

‘THE BOAT’

TRURO AND DISTRICT BOATOWNERS’

ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2010

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*You can download your own colour copy of the newsletter from the TBOA website:--
www.tboa.org.uk*

EDITORIAL

Ok the newsletter is a bit later this year, not laziness or to counter any trends to it becoming bi-annual, there's a thought, but merely because it is the Spring Newsletter and Spring is later this year. More correctly Spring is occurring at its traditional time this year after being early for several years, just like the newsletter. The newsletter is a bit like the January Christmas Dinner, 'Not Late but Early'.

Many thanks to our contributors. Vernon has produced his usual thought provoking article; at least I know what happened to the pigeon. Phil's contribution is, as usual, invaluable; thanks go to him for compiling the adverts as well as for his article which

complements the talk he gave on 4th March. David Reed's article on 'Boat Watch' is a timely reminder to us all to take security seriously, it's a scheme worth supporting.

A bi annual newsletter might be a good idea BUT would be dependant on an adequate supply of material; we do tend to rely on the same core of authors, hint hint.

The Maritime Community lost two notable boat builders and characters last year, Martin Heard and Ralph Bird.

I was privileged to know Martin for several years, when we owned Torstar he would bring her home for us in the winter, always making time to stop for a chat and a cup of tea and later when we bought Shearwater and overwintered her at Tregatreath.

I spent a lot of time in the yard in the Winter/Spring of 2006/7 putting a new engine in Shearwater and refurbishing her. I was very grateful for his help and advice, very blunt and to the point on occasion but always practical, honest and true. A typical example of his kindness and generosity was when I was battling the wet spring and summer to paint the topsides. I went to the yard one day to find she had been put in a shed, at no extra cost, so I could work in the dry.

Martin and the men that worked for him at that time made a good team and he is sadly missed.

Mark

FROM THE POOP DECK

Icebergs on the river, frozen swans, snow and wintry winds whistling through the cracked glass in the Captain's Cabin and now the Cabin Boy's spilt me porridge.!

Can it get any worse? Yes it can! I've just had a pigeon land on the quarterdeck with another message from our esteemed Editor "More words by Wednesday or it's the plank for you!!" Did I take any notice, of course I did! And I ate his pigeon.....

So here we are, all jolly and fun, shined up for the New Year and ready to go. By the way, did you drain your water pump before the frost set in – better go and check it out before you start your engine. Whilst you're down there, have a look at your diesel filter and clear out the muck and sludge that is always at the bottom of the filter bowl, You might as well change the filter as well.

Right, now where was I.....

More shipping has been laid up on the Fal, and it was especially sad to hear that the Malcolm Miller has been laid up for a while before she goes for a re-fit. I know one or two of you get twitchy when you see an old wooden sailing boat in need of some TLC and start to plan how you could do her up and get her back in the water. First, she's over 36 feet, Second – the crane's not big enough, Third – the Yard's full and finally, no you can't have a mooring so put your pennies back in the Piggy and go and find a smaller boat!!

I was looking at an old Sailing Programme over Christmas and in that season we had trips planned for Fowey, Plymouth, Salcombe, Channel Islands, Penzance and the Scillies. Those were the days when we could count on at least one week of good weather and think that we might get to at least one of the destinations. Let's hope that this year we can look forward to some good sailing and better weather, but whatever happens, we know that the company will always be good.

I have had a couple of complaints about the Recipe Corner from our last Newsletter. RCH Trelliske has asked me not to include any recipes in this issue as they are still trying to clear the backlog from last time. Hey Hum!

Have a good year, and if you do plan a trip, don't forget your **SO**las regs, **P**assage Plan, **Y**our alternative ports, **CO**Ntact numbers, your **cG**66 for th**E** coastguard and a photo of you**R** Boat.

Or use the old acronym - **SOPPY CONGER!!**

Happy sailing!!

The Skipper

BOAT JUMBLE

After last years indecision we have already got over the hidden compulsion to change the programme for this year, by swapping the January/February meetings etc. Therefore it is faithfully promised that there will be a boat jumble, plus BBQ in the yard at Newham this year, 1st May.

TRAMEX MOISTURE METER

Don't forget the club has purchased a Tramex Skipper moisture meter for use of the club members.

This is a professional instrument as used by most yacht surveyors and is very useful for measuring the moisture content of both GRP and wooden hulls and other structures. With experience it can be used to detect for osmosis in GRP or its possible onset in the near future.

It is available for weekly hire from the club. There will be no hire charge for members, however, due to the value and delicate nature of the instrument the committee has decided that there should be a £50 deposit (in cash) for each hire period which will be fully refundable upon its safe return in good condition.

It is complete with instructions and a useful article by Nigel Clegg on the subject of osmosis. Nigel Clegg is one of the UK's leading experts on the subject and his website www.passionforpaint.co.uk is a very useful reference.

*The custodians of the instrument will be either Phil Coltman or Keith Harris.
Contact details are: -*

Phil Coltman 01872 863010

Keith Harris 01209 718818

BOATWATCH

On the 1st July 2009 the Police introduced a scheme to hopefully improve security on what they refer to as Blue Water. The scheme has close parallels with the Neighbourhood watch scheme which most of us are probably familiar with. They plan to contact all coordinators, I am happy to be the TBOA's coordinator, and let them know details of crimes occurring on the water. I had setup, and have run the Loe Beach Boat Watch for six years which has been very successful. This should be an extension of what already happens. This hopefully will make us all more vigilant and security conscious.

As part of Boat Watch they will also be patrolling the waters a little more and visiting boats carrying out security checks. They usually do this on unattended boats and if they consider them insecure you may find a note to that effect. There will also be notices going up, marking the Boat Watch areas, which are essentially all of the water from Black Rock to Truro plus the Helford, which unsurprisingly is the highest area for boat crime within Cornwall with the incidence of boat crimes increasing dramatically in the summer months. Most vulnerable items are outboards, dinghies, oars and electronic equipment left topsides.

With regard to outboard security they have limited supplies of waterproof outboard covers. These come in two sizes and are white with the police crest on and cost £15. Apparently these have been tested in other areas and have proved to be a real deterrent to theft. These covers should be available in the major chandlers in the area.

Marking kits utilising microscopic dots suspended in a luminescent under UV light glue each with a unique code are also available.

Each kit contains enough solution to mark about 15 items and cost £10.

They are available from **Falmouth Yacht Brokers, Challenger Marine, Robin Curnow and Mylor Chandlery.**

As I have mentioned the police will be contacting me and should you wish to receive this information please forward your email address to me and then I can set up an

email group for this purpose. Please indicate that you are a TBOA member. My email address is loebeachwatch@yahoo.co.uk

I think this is a good scheme to support and they have plans, funds permitting, to add on certain bells and whistles later.

So send me your email addresses and help to make the scheme work.

Thanks David Reed

TBOA ANNUAL DINNER 2011

Many thanks to Dave Watkins for organising this years 'new format' annual dinner, which was an outstanding success.

Despite the hotel's protestations Dave has already booked next year's return match, same venue, same time (the 29th January 2011) and same price.

A letter from Dave and booking slip can be found at the end of the newsletter.

MEMBERS ADVERTS

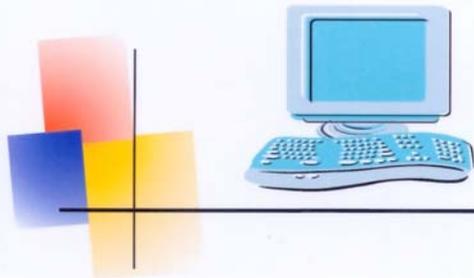


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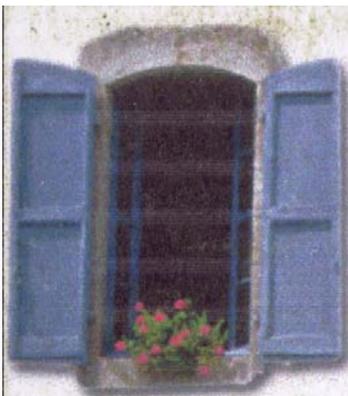
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A trip to the Mediterranean in a 23 foot boat



June 1986 to
October 1987



It must be the dream of most weekend and holiday yachtsmen to sail away from our rainy and wind swept shores to warmer cruising grounds with settled weather and romantic anchorages! For most it would seem an unaffordable dream, or perhaps something to think about when retired.

This is an account of how I achieved that dream for nearly a year and a half on a very limited budget in a 23 foot Virgo Voyager. The trip, mostly single-handed, was from Poole Harbour to the Western Mediterranean via the Bay of Biscay and the Atlantic Coasts of Spain and Portugal. The cruise included a fairly detailed exploration of the Balearic Islands and the Spanish Mediterranean coastline before making a return to England using the Canal du Midi to Bordeaux and then following the West Coast of France back to the Channel Ports.

My boat, "Free Again" was a standard Virgo Voyager, built in 1985 in Bridport by Newbridge Boats. She was fin keeled with a Bukh 10 diesel engine and proved herself to be an incredibly seaworthy little craft of ideal size for short and single-handed sailing over the fairly long distances involved. The main notable additions to the boat were an Avon life raft, a "Navik" windvane self-steering gear and a substantial amount of heavy ground tackle.

It was a trip that I had dreamed of for some time. Working in London as an Electronic Engineer brought increasing pressure to get out of the "Rat Race" at least for a while and so I decided to sell up and sail away to the sun! As a bachelor at 30 years of age I sold my flat and a lot of unwanted possessions and in the early summer of 1986 I left Poole to head down to Falmouth and then south to France and Spain.

Preparation is the key to success for any extended cruise and the Spring before leaving was a busy one spent preparing the boat and equipment and buying lots of charts and pilot books. When the boat was finally loaded she was a good inch or so down on the waterline.

It was a wet and windy sail that first week and I made calls to most of the West Country ports on route to Falmouth where I met up with an ex colleague, Neal, who was to crew for the Biscay crossing. The weather that June seemed to be continually unsettled, so we decided to cross to Brittany first and then cross Biscay from there. We had an easy overnight crossing to L'Aberwrach and then on to Camaret where we finally provisioned for the 3 – 4 day Biscay crossing to Northern Spain. With a favourable forecast we cautiously set off motoring out of the Rade de Breast when a nice F4/5 North Westerly wind picked up enabling us to sail out of the Raz de Sein on a nice reach and into the "Angry Bay" as it has so often been called! We continued on full main and genoa for about 100 miles before slowly losing the wind. The remaining 220 miles to Carino in Northern Spain were completed under engine and sail and finally under engine alone. Navigation was done using a combination of RDF and sun sights with continuous sun-run-sun plots across the bay until within range of the RDF beacons of Northern Spain. It was a relief to make landfall after three and a half days at sea and the harbour at Carino is a large protected fishing harbour on the west side of the Ensenada de Santa Maria and ideal for anchoring and spending a few days recovering from the passage.

The reputed "Angry Bay" and North Atlantic were not content with letting us off lightly however, for our next coastal sailing trips westward towards Cedeira and La Coruna were very rough indeed. The Rias provide excellent protection in most winds and it is not until out at sea that the full strength of the wind is felt. Without local weather information we found ourselves out in winds of up to 35 knots unexpectedly and here "Free Again" really showed herself to be a tremendous little sea boat. With three reefs in the main and a storm jib she handled the wind and huge Atlantic seas easily and I felt completely confident in her. Further down the coast rounding Cape Finistere also proved to be a challenge. The famous Cape lived up to its reputation, the wind building strength as we approached from the north. We rounded the Cape about a mile offshore in a F7 northerly and close reached across the bay heavily reefed towards the shelter of Ria de Corcubion. However at the entrance to the Ria with local katabatic winds of immense strength funnelling down the fjord like entrance, it took another hour to reach the anchorage, completely exhausted.

This was to be the pattern of weather generally in the Spanish Rias and makes some serious sailing in a very challenging and interesting cruising ground. The area was virtually uncommercialised and dramatically beautiful with steep to cliffs indented with the Rias which provided idyllic anchorages and beaches and some charming

fishing villages such as Corme and Lage, Muros, Porto Novo, and the more modern resort of Bayona in the south. Some small offshore islands, in particular the Isla Cies, which seem to be straight out of a Pacific Atoll.

It was while anchored of the white sands of these Islas Cies that I met a delightful couple who were later to become a much larger part of my life. They were Bill and Janet from Truro in a 30 foot Cheoy Lee ketch called "Sagittaire". They came rowing over the crystal clear water in their wooden dinghy to greet me as soon as I arrived. They had recognised the Virgo as being a typically English boat and came over to offer a hand of friendship. My crew Neal had by now left to return home by air and so their company was most welcome. We were to sail many passages in company "Free Again" and "Sagittaire", starting off with the coast of Portugal.

Once south of the Ria de Vigo and Bayona the weather started to become much more predictable and considerably lighter, at least while keeping within ten miles of the coastline travelling south. The wind was always from the north and its strength in those mid-summer months was usually about 10 – 20 knots.

The first port of call in Portugal was Viana do Castelo and upon arrival yachts were directed into a dirty old commercial basin used for visitors. The first port of entry into Portugal necessitated a lot of paperwork, a cruising carnet had to be formulated for the yacht for 6 months involving visits to several different offices. Throughout this tedious beaurocratic exercise however the Portugese officials were extremely friendly and courteous and as long as you could spare them the time of day the chore almost became a pleasure.

The next port of call was Lexios and Oporto. They were shrouded in fog the whole time I was there, a common sight on that part of the coast I was told. While there a visit to the port cellars in the old city of Oporto was not to be missed. The cellars on the south bank of the Rio Douro and were open to visitors for viewing and sampling! I went for the day with Bill and Janet from "Sagittaire" who had also made the passage down from Viana do Castelo. The old city of Oporto was fascinating with its old buildings and tiny streets and a return trip to Lexios on the old electric wooden tram completed a very pleasant day.

From Lexios I made a long overnight passage of about 120 miles, in company with two English lads on another boat, a 26 foot Mystere Flyer called "Windbag", to the large fishing village of Peniche. The harbours on the coast in between Lexios and Peniche had dangerous sand bars at their entrances and can be nasty if there is much of an Atlantic swell running, so I thought it would be a good opportunity to cover some ground in one hop and make quicker progress south. Peniche had a festival on that week and free sardines barbequed on the quay, brightly coloured and decorated fishing vessels and much hilarity and partying made the visit a memorable one!

The weather became lighter the further south I went and many of these coast hops had to be made under engine either motor sailing or simply motoring on calm seas! The good old Bukh 10 diesel engine would plod on for hours on a few litres of fuel and with the autopilot steering the passages became much easier.

Other places visited were Cascais, Lisbon, Sesiembra, and Sines. Sines was a picturesque fishing village hidden behind a huge oil terminal, but once inside the terminal was out of sight and total protection was provided from any prevailing northerly weather.

The next obstacle on this coast was Cape St. Vincent and once rounded the Algarve opened up. It was a 60-mile hop from Sines, around Cape St. Vincent to the safe anchorage at Sagres. Cape St. Vincent and the Algarve coastline gave shelter from the northerly Atlantic swell present on the west coast and the local northerly winds off the

cliffs gave some pleasant light weather sailing between Sagres and Portimao and Villamoura.

The Algarve was a bit of a culture shock after spending so long in Northern Spain and Portugal. It was fairly well commercialised and consequently more expensive and heavily populated. Villamoura was one of mainland Portugal's few yacht marinas and about the only place catering for the requirements of yachts, chandlery, craneage etc. So most yachts seemed to stop over here, at least for a few days to provision, make repairs and some to haul out and scrub. It was also a popular place for English and German yachtsmen to leave their boats unattended for longer periods.

At this stage I decided to make another overnight passage across the Bay of Cadiz from Villamoura to Cadiz eliminating the need to go Villa Real and the Guadalquivir and other ports up in the north of the bay. Another hot windless passage completed under motor and I arrived in the huge port of Cadiz in the midday sun. Back in Spain again and Cadiz reminded me of La Coruna in Northern Spain, a huge hot bustling commercial city, but with some typical Spanish character.

The long awaited sight of Gibraltar was now close and two short day hops saw me sailing underneath the timeless rock. Gibraltar was a marvellous sight and with good visibility it was possible to see Africa, Spain and The Rock of Gibraltar in one huge seascape! On the VHF the English voice of Lloyds Signal Station and British yachts sailing in Gibraltar Bay were all very comforting. Within 5 miles of Gibraltar, when a strong Levanter started blowing, I called up Gibraltar Radio on the VHF for local weather information, a luxury I had to do without on the way down!

After clearing customs on the quay and taking down my Spanish courtesy flag, I went and tied alongside in Sheppards Marina. What a feeling! I had made it, mostly single-handed from England to the Mediterranean in a very small yacht!! Sheppards Marina was like a small version of Penryn. You could buy or obtain almost any item of yacht chandlery and get any repair work done, so I took the opportunity of being hauled out to antifoul and also to get a surveyors report for insurance purposes for Mediterranean cruising. I had been forced to sail down with only third party insurance as I was deemed to be a high risk for that passage as a single hander so the surveyors report served as evidence that I had arrived without damage and they re-instated my full insurance cover.

By now I had been away for several months and although not homesick it was lovely to go shopping and ask for items in English again, almost all Gibraltarians speak fluent English and Spanish. I found Gibraltar a rather bizarre place, it was a complete mixture of English, Spanish and Morocco all rolled into one. The high street aptly named "Main Street" was for the tourists and was full of electronic gadgetry shops at supposedly knock down prices. The back streets, where the locals go, were rather run down, although the pubs were vaguely English in feel and stayed open all day.

But the Mediterranean lay waiting for me and the thirst for adventure prevented me from staying in Gib for too long.....it was like throwing a switch! One minute the Atlantic and next the Med.....the weather changed....the landscape changed....the standard of wealth changed....the buildings changed.....everything seemed to change within a few miles! This was the Costa del Sol, and indeed the sun shone!

My first port of call was Estepona. A posh cosmopolitan marina, I thought I had really arrived until I had to pay the berthing fees. It was about £4/night (remember this was 1986), not a lot by British standards then, but a lot compared to what I paid on the trip down – mostly nothing! I stayed a couple of nights and then sailed on to another tourist place – Feungirola, but luckily there at that time you could anchor for nothing

in a totally protected but unfinished harbour. I stayed about a week, but was to return later for a much longer period.

I continued along the Costa del Sol stopping at most of the harbours in a leisurely manner to Almeria, round Cabo de Gata and up almost as far as Cartegna. Then the easterly winds picked up, normal there in early September and prevented me making much progress. I had to make a decision about where I was going to spend the winter months, a decision I had been putting off hoping that I would find somewhere that took my fancy along the way. Eventually I decided to turn back and run before the easterlies and perhaps winter in Estepona or even anchor in Fuengirola.

When I sailed back into Fuengirola my mind was immediately made up. There lying at anchor was "Sagittaire", who I hadn't seen since the Algarve and also a chap called Peter Keig on "Zeal" who I had made friends with in Gibraltar. There were also several other boats that I had met on the way down and generally they thought it was a good place to spend a few months at very low cost! Even if it was a tourist trap ashore at least there were no harbour dues and it was safe with good holding in a muddy bottom. I made a lot of other friends on English yachts there as well and we had a marvellous couple of months prior to Christmas with numerous parties and beach barbeques. Some left in early December, Peter on "Zeal" went to Barbados in the ARC race and others just drifted away.

Bill and Janet on "Sagittaire" had arranged for their two daughters and son to come out for a visit over Christmas and had rented a Spanish apartment overlooking the beach and they invited me to spend Christmas with them! We had a fabulous time and I became very involved with the younger daughter Steph. At the time she was at college training to be a physiotherapist and had to return home in the New Year, when I continued with my cruise. She was however to come out to see me on several occasions later.

The next stage of the cruise was to go directly to the Balearic Islands. I rang home and invited an old sailing pal, Adam, to join me for a sail. He had not been well and was delighted by the chance invitation and came straight away; glad to leave the sub-zero winter of 1987 behind him. The other reason for leaving Fuengirola so early in the year was that the builders had returned to the harbour and construction of pontoons and quays had begun. Fuengirola was to change forever so it was time to leave. "Free Again" left to go east up the Costa del Sol and "Sagittaire" went west heading for Gib for some maintenance work. We arranged to meet in Ibiza at Easter when Steph would come out in her Easter holidays. Adam and I motored and sailed in varied weather up the coast to Alicante. It was an interesting coastal passage at a quiet time of year, but the Mediterranean weather allowed us to sail almost every day. I left Adam with "Free Again" in Alicante to fly home, a mutually good arrangement for a three week period. When I returned Adam knew Alicante pretty well and had made new friends and acquaintances, so much so that I left him there and sailed on alone.

A few days later I was dropping anchor in San Antonio harbour on Ibiza, a lovely spot out of season. The weather in the islands was very different to the mainland, it was a lot cooler with more wind and swell. The Balearic Islands were my first taste of Mediterranean islands from a cruising point of view and were lovely, it was spring and the countryside was ablaze with flowers, colour and a taste of the summer to come. I spent seven weeks in Ibiza and Formentera, the adjoining island, exploring and living life at a very agreeable pace. I met up with "Sagittaire" and some other friends from Fuengirola on the yacht "Felice" and spent some time with Steph. My

Father also came out for a visit and made some of his first ever sailing trips on a small boat going round the island on “Free Again”.

My two favourite places there were the anchorage on the tiny private island of Espalmador and Sabina harbour on Formentera. Espalmador was another place resembling a dream, a south seas place, with white sand in a crescent bay, crystal clear water, palms, almost no habitation save one virtually hidden villa and a tiny jetty with a small fishing boat moored alongside. Paradise on earth! About two miles away was Sabina Harbour, a small harbour for the Ibiza ferry and a few, then, recently built yacht pontoons. The place had a uniquely relaxed atmosphere, only to be found away from the hustle and bustle of twentieth century life. Back in Ibiza the tourists had started to arrive, it was mid-spring, and so it was time to depart.

I sailed in company with “Sagittaire” from Santa Eulalia to Andraitx on Majorca. There was no wind on that scorching hot day so the passage was made under engine alone. Majorca has much more dramatic scenery than Ibiza and I first noticed this when sailing into Andraitx. The natural harbour was given further protection by the addition of two staggered walls from either side of the fjord type entrance. It was free to anchor there and being a very pleasant spot away from tourism in those days it seemed a good place to stay for a week or two! In fact, using this as a base it was possible to explore a lot of the west coast of the island day sailing only and returning to Andraitx in the evenings.

“Sagittaire” and I made a passage up the north coast to Soller, another natural harbour and good anchorage. From here it was possible to make a day trip to the beauty spot of Cala Calobra and the Torrent de Parais. This was not a place to spend the night at anchor but safe enough during the day. It was an incredible place to go in your own yacht. A fingered bay inside cliffs of probably 1000 feet high with water so clear that you could see your anchor in 40 feet. The Torrent de Parais is a ravine in the landscape from a cowboy movie, very dramatic.

We both returned to Andraitx again, where I was to leave “Sagittaire” finally. This was the last time I saw her cruising in the Med but it wasn’t the last time I saw her crew! I left for Palma.

I tied bows to the Paseo Maritimo with my own ground tackle astern and went to explore the capital of the Balearic Islands. An interesting city and cathedral, but I only stayed a couple of days, preferring the peace and tranquillity of the quieter anchorages. So the next port of call was to be Porto Colom on the south coast of Majorca. Another natural harbour away from tourism. I was kept here for a few days by a passing depression but it was no hardship being storm bound in such a place! Soon though I was looking forward to Menorca, but had been warned about the weather there and that it had been nicknamed the “windy isle”. Years ago the local peasants were said to be slightly strange due to the effects of the continuous wind. True or not, the island was in the path of the famous Mistral, which starts its life further north in the Gulf du Lion. So I had to be sure of the weather before setting off. I was just within range of the French National Radio weather forecasts, France-Inter, which gave me a fair guide as to the weather trends, although local weather in the Med is almost impossible to forecast.

Eventually I crossed to Cuidadella on Menorca’s west coast and was able to sail part of the passage, for a change. This was an indication that I was to find a lot more wind around the island of Menorca. Cuidadella is a quiet harbour and town at the end of a deep ravine or fjord. I spent a few days there waiting for a small mistral to blow itself through and using the time to explore the old town in some detail.

Next stop was to be Fornells on the dangerous north coast. This was a magnificent blue water lagoon with a narrow entrance from the sea and a tiny fishing harbour inside the confines of the lagoon. There were several square miles of water inside although some of it was too shallow for yachts but overall it offered numerous places to anchor in quiet and solitude. The tiny fishing harbour was crammed with small local boats and lined with white washed villas and shops and could only be described as absolutely delightful! There was also an island in the centre of the lagoon upon which the entrance channel transit markers were located and might be useful in a northerly blow. I spent several days in Fornells before leaving to head towards Mahon, the capital of Menorca.

It was while sailing out through the entrance channel in a fresh wind that I heard the mainsail rip. It wasn't a loud noise but just enough to make me look up and see a six-inch tear just below one of the upper seams. I was quite surprised, this was the first time I had had any real sail damage on the entire trip. Fortunately, the wind was northwesterly and I was able to drop the mainsail and still lay a course on a long reach under headsail alone all the way round the coast. It turned out to be a magnificent sail to Mahon completed entirely under sail, a rare event in the Western Med in my experience at that stage.

The natural harbour of Mahon was huge. It took the best part of an hour to reach the anchorage at the far end from the sea. It was an amazing place with its own islands and coves, even a small canal cut through a hillside to provide an easy entrance to another secluded cala. There was also a military base there.

Unlike Fornells, Mahon was too deep for anchoring in most places and yachts seemed to gather in excellent holding at the extreme western end of the harbour in total protection and several yachts were anchored there permanently year in and year out. My first task was to repair the rip in the mainsail with some useful sticky Dacron sail repair cloth after hours of hand stitching. It held up well and saw me back to England without any further attention.

My younger sister flew out to Mahon for a short weeks holiday while I was in the anchorage. During her stay we hired a car and explored the interior of the island, which I would not have otherwise seen. The scenery was far less dramatic than Majorca or even Ibiza but none the less a lovely island, less spoilt by the effects of tourism and this was part of its charm. The tourist areas were close together around Binebeca on the south coast and some small spots on the north coast but altogether only a small fraction of the tourism of Majorca or even Ibiza at that time.

It was by now the end of May and I was starting to think of the passages I would have to make across to Barcelona and then up to the South of France to Sete to meet Steph and prepare for the trip through the Canal du Midi.

The crossing to Barcelona is just over 100 miles from Menorca and an overnigher. I had already seen the effects of the Mistral this far south so was a little concerned about the crossing going north and had to wait for a reasonable weather window. A windward passage of 100 miles or so single-handed in those steep short Mediterranean seas was not a pleasant thought if it blew up from the north. While waiting for the right weather again I decided to sail back round to Cuidadella by the southerly route in the lee of the island, the land protecting me from the northerlies. It was a fresh sail and quite enjoyable.

Eventually, everything was right and I made the passage to Barcelona motor sailing into a light northwesterly. It was a long but un-eventful passage and the RDF beacon at Barcelona helped with landfall identification in the moderate visibility. I went directly to the inner harbour and tied alongside the dirty quay opposite the expensive

yacht marina. The harbour was absolutely filthy, within hours the waterline was black with dirt and oil and the fenders and topsides soon looked similar. There was a constant threat of pilfering from dubious characters on the quayside, and a fairly high level of traffic and city noise. However, I had been at sea, and consequently awake, for over 24 hours and was glad of the opportunity to tie up and sleep.

Needless to say I didn't stay long. I was soon under way again and heading north east up the Costa Brava towards the French border. I made several stops and day sails, the places I liked the best were the anchorages at Cadaques and Port Lligat. On most of these coastal hops I had to fight a prevailing northerly wind, which was hard going. It took about a week to get from Barcelona to Port Vendres just over the French border. Spain was not going to let me go easily, and I must confess I was sad to leave. I had spent a year in Spain, a most memorable year of my life and probably one of the happiest and most relaxed. Crossing into France meant leaving it all behind and hitting the homeward trail back towards England and the reality it represented!

The first few days in France were difficult. I had to struggle with my French, after speaking Spanish for so long and France appeared so expensive by comparison. Mooring fees in Port Vendres were sky high, both in the marina and on the fish quay so after a day or so I left to the next place that looked suitable without heavy marina charges. This was Port la Nouvelle, a river and canal type commercial harbour with a small area for yachts. It was a quaint little town and I was not charged for mooring. However the customs man had a field day with me and turned the boat inside out looking for drugs I presumed, having come from Spain. I did point out that I had been to Port Vendres previously and seen customs officials, but he wasn't interested.

From Port la Nouvelle I went to Agde and tied up to the riverbank under some trees. A peaceful spot and very contrasting to some of the offshore sailing of the past year, it was my first taste of river and canal work and the shape of things to come for the next month or so in the inland waterways of France.

From Agde it was a very short hop to Sete and only a couple of hours under engine on a scorching windless day in June. I had been told about the marina in Sete and also the set up with the lifting bridges to the inner harbour, town quays and the Etang de Thau. So I went directly to the first bridge and awaited opening later in the afternoon.

I settled myself alongside the Quay Vaubon for a few days to prepare for the Canal du Midi. I used small car tyres in dustbin bags as stout fenders and briefly visited the marina to have the mast lifted down. I made a cradle tied to the pushpit to keep the mast high enough to give standing headroom in the cockpit.

However my days on the Quay Vaubon in Sete were not the best by any means. It was stifling hot and humid and there was constant disturbance from wash created by passing fishing vessels. Also to my horror one night my dinghy and outboard motor were stolen! I had left it tied alongside the yacht on the seaward side, and someone from a passing boat took it during the night by cutting the painter. I was heartbroken, that inflatable and outboard had served me faithfully for the whole trip and had been left unattended for many hours and even days in Spanish harbours along the way, but in the South of France I should have been more careful!

Steph travelled down by train from England to join me at the start of her summer holidays, for the canal trip to Bordeaux and she arrived at the station opposite the quay. A couple of days later we set off across the salt water lake – the Etang du Thau, to the entrance to the Canal du Midi and after a further couple of miles stumbled across our first lock – PANIC!

I had never been in a lock before so it was very daunting. I need not have worried as it went smoothly and we rose about 2 metres above sea level unscathed. The Canal du

Midi broke us in gently. The locks gradually got bigger the further we went and some of the staircases of locks were seven deep, at Forserannes for example. But by the time we reached them we had built up a bit of experience and confidence.

There were about 150 locks between Sete and Bordeaux. The trip took us three and a half weeks at a leisurely pace. Some people seemed to manage to get from one sea to the other in about eight days but it seemed such a shame to rush what was essentially a lovely part of the cruise. The pace of life on the canals was slow, the countryside was beautiful and the passage and overnight mooring was free along the way. There were picturesque towns and villages and mixed with some vin rouge, French cheese and warm sunshine who needed to hurry!

You could moor to the quays provided for the hire boats or you could just stop almost anywhere you liked and tie to a grassy bank under some trees for the night. We used metal stakes for mooring which we drove into the banks like tent pegs and with a draft of four feet we were able to get close to the waters edge in most places. The bottom of the canals were soft mud and running aground was a normal occurrence, either tying alongside the bank or just navigating a little too close to the edge. It wasn't a problem, we were always able to get afloat again by running astern.

The canal was in two parts, the Canal du Midi from Sete to Toulouse and the Canal Lateral a la Garonne from Toulouse to Bordeaux. We thought the Canal du Midi was the most picturesque and meandering of the two but it did have the most pleasure and hire boats which sometimes made the locks very crowded. The Canal Lateral a la Garonne is much straighter and more commercial and consequently quicker. Virtually all the locks on this part were electric, whereas on the Midi some were manual or partly electrified.

Eventually we wound up at the last lock at Castets and when the tide in the river was right they let us out into the Garonne and the Gironde estuary. The tides here were very strong and the current ran at 3 – 5 knots so it was quite a quick passage to Bordeaux. There was a small yacht marina in Bordeaux just below the new suspension bridge where we had the mast re-stepped. It was a friendly little place with a small club and restaurant.

Steph left me again here and I was to sail the remainder of the way home single-handed. From Bordeaux to the mouth of the Gironde Estuary at Royan was nearly 60 miles and could just be achieved on one tide with a good turn of speed, which showed how fast the current was. At Royan I provisioned the boat for the final long haul up the west coast of France to Ushant. I had decided to island hop up there, so after La Rochelle I went to Ile de Yeu, Belle Isle, Isle de Groix and then back to the mainland to Loctudy. This coastline was a fantastic cruising ground in itself but it seemed very set up and commercialised in a yachting sense compared to that which I had been used to in Spain. All the yachts were out for the weekend or a weeks holiday and weren't the typical live aboard cruising yachts I had been used to mixing with earlier. The Raz de Sein and Chanel du Four were foggy and presented their usual challenging pilotage difficulties and this was the first fog I had encountered since Lexios in Portugal over a year previously. In L'Aberwrach I had to wait five days for a suitable weather window for the 100 mile crossing to Falmouth, I was now back to the 50-degree North Latitudes and the unsettled weather of the English Channel! I arrived in Falmouth at about 10 o'clock in the morning and dropped anchor off the town amongst other visiting yachts and some old gaff working boats. It was a pretty scene to return to and Steph was there to meet me! It was 15 months previously that I had left Falmouth and I spent a whole month there trying to get adjusted to life in

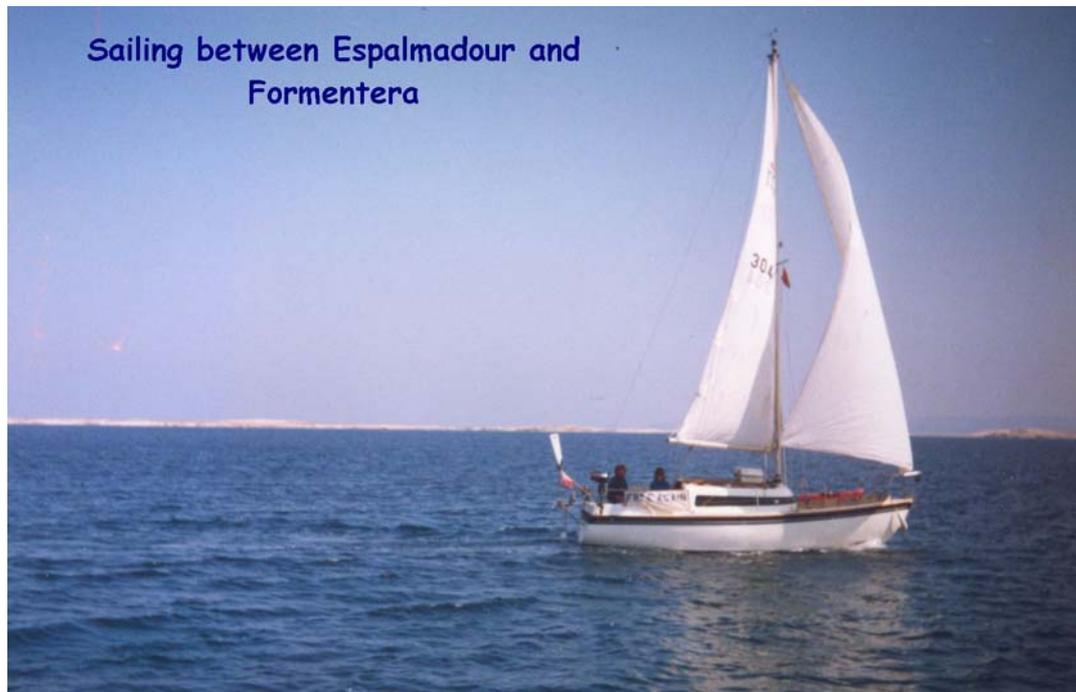
England again before returning to Poole in Dorset by the end of September to get a job!

The trip was an experience of a lifetime that cannot easily be put into words, those yachtsmen who have been long distance cruising may appreciate the difficulty of adjusting back into a “normal” lifestyle again. I found that it had changed me fundamentally, my values had changed and my outlook on life was somehow different. I had sailed thousands of miles, mostly alone. I had seen dolphins, turtles, flying fish, storms and balmy Mediterranean nights afloat. I had had time to think and study life and watch people in other countries over the weeks and months.

It's not possible to put a price on such a trip, the value of such an experience can't be put in financial terms either. However, I'm sure most readers would be interested in the cost for such a trip even if it was in 1986/7. Averaged out over the whole period I found I spent about £45/week. That included food and provisions, fuel, insurance, boat maintenance and other costs such as odd bits of travel inland, entertainment, some meals out etc. It should be understood that in material terms it was a fairly meagre lifestyle compared to living at home but I considered my quality of life to be much richer. The freedom, enjoyment of sailing and cruising, meeting such a variety of people and living a carefree lifestyle more than compensated for not having much money to spend.

I hope this article might give some inspiration and ideas to yachtsmen here who are fully capable of making such a trip but still consider it to be just a dream.

It is possible, I've done it!



Phil Coltman.

Truro Boat Owners Association

Jesmond
St Piran's Hill
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TRURO TR3 7PY

Dear Member,

TBOA ANNUAL DINNER... 29th January 2011

It's that time of year when the boats are in the water, the summer is another scorcher and our minds turn to planning the Annual Dinner.

The Falmouth Beach Hotel has been booked again for 29th January 2011 for our annual bash. The Hotel have afforded us a discount on the main meal / entertainment and also offered very generous terms for staying overnight bed and breakfast.

The format will be the same at discounted price of £32.00 per head. This price includes a live band and disco together with a tableside magician who promises to turn our Commodore into a Kilt wearing Cornishman! The B & B will be £27.00 per person - £10.00 per person to secure your room, outstanding value in a great location. Please make this cheque payable to The Falmouth Beach Hotel.

Numbers will be limited so please get your orders in as we shall operate a first come first served basis to keep it fair. Please send cheque for Dinner to me at above address cheques made payable to TBOA.

All balances must be paid for the dinner by 1st December 2010 please. Hotel accommodation balance you pay to Hotel on the night. Please let us know as soon as possible if you would like to attend.

E-mail -watkins@welcombe2.ndo.co.uk
Phone- 01872 863366 Mobile 07967 204711

Dave Watkins

TBOA Annual Dinner. 29th January 2011. Falmouth Beach Hotel. Falmouth

We / I ... wish to book Dinner (Number attending)

We / I ... wish to book Bed & Breakfast (Number staying).....

Name:

Address:

Cheque enclosed; £.....

payable to TBOA

