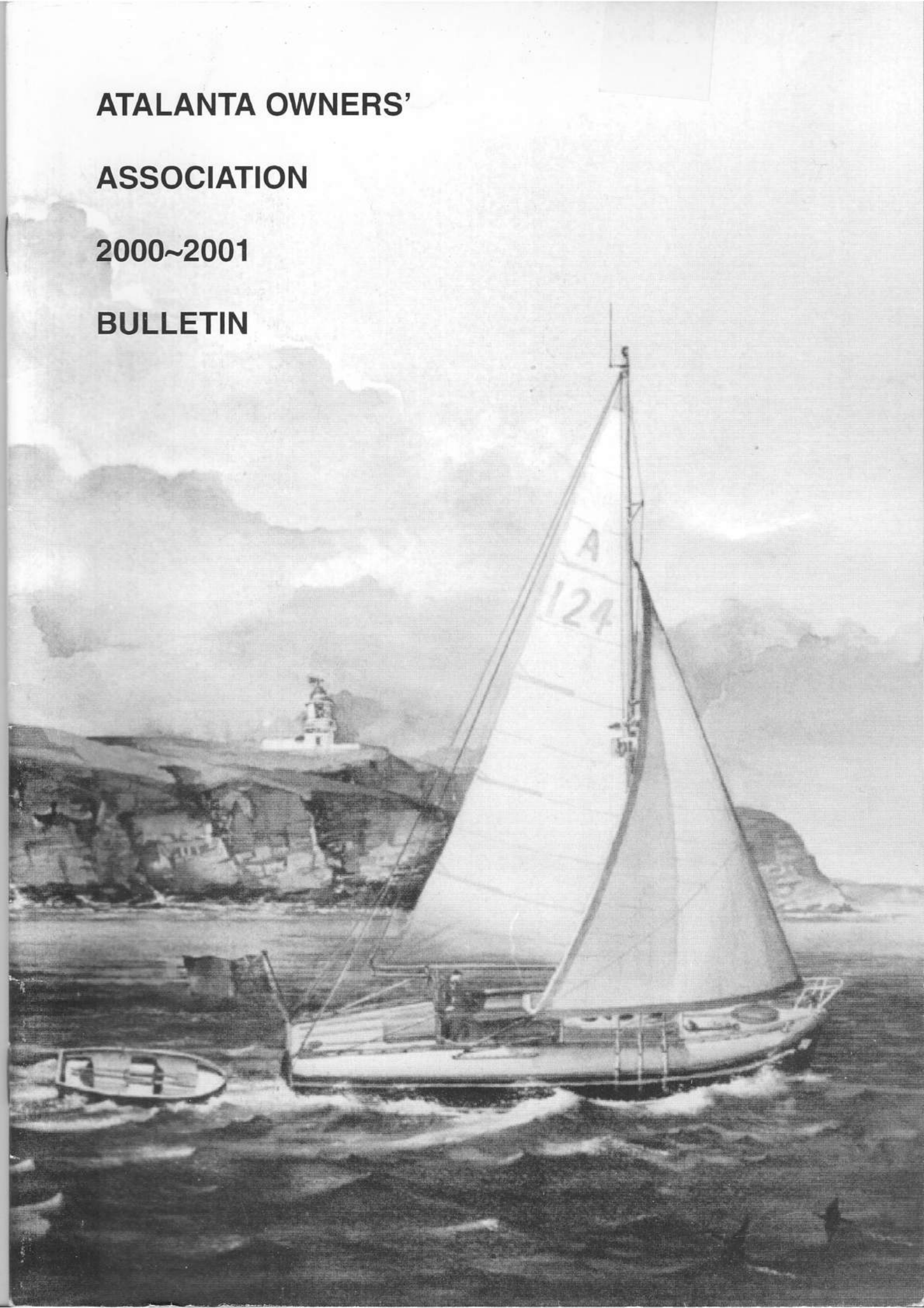


**ATALANTA OWNERS'**

**ASSOCIATION**

**2000~2001**

**BULLETIN**



ATALANTA OWNERS' ASSOCIATION

2000 – 2001 BULLETIN

42<sup>nd</sup> Edition

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Front cover illustration of A 124 “Rakshi”, from a watercolour by Graham Winteringham, of the Royal Birmingham Society of Artists, former owner.

Inside front cover – participants in the South Coast Rally with Charles and Bobby Currey. (Photograph David Pullinger)

Inside back cover – “Achates” chases “Walrus” during the South Coast Rally. (Photograph David Pullinger)

**ATALANTA OWNERS' ASSOCIATION 2000 BULLETIN**

**COMMITTEE 2000 - 2001**

**Commodore**                    **Charles Currey Esq.,**

**Vice Commodore**           **John Searle Esq.,**

**Hon. Secretary**            **Colin Twyford Esq.,**

**Hon Editor**                    **Mike Dixon,**

**Hon Auditor**                **Mrs Monica Mourant,**

**Engines**                      **Adrian Rivett Esq.,**

**Fred Boothman Esq.,**

**Although no longer on the Committee, advice on drawings and other technical matters will continue to be available from**

**Maurice Donovan Esq.,**

**From the Commodore**

This is my last letter to you all as Commodore. It has been difficult to give Colin the help he deserves and the new arrangements should improve the situation.

This does not mean that I will be giving up my interest in Atalantas and of course I will continue to try to help with any questions should they turn up.

There was a really interesting and cheerful day last June when three Atalantas arrived on our moorings in front of Lighter's Field. Let's try to repeat this in 2001.

Here's to our unique boats. They will last a long time yet!

**Charles Currey**

**Editorial**

In this issue, you will find some fascinating accounts of members' voyages. From Keith Viewing's circumnavigation of Brittany to Mick Le Maitre's round trip from Guernsey to West Mersea, proof, if ever it was needed, that we are fortunate to own such versatile and seaworthy craft.

The Boothman's tale of adverse weather in Naxos, almost 20 year's ago brought a wry smile – two feet of water – enough for an Atalanta, but insufficient for the majority of modern boats.

And don't miss Michael Roberts' delightful catalogue of sailing yarns, recounted with such masterly understatement.

I hope you enjoy their stories and, for those of you who are perhaps contemplating something a little more ambitious next year, that you are encouraged by their exploits.

There's always room in the bulletin for your log-books and journals. Please do send them in – in whatever format you can manage.

May you always be on starboard with the wind abaft the beam!

Good sailing in 2001.

**Mike Dixon**



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### South Coast Rally

**Charles Hammond**

**("Walrus" A 119)**

**July 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>.  
Chichester Harbour**

**A 60 "Achates"  
A 119 "Walrus"  
A 165 "Sloebery"**

### Friday evening 2000

Two Atalantas meet up at East Head. We've got a rally on! OK, so two boats isn't a lot but.....it's better than one! And it could be three on Sunday.

We lit a barbeque in the sand dunes and had a wonderful meal washed down with plenty of wine and beer.

### Saturday 1000

No other boats had arrived, so "Achates" and "Walrus" set sail for Bembridge IOW. Wind southerly force three.

Excellent sail – arrived mid day.

"Walrus" ran up the sandy beach, just inside the harbour, on the left as you go in, and "Achates" anchored off the beach.

In the afternoon we caught the bus to Ryde and then walked back along the coastal path. The evening was spent in the Bay Watch café, where we had fantastic locally caught fish, good wine and excellent company.

### Sunday 0900

A quick dash back to Chichester to meet "Sloebery" for the start of the race which was to finish at the Commodore's residence, where an evening barbeque was waiting.

### The race

Ready, steady, GO!!!!

Three Atalantas in a line heading for the Commodore's house, the wind north-easterly force two with the tide against us. "Achates" got off to a flying start and wasn't seen again until the finish. "Walrus" and "Sloebery" followed steadily behind using their local knowledge!! (Ha ha!)

The boats were neck and neck at the Bosham channel. "Walrus" stayed close to the north side and "Sloebery" towards the southern shore. "Walrus" pulled clear and crossed the line just in front.

I must come clean at this point as during the race we received telephone calls from the Currey family, coaching us on the Itchenor Reach tactics.

The finish line was marshalled by the Commodore positioned on the shore astride his lawn mower, assisted by the Secretary, Colin Twyford.

All three boats took up the Curreys' visitor moorings. We were ferried ashore by Alistair to a splendid barbeque courtesy of Bobby Currie.

The Commodore presented the prizes –

1 <sup>st</sup>	A 60 "Achates" – David Pullinger
2 <sup>nd</sup>	A 165 "Sloebery" – Jonathon Askew
3 <sup>rd</sup>	A 119 "Walrus" – Charles Hammond

Thank you to the Currey's for being such good hosts and to all those that came. Please come again next year.



## Cruise to Brittany

### Keith Viewing

#### ("Solone" A 162)

"Good old Uffa", they said. "Hadn't seen one for years". Caps off and a sweeping bow to the master architect. They were fascinated; in Christchurch, in Poole, and wherever we were in Brittany.

"Solone" was beautiful in a coat of Royal blue with boot-top and off-white anti-fouling. The flat battery and the need to top up the hydraulics in Dartmouth two years before were forgotten in the excitement of the moment. She was afloat and gorgeous amongst the mass of white look-a-likes in the sun. The Priory bells pealed, and only a half-litre of fluid was needed to raise that keel.

Round to Poole to find the elegant wife of 40 years perched on a bollard as if arrived from Ascot. One of the admirers had recommended a visit to Wareham. Ah yes! Up river in the rain, where the rushes grow, strings of boats, an otter, and the rain lifted. There was "Atalanta Mary", all wooden mast and oiled cabin top, beautiful to see; there was Wareham bridge and the Town Quay. The ducks were at eye level and close enough to touch, and the sign read 'welcome to moor'.

Back on the ebb, and another welcome from Redclyffe YC, and please use the showers—the first temptation of Circe. That battery was flat again; the red light was on and off, but mainly on and eight leads were attached to the alternator. "Only two leads on the new ones", they said. This was followed by some mention of other advances in technology and a cell phone rang on a boat nearby. Alternators came and went, and did one "--- wish to purchase the smallest pack of a 50 litre drum of hydraulic fluid?" Now we discovered the world of those that make do and mend, same as in the Dark Continent. Cash changed hands in an unmentionable garage where a grubby container held the goods in pristine condition. But still the oil dripped into the keel boxes below. New rams were required and that was a good excuse to remain in Paradise.

The Monday Club at Redclyffe YC is one of those gatherings of the very wise and generous men. Four new planks appeared, each 12 x 1.5

inches and 8 feet in length, and trussed in pairs, two were set athwart the gunwales, and two floated beneath the hull to support the keels. The excellent 1.8 m inflatable (by Wetline), that fitted over the aft cabin was from Wareham, too.

Elegant Frouwke departed for France by Condor ferry, with some comment about "why take 24 hours for the trip when the Condor takes only four?" New rams, new cruising chute; L'Aber Wrach on 9<sup>th</sup> July, or bust. Ian of Gwanda was at the helm and keen to join the festivals of ancient boats to mark the Millennium. The gathering at L'Aber Wrach would feed to Brest, and on to Douarnenez.

About seven miles off St Albans a fog patch descended and stayed down. Too late to turn back, so the best option was to steer west and one hoped, parallel with the inshore shipping lane. One geologist reminded the other geologist that they had achieved some proficiency in the art of imagination.

The fog lifted to identify the Castle Ledge buoy at Dartmouth, and midnight came and went. The second level of Paradise was at the river cliff below Dittisham, but the course was set by noon and "Solone" was in mid-Channel in the small hours. We were driven by a fresh westerly that gradually backed and increased, as did the swell; pitch dark with rising seas and more to come. This was our first experience of surfing; exciting, but less so amongst the shipping during the graveyard watch and our tricks of thirty minutes were enough.

Most of the ships were bound south west, so "Solone" crossed at a fine angle. Others sheered off from that steady stream and headed west, and even north of west. One changed course gradually so that classic triangle of pretty lights came up astern as our helm went down, down, and down again. Most stern lights are pretty insignificant and eventually the monster decided that "Solone" was insignificant too, and foamed past.

Square sails came over the horizon with the dawn and soon "La Belle Poule", one of the training schooners of the French Navy, was along-side for a cheery "bon jour". White and ethereal, sparkling smart, she was wonderful company.

There is a temptation to take short cuts with the Atalanta, but we soon recognised the wicked, sucking swirl of the tide over barely submerged rocks and soon we were safe in the

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river and moored amongst an interesting fleet of ancients off the town. "Solone" had arrived on schedule after all.

The weather was absolutely foul. The wind blew, the rain came in fierce squalls, the boats rolled on the swell, and the water was too rough to try for the shore in the dinghy. The Bretons are a tough lot and we could see crowds hidden by umbrellas intent upon the open-air sea shanties and the traditional songs and dance of the Celts. It was amazing. Eventually we made it ashore, but it was difficult to walk against the wind where it funnelled close to the cliffs.

The magic of Abers 2000 was revealed when 1200 enthusiasts sat to a superb dinner. By now we knew of the common culture of the Scots, the Irish and our hosts. The bag pipes gave a haunting call in the wind and carried the message of Saint Eflam over the water. His curragh had crossed in 88 hours.

One shanty succeeded another, some familiar, others less so, but the soul of Abers set the 1200 swaying to the music, hands on shoulders, this way and that, weigh, weigh, weigh, in the boating song. Others set the dancing with hundreds linked around the diners and others tapping the jig on flexing tables. Friendly, orderly, and delightful.

The fleet was to leave L'Aber Wrach before dawn for the Chenal du Four and the Rade de Brest. We saw the flash of torches and heard calls upon the wind and took a chance on the weather at dawn. Around the point, there were 17 boats ahead and another 18 astern, and it was not as bad as it seemed.

The fortress of Brest rises steep from the waters edge to guard the river, to lend grace to the town. An ample quay provides space for countless demonstrations of all things nautical, refreshments of all sorts, and a fine display of small-craft. You sailed into the basin, found a ladder on the wall, were given an ID number for your life-lines; and 'Eee-Grecque-quatre', all with a smile.

That mooring was in a prime position to see all that entered and left the harbour. Tugs hauled the great "Sedov", (a four-masted barque and the largest sailor afloat), through a curtain of rain, the stem within a hundred metres of "Solone" and the bowsprit rising above. Square-riggers of all sorts, Breton fishing craft great and small, numerous galleys of the Atlantic Challenge, and then with a resounding

boom, came another apparition from the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, a 16 gun revenue cutter and one still smoking. The "Le Renard" was together with Peter the Great's frigate, "Shtandart", the most impressive of all. One could differ, perhaps, on the "Stad Amsterdam", a brand new three-masted ship in superb order and on the "Recouvrance" of Brest. And the racing, and Bastille Day and the fire-works. And "Solone" saw it all.

The race to Douarnenez across the bay was a drifter so we motored through the fleet with a wonderful view of hundreds of sail astern and the benefit of an early arrival. A drying mooring close to the lock gates gave a superb spectacle as the fleet passed through. Ships by far too large would square up for the entrance, a spoke this way and that. Some dame of fashion lounged in a hammock slung in the line of sight. She preferred to remain undisturbed and book-in-hand, dismissed the entreaties of the helmsman with an idle, but practised wave!

The Turkish coast called Ian, and Frouwke joined ship for the dreaded Raz de Sein and beyond. All of this was very new, and as the only young lady who was ill on the trapeze of a Flying Dutchman, and came back for more, there was concern for 'all of that up and down business'. A chance remark resulted in *COCCULINE* by *Boiron*, a homeopathic remedy and now there was confidence.

One late afternoon "Solone" lifted to the flood with three hours to reach the Raz at HW. Plenty of light houses there, and swirling tides in a place that is never still. Edge away from the race, this way and that, try to follow the sailing directions and then safely past; all seen by the Coast Guard high on the cliffs above. The anchorage at Audierne was wide open to a stiff wind that evening, and so up river to arrive off the town at last-light. A vacant mooring was there, riding in a metre of water over clean sand. Oh wonder!

The westerly prevailed so that the Pointe Penmarc'h seemed a reasonable target with Loctudy by nightfall. The tide served, the wind blew, and the set towards that point and its overfalls was avoided. Around the point the coast was low and sandy and fishing craft great and small, were everywhere. The young flood swept "Solone" along and it was fun to race with the fishers for the afternoon landings. The homeopathic remedy had stood the strain.

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The next leg to Port Tudy on Ile Graz included a diversion to explore the Odet River and a sight of Quimper. Similar to the upper reaches of the Fal, well-wooded and coloured by occasional patches of heather on almost bare over-hangs; tight turns in narrow gorges and a magic anchorage if you could find the entrance to a secret channel. The Iles Glennan were recommended but the west wind freshened and we stood on towards the rising cliffs of Ile de Graz. We surged into Port Tudy and were lucky there; the mole was high, the main was down in a flash, and there was an outside berth on a buoy. Our kindly neighbour explained with a yawn "--that they had just arrived from New York"

Now the goal was the Auray River in the Morbihan, hidden behind the peninsular of Quiberon of sandy beaches and water-front hotels. The off-lying rocks were well separated by channels which seemed much wider than imagined from the chart. Now search for the chart again for an insignificant star to identify another huge lighthouse. The swell eased, the west wind blew on an easy reach, but where was the entrance to the inland sea? Steer north for the channel, and there, almost hidden by a huge tree, was the Port Navalo light.

"Solone" caught the young flood through the narrows and sailed on the wind in the Auray River. The Marina of Port Cruesty, outside the narrows, and the harbour of Navalo inside, were both dead to lee and uninviting. A mud-flat was preferred and as we know, these are carefully savoured as you sweep around the bend of any beautiful river. At last a tree lined tow path, a stone-walled channel to the town, a vacant space on the trot, and enjoy Auray of the XVI th Century.

You need a handy chart in the Morbihan as the current sweeps past crowded moorings, busy sailing schools and one island after the other. You search for the river; a 90 degree turn, a narrow channel between the rocks, and then you float in shallow waters with gentle slopes to the fields. No prize for joining the throng waiting for the bridge; better to lie off in an eddy and watch artists of the full astern manoeuvre-never look back-as they practised their skills. Interesting.

The mooring fee in Vannes is reckoned by the beam, so bravo for the slim Atalanta which fits where others cannot. The town was XVI century again, and on a grand scale. Now sailing again and against the breeze, but not as fast as a two masted lugger, Breton style. The

Brittany canal beckoned, but the bar of the Villaine River had to be crossed and was another dead lee shore. Waiting for a shift at Locmariaquer was a pleasure; a diesel pump was in the village; fresh mussels for a song, and nice soft mud for wind-swept but gentle nights.

At last the wind backed off-shore and blew just as strong. Should we choose the white-light sector for the entrance, or follow the directions and choose the lee shore? We chose the white sector, and touched with the keels as others anchored for the tide.

The river and the canals were magic; constantly changing scenery, the harvest in progress, an expanse of still water and inviting banks in the sun. The elegant crane in the tiny gully of La Roche Bernard was free, but croissants again and on to the great basin of Redon. More Deux-Mille celebrations! The flag-ship was the mighty Renard, host to a dedication with choir and bag-pipes. The Pirates, every child under the age of twelve, sang with the enthusiasm of L'Aber Wrack and we enjoyed the celebrations and the company; that crane of Redon excepted.

The way to St Malo was wonderful; there were very few boats, and above the sea-lock the sailors on passage were scarce and those from Britain, rare. August was supposed to be busy, but perhaps the shallow drafts of the modern boats were not shallow enough. We touched a rocky bottom from time to time, and soon raised the keels and depended upon the rudder for soundings. One magnificent water-mill succeeded another; Rennes came and went, and now for the let-down to the sea. Narrow winding rivers were shaded by avenues of magnificent trees, or by steeply wooded river cliffs gradually widening; the locks were a flood of colour, each attended by a student, elegant, charming and competent with the classical surprises of Leon and Dinan to come. This is Atalanta country, a privilege for the few.

We were invited to Tuscany, so "Solone" passed St Malo without a rest, or indeed a passage plan. At peace from the inland waters and a strong ebb out to sea, we took a chance on the tidal streams to Jersey, the homeopathic cure, and the passage plan. Very wrong. Nightfall was well before St Hellier when the wind freshened and sent Frouwke below. Three sets of directions to the harbour were studied, but none really helped for the town lights were blotted out by squalls and then by a



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sizeable mass of rock. Now lights were all over the place. Swept by the tide, roll the jib for a better view, and at last recognise that the brilliant green under the equally bright red had to be leading lights. Give it a try, and all of the others fell into place; turn first right into the yacht harbour. Wonderful.

The weather was uncertain at Alderney; something about fog patches later next day, but we could cross the shipping early and reach Poole by evening. That was another test of the wonder remedy! We were set ten miles east by the flood as the chalk cliffs of the Isle of Wight rose on the horizon, and any fog was dispersed in the freshening wind. Now 3-4, then 5 and probably 6 plus, with the pennants on the backstay cracking like pistol shots. The swell rose encouraged by the ebb, and "Solone" rolled off the crests and surged down the fronts

before lifting again. Thirty miles to go, the genoa furled; the fully battened main de-powered and still sailing fast.

The need to establish the set to the west resulted in an offer by a former prostrate mariner, to take the helm. As "Solone" rolled off a larger crest than most, the comment was an enthusiastic, "This is really rather fun". The remedy could be said to be tried and tested. The ebb was strong at Poole bar that afternoon and we sailed slowly past one uninviting marina after another, until the weather shore beckoned. With keels up, and rudder touching, we anchored at Shipstall Point watched by hundreds of gulls and tens of deer grazing the saltings. This was magic indeed. To Christchurch next day, to be greeted by swans, wild ponies and the Priory bells again.



### **An Opportunist Sailing By**

**Michael Roberts**

**(Former owner of "Sherpa" F 47)**

Sixty two years ago, at the tender age of not quite 18, I arrived at the Royal Military College Sandhurst, a "Gentleman Cadet" destined for eighteen months of military training to become, hopefully, an officer in the Indian Army and the career of a lifetime. The date was 28 August 1939, and after an extremely uncomplimentary introduction to life at the RMC as a young squirt of no significance whatsoever, the whole company was called to meet in the canteen for an announcement, on 3 September. We listened in silence to the declaration of war, promptly burst into a prolonged bout of cheering, and re-filled our beer mugs.

Three months later I had one pip on my shoulder and was embarked on an old rust bucket called the "Lancashire" heading for Bombay. There we were greeted by the reddest sunrise I have ever witnessed. Not only was the whole sky red, it was reflected in the sea and on the Gateway to India. The

shepherd's warning never crossed my mind. I was overjoyed, I was back in India after eleven years at school in England (the fate in those days of the children of parents who served the Empire abroad). Home at last, in this wonderful country .....

But wait a minute – what's all this got to do with sailing? Well, it has to do with a model yacht, an uncle in the Royal Navy, and a ketch called Davy Jones. These three launched me into a lifelong love of sailing, and wherever I fetched up near a stretch of water I sailed on it or rowed on it. There was Hanna Lake near Quetta, and later on the river and lake near Poona, where I and a number of sailing enthusiasts were on an army course on which the sailing took precedence!

The fortunes of war then took the Gurkha Battalion, with which I was serving, to the Andaman Islands, an almost unspoilt paradise whose main harbour, Port Blair, provided perfect sheltered sailing waters for small craft. The first thing I did was to join the sailing club, where a kindly member gave me his GP14, as he had built a new one. I understood his generosity when I found myself coming in last in the Sunday races. Never mind, it was sailing and any time I liked, as long as I

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avoided the Japanese bombing times – usually predictable.

We were rescued from the Japanese in the nick of time on Friday 13 March (a date which has been sacred to me ever since), by the Cruiser “Ceylon” and the troopship “Newara Eliya”. It was a night time operation and the troopship crew “rescued” my dinghy, which occupied the quarter deck till we got back to Madras. I never saw it again.

It chanced that our next destination was Ceylon itself, the defence of which was entrusted to our hands, and there wasn't much time for anything else, except entertaining the tea planters' daughters, one of whom later became my wife. However the battalion was soon required elsewhere – Burma, to be precise, and we found ourselves slugging it out toe to toe with some very unfriendly Japanese warriors in the Kabaw Valley and Imphal. They lost, and we had a rest by a lake in Imphal – but no sailing, only rowing, and not much of that either. We were soon on the move again, over the mountain and into the plains of Burma, and some very wide stretches of water which expedience demanded should be crossed as rapidly as possible owing to the presence of enemy aircraft. Expedience also demanded that our own fire should be directed at the enemy, airborne or not.

Mistakes, unfortunately, occasionally did happen and my share of one such mishap was a “blighty” which altered the course of my life. Within two years I was married and a father. Indian Independence had ended my service in the Indian Army, and I was on my way “home” jobless.

Britain's long association with Nepal, however, was still very strong and four regiments were transferred to the British Army, including my regiment, the 10<sup>th</sup>. I rejoined, and in Hong Kong my wife bought a small rowing dinghy from Choy Lee's boat yard, to which we added a lee-board, mast, sail and 2hp outboard. Based in the small fishing port of Sai Kung, we had a local paradise called Clearwater Bay to ourselves. Sailing again at last. That was in the sixties, and since then I have built and sailed two Gremlins, a Heron, an Optimist, an Embassy, two 20ft canoes, and a 12ft rowing boat; this last, built of hardboard to a Blandford design, is still going strong after 20 years!

Dinghy sailing is now far too energetic for me, and I am assured by a sailing friend that in old age you need a 70 footer with a crew. I am approaching 80 and can't afford that, so I've settled for a 7ft Gremlin. You can sit in the middle and lean gently from side to side.



### **Cruise from Guernsey to the East Coast race**

**Mick Le Maitre**

**(“Sweet Sue” A 138)**

Mick Le Maitre, Skipper  
John Prout, Navigator and Chef  
Recondition Engine, 8HP Yamar  
Propeller - 2 blade 11” x 9”  
Fuel Cans 3 x 25 litres up in the bows  
Fuel Cans 6 x 5 litres in cockpit lockers  
Main fuel tank 35 litres  
Main water tank 65 litres  
3 x 10 litres in engine compartment

### **Friday 11 August St Sampsons to Omonville La Rogue**

1450 Left mooring for lay-by pontoon. Had difficulty getting alongside an unattended 18ft cabin cruiser. John arrived just in time to help with the ropes. All stores put in aft cabin, including powered cool box. Ten minutes later left lay-by pontoon and cleared the harbour. Wind 2/3 N/NE. Decided to motor sail so main up. Abeam of Cape de la Hague making 9kts over the ground, moving out so we don't get caught in the back tide. Saw one yacht inside going backwards.

2045 Picked up buoy in Omonville La Rogue.

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### **Saturday 12 August Omonville to where? - Shoreham, Brighton or Newhaven**

- 2045 Left Omonville in fog with coffee mug in hand
- 0535 Returning - fog is very thick. Tidy up stores etc.
- 1325 Left Omonville again, had heard other yachts chatting on radio. No fog mid channel. Radioed St Peter Port and Solent Coastguard of our intentions. Wind F1/3 W/SW. Mainsail up, hardly filling. Tide against us. Two P&O Ferries passed us, one heading for Cherbourg, the other one leaving. 15 litres of fuel put into main tank. Navigation lights checked, OK. Stem section of dinghy inflated with seat and tied down on aft deck. Turned and passed through first shipping lane at right angles to it. Keeping a lookout for E.C.3 buoy, it's been moved. Using an old chart, passed through last shipping lane at right angles. Ship gave way to me, he had right of way. Sea has got very lumpy, no wind as yet. Tide against us. John and I discussed where to go. Newhaven was agreed. Finished breakfast, informed Solent Coastguard of our intended arrival in Newhaven.
- 0945 All moored up at visitors pontoon, engine not turned off yet. Marine attendant there with his palm open!

### **Monday 14 August Newhaven to Folkestone**

- 0630 Left Marina, cleared breakwater. Main up. Genoa up, engine off. Rounding Beachy Head. 7kts. Genoa poled out. Rounding Dungeness, wind increasing 9kts over ground. Arrived Folkestone, no VHF contact.
- 1530 Anchored in Folkestone, drying harbour on two anchors. Dried out 1545. Russian submarine against the quay with a boat alongside with two men painting her.

### **Tuesday 15 August Folkestone to Ramsgate**

- 0915 Afloat, up anchors, cleared Folkestone harbour. Main up. Genoa up and engine off. Steered course to clear Dover by 2 miles S/E off Dover, wind dropped to nothing, sails down engine on. On arrival had to wait for a ferry to depart.
- 1345 Entered East marina. John's gone ashore to buy charts, whilst I fuel up main tank and water tank and wash down Sweet Sue.

### **Wednesday 16 August Ramsgate to West Mersea**

- 1020 Passed pier heads off Ramsgate, under motor heading north. Close in to avoid tide and cable laying operations. Passing North Foreland. Mainsail up. Gave way to a ship as we entered Princess Channel. Wind increasing. Motor sail tacking up channel. Passing Princess No.5 buoy. Every seventh wave is washing over cabin top. Chart table and galley area wet. Still making over 5kts. Passing east off Shivering Sand Tower. Sea calming down on to S/W Swin. Going up Middle Deep, no wind, tide with us. Speed 6.7kts over ground. Then to South Whitaker. Wallet Spitway.
- 2010 Dropped anchor at Mersea Quarters
- A Ditch barge asked us to radio for a water taxi, this we did. It was a long time coming, we called again, then realised we were talking to Brightlingsea taxi. Mersea taxi had packed in for the night.

### **Thursday 17 August**

- 1100 Moved inside to pick up a buoy
- 1130 Found a buoy in Thorn Fleet all fast

### **Saturday 19 August**

- 1131 Left buoy under motor, left dinghy behind
- 0830 Dropped anchor outside No.4 race buoy near two other Atalantas. Dropped keels down to 5ft. John and

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I both agreed to do our best and not blame each other for mistakes.

0845 Up anchor. Main sail up one reef. Genoa up, reefed down similar to slab reefing on main. Sailing to other side of committee boat for start. Can see H Flat but not course flag. Heading towards start line

0935 Gun goes off, first across the line is "Arosa", and I'm second. John's on radio for course instructions, someone else is also calling Committee boat. John worked out the race course, well sort of. Adjustment for mainsheet slider breaks. We have to tie it amidships. Rounding first windward mark. "Sweet Sue" taken the lead. Running down wind with the tailenders, some of the other class's yachts are passing us going up wind. Round the next mark getting dirty wind from tailenders. Put in a short tack, luck is with me we lay the buoy around then down wind again. We decide to take the reefs out of Main and Genoa. It appears wind has dropped. Around mark with a reach to next with a strong cross-tide, glad we took out reefs. Around mark with a beat to finish line. We are over, pressed main detamed flapping away. Genoa tracks awash.

1132 Gun goes off. Genoa down, then Main, motoring back.

1200 All moored up on buoy

### East Coast Race Results

1<sup>st</sup> A 138 "Sweet Sue" – Mick Le Maitre  
2<sup>nd</sup> F54 "Blue Bell" – Rick Wick  
3<sup>rd</sup> A 104 "Arosa" – Simon Cooper  
4<sup>th</sup> A 168 "Kookaburra" – Norman Dorrington  
5<sup>th</sup> A 183 "Bluster" – Jane Stearn  
6<sup>th</sup> A 179 "Emma Duck" – Martin Mitchell

### Sunday 20 August West Mersea to Ramsgate

1201 Cast off buoy for return journey, clear of Mersea quarter Mainsail up, motor sailing. Passed two Atlantas "Bluster" & "Emma Duck" Different route going back Spithead to No.5 Barrow buoy, over Sunk Sand

through Black Deep to Fisherman's Gate, then on to Ramsgate harbour. Had to wait for ferry to leave

1345 Entered East marina, two attempts to get alongside. Said to John "sure you could've reached it first time". John's reply was "I'll put the rope in my teeth and swim ashore". We had lunch in the cockpit watching other people attempting to moor up.

### Monday 21 August Ramsgate to Folkestone

0700 Left Ramsgate into a fresh W wind and remains of ebb under motor. Hoisted a reefed main, passed Dover 2 miles offshore

1115 Entered Folkestone harbour after waiting for Seacat to depart. Picked up a buoy to East of old harbour. We went aboard the Russian submarine, it's well worth a visit

### Tuesday 22 August Folkestone to Newhaven

1015 Leaving Folkestone harbour, light variable winds under motor. Abreast Dungeness one mile offshore. Main up. Genoa up and motor running

1500 French forecast gives fresh winds, warning F/7. Brittany winds picking up F3/4/5 and 6 expected tonight, engine stopped. Rounding Beachy Head. 7.5kts over ground.

1945 Arrive Newhaven marina. Lifeboat went out twice while we waited for wind to drop. Harbour master told off a Charter boat skipper for taking out a part of anglers.

### Thursday 24 August Newhaven to Bembridge

0545 Left Newhaven for Bembridge IOW due to F7 on Jersey forecast. Cleared breakwater, proceeding under main and motor, calm sea F203 NE. Put up Genoa, stopped motor. An hour later start motor, down Genoa. Went inside Boulder Street buoy, strong tide against us now. Across Nab channel picking up St. Helens Fort.

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1515 Anchored off the Tide Guage waiting for water

1645 Finally moored up on the outside of two yachts at Bembridge marina

### Friday 25 August

We were intending to cross channel this morning. Strong wind warning in process, Bembridge marina is choc-a-block.

### Saturday 26 August Bembridge to Guernsey

1730 Exit Bembridge Channel, wind F2/3. West, fair, after a morning of continuous rain. Reported to Solent Coastguard. Motoring with Main up, very hard on the wind. Unbent Genoa put in cabin, blocking the Nav lights which are on the cabin sides.

2000 Starting to go through first shipping lane at right angles

0600 Dawn coming as we enter second shipping lane, went at right angles

1100 Passing Cape de la Hague, wind strong F5, seas are horrendous, prop out of water, boat getting a good wash down. Were going at 10kts plus over the ground. Turned to motor sail on other tack to pass Amfroque. Seas just stopped us turned to other tack heading for Sark

1430 Off Bec du Nez, seas a lot better, heading for Percée passage

1615 Arrived on moorings at St Sampsons harbour



### Greek Ferries, Blustery Naxos Channel and the Virtues of an Atalanta

#### Fred and Melva Boothman

These three came together early this September into a recollection of our visit to this part of the Aegean with our Atalanta way back in 1981. We had left the tiny anchorage on Delos heading for the island of Santorini with the option of calling in at Naxos if circumstances changed. We literally squirted out of the Dili Strait with a rapidly rising Meltemi behind us. The wind indicator showed a full North F6, too strong to turn back for shelter. The Beaufort Scale doesn't have the same meaning in the Med, born as it is from observations of the grey Atlantic and the S.W. Approaches. Here a F6 can appear quite benign. It's a cloudless sky, the sun is very warm and instead of full oilskins and a cuppa soup, shorts and tee-shirts are recommended. So goose winged we ploughed on southwards. Recently every day seemed to offer the same conditions. We began to refer to it as downhill sailing and we were clocking up some fast passages, however it was beginning to concern

us. Sometime some day we had to turn around and head back against this and were certain the little Volvo 7 wouldn't hack it.

We saw the island of Paros first, emerging from a fierce heat haze on the stbd side. As we approached the narrowing channel, the following was beginning to heap up into a charge. Some 6 feet away we noticed that the towed Avon was attempting to climb up on the aft deck. Thank goodness for Atalanta's centre cockpit and amidships positioned engine. As we looked down in each trough the Avon was shrugged as the boat's mass was rocked forward, and thank goodness for that oft criticised bluff bow whose built-in buoyancy avoided the broaching trip and lifted us upwards to the crest. The conditions were evidently F7 – Naxos had suddenly become attractive. Fighting with the helm reminded us that we had already lost one rudder blade in similar circumstances on the way down to Corfu, we didn't want to repeat it. Our clue to the whereabouts of Naxos's outer harbour was not the expected dark outline of the mole but the line of white water covering it. We headed for the outer edge, and then suddenly into the relative serenity of the inner harbour. We tied up Med style, alongside several other larger yachts with the anchor laid forward and stern

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lines to the quay, and then sat quietly for a few minutes – this cruising lark was getting a bit too hairy. Our Naxos troubles, however, were only just beginning.

We walked the short distance into Naxos town, seeking to re-provision and to get a brief respite from the howling wind. On our return we clocked that the inner harbour offered good security, with the outer harbour doing the bulk of the work. The inter-island ferries had been cancelled. A large crowd of us looked on as a military helicopter, summoned in, took off an emergency hospital case. As it powered upwards it raised a huge cloud of dust and sand, covering us all. Back at the boat we re-checked all lines as a slight swell from the south had developed. We confidently turned in for the night. A very early dawn light had us awake, the slight swell of the night before had grown into a silent crestless scend. In spite of the northerly gale driving the sea before it, we were being visited by a comparable sea from the south. Lying in our berth we could sense each wave as it picked us up and drove us towards the quayside wall, only to be arrested by the audible tightening of the anchor cable, whereupon we'd be catapulted forward as the surge withdrew where the stern lines would be challenged to do their cleat bursting best.

The induced nausea was the least of our problems. We lay there and tried mutual reassurance. The Atalanta is a tough old boat, the aft deck cleats were provided with full size backing plates and the way in which the stem-head bollards were fitted would require Semtex to dislodge them. But what if the anchor dragged??? We were upon the deck in a flash and looking along the line of yachts, so was everybody else. The snug berth had become virtually untenable, but we had no option other than to tough it out. We considered hauling out from the quay but concluded this would reduce the scope of the anchor, not wise. Instead we hung all our fenders off the transom. Sitting amidst the predicament is stressful. We could do nothing more. We spent the rest of the day in town to get away from it all. On our return it was obvious that the possibility of sleep for the forthcoming night was unchanged and we'd barely turned in before a tremendous crash occurred, shaking the mast and rigging violently like a giant's rattle. Had we smashed into the quay wall? Still in the dark but this time back on deck, the next sickening crash revealed that it was not us but the adjacent 40 footer. In despair, they had abandoned ship

and gone off to find accommodation that had a foundation to it. Sadly, they'd locked away the anchor winch handle. We climbed back on board and into our berth, but with the crashing noise of the head banging yacht alongside, sleep was impossible above all the graunching and shuddering we would need to be able to discern whether it was our turn for quayside antics.

### **An Atalanta Solution**

Dawn revealed we were not alone in our torment. Exasperated crews had taken their bunk cushions onto the quay and were sleeping on the concrete. We hadn't slept at all and the likelihood of a third sleepless night was less daunting and more inspiring. On our various escapes into town we'd spotted that there was in fact a tiny inner inner harbour tucked into the town and housing small powered fishing and rowing boats. What was particularly attractive was the flat clam water. A good night beckoned if only ..... We glanced at each other to see we shared the same idea. Back at the crazy place we released the Avon and with a lead line marked at two feet rowed towards the inner sanctuary. Only occasionally did the lead ground, the harbour was evidently quite flat. What's more we spotted an ideal spot right in against the town's main street and some twenty yards from a tavern offering cold rice pudding for dessert.

Back on the boat we swiftly lifted the undercarriage and raised the rudder blade, let go the lines and headed for bliss. The height of the small harbour was barely a metre above sea level, so what would appear to be our reckless if not desperate intention was soon revealed, and as we eased into the tiny port local fishermen's arms were raised with genuine concern, but fell away again as we showed we could make way. In the crystal clear water experienced eyes focussed away from us down to below the water line and then upwards to the top of the mast and silently asked just how we had managed to get this far. As we glided to the selected berth hospitable Greek hands took our lines and tied us alongside. We waded some 30 feet and dropped the anchor as a precaution. Almost at once we were offered gutted fish from the adjacent boat, whilst another owner appeared with a punnet of what he called Naxos fruit (mulberries), a typical friendly Greek welcome, and given the technical language problem on both sides, we answered the outstanding stability question uppermost in

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their minds by inviting them to peek into the cockpit to view the massive raised keels.

The gale blew relentlessly for a full week. There was so much salt spray in the air carried in from the sea that in the fierce heat it began to settle and dry on deck, mast and rigging, sail covers and spray hood, so that by the end of the week the sparkling crystalline coating was making the boat look like a sugared almond.

But down below, at night, the "Sleepless in Naxos" period was finally over. We took our leave of Naxos on a fine settled morning, once again heading south. Poseidon had had his fun but we'd shown him we weren't entirely vulnerable. We'd pull the lifting keel stunt on him a couple of times more before we were through, but for the next few weeks he could curb his excesses and leave us and the Atalanta alone.



### 2000 Cruise "Round the Top"

Mike Dixon

("GELLIE" T 4)

#### Stonehaven to Portsoy 24<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> June

It was an inauspicious start.

David and I had gone down to "Gellie" on the Friday afternoon with the intention of setting off late evening. Arriving on board, we wasted no time in preparing to let go the mooring. David threw it off one way; the skipper thought it was going the other way, and promptly steered across the top of it, fouling the propeller in the process. Despite half an hour's worthy of feeling around beneath the hull, it proved impossible to free the snarl up.

The tide was ebbing and three hours later we plodged around in the mud and freed the mooring. No apparent damage to the propeller or shaft.

After a quiet night in our bunks, we set off twelve hours later, bound for Portsoy. The forecast was not great but I hoped that by keeping well inshore we'd manage to glean a modicum of shelter from the northerly wind.

Theory was great, but in practice the force 4/5 wind, more or less from where we wanted to go, forced us further and further offshore. Later on in the afternoon, we tacked inshore and then followed the five-metre contour under engine.

Shortly after midnight we came out from what little lee there was at Buchan Ness. The swell

was huge and "Gellie" made little headway. An hour later we were tucked up inside Peterhead marina, sipping a well-earned dram.

The forecast was gloomy – more of the same, so we decided to cut our losses, leave "Gellie" where she was, and return home – to attempt further progress later in the week.

By contrast, Tuesday was a splendid day. The wind remained easterly or northeasterly all day and we had an excellent trip along the coast. Such was the progress that we arrived off Portsoy too soon for entry. Not to worry, there were many odd jobs to be completed – we even polished the brasswork.

Safely tucked up inside the harbour early evening, we left "Gellie" to her own devices and returned home.

#### Portsoy to Doune 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> July

The boat festival was a bit disappointing this year largely due to the lack of funding and proper race organisation. The social side was, as ever, frenetic!

As well as David, we had two Sarah's on board, Sarah Legg my Goddaughter, and Sarah Deans, her best pal from University. Sarah D hadn't sailed before.

I had planned to sail from Portsoy late on the Sunday evening, with the intention of entering the Caledonian Canal by lunchtime on the Monday. The previous year we had missed out by about twenty minutes. It was a lovely night – barely a cloud in the sky, and never really dark. The wind was fitful and negligible, so we motored the whole way to the canal. Bit of a pain really, but we had done this bit more than once.

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At one point, off Burghead, we thought we were about to enter thick fog. Low-lying mist obscured the coast and the mist and sea merged into a uniform pewter grey. It was quite impossible to judge the visibility, as there was not even a ripple on the sea for reference.

We entered the Inverness Firth at Fort George at 1015, rousing the girls to see the superb dolphin display. An hour and a half later we were in the canal.

Pressing on through the locks we emerged out onto Loch Ness just after 1700. The last loch was shared with no less than 13 hire motor cruisers, mostly under the command of complete novices. All rather fraught and not to be repeated if it can possibly be avoided.

But what an evening! The wind northeasterly – right astern – and the full 19 miles of Loch Ness ahead of us. Goose-winged, we covered the distance in less than four hours, mooring up at Fort Augustus just after 2200.

Tuesday and Wednesday were spent transiting the canal to Corpach sea loch basin. There was half a day's delay whilst we had the engine exhaust manifold elbow welded up – what a mess cooling water and diesel exhaust fumes make.

Because of the tides, we didn't manage to get out of the canal until Thursday morning. The skipper was impatient and gouged a chunk out of the rubbing strake as a result. Serve him right.

Until mid afternoon, we had a very pleasant sail with the light northeasterly. There was an outbreak of shorts and general baring of flesh (whilst maintaining modesty of course). Even the spinnaker got an airing.

The wind died away as we came up to Glensanda quarry and harbour, and rather than stare at the eyesore any longer, on went the engine. At 1645, "Gellie" rounded Rubha an Ridrie into the Sound of Mull, by which time the wind had filled in and backed northwesterly.

In the short sea, "Gellie's" motion was very uncomfortable, so rather than suffer the short pitching and the noise of the engine any longer, we elected to beat up the Sound of Mull. What a difference! The tide was with us, so that even allowing for the extra distance due to frequent tacking, we eventually arrived

at Tobermory no later than if we had motored. And a lot more pleasurable as well!

It was too late to go ashore, so we had a lazy cook-out-of-tins meal, accompanied by a carton of Chateau Red. The Sarah's obviously thought they were back at Uni.

This was as far as we'd got to the year before, so new territory for "Gellie" and the girls from now on. Next morning, Friday, was damp and miserable. David and I did enquire if the girls wished to join us on deck, but we assumed the muffled grunts from the aft cabin were a polite refusal.

Once clear of Tobermory bay, sails were set. Initially beating up the Sound of Mull, we had an entertaining couple of hours avoiding Tom MacLean's whale (Moby Dick) and what appeared to be the entire Dutch Navy.

By 0845 we had sufficient sea room to bear away round Ardnamurchan Point, and continue up to the north and Mallaig. Breakfast consisted of cereals and curried beans, a combination you'd never consider at home, but it tasted great! During the morning and early afternoon the islands of Muck, Eigg and Rhum skulked away to port in the continuing murky weather. I called Doune on the mobile, spoke with Mary Robinson and booked dinner.

Alongside in Mallaig, we topped up the stores, water and a couple of chandlery items. By chance we bumped into Andy and Liz Tibbetts from Doune on the quayside. Great to see them again. Andy offered to take the girls on to Doune on board the "Mary Doune", meaning they got to the showers two hours ahead of David and me. We brought "Gellie" across, mooring to the visitor's buoy at 1742.

I had spent a week sailing from Doune some years earlier. The set up almost defies description. Suffice to say that about 10 or 12 years ago, the Robinson family, Alan, Mary and their two sons Jamie and Toby moved into a semi-derelict croft on the Knoydart peninsula and established a boat shed and slipway. They then searched for a suitable hull to turn into a traditional sailing vessel for charter. They found a fishing boat hull in Denmark. Covering the hatch with sheets of plywood, they motored the vessel back to Doune. After a long and arduous restoration, the result is the "Eda Fransden" – a beautiful gaff rigged cutter.



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Along the way, various helpers and volunteers have stayed on to create a small but thriving community at Doune. There is no road access and literally everything is shipped in by sea. Four families now live there and the business has flourished, attracting visitors drawn by the remoteness, the beauty and the wildlife.

We spent the evening ashore. After welcome showers (plain glass and no curtains at the windows – but that's the way of things!) we had a simple but delicious dinner in the restaurant – venison from the estate and a home made lemon meringue pie to die for. Then up to Andy and Liz's house for a blether about old times and their plans for the future, before returning to the jetty in the evening gloom. Coming down past the boat shed, we came across three large stags; we looked at them, they stared back at us. Quietly we continued on, leaving them quite unconcerned. I picked a sprig of heather for the pulpit rail on "Gellie" to acknowledge our rounding of Ardnamurchan that morning.

### **Doune to Stonehaven 8<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> July**

Doune was the point of no return; either we retraced our track back through the canal or we continued on round the top of Scotland and across the Moray Firth to home. Andy had managed to get weather faxes from the web the previous evening and the next few days were not looking particularly helpful for us going north. Nevertheless, there was sufficient west in the forecast wind to make the carry on option viable – a far better prospect than going back through the canal yet again.

David and I got up at 0600 and "Gellie" was on the move ten minutes later. Another dull morning. We were under a bit of pressure to get moving so as to transit Kyle Rhea with the favourable tide. So we pressed on under engine, Isle Ornsay to port, Loch Hourn (the Loch of Hell) looking very dramatic and foreboding to starboard.

The narrows were transited without incident; some eddies and rips but nothing of note. Inquisitive seals checked our progress – nine knots at times.

We went under the Skye bridge at 0948 and had the sails up just after 1000. We carried on all day with the mainland to starboard and the outline of Raasay to port – Skye being entirely lost to view in the dreary weather. The rain never let up all day and whilst the sailing was easy it was most miserable.

Mindful of the weather forecasts (NW'y 5/6 possibly 7), I elected to make for the Gairloch. The pilot book showed a snug anchorage at Badachro, tucked in behind the small island of Eilean Horrisdale. We anchored there just before 1800.

It was just as well it was a pleasant spot; we had three nights there! Whilst the wind blew old boots outside, the anchorage was very peaceful. On the Sunday morning, a second anchor was laid as a precaution, but it proved unnecessary. The two Sarah's decided to row ashore to recce a suitable eatery for the evening. Sarah D claimed she could row and I knew Sarah L could, but it was only after about 50 eventful yards that Sarah D remembered that it was canoeing, not rowing that she had done previously. Hmmm!

The Badachro Inn served excellent meals – rather up-market pub grub, but the evening's enjoyment was somewhat marred by two trips in the dinghy back to "Gellie" – dead to windward! Ah! – the joys of cruising.

Tuesday's forecast was more promising. Still in the west, the wind was expected to remain NW to SW overnight. We took our time getting underway and it wasn't until noon that we motored out from the bay. There was still a sizeable swell out in the Minch and much to our disgust, the wind remained stubbornly from the North and light. After a couple of hours getting nowhere very fast, we handed the sails and continued on under engine. The weather was cloudy but at least it was dry. Rounding Rubha Reidh we bore away to the northeast with Loch Ewe, the Lochs Broom and the Summer Isles away to starboard. Somewhat weary, we moored alongside the new pontoons at Lochinver at 2218.

Next morning was spent restocking supplies, including a trip to the fabulous pie shop. If you're ever in that neck of the woods, it's worth a detour. By noon we were away and sailing – slowly, but no engine! With the Assynt peninsula to starboard we made steady progress. Bill Smith (from Aberdeen, but with a croft at Clachtoll) came out in his boat and chatted with us for half an hour or more.

Tipping our hats to the Old Man of Stoer (most easily recognised from due west) we bore away across Eddrachillis bay towards Handa Island. The coast got ever more bleak with fewer and fewer houses and crofts. Loch Laxford opened up to starboard, but we kept

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on to Loch Inchard, mooring to the wall at Kinlochbervie just after 1900. This sizeable dock, enlarged and deepened with EEC grant funds harboured a huge fishing fleet up to a couple of years ago. Sadly the fish have disappeared, and most of the boats with them. It is a bleak place, windswept and eerily empty. There is a community close by the dock but we saw not a soul.

The next day, Thursday was the big one – Cape Wrath. As everyone knows, the word Wrath has nothing to do with the ferocity of the elements, but comes from the Norse Viking word meaning “turning point”. Nevertheless, a headland not to be trifled with.

We set off just after 0600, and motored out to sea. An hour later saw “Gellie” sailing well in a westerly force four. The seas were huge after the five days of consistent westerlies. Occasional glimpses of sun and lots of bird life – not a bad morning at all.

In hindsight it would have been better to stand off to the north of Duslic (Stag) rock which lies about 8 cables to the NNE of Cape Wrath. I didn't have the benefit of hindsight, so we suffered half an hour of violent movement in the very confused seas, wrestling with the helm and with the spinnaker pole attempting to sail down wind goose-winged.

By 1000, Duslic rock was abaft the beam and we could relax a bit. As we settled down with the wind over the port quarter, “Gellie” made excellent progress along the top of Scotland.

We had one reef in, but the wind was showing no sign of easing. David wisely recommended a second reef and after that “Gellie” didn't seem quite so over-pressed. Shortly afterwards, a squall went though, pushing “Gellie's” speed to 7 knots for a while.

All the time, we were heading away from the shore so at 1600 we gybed onto starboard and closed the coast again. Four hours later, we rounded Holborn Head in a howling rain squall, handed sails and motored into Scrabster. Our lines were taken by Bob Clunas the Harbour Master (and a relative of David's). Quite a day – 62 miles in 14 hours.

The interesting bits were not over yet! Friday was the Pentland Firth. As is the case with all

passages, planning is the key, so consultation of the almanacs and sailing directions suggested a departure time of 0600 – yet again!

The wind was back in the NNW at about force 5, so a good sail was in prospect. Rounding Dunnet Head at 0730, the sheets were eased, we picked up the tide and we started to move. Passing through the Inner Sound between Mey Point and the island of Stroma, there were a couple of very confused patches, overfalls, eddies and the occasional hole into which “Gellie” plunged spectacularly. Speed over the ground went up to 10.5 knots.

Rounding Duncansby Head at 0900, we found sheltered water at last. It was very nice just to sail across Sinclair Bay towards Wick without having to cling on constantly. We were safely into Wick by 1136. Water, showers, food and a meal ashore – we'd deserved it.

The next morning, Saturday, seemed quiet after the strong winds of the previous few days, so we expected to motor for quite some time. Leaving Wick just after 0630, we quickly realised that the wind was still a force to be reckoned with. From the north, it was to remain force 4 to 5 for the whole trip. With two reefs in the main and a reduced genoa goose winged, we had a rumbustuous sail across the Moray Firth, shaping a course some five miles off Rattray Head. Two hours at a stretch was all anyone could manage on the helm, otherwise a permanent arm extension was a real possibility.

The seas were very big at Rattray, despite being well offshore. Gybing onto starboard, we headed closer inshore down towards Buchan Ness. Thankfully, at 2300, off Buchan Ness the wind backed NW'ly and we came into the lee of the land. With the seas calmed, the remaining 30 odd miles to Stonehaven was a pleasant contrast. Sarah L was determined to see the entire trip and dozed on and off in the corner of the cockpit. 0500 saw “Gellie” into Stonehaven Bay, and very shortly afterwards we moored up amongst the familiar boats. A large dram was poured and enjoyed.

Total distance 620 miles, two thirds under sail, at an average speed of 4.25 knots

