



TOGLINE

The Quarterly Journal of the Trent Offshore Group
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SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2012

AHOY!!!!:- The first of a series of four-letter words issued by skippers as two boats approach each other...



Here we go again! I seem to start off with those four words every time I produce a TOGLINE! It is so apt really – the collective “we” seems to personify the reason behind the newsletter – to spread the news and to keep everyone informed of what goes on. It is a

wonderful gift to be able to share our thoughts, our experiences and even our feelings with each other through the medium of the printed word. It beats toms, the cleft stick, smoke signals and simple word of mouth. After all, the Trent Offshore Group is filled with people of a like mind – otherwise they wouldn't be members. I hope everyone feels it is a pleasure, not a burden, to enjoy the results of a number of welcome contributors to our newsletter. We have managed to produce a 12-pager this quarter – well done everyone. The words (and the pictures!!) bring the good times to life and always provide a lasting record of this trip or that trip. I have a ready record of most of the newsletters since the start and can probably produce the early ones if need be. Somebody will now ask for the first one....! No doubt you feel the needle may be stuck in a familiar groove, when I say I am so grateful to those who regularly supply me with copy. It's true, though and it is always such a lovely surprise to find something from someone fresh!! Please keep it up! **One of the surprising things** about the reports are the regularity of the sightings of those old friends, the dolphins and – occasionally, to those more fortunate – whales. Graham's pictures of dolphins during his Transat and Peter's sighting of pilot whales in Scotland, bring home to us the privilege of sharing the seas with our air-breathing mammals. I recently had the pleasure of schnorkelling with a pair of sea-lion cubs in close company. They were so very graceful – twisting turning, going beneath me on their backs, cheekily regarding this clumsy oaf above them. They would play with each other, intertwining, breaking away then shooting up and blowing cheeky bubbles in my face (probably warning me away...!) I was absolutely

charmed and so honoured by their complete unconcern, the utter trust that they showed in my presence on their territory. Later, I was fortunate to come across a sea-turtle as well. A rock on the sand beneath me suddenly moved.... We lazily swam together for a while - he completely unconcerned. Then he surfaced, took a breath, dived and just disappeared! Wonderful!

We are now halfway through the year and have had some very good trips judging by the reports I have shared with you. We wish the Irish and Ionian trips the best of luck and hope you can bring back some good stories and pictures, please!! We still have the October Sailex – the wind-up of our year - and hope for good weather and a little less wind this time! Stormbound in Yarmouth is not the best way of spending a day when you have only five good days of which to make the best!

Socially as well, we will have had the BBQ at Rutland Water and can look forward to the pub visit at the Belvoir Brewery on 20th October. You have already been informed of this via the flyer and - believe me - it is well worth a visit! The hospitality is very welcoming and the samples very satisfactory! Food? Well a good buffet with a selection of mouth-watering goodies and plenty of them! All in all, excellent value! **Finally**, to echo our Presiding Master, we have had some excellent sailing results in the Olympics. The ruthlessness and the tactics really had me spellbound. I've never raced as such and having watched these boys/girls behaviour to each other, I don't think I will. **Adios for now until 31st October** deadline for Autumn. Keep our burgees flying support your Council and be nice to each other. Once again – my grateful thanks to you all. See you around sometime.

Happy Sailing!

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PRESIDING MASTER'S MUSINGS

by Neil Macfarlane



Sailing made its Olympic debut in Paris in 1900, and unusually even then, featured both men's and women's competitions. With the exception of St Louis in 1904, it has featured ever since. However, for

Sydney 2000 the name was changed from "yachting" to the more egalitarian "sailing". Events range from dinghies and keelboats to windsurfers, with both fleet (three or more competitors) and match racing (two head to head) – each with its own scoring system, but not quite matching the complexities of the velodrome. As I write, Ben Ainslie has retained his gold medal in the Finn, and Britain has silvers in the Star and RS-X windsurfer. We are in with a prospective medal in the men's 470, and a chance in the women's 470 for which medal race, I have tickets.

Many TOG members will have started sailing in small dinghies and progressed to larger boats and offshore sailing as finances permitted. Perhaps the attractions of frequent capsizes and immersion palled? However, the basic skills of sailing, once acquired in a dinghy, are never lost. They transfer smoothly to larger vessels, and conveniently everything slows down somewhat. As a boy, I learned to sail in a clinker built, gaff-rigged Burnham dinghy well over 50 years ago on East Loch Tarbert, Loch Fyne; sailed at school and university in Cadets, Enterprises and Larks; progressed to a Wayfarer in North Norfolk, and thence to offshore with my brother, in a range of yachts - and not least through TOG charters. Nowadays, packing gear and the travel can be a hassle but, once on board and leaving a mooring, most recently from Armadale on Skye, these are forgotten and another memorable TOG trip is in prospect.

REPORTS

FRANCE & CHANNEL ISLANDS

Sunday 20th to Sunday 27th MAY

by Stephen Eccleston

D'ARTAGNAN CREW

DAVE SKIPPER

PAUL MATE

KENNY

RICHARD

NIGEL

STEVE



For the Sailex, 2 Beneteau Oceanis 37's had been chartered from Fairview Sailing on the River Hamble and upon inspection, it was obvious that both were in excellent condition. Fairview's representative took the time to convey the finer points of Beneteau 37's handling and equipment. Our yacht for the trip was *D'Artagnan*, an apt name considering our aim was to complete a channel crossing to France and the Channel Islands.

The equipment checks, including an inflatable and outboard, were undertaken by Dave, with Paul making the necessary records. Dave's safety briefing and equipment familiarisation soon followed; a necessary task which we all agreed was as important to experienced as to less experienced crew members.

Following the loading of all the provisions, cabin allocation and crew kit, *D'Artagnan* slipped its mooring at Fairview's Marina,

on a fantastic sunny afternoon, en route to Gosport and Haslar Marina in Portsmouth for our first overnight stay. Once in Southampton water, the mainsail and genoa were hoisted which enabled the crew to experience a very enjoyable sail to Gosport.

On arrival at Gosport and Haslar Marina, our yacht was



secured to its mooring for the night. Following the use of the facilities, everyone, including the crew from both yachts, met at the "Mary Mouse" a lightship converted into a floating restaurant and enjoyed refreshments and a meal.

Monday morning arrived with a fresh south-easterly wind. Following a tasty breakfast prepared by our skipper who set the standard, but not for washing up, Dave and Paul checked the passage plan, whilst the remaining crew made *D'Artagnan* seaworthy. Slipping our mooring, we headed out under motor en route to France and the port of Cherbourg. Reaching a safe position just off the main channel, the sail and genoa were hoisted in preparation for a south-east passage of the Isle of Wight and safe water off Bembridge Ledge.

During the passage, the crew alternated amongst helming, observing and various other activities, making an interesting and enjoyable trip, providing an opportunity to gain navigational experience. During the trip, Kenny included a demonstration of the ins and outs of a buoyancy aid, which the crew found very amusing when he caught the lifejacket toggle causing an accidental inflation, but showing the effectiveness of the



Fairview lifejackets! This left Kenny temporarily unable to move, but still with cups of tea in hand, as was ever his aim of looking after fellow crew members. Great stuff!

The Channel crossing was navigated without a hitch and on our approach to Cherbourg outer harbour, the French pennant was hoisted. Once secure on our mooring, refreshments were enjoyed by all. Diane and Adrian had made a reservation at a local restaurant which all the crew thoroughly enjoyed, not only

discussing the crossing, but also the superb French cuisine. What a first class evening!

Tuesday morning, with the aroma of fresh bread and coffee which had been acquired by Kenny on a very early shopping trip wafting throughout *D'Artagnan* breakfast was consumed by the crew without hesitation. Dave and Paul having discussed and agreed our passage plan, *D'Artagnan* left Cherbourg on a sunny day, straight into a westerly headwind. Motor-sailing to Cap De



La Hague and experiencing very heavy overfalls, Paul ensured all crew were clipped on. A pleasant sail followed across the top of the Alderney Race, to arrive early afternoon at Braye Harbour, Alderney. Once *D'Artagnan* was secured to a mooring buoy, lunch was prepared by Nigel and enjoyed by all the crew. A trip onto Alderney was agreed, therefore the inflatable dinghy was required... "Oh no!" (or words to that effect!) shouted by the skipper as an oar slipped overboard! You would think the first design feature of an oar would be that it floats! No chance, just glad it wasn't me! Once ashore the crew cycled, walked and enjoyed a great pub meal for dinner.

Wednesday morning and having enjoyed breakfast, we made ready to leave Braye Harbour and Alderney. Once clear of the breakwater, we came round to port and then sailed down 'The Swinge' a channel between Alderney and Burhou. We continued with a fabulous sail towards Guernsey, once sighting



the island in the distance before it disappeared as we sailed into a very dense fog bank. We proceeded with caution for approximately an hour with crew topside, navigation lights on and Paul amidships providing an audible warning. Miraculously the fog cleared as we reached the entrance to 'Little Russel', the channel between Herm and Guernsey Island, which we navigated successfully, arriving within the outer harbour by mid-



afternoon. Once the tide depth had increased, the harbour master guided us to our allocated mooring passing over the tide bar that separated the outer and inner harbour.



Thursday was the day for rest, relaxation and for those adventurous, an opportunity to explore Guernsey or Herm Island where we had heard there was a Beer Festival! Tickets



purchased, we were all soon on the ferry heading for Herm Island, on a glorious sunny day with spectacular views. Once on the island, its true natural beauty was outstanding, with no vehicles and a fantastic hotel. It's a gem for walkers and families alike, to enjoy the beautiful secluded white sandy coves and scattered rock pools - a real paradise.

Friday morning arrived with all crew in good spirits following a hearty breakfast prepared by Richard. With poor visibility we set sail. Fortunately, the weather cleared sufficiently just as the incoming tide gave *D'Artagnan* enough clearance over the tide

bar and we headed for Lymington. We sailed back via the “Little Russel”, then through the ‘Alderney Race’ between France and Alderney, but due to poor visibility, the crew couldn’t see either! (Log read 14 knots speed over ground for a while)! A weather forecast was received just off Alderney, that a F8 was due in the Solent area. The decision was taken to motor-sail to “beat the weather”. So rapid was our progress, we backed off for the remaining 2 hours to avoid bucking the tide through the Needles. The trip from Guernsey to Lymington was completed in 11.30 hours. Once we navigated the channel on to our mooring within Lymington Marina, we all headed off for Fish & Chips which were eaten on the town quay, avoiding the skills of the dive-bombing seagulls, the perfect end to a fantastic



day.

Saturday dawned sunny with a fresh wind, which gave us a cracking sail to Cowes. Once secure on our mooring, the crew headed into town to watch the rugby and for last-minute shopping etc. Following a great day ashore, both crews enjoyed a superb meal at the now famous ‘On the Rocks Restaurant’ in Yarmouth arranged by Diane & Adrian. This coincided with the annual Yarmouth Regatta held over the weekend, with vessels of all types including a Cougar, a fabulous atmosphere and another memorable sailing trip.

Sunday morning our last day aboard, an enjoyable sail on the Solent and once within the Hamble, *D’Artagnan* was returned to its mooring at Fairview’s Marina. Congratulations from the crew to all those involved at the Trent Offshore Group for arranging and coordinating the Sailex.



ISLE OF SKYE CRUISE 7 -14July 2012

by Neil Macfarlane and Andy McWilliam.

(N.B. – *Italics relate to “Countess of Sleaf” – Ed.*)

SLEAT ODYSSEY

44ft *Jeanneau*

Stewart Cook (Skipper)

John Bryant

Hayden Jones

Mark Bennett

Peter Tytler

Tom Macfarlane

Neil Macfarlane

COUNTRESS OF SLEAT

44ft *Elan Impression*

Andy McWilliam (Skipper)

Arthur Wood

Brenda Wood

Ronney Panerai

Ivone Panerai

Robert McWilliam

Rowland Charge

Saturday 7 July

Crews assembled at Armadale during the afternoon having travelled by various modes, with some combining the charter with longer stays in Scotland. Provisions and luggage were stowed, and formal handovers and safety briefings completed. Then in the rather gloomy and damp early evening, the yachts



dropped their moorings and set sail, beating in a F3 NE wind across the Sound of Sleat for Loch Nevis, to spend the night off the pretty village of Inverie on the Knoydart peninsula. The village is only accessible by boat, or via rough forestry tracks, and includes the “remotest pub in Britain”. There the *Countess of Sleaf* had the first of her anchoring difficulties (drag and swinging) so decided to deploy the kedge anchor. Later, skippers met to discuss the weather forecast and debate options for the week ahead; it was agreed initially to head north-east through the Kyle Rhea, the narrow passage between Skye and the mainland.

Sunday 8 July

Careful planning meant an early start to ensure a favourable tidal current through Kyle Rhea, where spring rates are 7-8 kn. Both yachts managed some sailing early on, beating up the Sound of Sleat and past the entrance to Loch Horn. But against a F3/4 north-easterly, funnelling down between Skye and the mainland, engine power was required to ensure arrival at Kyle Rhea with the tide still favourable. In the event the skippers (and helms) timed it perfectly and the yachts skimmed through the narrows, past the elderly car ferry with its man-powered rotating platform, and out into Loch Alsh. Turning westward, sails were hoisted and the yachts entered the Kyle of Lochalsh, where tidal flows are less pronounced. On *Sleaf Odyssey* a momentary doubt arose as the mast-head closed on the central span of the road bridge, but sense prevailed and we swept under into more open waters. This gave the opportunity for some good sailing towards the islands of Crowlin, Scalpin, and Longay. On *Sleaf Odyssey* the sharp eyes of our navigator and resident marine biologist Peter spotted a pod of whales astern. These were identified as pilot whales and they gave an impressive display as we tried to sidle up on them. After this wonderful sighting, we turned north-east up Loch Carron and in mid-afternoon entered Plockton harbour and picked up moorings to rendezvous with the *Countess of Sleaf*. She had arrived earlier and the crew had gone to a pub to watch Andy Murray’s reversal of fortune to Federer. On leaving, the McWilliam brothers could not resist what turned out to be the best “fish cakes and chips” ever.

Later in the evening the *Countess* played host to *Odyssey’s* crew and we all toasted Brian Morris, who had been unable to

join us but had generously provided the Islay malt. Plans for the rest of week were discussed with general agreement that we would seek to circumnavigate Skye.

Monday 9 July

Both crews had taken the opportunity to go ashore at Plockton, shop and potter about this still delightful (former) fishing village, though now with many smart eateries and holiday cottages. With the yachts having watered at the pontoon (NB please wait until after 9.30am lest you deprive the B&B guests of their water!) and a forecast of N/NE F5-6 winds, the *Countess* set sail around 10am and *Odyssey* followed within the hour, heading down Loch Carron on a beam reach. *Odyssey's* plan was for a brief visit to Applecross but, its relative exposure, a F6 and building sea persuaded us to motor-sail past the bay, with Raasay and Rona to the west. Turning into the relative shelter of Loch Torridon the wind eased, the genoa was set and a fine beam reach took *Odyssey* down into Loch Shildaig in search of the hotel moorings. These failed to materialise so, having cruised about and rejected various dodgy looking buoys, we anchored under the sharp eye of a sea eagle. *Odyssey's* crew dined well ashore on local sea food and Skye beer.

Meanwhile, after a strenuous five hours of beating up the Inner Sound in a F5/6 northerly Countess experienced further difficulty with anchoring in Gairloch (more kelp and dragging). So Robert helmed through a rocky narrow passage into the next bay where a lonely night was spent on a mooring.

Tuesday 10 July



Next day *Odyssey* left late morning with the skipper having been on the phone to Skye Yachts trying without success to sort out a defunct GPS/plotter that refused to fire up or provide lat/long to the DSC radio (shades of *Pegasus*, the Royal Corps of Signals yacht). A quick muster showed that we had about eight GPS systems among us - (three of which were Peter's) - plus umpteen charts and pilots so we chanced it and sailed! *Odyssey's* plan was a shortish hop to Loch Gairloch, while *Countess* was bound for the Shiant Isles and the Outer Hebrides. With a F4-5 north wind we tacked up Loch Torridon, up the coast and turned into Loch Gairloch, heading down into our second Loch Shildaig and eponymous village. The small but busy fishing harbour also included reserved space on the pontoons for sightseeing boats, so we rafted up to larger yacht (which hailed from the Hamble RSYC). After watching a performing dog and seal in the harbour we dined ashore – again on local sea food and beer (changed days from the 60s/70s when all the shellfish were exported and the only “beer” McEwan's!). The moorings were “free” as the post of harbour master was vacant – advertised salary some

£25K and the duties seemingly not too onerous in the balmy summer sunshine

Meanwhile, the Countess dropped her mooring at 10am, in a



*drizzle which stopped at the mouth of Loch Gairloch. She motor-sailed (with regulation inverted cone) to the Shiant Isles for a quick lunch at anchor in 5m (and it held!) under a cloud of birds – mostly puffins. Brenda and Andy both received direct hits but managed to avoid extra dressing on their sandwiches. Then followed a cracking beam to broad reach, south westerly to Scalpay Sound on the northern edge of East Loch Tarbert on Harris. Hearts raced and momentarily stopped as we passed under the bridge, charted at 19m with an 18.81m air draft. Even at low water, it appeared a collision was “on”, despite several verifications of the maths. *Countess* anchored (again with the kedge) for the night in the beautiful and peaceful south harbour of Scalpay.*

Wednesday 11 July

With a northerly F3-4 forecast *Odyssey* made an early start for the long leg to Loch Dunvegan. On a long, leisurely beam reach passage was made westward and the northern tip of Skye passed with the small island of Eilean Trodday to the north, and the enticing Shiant Isles on the horizon (another year!). Turning south-west of Fladda-chuain on to a broad reach, Loch Snizort and Waternish Point were passed on the port beam. South towards Dunvegan Head to starboard, and so south-east, down the loch, into the narrows past Dunvegan Castle (seat of the MacLeods) avoiding a submerged rock, slickly to pick up a mooring.

Meanwhile on board the Countess, Robert had assumed temporary command under the observant eye of Arthur, to be assessed for his ICC. With very light winds Countess motored south to Loch Dunvegan, where the skipper took the yacht perfectly on to a mooring opposite the village. The crew went ashore to stretch their legs, book dinner at the Misty Isle Hotel, and soak up a Guinness or two. Both crews later dined at this hotel which gave us a memorable evening and rich source of anecdotes (see Peter's account).

Thursday 12 July

In a light north-easterly the yachts retraced their course out of Loch Dunvegan. Ronney helmed *Countess* and later, Rowland, with perfect helmsmanship, took her round Dunvegan Head, the Merchant and the impressive Neist Point, (gull winging at this stage). On a SSE beam reach the *Countess* headed towards Canna.

On leaving Loch Dunvegan, *Odyssey* headed S/SW, carefully avoiding the traffic separation zone (in which we saw only two merchant ships). In late morning, off Neist Point, a pod of

dolphins privileged us with a truly acrobatic display. The sun came out, and now, well out into the Sea of the Hebrides, the wind freshened and we had great sail down towards Canna. All took an exhilarating turn on the helm – blue water sailing indeed.

On arrival at beautiful Canna, the smallest of the Small Isles, in crystal clear sunshine, Countess spent an hour providing great amusement to other yachts and proving the fertility of the sea



bed by hoisting colossal amounts of kelp with her anchor. Finally a “bite” was achieved and the swing prevented with the kedgeree. Arthur and Brenda remained aboard while the others explored the nearby, almost parched hills and the tiny kirk. Later, the crew were treated to the delights of Iberian cuisine of the husband and wife team, Ronney and Ivone – Chorizos y Guisantes in a type of stew with rice and a rioja or two for accompaniment. Saborosa o que! This was only challenged by Dunblane meat pie and haggis, and all was consumed. Meanwhile, on entering Canna harbour, Odyssey sighted the Countess at rest with her bow clad in kelp, when we were hailed by the McWilliam brothers cavorting on the hill. So, once more Odyssey demonstrated her anchoring skills. The anchor held first time (possibly aided by Countess’s earlier kelp clearing efforts). The wind later dropped to give us a peaceful night in a splendid setting.

Friday 13 July



Porridge for breakfast set up Odyssey for the day, with blue skies and a north-easterly F2-3. A laid-back sail took both yachts to Loch Scresort on the west of Rhum for lunch and short trip

ashore for some. Then the homeward leg to Armadale and possibly the best sail of the week – soon the wind had picked up to F5 and Odyssey took full advantage, making a consistent 7-8kn (peak speed 8.9kn) and overhauling the Countess off the Sleat Peninsula. A long port tack took Odyssey close to the entrance to Loch Nevis, then a single starboard tack right into Armadale Bay, to drop the sails and pick up a buoy.

The Countess arrived soon afterwards but, in a heavy NE swell, their boat hook was taken by mooring line before it could be secured. Skipper Andy gave the impression of ship abandonment as he scurried into the dinghy to retrieve the errant boathook and eventually, hitch the yacht to the buoy. Andy’s dinghy antics and his brother Robert’s bravura yacht handling, delighted the waiting Mallaig ferry passengers, fully justifying the latter’s recent award of the ICC.

That evening, we packed most of our gear, took it ashore, and cleaned the yachts. Then both crews, washed and unwashed, met in the bar of the Ardvasar Hotel, ate in the splendour (and isolation) of the dining room, swapped tales, and agreed it had been a great week’s sailing.

Log Totals: Sleat Odyssey 266 NM
Countess of Sleat 300 NM

Now – WHAT REALLY HAPPENED....

A sideways look by Peter Tytler.

Standing on the pier at

Armadale, waiting for the various members to arrive by ferry, looking over to the gathering clouds over Mallaig and a chilly breeze from the North, I was beginning to wonder at the wisdom of this Hebridean cruise. However, once we were



aboard our spanking new 44ft Jeanneau, Sleat Odyssey, with our cheerful crew assembled, the prospect of a brisk beat up to Inverie for an overnight stop removed the doubts. Considering that most of the crew had not sailed for a while, we were soon working like a well-oiled machine. Although the ‘Forge’ at Inverie is well known for its good kitchen, the weather and the delicious odour of Scottish steak pie wafting up from the galley overcame the desire to go ashore. Washed down with some of Tesco’s red wine, we were content to try out our sleeping quarters.

Next morning we were up and off to catch the tidal gate at Kyle Rhea. We managed to get some more sailing in before we had to motor up through the narrows. Stewart’s passage-planning was so immaculate, that we entered with the tidal stream building up to peak speed. We sped through this dramatic narrows in a flash. Although the cloud level was low and the atmosphere brooding, we were still able to appreciate its beauty. Turning towards Kyle of Lochalsh, we were faced with the majestic arching span of the Skye Bridge. Although we all knew there was 29m clearance, doubts crept in as we approached and the gap between the top of the mast and the bridge appeared to decrease. I am sure we all ducked mentally. It would not be appropriate for TOG members to show cringing apprehension, but a cheer went up as we glided smoothly under the span. Once clear of the navigation channel, the sails were up and we were on our way to Plockton. The winds were light and variable and we were making slow progress. I started to look about and behind us I saw whales blowing. There were at least five and some were big, about 30 feet long. The bulbous head revealed that they

were a family of pilot whales. The motor was put on and we headed towards them. Their reaction was to take off at speed. The engine was cut and we were sailing back on course, when more surfaced ahead of us. We kept the engine off and were rewarded with two large individuals raising their heads out of the water for a better look at us. They reminded me of the two



old geezers in theatre box in the Muppets show. “What do you think of the show so far?” We came close enough for us to photograph them. For me this was the closest I have come to these magnificent creatures.

Before we knew it we were at anchor off the pretty village of Plockton. Originally home to a fishing community, it is now a very popular holiday venue and many of the cottages are holiday homes. The weather had improved and we all sat out in the cockpit with our drinks to listen to Andy Murray’s progress at Wimbledon. Our only source of information was a commentary via the internet on Tom’s Smartphone. The reporting was fragmentary and several minutes after the event, but we were soon aware that things were going badly for him. Our disappointment was tempered by the relatively balmy conditions and our surroundings. It certainly raised our expectations for another pleasant Hebridean cruise.

A gentle force 3 took us out of Plockton and down Loch Carron next day. We took a short cut through Caolas Mhor, a passage between the mainland and the small island of Eil Beag, and on into the Inner Sound of Raasay. By now the wind was increasing to force 6. We had reefed the mainsail and genoa, but beating was uncomfortable with rising seas. We were becoming overpowered and in danger of broaching. Stewart did the wise thing and motored the rest of the way up the Inner Sound of Raasay. We had planned a lunch stop at Red Point with its glorious red sandy beach, but it offered no shelter from strong northerly winds, so we grabbed a sandwich on the way. Some of us had not yet found their sea legs and I, for one, was beginning to feel quite queasy when eventually we reached the mouth of Loch Torridon. Mercifully the wind eased and with the wind on the beam, we rolled out the genoa and sailed round into Loch Carron. The motion was easier and we were able to enjoy our passage into Loch Shieldaig. Our various references suggested that there would be two visitors mooring off the hotel but, after searching in vain, Stewart phoned the hotel, to be informed that they had been removed for refurbishment. This seemed to us a curious time to be doing such a thing at the height of the season, but that’s the West Coast for you! During our search for moorings, we were lucky to see a mighty sea eagle (the flying barn door) fly close behind us and land on a tree. The anchor was dropped where the moorings should have been and we were

able to see the village of Sheildaig in all its glory. Like Plockton, it has a line of white-washed cottages lining the top of the Loch, whilst behind it rose a symmetrically-domed rocky hill, rising to 500m. For me, Sheildaig is one of the most beautiful villages in Scotland, especially when seen from your own yacht at anchor in the loch. If that was not enough, it has an excellent sea-food restaurant and bar serving excellent local brewed beers. I can tell you it was a very happy crew that went to bed that night. What bliss!

Tuesday morning was taken up with a faulty Chart plotter, which appeared to be the master unit for GPS signal processing. Being well-seasoned navigators and having eight independent GPS hand units, Smartphones or PC chart plotters, we were not concerned. The real problem was that the DSC radio was not receiving GPS information. That in itself was not a serious problem since the VHF still worked and we could send a traditional mayday. Stewart wanted to report the fault to the charterer and seek advice on how to get the system up and running. Following various instructions, involving start and soft buttons, which did not work, Mark at Ardivasar contacted the manufacturer. Their singularly useless piece of advice was that perhaps the start button was jammed against the casing! With that we were off. The passage planned, navigator at his table with paper charts and an iPad at the ready, we set sail for Loch Gairloch, while our sister ship headed for the outer Hebrides via the Shiant Isles. The wind was still to north but at force 4 to 5, so we had a bracing beat, dodging creel marker buoys all the way into Loch Gairloch. There are 4 overnight options at the head of the Loch, 3 anchorages and the pontoons in the busy fishing harbour. Stewart chose the pontoons for easy access to the village. The wind was offshore and quite strong. There were no empty spaces, so the decision to raft up alongside a yacht of similar size was made. With an anxious Mark at the helm, we eventually succeeded in coming alongside, after a few recces. At one stage an elderly yachtie emerged from his boat, no doubt raised by the commands to the helm from the bow and stern of our yacht. In true Parahandy style, he offered to help but was not keen to go on board someone else’s boat (the one we were coming alongside) without permission! He scuttled off and the owners suddenly appeared very anxious to help. This was one of the very useful training exercises during our cruise.

Once secure, we were able to relax in the cockpit and observe entertainment provided by the locals. A very large Atlantic grey seal had taken residence in the harbour at the stern of a fishing boat where it was enjoying a free meal. On the opposite side, on the steps on the breakwater, a lady was exercising her willing Spaniel by throwing a ball into the water. Naturally the spaniel rushed down the steps and leapt into the harbour with a mighty splash to retrieve it. The seal soon cottoned on to this game and decided to participate. He waited until the ball hit the water and then he submerged, swimming towards the ball. Just as the dog took the ball in his mouth the seal must have nudged him from below. The dog’s reaction was hilarious. He swam furiously round and round, like a clockwork mouse, looking for the source of the provocation. According to the owner, this happens every evening, which proves seals are more intelligent than dogs (Spaniels at least).

The entertainment over, we all went ashore to feast on sea food at the hotel restaurant.

Our next destination was Loch Dunvegan on the north-west of Skye. The passage plan would take us between the little island of Eilean Trodday and the northern tip of Skye. The trip over was quiet, with light winds and good visibility, which allowed us

to view a widening panorama of the Outer Hebrides on the horizon. As we passed Eilean Trodday, the waters became quite disturbed by a fast tidal stream. Beyond, to the north-west, we could see the dark outline of the Shiant Islands, which the *Countess of Sleaf* was visiting. I was very envious. I consoled myself by soaking in the wild coast of Skye. Like many parts of Skye it is the geology which fascinates. The spiky stacks, the chains of small rocky islands and ribbed cliffs are what stick in the mind. Lovely in calm sunshine but treacherous in the stronger northerly winds we were about to experience later in our trip. We were lucky to get so close.

Apart for an unexpected gyration caused by a temperamental autohelm, the trip down to Loch Dunvegan was uneventful. The entry to the harbour, which involves negotiating a narrow rocky-sided passage with a nasty submerged rock in the middle, did raise the adrenaline levels for those in the cockpit. For me at the navigation table, with all the wonders of science (my ipad with C-Maps), it seemed plain sailing but, I did release a sigh of relief when the danger passed.

It is not easy picking up moorings from a high-sided yacht, but we were fortunate to have a tall, flexible Tom to lean over with the boat hook, with father anxiously holding onto his harness. The *Countess of Sleaf*'s technique was more elaborate and involved the use of a less tall man in an inflatable!

The two crews went ashore for dinner at the attractively named Misty Isle Hotel, but inside we found ourselves in a time capsule from the 1950's. The facilities were particularly ancient. The cistern of the WC was inclined at 15° from the horizontal, which was confusing for mariners who by this time had found their sea legs and were already finding it difficult to achieve equilibrium ashore. I was also fascinated by the paint roller slung above the tired-looking bath. I suppose it is difficult to find loofahs on Skye. The food was OK, but we emptied the wine cellar by ordering two bottles of red wine. The waitresses were two personable sisters of dramatically different physique; the smaller of the two was like a pretty porcelain doll and a delight for ancient mariners to feast their eyes on, distracting us from what was put on our plates. Truly this was one of these memorable occasions ashore.

Thursday was a fine day, but the wind was light. My guiding hands was not needed as Stewart retraced our track on his own hand-held GPS. He seemed much happier with this arrangement! The passage plan was to avoid the traffic separation channels, by passing close to Neist Point and south to Canna for the night. Disappointed by light winds, Stewart took us out into the Minch in the hope of catching the wind away from the shelter of Skye. Suddenly, out of the blue, a pod of short-nosed, common dolphins came racing towards us from landward. They were leaping out of the water in synchrony and diving under the hull. They resurfaced and gambolled around us, giving us a great view and a photo opportunity. Deciding we were going the wrong way, they danced away to the north, leaving us gasping. The sun had come out at last, warmth filled the cockpit and the crew shed layers. The wind increased, to give an exhilarating reach down to Canna, with a maximum SOG of 8.8 knots! As we were approached by yet another pod of curious dolphins, the *Countess of Sleaf* radioed to warn us of anchoring hazards ahead. Canna is notorious for poor holding because of a rich kelp forest and Andy's crew had to make several attempts to anchor. In the process of harvesting the kelp, they had effectively laid bare a hole in the kelp forest, into which our cunning skipper dropped the hook which held first time! This, of course, demonstrates the

commendable spirit of altruism and cooperation of TOG sailors. Even so, a strong gusty wind had us oscillating across the bay, making it difficult to be sure that we were really securely in place. Later, the wind dropped and we all had a restful night in a wonderful location.

Friday morning was sunny, bright and clear, the wind was from the NE and registering F 2, all good signs for our last day at sea. With a belly full of salty porridge, the Scottish recipe is not to the English palate, we sailed for Rhum. The gentle beat round the north of Rum was so restful, that Neil had time to fiddle with the miscreant chart plotter and Bingo! He got it to work, but by this time it was redundant as our more reliable systems were in place.

Once again we demonstrated our faultless anchoring skills in Loch Scresort. Rhum is the biggest of the Small Isles and is dominated by the twin peaks of Bareval and Hallival, which rise majestically to 2000 feet. The wildlife here is a major pull for tourists. The red deer which roam free, will be familiar to all fans of Autumn Watch on BBC 1. Also the eagles and seabirds bring enthusiasts from all parts of Europe. The good weather had improved in the shelter of the Bay, so Stewart and I went ashore to visit the Castle, an elaborate Victorian pile and landmark at the head of the Loch. The walk round the bay was warm and pleasant and one could be forgiven if thoughts of Greek islands came to mind. We returned to a culinary masterpiece prepared by Neil and his sous-chefs, from leftovers and surplus stores scrounged from our sister ship.

The wind was freshening. It was time to leave and follow our passage plan to make a long beat towards Mallaig and then tack directly in to Armadale Harbour to pick up a Skye Yachts' mooring. Some of us suggested doing this entirely under sail, but wiser heads saw its folly. Once out of the shelter of the anchorage, the wind strengthened to F5 giving us an exciting sail at speeds consistently above 7 and peaking at 8.9 knots. We had to reef in the genoa and ease out the main, to avoid being overpowered. All round us the shearwaters were skimming the waves and enjoying the strong winds as much as we were. Our newer boat, with well-set pristine sails, was more than a match for the *Countess of Sleaf*, which was overtaken and left behind in our dash for the moorings. It goes without saying that we were not racing, that's not our practice in TOG, but it sure as Hell makes you feel good. (*I quite agree!* – Ed)

While we were safely on our moorings and tidying up, we were able to observe another variation of the mooring technique of the *Countess of Sleaf*. In she came, with the dinghy at the ready, approaching the mooring. Suddenly the skipper took to the dinghy and set off for shore. Surely he was not abandoning ship like the unfortunate captain of the Costa Concordia? No! In fact, he was racing for the boat-hook which had been wrested from the hands of the crew as the strong winds caught the bow just as they picked up the buoy. Meanwhile, our newest member of the illustrious ICC was demonstrating his close manoeuvring skills, dodging buoys, shoals and yachts, as he successfully maintained station against fluky winds. This awesome display was much appreciated by the ferry passengers assembled on the RORO ferry pier. Did I hear a muffled cheer through the howling wind? Andy returned at ramming speed with wandering boat-hook and the mooring was made secure. Clearly, Robert deserves his ICC and Arthur was vindicated in his decision. Well done the *Countess of Sleaf*..

What a memorable cruise it was! I have said it before and I have no worries repeating that sailing the West Coast of

Scotland is a great experience and will become a regular event in TOG's sailing calendar I am sure. Thanks to Stewart, our skipper, for making the right decisions and keeping the crew happy. Neil, our senior officer, for his beneficent overseeing calm and cuisine extraordinaire. Tom, for his agility, youthful banter and mimicry. Mark, for helping out with navigation and saving me from a total troglodyte existence at the navigation table (which enjoy, really!), Hayden, for his incredible helming skills and fortitude. John, for technical skills, backup navigation and amazing organisation ability. They are a great crew and I hope to sail with them again.



Memoirs of an Atlantic Crossing – 25th ARC 2010 – Skyelark of London
by *Graham Wassall*

Chapter 2

Onwards to the Cape Verde Islands

After the 1pm start on Sunday 21st

November, we headed south along the East coast of Gran Canaria.

Due to the Jet stream being 500 miles south of its usual position (familiar story to this summer), Dan, our Skipper, decided to head south of the Cape Verde Islands to pick up the Trade Winds.

Others in the race headed directly to the Caribbean and were battered by winds of 40 knots on the nose. Several boats were disabled along with the British Forces boat which lost it's mast.

Life on board ?

Would anyone be seasick ? Would we all get on well ?

Would the boat have any major issues ?

Thankfully it was No, Yes, No respectively.

Once into our watch routines, life was generally easy and chilled out. Time to catch up on those books that I always wanted to read !!



One of the rougher days !!

Helming at night was harder than I'd imagined. The concentration need to keep on the required course and sailing into complete darkness, took some time to adjust to. Cooking became the topic of the day and with a couple of wannabee Marco Pierre Whites on board, it resulted in some interesting concoctions !!

Who would kill our friendly butternut squash ?

My watch-mate, Malcolm and I sub-contracted our cooking duties to Trina, our Danish crew-mate, in exchange for doing her washing – as you can see from the picture, there was not a lot to wash.



Wash days were always interesting !!

It took a slow 7 days to clear the Cape Verde Islands by which time our VMG (Velocity Made Good) was showing that we were only 200 miles closer to St Lucia and our ETA was 23rd January. During this time of very calm waters, we were fortunate

to see lots of Dolphins, leather-back turtles and best of all, we nearly ran into a sleeping Sperm Whale, which, when startled, dived right in front of the boat – the tail was enormous.



Training our dolphins in the art of formation swimming

On picking up the Trade Winds, we were able to average 7 knots. This put us on course for a more exciting experience.



Go West !!
The Journey continues

Chapter 3 , next TOGLine

TREASURER

GRAHAM WASSALL (01664454478)



ARTHUR WOOD - DEPUTY PRESIDING MASTER



STEWART COOK - ADMINISTRATOR



PAUL RATCLIFFE - MEMBERSHIP

(01778 341475)



NAVIGATION

CLIVE CRANKSHAW (01664 454403)



SOCIAL

ANDY McWILLIAM (01509 413978)



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A visit to Belvoir Brewery, Crown Park, Old Dalby, Leicestershire, LE14 3NQ. Saturday, 20th October 2012 – 7:30 to 10:30p.m.

The tour starts at 19.00 hrs and with drinks and buffet. The cost is £13.95pp and should last approximately two and a half hours. A clue as to the numbers likely nearer the time would be appreciated!

JOHN BRYANT - EXPEDITIONS MASTER



MARK DAVIS - TRAINING
(07711 170451)



mark@ashoresailing.co.uk

The following courses are available:

- RYA Essential Navigation & Seamanship Theory.*
- RYA Day Skipper Theory.*
- RYA Coastal Skipper/Yachtmaster Offshore Theory*
- RYA Yachtmaster Ocean Theory.*
- Marine Radio Short Range Certificate.*
- RYA First Aid.*

For more information visit:-

<http://www.trent-offshore-group.co.uk/courses.html>

and keep up-to-date with forthcoming events

or

contact our training organiser: -

Mark Davis

✉ mark@ashoresailing.co.uk

☎ 0771 1170 451

WEBSITE

www.trent-offshore-group.co.uk

The TOG website has a new page: Keep up-to-date with what's on at:-

<http://www.trent-offshore-group.co.uk/Current-News.html>

Visit this page now to see some of the latest pictures and comments sent in by members. If you have any sailing news and pictures you would like uploading then please forward to Mark: You can text to 0771 1170 451 or ✉

mark@ashoresailing.co.uk

TAILPIECE



With thanks to Norman Allen.....

**Electron Fever or
All my Electrons....**

I must go down to the seas again, in a modern high-tech boat,
And all I ask is electric, for comfort while afloat,
And alternators, and solar panels, and generators going,
And deep-cycle batteries with many amperes flowing.

I must go down to the seas again, to the autopilot's ways,
And all I ask is a GPS, and a radar, and displays,
And a cell phone, and a weather-fax, and a short-wave radio,
And compact disks, computer games and TV videos.

I must go down to the seas again, with a freezer full of steaks,
And all I ask is a microwave, and a blender for milkshakes,
And a water maker, air-conditioner, hot water in the sink,
And email and a VHF to hear what my buddies think-

I must go down to the seas again, with power-furling sails,
And chart displays of all the seas, and a bullhorn for loud hails,
And motors pulling anchor chains, and push-button sheets,
And programs that take full charge of tacking during beats.

I must go down to the seas again, and not leave friends behind,
And so they never get seasick we'll use the web online,
And all I ask is an Internet with satellites over me,
And beaming all the data up, my friends sail virtually.

I must go down to the seas again, record the humpback whales,
Compute until I decipher their language and their tales,
And learn to sing in harmony, converse beneath the waves,
And befriend the gentle giants as my synthersizer plays.

I must go down to the seas again, with RAM in gigabytes, .
And teraflops of processing for hobbies that I like,
And software suiting all my wants, seated at my console,
And pushing on the buttons which give me complete control.

I must go down to the seas again, my concept seems quite sound
But when I simulate this boat, some problems I have found
The cost is astronomical, repairs will never stop,
Instead of going sailing, I'll be shackled to the dock.

I must go down to the seas again, how can I get away?
Must I be locked in low-tech boats until my dying day?
Is there no cure for my complaint, no technological fix?
Oh I fear electric fever is a habit I can't kick.

*(This is attributed to Anon. and was first published in
Commodore's Bulletin of the Seven Seas Cruising
Association. It was sent to me, twice, by two members of the
Royal Institute of Navigation – Norman)*



Sailing Programme 2012

NON Members of TOG are welcome to join any of the following sailing programmes and will be invited to join the group as a temporary member for the year at an additional cost of £20



SEPTEMBER

Booking/Ref: GRE/12

Trip Title: **GREECE - IONIAN SEA**

Description: In the Southern Ionian the islands of Lefkas, Cephalonia (Kefalonia) and Zakynthos (Zante), enclose an 'inland sea' with more than twenty smaller islands dotted within this wonderful cruising area including Meganissi, Kastos, Kalamos and Ithaca. Sailing around these Ionian islands you will discover many safe anchorages in picturesque bays surrounded by olive groves and cypress trees and be able to explore a fantastic choice of pretty ports.

Lead Skipper: Andy McWilliam

Dates: Sunday 16th September to Sunday 23rd September inclusive

Booking Status: 5 onboard. Depending on the final number of persons booking we have two options. First option is upsizing our existing charter boat (Bavaria 32) to a 36, 39 or 45 footer. The other alternative open to TOG at the moment is to charter a second boat, this option is dependent on another qualified Skipper and Mate signing up.

. **One boat fully booked** but list waiting. **Cost:** between £370 and £425 per berth plus flights



OCTOBER

Booking/Ref: EOS/12

Trip Title: **SOLENT END OF SEASON SAILEX**

Description: Our traditional "End of Season Sailex". A Last Chance to get afloat and enjoy a few days in good company before we all meet up at the Annual Dinner.

Dates: Wednesday 10th October - Sunday 14th October inclusive

Booking Status: taking bookings now

Cost: £230 per berth



**Latest transport at Botanical Gardens, Quito.
A rather unusual use for patio chairs.....**