany flaps secured with bolts into the bulkheads at each end. Fully lowered, the flaps take hardly any room out of the original cockpit. Raised level with the cockpit seats they provide an extra wide seating area which would certainly be wide enough to make extra berths under a cockpit tent. However, they really come into their own when they are bolted in their raised position, when they provide a secured trough in which to sit. Moreover, one foot can be braced against the leeward flap. The boards are tapered being around eight inches wide at the forward end, some four or five inches at the other end. The dimensions are determined by the natural geometry of the cockpit. Not only do the raised flaps secure people, they also secure things such as hand bearing compasses

and binoculars, though it should be stressed that such storage should only be temporary.

Perhaps the greatest change that I have made to the boat has been to dispense with the sheet horse. A couple of years ago, I came across an article in *Practical Boat Owner*, which advocated the use of twin main sheets as a means of enhancing sail control. I decided to experiment with twin sheets as it was clear that not using the sheet horse would greatly improve access to the stern cabin.

The twin sheets are fixed to large U-bolts set as far outboard as possible. The twin sheets certainly improve sail control, though to get the best out of the arrangement, it is also necessary to rig a gybe preventer to some point well forward. I used the base of the pulpit stanchions. With the aid of two sheets and a preventer, it is possible to have full control of the mainsail on all points of sailing. When the boom lies within the arc defined by the fixing points of the sheets, one sheet trims the sail angle which is retained by tensioning the gybe preventer. The other sheet can then be tensioned to serve as a very powerful kicking strap. With the boom forward of the arc defined by the fixing points much the same situation prevails though the kicking strap effect is not quite so powerful. However, in all circumstances it is possible to control not only the angle but also the twist of the sail.

The greatest advantage, especially in strongish winds or gusty conditions, is in gybing. This manoeuvre can be carried out under perfect control. One sheet is tightened as the other is slackened and the boom can be brought well inboard over the cockpit. This allows the gybe preventers to be changed over while the boom remains under perfect control. Even if the wind does get the wrong side of the sail it is only the top of the sail that blows over. When all is ready the gybe is accomplished by simultaneously slackening one sheet and tightening the other. Once the boom is safely over and the sail properly set, the gybe preventer can be fully secured. It takes a lot of string, and this is the one disadvantage. It is essential to use different coloured mainsheets because at times the cockpit floor is covered in rope. Provided each rope's function can be differentiated by its colour, it is a simple matter to sort them out.

I am very enthusiastic about this modification. It has all the advantages outlined above, and makes short handed or weak-crewed sailing a great deal easier. It is also ideal for allowing novices to helm downwind as whatever they do, no harm can result. This removes a lot of their anxiety and they learn more quickly as a consequence. Fortunately it is possible to try this modification without going to the expense of fitting a second sheet. Preliminary trials may be made by removing the sheet horse and anchoring the existing mainsheet to one of the fixing points. The second mainsheet can be simulated by using a longish mooring rope running through a single block shackled to the boom. This arrangement will not give the full power of two proper mainsheets, but it will allow one to get the feel of the thing during a few manoeuvres in moderate weather.

In case anyone else tries this, and I really do recommend it (especially to those who find normal gybing a bit of a fraught procedure), the normal sheet horse fixings could acquire a new purpose. I have not got around to this one yet, but if they were fitted with short stubby posts, they would provide a very convenient bollard in easy reach of the cockpit.

MORE LEAKS AND CURES

By Colin Twyford HIRAN A95

During the winter of 1992/1993 Janet and I did a great deal of work on the underside of Hiran, and the winter of 1993/1994 was spent repairing the keel boxes (see "Leaks and Cures" 1994\1995 Bulletin). I am ashamed to admit that a vital task was omitted, so in the early months of 1995 I raised Hiran on blocks once again and stripped off the raised capping round the underside of the keel boxes. Like the centre keel band removed the previous year they came off very easily leaving a host of brass stumps protruding. This was all that remained of the screws that held up the capping over the past 35 years. They were all either unscrewed or pulled out, though some required drilling. Using 1¼" x 1¼" fluted dowels I filled all the holes (164) using the West system. The bottom of the plywood sheets that made up the keel boxes were exposed, plus of course the hole cut into the hull section. Some of the edges were slightly de-laminated so West was forced down all the holes, then the repair was sanded down.

New strips and ends were glued and screwed down in ¾ mahogany, slightly thicker than previously used. The repair was covered with three coatings of West resin in keeping with the rest of the underside, and the rubber keel strips replaced with the plates and half rounds to hold them in position. In launching, and during the months following, Hiran was a dry boat as last. The replacement was not a difficult job and I recommend it to all owners.

Johara Atalanta 148

FOR SALE: Sea going trailer/sailor, drop keel 26 foot registered mast head sloop. Fully restored to almost new condition. Four wheel galvanized trailer with winch extra. New furlong genoa, main six years old, spinnaker. Rewired, re-plumbed new stainless standing rigging. Agba hull and deck epoxyed and varnished. Decca. Ready to sail away; can be rigged and launched in two hours by two men and a boy. Recovery same time. Heavy duty full sized boat cover. History of restoration and invoices available. Offers over £10,000. Greenhough O1253-735431.