

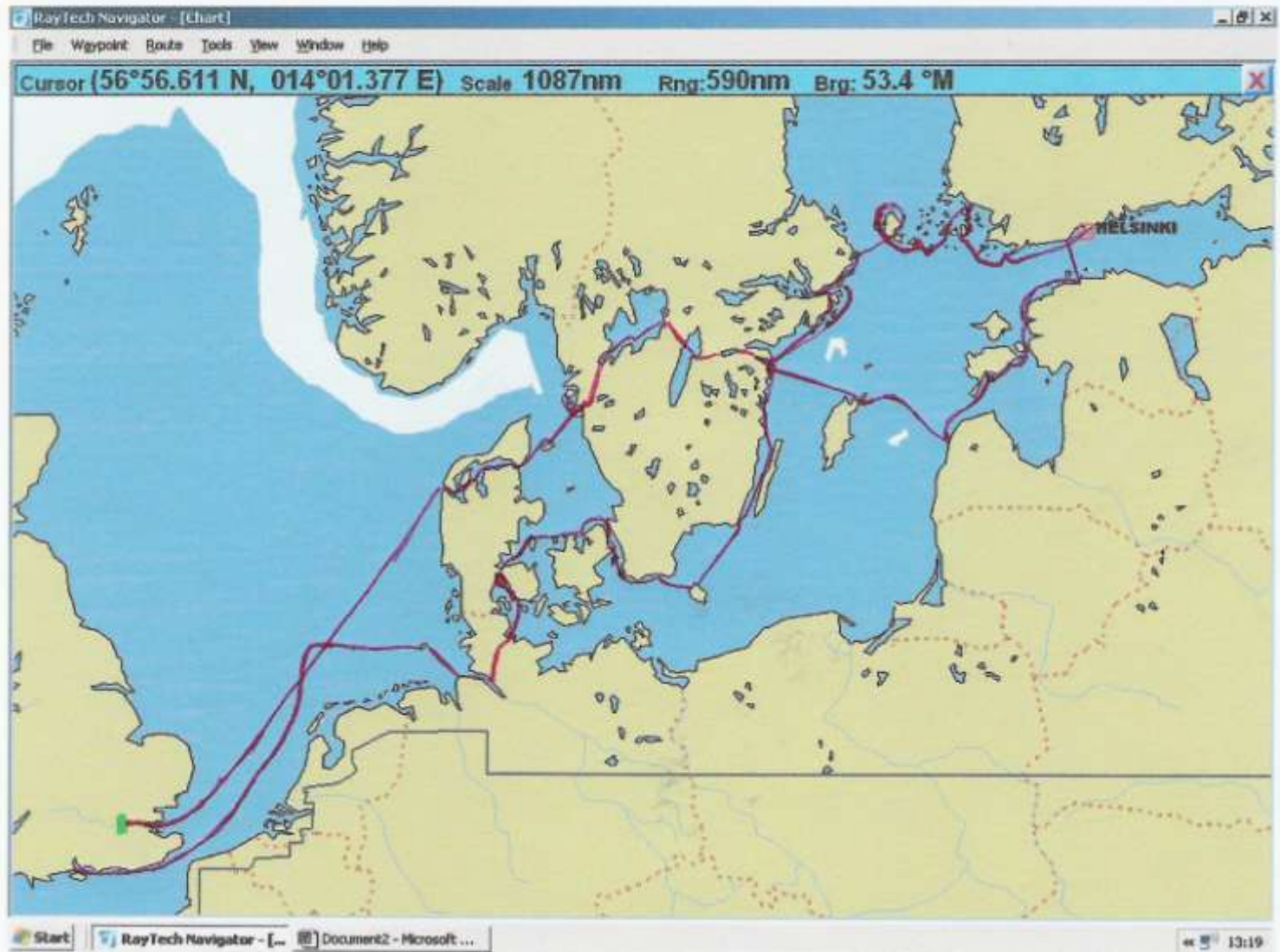
# **Bumping and Grinding Round the Baltic**

**The Voyage of Mina<sup>2</sup> to the Baltic Sea  
May – September 2005**



**Tim Barker**

## Mina' Baltic Cruise 2005



# Bumping and Grinding Round the Baltic

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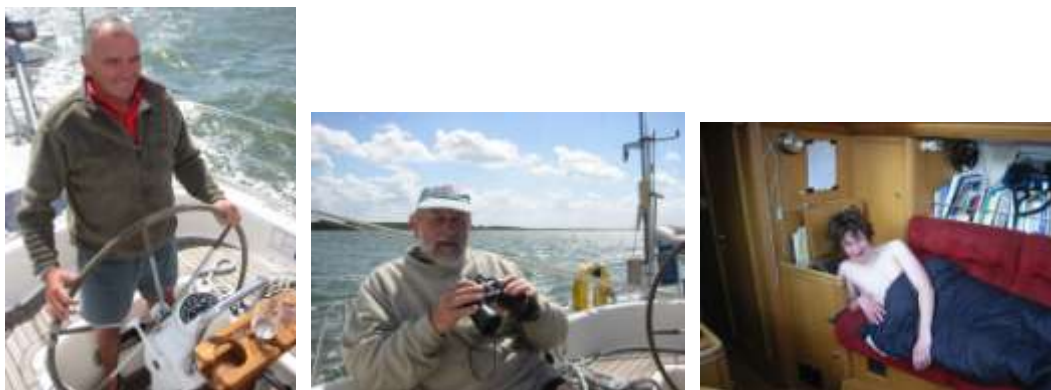
The preparations for our Baltic cruise were the usual disaster. Even before I left St Katherine Docks for Gillingham for the annual haul and antifoul, the starter motor and one of the batteries had packed up. When I got those replaced, the autopilot expired on the way downriver. At Gillingham, the yard dropped one of the batteries which leaked concentrated sulphuric acid on to my immaculate light American oak cabin sole. A dark brown square of lifting veneer marked the spot. And the GPS, which had worked perfectly all the previous year, suddenly refused to talk to the chart plotter. Pretty much par for the course on *Mina*<sup>2</sup>, my cutter rigged Oyster 485.

But by 18 May, everything was in place (including a four month supply of wine, gin, whisky and beer). Lawrence Wells, Gordon Reddell and Tom McCarter joined the boat for the North Sea passage. Lawrence, Gordon and I are horny-handed salts of the sea. A decrepit bunch with an average age of just over 60. The last-minute sign-up of Tom, an 18-year old New Zealander, brought the average age down to 49 which made 75% of us feel a lot more youthful.

At 0915 on 19 May we locked out of St Katherine's and headed downriver to the estuary and the North Sea, and our next adventure. Within minutes of leaving St Kats, I discovered that the solution we thought we had found to the GPS / chart plotter problem had not worked, and the brand new autopilot controller which had been fitted in Gillingham had packed up. So I didn't know where I was and had to hand-steer for three days to a place I was unlikely to find. To make matters worse, the onboard email had gone on the blink as well so I couldn't even make my way up the North Sea firing off disgruntled emails to those who were responsible. This boat looks good and sails brilliantly but the technology drives me mad! How I sometimes hark back to the days when I had a fistful of charts and a hand bearing compass.

But what the hell, we had a fair wind. Our 460 mile passage from London to the top of Denmark was not, it has to be said, as full of incident as the passage to the Lofoten islands last year. No thirty hour gales. No dramatic electrical storms. No dolphins leaping from our bow wave – but it was a cracking good sail nonetheless, with 20-25 knots of wind abaft the beam all the way. We arrived at the narrow entrance to the Limfjord in Denmark (a bit to the north of Dundee) almost three days to the minute since we left London. Since passing the Thames barrier we had not had the engine on at all. Bliss.





### **Lawrence, Gordon and Tom en route to Denmark**

Tom had no previous offshore experience and was keen to learn the ropes. Under the solicitous guidance of Lawrence he certainly learnt how to mix a lethal gin and tonic! We arrived at Thyborøn, the narrow entrance to the Limfjord, early on Sunday morning. Thyborøn harbour looked unappealingly industrial so we turned the engine on and motored in light airs to the tidy little town of Lemvig ten miles into the fjord. There was not enough depth for us in the yacht harbour so we tied up against the main harbour wall. The Baltic is not really designed for boats of our size and this would be a recurring theme but, having got used to tying up alongside rusty fishing boats and old tractor tyres in Norway last year, it was not to be a problem.

**Monday 23 May.** We awoke to warm sunshine and a hail from the harbour master, resplendent in a white naval officer's hat covered with gold braid befitting his status. He wanted 75 DKr – less than £7 which seemed reasonable compared with the £40+ that an English south coast marina would take off us. After lunch, we set sail for the short twelve mile passage to the island of Venø. Great sailing with the wind behind us, we shot along through the flat protected waters. The little harbour on the west coast of Venø (the prettiest side of the island according to the pilot book) was too shallow for us so we anchored about 300m offshore in 4m of water. But with the wind increasing from the southwest, it would have been a very wet dinghy ride ashore, so we set off for the more protected east side of the island (which turned out to be just as pretty) anchored again about 300m from the shore and settled down for the evening.

**Tuesday 24 May.** The brand-new autopilot controller had got water inside it and had packed up. Having stripped it down, dried it out with a hair dryer (yes, every boat should have one!) and strapped it up with duck tape, it worked a treat. We then set sail to the island of Livø, about 24 miles off. Again, strongish winds from behind us, flat water and a good turn of speed. Terrific. We decided not to anchor off Livø due to the wind, but see if we could get into the tiny harbour. The pilot book suggested that there was only 2m of water (we draw 2.2m) but chart suggested that it might be possible. It was – just. The harbour is only about 30m by 18m (we are 16m with the davit) with a narrow entrance half of which was blocked by a working boat. With a stiff cross wind we had to run at speed through the narrow entrance before slamming on the brakes whilst executing a handbrake turn on to the harbour wall. We missed two boats by inches and hit the harbour wall only a glancing blow. We had now wedged ourselves into the harbour facing the wrong way with a strong wind pinning us to the quay. Would we ever be able to get out? Time would tell.



### **Livø – an impossibly small harbour**

Livø is a delightfully pretty island, shaped like a tadpole, about one and a half miles long and one mile wide. No cars (and no dogs) are allowed on the island. The long spit at the southern end is home to a colony of seals and the body of the tadpole beautiful countryside. The island seemed to be populated entirely by small children, dashing around all over the place. It was somewhat surreal like we had sailed into the land of the Munchkins. It transpired that the entire island let itself out for school trips, and there were 140 children between the ages of 6 and 13 staying for three days with only a couple of staff to supervise.

**Wednesday 25 May.** The wind was still strong from the south but there was now thick cloud cover and it was a cold damp morning. This didn't stop Tom from going for his first swim. He announced that the water was very cold as if this would come as a surprise to us. We walked right the way round this jewel of an island which is one large nature reserve with a very small working farm. The air was full of birdsong and I counted a dozen different species including a buzzard which was being harassed by a couple of outraged jackdaws. As we were preparing to leave, all the children came down to the miniscule harbour to catch the ferry home. Engaging us in conversation (all of them spoke excellent English), it was not long before we seemed to have invited all 140 of them on board for a conducted tour of the boat. They showed little interest in the navigatorium and revolutionary generator but they all thought the television was incredibly cool. I didn't like to tell them that I didn't even know if it worked as I had never turned it on!



**The *Mina*<sup>2</sup> fan club**

Having waved goodbye to our young fans, we then had the problem of getting out of the miniscule harbour. The wind was still pinning us onto the harbour wall, so the only way out was to employ the noble and ancient art of warping. We launched the dinghy and took a stout line over to the far quay and winched ourselves through 90 degrees. Having turned the boat, we then motored out of the harbour astern with about half an inch clearance on each side. A number of people had congregated on the quayside to watch the mad Englishmen destroy their harbour, but I am pleased to say they were disappointed. It turned out to be a textbook manoeuvre.

Setting off for Ålborg, we had another exhilarating dead run with numerous gybes as we shot down the slightly twisting channel. There are three marinas in Ålborg. We chose the one furthest into town as we had been told that they could accommodate bigger yachts. Bows-to mooring is prevalent in the Baltic and in the western Baltic you moor between two poles at the stern, known as a box, with your bow onto the quay. Almost all the boxes in the Baltic were too narrow for us, and Ålborg was no exception. However we managed to find an alongside berth in the boat yard at the western end of the marina.

**Thursday 26 May.** Lawrence and Gordon bade their fond farewells and an hour and a half later my parents, Hugh and Noel, arrived. Both in their eighties, my father is on his third set of hips and not too mobile these days so it was as well we had an alongside mooring. I had still been having enormous problems getting my navigation software to interface with the GPS so Hugh and Noel had brought out a new software disc for chart plotting. I uninstalled what I had, popped in the CD and – nothing. It simply wouldn't load. So having had a just about workable solution before, now I had nothing. Bloody technology!

**27 May.** I took the laptop to a computer shop where they downloaded the software from the Raytech website and, as a precaution, I made a CD copy as backup. But it didn't make any

difference – I will have to live with the unsatisfactory workaround. We headed off for Hals at the eastern entrance of the Limfjord, some 17 miles away, again with the wind behind us.

**28 May.** Hals is a pretty little village, now populated by wealthy Danish holiday makers. But in former times it was strategically important and the fortified earthwork redoubt guarded the narrow entrance to the Limfjord. The old garrison building in the middle houses a small museum where we learnt that the British Navy had attacked the redoubt in 1811 but was repulsed by the Danes. Whilst the British Navy had difficulty in getting into the Limfjord, I was having difficulty in getting out. The wind had swung from WSW to ESE and now had us firmly pinned to the harbour wall. Our newly acquired warping techniques were not an option on this occasion so instead we dropped the dinghy from its davits and Tom took a line from the stern to tug us out. The stern slowly swung away from the quay whilst vigorous use of the bowthruster stopped the bow from crunching its way down the quay. The problems of getting Mina<sup>2</sup> off the quay had obviously occurred to the local residents who turned out in force to see another British vessel come to grief. I am rather proud to say they were disappointed as the operation was carried out with complete success and honour was maintained. We stood off in the harbour whilst the dinghy was re-hoisted on its davits and then we headed off for the island of Læsø, half way between Denmark and Sweden. The wind was for the most part F6 on the beam (at one point coming just forward of the beam – the first time since we had left London). Slightly over-reefed to give a comfortable ride for Hugh and Noel, we were still reeling off the miles at 9 to 9.5 knots. Once again, great sailing.



We skirted round the shallow sand bank on the NW coast of Læsø and picked up the excellent leading marks on the shore leading us into Vesterø harbour. In the yacht basin, bows-to mooring was again the norm, this time lying to a stern anchor, but if Hugh ever had a chance of getting off the boat, we had to find an alongside quay so we tied up to a fishing quay. Being a Saturday, the rest of the harbour was all but full, most of the boats having come over from Sæby, a small harbour on the Jutland coast about 12 miles away. Læsø is a favourite weekend destination for them. Nearly all the boats here are in the 26 – 35 foot range and our arrival apparently caused a good deal of comment from the Sæby fleet who were all on the quayside preparing their barbecue dinners together. During the evening, one by one they all popped round to have a chat – a very friendly bunch.



The wind having been ESE on arrival, it then veered to WSW again, on our quarter. One of the disadvantages of our in-mast reefing is that when the wind is from the quarter in harbour, the mast acts like a massive organ pipe and this monotonous booming resonance not only fills the boat, but the rest of the harbour as well. Reluctant to go to the trouble of unmooring and turning the boat round (Sod's Law dictates that had we done this the wind would have backed to ESE again) we decided to put up with it. But it was difficult. And it was probably difficult for the rest of the harbour as well. Doubtless they were looking forward to our departure and to enjoying the tranquillity of the harbour again.

**29 May.** We had been advised that Læso was famous for its “lobsters”. In the morning, a fishing boat came in so Tom and I went to investigate the catch. It was stuffed full of langoustine. The fisherman spoke perfect English (I wonder how many of our fishermen speak perfect Danish?) and we bought 1.5 kgs of tails for DKR 75 (£7). The fisherman showed us how to gut the langoustine (twist the middle tail and draw it out), and then cut the belly with scissors to open them up for easy eating. To cook, he said, put them in cold salted water and bring to the boil. Boil for one minute, take them off the heat and stir them all up. Leave in the water for a further minute, then drain. Alternatively place them on a tray in the oven with plenty of butter, cover with aluminium foil and roast for 20 minutes at 200 deg C. We prepared the crustaceans and marinated them with lemon juice and plenty of garlic.



**Tom preparing the langoustine**

Judging by the stickers on all the fishing boats (a lobster holding an EU flag with a rude sign in the middle), the local fisherman were clearly no fans of the Brussels fishery bureaucrats.





### **Danish fishermen's opinion of EU policy**

Hugh and Noel were delighted to find that the bus service on Læsø is free, and off they went off for a one-hour round-trip of the island. It turned into an impromptu guided tour with the driver and other passengers all chipping in with bits of information. They loved it. Meanwhile, Tom and I took the bikes out for a 40-minute cycle to the little capital town of Byrum in the centre of the island. We were charmed by the pretty churches on the island which play tunes on their bells – very Hans Christian Andersen!

At midday we set off for the comparatively long 38 mile leg to Sweden and our stopover point on the way to Marstrand. I had no pilot book of this particular area so I picked a likely looking haven from the chart and settled on Rød in between the islands of Hønø and Øckerø at 57° 41.9'N 011° 38.4'E. The wind started WSW F4/5. When setting the cruising chute it seemed very difficult to pull the snuffer up so I suspected we would have a problem bringing it down. Over time the wind increased and the sea was building and becoming very confused. Time to take the chute down before conditions deteriorated further. Sure enough, the snuffer wouldn't budge, so we did a conventional spinnaker drop into the cockpit. Lots of noise and drama, but it all went well, thanks to having Tom's young muscle on board. We doused the rest of the sails once we were in the lee of the rocks in the channel leading us to Rød. When we reached the small well protected harbour there was nothing suitable for us as a mooring in the leisure boat area (bows to between booms) but there was plenty of room along the fishing boat quay so we went alongside. After the drama of the spinnaker drop in the steep confused seas, we were enjoying a well deserved "anchor nip" in the cockpit looking at the tranquil scene of swans, and a female eider duck with her cute collection of five chicks paddling close beside her. Suddenly there was furious squawking. A vicious looking black backed gull was swooping out of the sky towards the family of eiders. The mother reared herself out of the water flapping her wings but to no avail. The gull plucked one of the chicks out of the water in its mouth and flew off, swallowing it whole in flight. I was traumatised at the sudden change from the tranquil family scene to the sudden death of the innocent chick. I had hardly had time to recover from this gruesome scene when the gull headed back for pudding and grabbed a second chick from the water, took it back to the quayside where it bashed the poor little thing to death on the ground before gobbling it up. Absolutely horrific. By the next morning, the female eider was paddling sadly around. There was not one chick to be seen.

For dinner we baked the langoustine tails with butter and served them with fresh bread and a glass of dry white wine. They were exquisite. Easy to shell and sweet to taste. A real success.

**30 May.** Rød had little to recommend it as a place to hang around, so we set off early for the short 12 mile passage to the island town of Marstrand to the north. These waters seem to be full of beautiful old gaff-rigged sail training ships and as we left Roed we saw two hoisting their sails. We shot past them, leaving them in our wake a beautiful sight sailing in line astern behind us. The south east approach to Marstrand is through Albrectssunds Kanal, a very narrow sound, at places barely wide enough for Mina2, past pretty houses with immaculate gardens – very picturesque. And as one made the final turn, the spectacular view of Marstrand opened up with its magnificent castle perched on the hill behind it. Marstrand has a very large Gasthamn (yacht harbour) and there were very few boats so we were able to go alongside. The island is very pretty and very tidy with well kept old houses leading back from the harbour. It is the holiday island of choice for wealthy Swedish families on the west coast but only, presumably, teetotal Swedish families as the island was settled by a particularly sober Lutheran community and it remains “dry” to this day.



### **The approach to Marstrand**

Another British boat came in – the first we had seen since leaving London – a steel built cutter *Bumble-bee*. The owner, John Woodhouse popped round to say hello, explaining that he was another Royal Cruising Club member but was not flying the burgee because he had lost it. Later that evening I went aboard *Bumble-bee* for a drink with John, his wife Val and daughter Kate.

**31 May.** The morning dawned cold and raining so we decided to have a lazy day. Dominating the small town is the magnificent castle high on its mount and, in the afternoon, Tom, Noel and I set off to explore. The castle is enormous. Protected by inner and outer moats it is like a maze, complete with secret tunnels and twisting staircases. As well as being a sizeable garrison, it was also the local prison. Judging by the dark, damp, airless and cramped cells I can't imagine many prisoners survived for long.

I had promised everyone dinner ashore only to find that, being mid-week and early in the season, all the restaurants were shut. Instead I cooked a gastronomic dinner of asparagus followed by confit of duck with sauté potatoes. Excellent. I left the tin of duck fat on the pontoon overnight to congeal before disposing of it. The following morning most of the fat had gone – there were great gouges out of it. It had obviously tempted some cannibalistic black-backed gull. I hope he got the shits.



### **A cannibalistic treat for the gulls, and a gourmet dinner for us on the *Viking***

**1 June.** We went for a jolly around an island north of Marstrand before heading south for Göteborg through very pretty skerries. Göteborg (Gothenburg) is Sweden's second largest city and we made our way to the centre through masses of commercial ships, past large dry docks and massive cranes. We went to the marina in the middle of town ( Lilla Bommen - just west of Götaälvbron bridge) and next to the enormous four masted barque *Viking*. *Viking* is now a static restaurant, bar and conference centre and that evening we enjoyed an excellent smorgsbord dinner on board.

**2 June.** After a big boat clean up it was time to say farewell to my parents who were flying back to London. I was also sorry to say goodbye to Tom after two fun weeks together. He wanted to see Stockholm for a couple of days before he returned home and took an overnight bus which was not only the cheapest way of getting there but saved him the cost of a night's accommodation as well.

The marina is right by the opera house so, on my own for the evening, I went to see "Beauty and the Beast". It is more of a pantomime / musical than an opera so there was quite a lot of talking as well as singing/dancing, and all in Swedish. Added to which, the youth sitting beside me turned on his iPod and listened to heavy rock throughout the performance, so I confess to having left during the interval!

**3 June.** I had the boat to myself for a couple of days and I enjoyed the peace and the space to get on with chores, like doing the laundry. Paranoid about batteries, I tested each cell with a hydrometer. I was horrified to find that one of the brand new batteries seemed completely dead. I had great difficulty in tracking down a marine electrician, but eventually got hold of Gunnar who popped by on his way to lunch. He confirmed the terminal state of the battery. He called a specialist battery supplier who said that that type of battery was not available anywhere in Sweden at any price. So we isolated half the battery bank to enable me to get on our way. Gunnar was very friendly, and in the course of conversation he told me that he had a



part share in an old ferry which could take up to 300 passengers, which they used for “round the skerries” dinner trips.

**4 June.** It rained torrentially overnight and it was still raining and cold in the morning. At 1600 my next guest, Nigel Fawkes arrived. We went for a stroll along the waterfront before deciding what to do for dinner. After a while, we came across a pretty, oldish ferry and on board, to my surprise, was my new best friend Gunnar. Delighted to see us, he invited us on board. He told us that the 300 ton *M/S Poseidon* was departing on a two and a half hour dinner trip through the skerries. Why didn't we come along for half price? It sounded fun and solved the dinner question as well. Dinner was an excellent seafood buffet of langoustine, prawns, mussels, crab claws etc, whilst motoring through extremely pretty granite islands with beautiful houses. After we had had our fill, Gunnar invited us to the bridge where we were introduced to Capt. Rolf Nordell who sported a spectacular purple nose. “Ah, Englishmen” he greeted us cheerfully, “I met my first foreign love in England - in Hull. Her name was Rose Batty and her address was 32 Victoria Road. That was in 1951”. He only looked in his late 50's and Nigel and I wondered at what age Swedish seamen started their careers and their sexual conquests! We later discovered he was over 70 and was 15 at the time. Cap'n Rolf had been at sea most of his life and he entertained us with stories of his exploits, doubtless embellished over the years. Half way back and still deep in the skerries, Cap'n Rolf placed my hands on the wheel and announced that he was going to have his dinner. He clattered his way down the bridge steps and was gone. I was in charge. The bridge seemed devoid of any modern navigation aids. No depth instrument, no GPS, no chartplotter; indeed, looking around, I couldn't even see a paper chart – presumably the good Captain knew these skerries like the back of his hand and didn't need any. But meanwhile the *Poseidon*, with its 200 paying customers, was heading resolutely for the next island less than a quarter of a mile away. I swung the wheel to port and, alarmingly, absolutely nothing happened. The hard unforgiving granite was still dead ahead and getting very much closer. Just as the cold sweat was beading on my forehead, and seemingly about half an hour after I had put the helm hard a port, the bow slowly started turning. By now getting the hang of things, I immediately reversed the helm and after what felt like another five minutes the ship gracefully swung to starboard round the island.



***M/S Poseidon* – amazingly still intact after the change of helmsman**

By the time Cap'n Rolf returned to the bridge, I was thoroughly enjoying myself slaloming through the skerries, and had to be wrestled off the wheel. An unexpected and delightful way to spend the evening and the 200 Swedish party-goers down below were oblivious to the disaster which nearly befell them. Nigel and I returned to *Mina2* and Gunnar later joined us on the boat for a night cap before going home.

**5 June.** In the morning, Nigel and I visited the excellent Göteborg Museum which had, amongst other things, an impressive collection of impressionist art. We returned to the boat to find, in the cockpit, a parcel containing a stout pair of fire gloves and a gadget for picking heavy batteries up by their terminals. A gift from Gunnar of two items of equipment that he felt we lacked.

After lunch Nigel and I headed upriver towards the Trollhätte Canal at the beginning of our transit through the middle of Sweden via canals and lakes. The Götaälvbron bridge in Göteborg has a height of 19.5m – too low for us. We hoisted flag P (the signal indicating you require the bridge to be opened), a call on Channel 09 and the traffic was stopped, the bridge lifted and we were on our way. Half a mile up river was another low railway bridge. We had to hang around for 35 minutes whilst a couple of trains crossed before the bridge opened, but we were then on our way passing through the industrial outskirts of the city with a graveyard of half sunken wooden fishing boats lining the shore. The further we went (motoring as the wind was light from behind) the more rural the landscape, and eventually we were passing farmland on either side. The river is extremely well buoyed with boomed marks every 100 metres either side of the channel, each marked with the distance from the head of the river/canal at Vänersborg.

There were very few places where we could moor up for the night, so we decided to tuck into Kungälv, a little island with an imposing castle and a small guest harbour up a narrow channel, a delightful and secluded spot. We were within a few feet of our destination when we suddenly went aground. As there wasn't enough room for us to turn round in the narrow channel, I started to reverse between the mooring piles to give me room to turn. This technique is guaranteed to work if you don't have a one knot current pushing 18 tons of boat onto the flimsy mooring piles and pinning you there (I had been lulled into a false sense of security in the non-tidal Baltic and had completely forgotten we were in the current of the river). For good measure I then jammed one of the piles underneath our dinghy which was hanging off the davits at the back of my boat. The next few minutes are a bit of a blur, but with Nigel effectively lifting 18 tons of boat off the pile and me manically gunning the engine forward and astern, we eventually managed to claw free and retreat shamefaced back out of the channel. Nigel thereby acquired super-hero status.

The number of mooring places in the Gota river are few and far between, so having disgraced ourselves at Kungälv, we headed further upriver to Lilla Edet. We tied up for the night against the waiting pontoon below a lifting bridge. We went for a walk and came back to the boat an hour later to find that the sluice gates had obviously been shut: the water level had fallen by at least half a metre and we were hanging by bar taut lines to the quay.

**6 June.** In a freezing cold northerly, we donned full foul weather gear, hats and gloves and entered, alone, the first of the locks in the Trollhätte Canal. These enormous ship locks are carved out of granite from the very mountain. With an enormous rise, the top of the lock, with battleship-sized bollards standing like sentries, towered four stories above us. Keeping us

alongside the lock wall by heaving on the rungs of a slimy rusting ladder with a boat hook, I ordered Nigel to the top, mooring line in teeth, to make fast to the bollards. Now covered in slime, he hauled himself over the parapet and found himself looking at a pair of boots. The boots belonged to a faintly embarrassed lock-keeper who had just emerged from his hut, who said it was totally unnecessary to climb up the wall; using the little hooks recessed into the lock wall (which neither of us had noticed) would be quite sufficient.

Having subjected Nigel to this unnecessary ordeal, I made amends by authorising the issue of a tot or two of my treasured and diminishing supply of sloe gin (or should it be slø gin here?). Feeling this may not be quite enough, I had the brilliant idea of appointing Nigel Chief Fire Officer and presenting him with our newly acquired fire gloves as his badge of office. This clearly did the trick. Nigel took his new responsibilities very seriously and kept the gloves on all day - even whilst he ate, which was quite a feat.

Eventually we arrived at Vänersborg on the edge of Lake Vänern. We spurned the marina as the pilot book indicated it had a maximum depth of only 2m (although I later found out from the girl in the harbour office that the outer wall of the marina can take 2.4m), and we headed for the town quay.

Nigel's recently acquired status of super-hero had obviously gone to his head. As we approached the quay, and just as I was saying to him that it might be easier to step ashore midships, he launched himself from the bow, Superman style, whilst the quay was still six feet away and a good two feet higher than the boat. His feet just made the edge of the quay, but his body ran out of momentum. The outcome was inevitable. When Nigel finally surfaced he was still valiantly holding onto the mooring line. It was a fat lot of use in the water. By now it should have been secured to a bollard on the quay. Nigel managed to haul himself onto the quay just before I ran him over, looking bedraggled and laughing hysterically with embarrassment (which I was as well) and continued tying the boat up. He later claimed that it was all the fault of my sloe gin. Rubbish.



**The multi-tasking Chief Fire Officer - but not looking quite so smart after a dunking**



Once we had dried Nigel out, we went for a walk around the town. Some nice older buildings – wooden and brick, but not worth a diversion. We walked to the marina in which there were just three boats, one of which was British, flying an RCC burgee. It was *Ben Mor*, a Rassy 39 owned by Ted Watts, but no one was on board.

### **7 June.**

We awoke to a clear blue sky – the first sight of the sun for a week – and a very strong northerly wind. We had obviously done something to upset the local gull population as the decks were covered in bird droppings. The foredeck crew, aka Chief Fire Officer, obligingly cleaned up, counting no fewer than 100 direct hits. We left the town quay at about 1030 bound across Lake Vänern to Läckö Slott (slott = castle). The final seven miles of the 38 mile passage was through a wonderful skärgård (archipelago). It was very, very pretty, and made all the more exciting by seeing our first white-tailed eagle flapping over, as ever being harrassed by outraged gulls. One bit of the twisting passage was a particularly tight turn through the rocks and there were a collection of four stone built blocks, with granite bollards on, lined with wooden staves for springing old sailing ships round the bend. Eventually we got to Läckö Slott – a magnificent imposing castle with a little marina under its walls. Slap bang in the middle of the marina entrance, we hit a rock. Quite hard. They obviously don't expect 2.2m draft boats to come in. We backed up and tied up to the end of the ferry quay, blocking half the entrance. Nigel prepared dinner and as it was being put on the table two young ladies turned up, wearing aprons and chef hats. They explained that they were the cooks in the castle and they were catering for a party of 40 people that evening. We exchanged pleasantries and then made our excuses to go below and eat the cooling meal. The final question from one of the girls was “You have to pay to stay here?” to which I replied “I presume so. Doubtless someone will come and ask us for money”. Apparently she was not asking a question but making a statement. “No” said one of the girls, “you have to pay us. It will be eighty Crowns”. Well, I’m used to paying harbour dues to people in uniforms, but pinafores and chefs hats was a first.

So to summarise the docking successes of the previous two days: we ran out of water and nearly destroyed a marina trying to extricate ourselves; later in the day Nigel falls overboard, and this night we hit a rock. I fully expected to sink the boat the following day.

**8 June.** We went round Läckö castle which was a revelation. Whilst it looks run down from the outside, inside it was spectacular. Originally built as a fortification, it was then developed into a baroque palace by the De la Gardie family. Of the 248 rooms the most spectacular are the enormous state rooms, beautifully gilded with flying cherubs hung from the ceilings.



### **Läckö Slott**

In the afternoon, we crossed 16 miles of Lake Vänern and passed down the narrow sound between Brommö and Fågalö, two islands in middle of the lake, and into a very pleasant, large shallow bay at the top of Fågalö where we anchored for the night.

A political postscript on Lake Vänern: The European Commission, in its wisdom, had just decreed Lake Vänern to be a sea and not a lake, notwithstanding it is 100 feet above sea level, 40 miles from the sea and full of fresh water. Having done that, another EEC bureaucratic department announced that as all the pleasure boats and ferries only had permits to operate on a lake and not on the sea, they were no longer licensed to operate. So at a stroke half the population have been deprived of the means to earn their living, and depriving all the tourists and holiday makers any chance of getting to any of the 20,000 islands on the lake. Makes sense, doesn't it?

**9 June.** We awoke to another hot and sunny day and the nine mile trip to Sjötorp and the start of the Göta Canal proper. We arrived to find that the convoy (the canal did not fully open until the following day) had already left. This was something of a problem as we had arranged to meet our wives the following day in Karlsborg and there was now no chance we could make the rendezvous. But a few phone calls later, all their plans had been reorganised and we were to meet them in Töreboda instead. Unable to enter the canal we now had a free day. Nigel was keen to visit the cathedral in Mariestad, a 20km bike ride down what looked on the map to be a pleasant lakeside road. It turned out not to be the tranquil pastoral cycle Nigel had hoped for, but instead he found himself on the main Stockholm – Göteborg motorway, the busiest road in Sweden. For the return journey, Nigel sensibly folded the bike up and caught a bus.

Meanwhile, I spent the day sorting the boat out. Walking down the pontoon I noticed some gull chicks nesting below. All of a sudden, and without any warning, there was an incredibly loud shriek in my right ear and something hit me hard on the head. I ducked sideways only to see “mother” doing a tight turn and lining me up for her next bombing run. Not wishing to be

batted over the head a second time, I rapidly retreated back to the boat, rubbing my neck which I had ricked whilst taking evading action.

**10 June.** So at last we entered the first of the fifty eight locks of the Göta Canal. We were to take five days for the transit. Apart from the two massive ship locks of the Trollhätte Canal this was the first lock experience for all of the five boats which managed to squeeze in. Being the first day the canal was fully open, it was also the first experience for the pretty young lock girl. But she nannied us all into position, and waited until we had all gone to the canal office and paid our dues (just over £300 which included the locks and all marina fees). The lock gates were closed, and the sluice opened. A maelstrom of swirling bubbling water hit the boats like a brick wall. For the next five minutes it was like being in a washing machine, desperately trying to fend off lock walls and the other boats as the roaring water pushed us first one way then the other. Eventually the waters calmed, the lock gates opened and, in a state of catatonic shock, we motored out of the lock knowing that we had to go through the traumatic experience another 28 times before we reached the summit.

But the management of the Göta Canal are canny. They employ a clearly sexist recruitment policy and 95% of the lock keepers were extremely pretty young girls who provided a delightful distraction from the trauma of the locks for the mainly male skippers. Having tied the boat up in the lock, Nigel was in the habit of swanning off to chat up the Gorgeous Göta Girls, photographing each one and marking them out of ten for pulchritude, leaving me in the washing machine to wrestle with the mooring lines. By late afternoon we had reached Töreboda where we were reunited with our wives. I was now experiencing considerable discomfort in my shoulder and arm, the consequence of my encounter with the maternal gull.



**Just two of the Gorgeous Göta Girls**

At one point we swung round a bend to find a vintage passenger ship, the *SS Sandon*, pretty much blocking the canal. Hanging down the sides of the ship were old tree trunks which they use as fenders, rolling down the hull as the squeeze into the locks. Adhering to the international rule of the road, I moved to the starboard side of the canal and stopped to let her pass. She gave two loud blasts on her horn – the signal for “I am altering course to port”, ie directly towards us. Obliging I moved over to the other side of the canal where it became obvious why the ship wanted to use the “wrong” side of the canal, as we almost went aground. Edging past us, the captain of the *Sandon* opened the bridge window and, much to the amusement of his passengers, shouted to me “Not only do you have lots of money and a beautiful boat - but you have lots of common sense too!”, and with a farewell blast of her horn she steamed on her way.



**11 June.** We left Töreboda and passed through the last of the uphill locks, reaching our highest point of more than 300 feet above sea level, certainly the highest our ocean going vessel had ever been or was ever likely to be.



**319 ft above sea level – for the first, last and only time**

We had been passing through lovely soft countryside with pretty well-kept canal-side properties. It was a bit like motoring through somebody's back garden. We then headed across Lake Viken to the town of Karlsborg on its eastern side. The enormous castle is still a garrison and walking round it reminded me of Aldershot. A hangar full of camouflaged snowmobiles reminded us that this part of the world is completely frozen over in the winter months.

By the marina was a crazy golf course. I had thought they had gone out of fashion in the 50's, apart from places like Blackpool and Weymouth where holiday makers were so bored out of their skulls they would try anything to relieve the monotony. Not so in Scandinavia apparently. There had been a crazy golf course by every marina we had visited in both Denmark and Sweden. Here it remained a passion. The reason I mention this one in particular was because of the bizarre sight of a car drawing up, a man getting out and opening the boot, and taking out a pair of golf shoes and his own putter. We speculated whether he was the local professional come to give lessons. Or perhaps he was a member of the Swedish National Team, keeping his hand in until Crazy Golf was made an Olympic sport. The other surprising sporting feature of the region is petanque, or boule. I thought the sport was restricted to France apart from the occasional pitch in trendy places like Docklands. But here you will find any number of petanque pitches, the only difference to the French game being the lack of the shrugged shoulders, the cry of "Sacré Bleu" and the yellow Gauloise permanently attached to the lower lip.

**12 June.** Although we were heading across Lake Vättern to Motala, everyone told us that a diversion to Vadstena, a little further down the lake, was pretty much obligatory. And when we got there we understood why. The moorings are in the moat of Vadstena Castle. Built in 1544 by King Gustav I, it is a magnificent building – absolutely spectacular. We immersed ourselves in the history of the Brigittine Nuns in the impressive new museum housed in the old convent dormitory (part of the castle grounds remain an active convent). The other local attraction is the Museum of Insanity which, sadly, was closed. But through one of the windows we could see the cast iron bath with its strapped down canvas cover and a hole for

the patients head to stick out of. You shared the bath with a large number of electric eels. This was only one of the instruments of torture on display. If you weren't insane before these treatments, you certainly would be after!



**Vadstena castle – the quayside is actually part of the moat**

As we left Vadstena for our overnight stop in Motala, the skies blackened, thunder rolled and a triple rainbow arched perfectly over the ancient spires and turrets of Vadstena.

Motala is rather dull in comparison to Vadstena, although Nigel and Jane did go to a rather whacky motor museum. Even though they were the only visitors, the curator was determined to make everything as authentic as possible, including giving a fresh cup of tea to the mannequin who was in charge of the 1940's switchboard!

That evening, the Downstairs Skipper treated us all to a gastrodinner, producing a whole fillet of beef which she had brought in her luggage firstly from Argentina to London; thence to Stockholm and onwards by train to Töreboda – breaking countless international laws of which we all professed ourselves entirely ignorant. Delicious!

**13 June.** From Motala we were back in the canal again, heading for Berg on the west coast of Lake Roxen. At Berg, leading into Lake Roxen, is a staircase of eight consecutive locks. The accommodation looked better at the top of the locks than down at the bottom so we stayed put for the night and decided to tackle the staircase the following morning. Having seen only two other British boats since having left London three and a half weeks earlier, we bumped into four Royal Southern boats cruising in company and heading in the opposite direction. We discovered that a number of them lived in Hamble and knew my parents.

By now my shoulder and back were pretty constant agony and all the fingers of my right hand had gone completely numb, even though I was eating Ibuprofen like popcorn **and** having Maria rub Ibuprofen gel into my shoulder and arm. I hadn't been able to sleep for a couple of days and I was becoming exhausted. Clearly the demon gull of Sjötorp had inflicted more damage than I had originally thought.

**14 June.** We awoke to another hot and cloudless day. We had a late start as a flotilla of boats had to make their way up the staircase of locks before we could head down. Standing on the boat at the top of the flight of locks looking down 100 feet to the lake below was bizarre.



**Looking down the 8-lock flight to Lake Roxen**

Having crossed Lake Roxen we had one final stretch of canal before making our way out into the Baltic. This stretch included the lifting bridge which carried the main Stockholm to Göteborg railway line. Responsibility for manning the bridge fell to a young lad who was obviously as new to the job as his more attractive lock-keeping colleagues. He was clearly terrified by the vision of him raising the bridge only to see the 4.15 intercity express doing an Evel Knievel across the Gota Canal. Every time an opportunity presented itself, he lost his bottle and rushed back to report to us all that there would be yet a further ten minute delay. Meanwhile the boats kept on coming down the canal. By the time he had steeled himself to open the bridge, the canal was as busy as the Hamble on a bank holiday weekend. As there was no time to allow more than five boats through at each opening, I should think some of them are still there. Going through the bridge one had the novel experience of looking down the railway line at eye level stretching out over the horizon. But even more weird was the experience a little further along the canal of going over an aquaduct and looking down on the motorway below.



### **Lorries trundle beneath the keel**

With the delays at the top of the locks and at the railway bridge, it was touch and go whether we would get to Söderköping before the lifting bridges stopped lifting for the night at 6pm. We failed. Three miles short of our destination we met a small road bridge which was remotely controlled and resolutely failed to open so we, along with a boat with a young couple and their child, tied up to the waiting pontoon and settled down for the night.

**15 June.** We looked at our watches waiting for 0900 when the remotely controlled bridge was due to re-open. At two minutes to, the bells started to ring and the lights to flash red, warning the non-existent traffic that the barriers were about to close. A driving school car – the first car we had seen for half an hour - cruised to a halt; not behind the white line but directly under the barrier. We all waited with baited breath. On the stroke of 0900 the barrier fell with a resounding clang onto the roof of the car. A very large lady flew out of the car screaming hysterically. As the barrier was not down properly, the bridge was not going to rise. The bridge operator was looking at the scene on a closed circuit TV screen some miles away and was not in the best position to help. So our neighbour walked round, and gently lifted the barrier whilst the driver (presumably the hapless student) reversed the car back. With the barrier now lowered, the bridge at last started to rise and we motored through to the sound of the continuing hysterical screams of the fat instructor.

The evening before, our new neighbours had joined us for a drink and told us that the great attraction of Söderköping was “the best ice cream parlour in Sweden”.

I had better explain that the Swedes are not the sylph-like beauties we had expected but, like the British, they are all running to fat. Whereas in Britain it is chips, beer and junk food, in Sweden it is ice cream. You may have a village so small that it has no corner shop or petrol station, but you can guarantee that it will have at least two ice cream shops – and you rarely see a Swede without an ice cream stuffed into his face. So in the land where ice cream is a national obsession, the best ice cream parlour in the country had to be worth a visit. And it was. The menu of gargantuan and bizarre concoctions of ice cream ran to several dozen pages and included “The Vesuvius” which was presented in a bowl of dried ice, steaming like a



cauldron. Unfortunately for Nigel, out of all the options, he chose the one that seemed to be made from Domestos flavoured ice cream. The others were exquisite, but of such an obscene size that we were all defeated.



### **Super-sizing in the land of ice creams**

We tried to walk off the ice cream with a stroll round town, the big feature of which is the largest wooden bell tower in the country. Very tall and thin, and apparently propped up by ill-assorted spillikins it is almost contemporary in design and would not look out of place in the Tate Modern. Unbelievably, though, it was built in 1582. Replete with ice cream we went through the last of the Göta Canal locks and enjoyed a brisk sail to a lovely anchorage at Trässö.



**16<sup>th</sup> century spillikins propping up the largest bell tower in Sweden**

One of the features of the Trollhätte and Göta canals were the bridges. As the canals split Sweden in two, there were numerous, and I swear that each one was different. Some swung vertically up to the left, others swung up to the right. Some swung horizontally from the shore, others pivoted horizontally in the middle of the canal. Some were cantilevered, others on cogs. There was the one that lifted vertically between two enormous towers; the other that moved horizontally along rails, and a further one that lifted vertically in two parts into bascules like Tower Bridge. Most were single bridges but some were twin bridges. It was like there was a rule “We are building a new bridge and you are invited to tender for the design, but it has to be like none other on the canal”. But it sure makes it interesting.

**16 June.** I awoke to the ominous sound of the automatic bilge pump and discovered that the pump for the forward shower was gushing water into the bilge. I have a staggering fourteen pumps on board and spares for most of them – but not, of course, this one. A phone call to Oyster After Sales and the spares were on their way to Charles and Jane to bring out with them. If that didn’t arrive the following day, they could courier out another one to the marina in Stockholm. So we continued to progress towards Stockholm, stopping for the night at Mörbyfjord, a pretty and secluded anchorage behind Ängsholmen Island. On the way we saw a couple of small islands, bleach white, including the many trees which were completely bare of leaves. Totally dead. These are the islands selected by cormorants as their nesting grounds. Their guano is so toxic that it kills everything - even the trees in which they are nesting.



### **Nature's very own acid rain**

**17 June.** The pain in my back and arm was now considerable so we hammered to Stockholm to try and get some treatment before the weekend, arriving shortly after midday. The other priority was to take delivery of the replacement battery so that, once again, we would be operating off a full set rather than half a bank. We went through the Skurusundet, an extremely pretty back route into Stockholm. Tying up in the Vasahamnen, the marina right next door to the Vasa museum, I shot off straight away to see Leif, the affable harbourmaster. He rose to the challenge and within minutes an emergency appointment had been made with a chiropractor, Fred Lovgren. Leif kindly insisted that he drive me to the surgery. Lovgren checked me out and said that I had suffered severe whiplash and by now there was considerable nerve damage (by this time I could hardly feel the fingers of my right hand at all). One treatment would help but it would need at least five or six treatments to sort the problem out. He crunched my bones a bit and gave me the names and numbers of chiropractors in Turku and Helsinki, so I could continue the cruise and the treatment. I could feel another book coming on – “Chiropractors of the Baltic”!

By the time I got back to the boat, Michael, the battery man, had arrived with the new Varta. He would have to charge me for it (a whopping £240 – 50% more than the already exorbitant UK price) but he would take the dud battery away, test it and then rebate my credit card under warranty when he confirmed it defective. Michael had really put himself out, coming into work that day just to get me sorted, so I gave him a box of wine. The cost of alcohol is so outrageous in Sweden that the gift was probably worth as much as the battery so this went down extremely well.

Having sorted the back and the battery, we then set off to explore the elegant and beautiful city of Stockholm – the Venice of the North – the highlight being a wander through Gamla Stan, the Old Town of the city. Stockholm quite rightly deserves its reputation as the most beautiful city in northern Europe. En route I was delighted to get a phone call from my sister,

Linda, who had also been cruising the Baltic on *Suilven*, their Oyster 47. They would be arriving in Stockholm the following evening and we agreed to go out for dinner together.

**18 June.** The morning was dedicated to chores – food shopping, launderette, getting specs repaired and topping up the Swedish Vodaphone card. There was also the obligatory trip to the chandler where I bought an Åland Islands courtesy flag and, amazingly, a spare diaphragm for the shower pump. Exhausted, Maria and I stopped off for a drink in the Old Town at a restaurant and at the same time booked a table for ten for that evening. We took one of the numerous ferries which ply between the islands, this one going straight to the marina. Having fitted the new pump diaphragm, I was ready for my pilgrimage to the Vasamuseum right next to the marina.

The *Vasa* is like the *Mary Rose* with knobs on. It was the flag ship of King Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden. It was the mightiest warship in the world with 64 guns on two decks. It was built with no expense spared, beautifully carved and gilded and launched with enormous ceremony on 10 August 1628. She sailed majestically for a quarter of a mile into the Stockholm sound, fired a salute and promptly capsized. The king was in Poland at the time, waging war as kings do. I wouldn't have wanted to have been the one to make the phone call explaining that his pride and joy was now 30 metres below the surface. But the king's loss was our gain. Salvaged in 1961 after 333 years, she is almost completely intact, thanks to being buried in silt and the non-rotting brackish waters of the Baltic. I spent two and a half hours in the museum and could have spent a lot longer. It is a wonderful museum.



**The Vasa**

I dragged myself away to find Linda and John had arrived in *Suilven* and that my next guests, Charles and Jane Penny, were also in town, overlapping with Nigel and Jane who were to leave the following day. Another RCC boat, a Westerly 38 called *Dafony* had tied up close by, and I introduced myself to Mike and Liz Redfern who later joined us on *Mina*<sup>2</sup> for drinks.



That evening, the crews of *Mina*<sup>2</sup> and *Suilven*, ten in total, caught the ferry to the Old Town for dinner.

**19 June.** Nigel, Jane and Maria went off for the day to the summer palace in Lake Mälaren. I absented myself being in need of some time to myself to get on with maintenance work. The party arrived back from their excursion late in the afternoon with Jane limping badly, having been stung by a bee on her foot which was by now painfully swollen and looking as if it might drop off at any moment. As the poison started working its way past her ankle and up her leg she was heard to say grittily “Don’t worry, I have another foot”. Very Jane. Very British.

**20 June.** After a second session with the chiropractor, we bade sad farewells to Linda and John, as well as Jane and Nigel. Charles was somewhat bemused when Nigel, with great ceremony, appointed him the new Chief Fire Officer and formally handed over the badge of office, being the fire gloves.



**The insignia of the Chief Fire Officer are formally transferred**

We set sail in light airs through the charming Stockholm archipelago and arrived at the well protected anchorage in the middle of Store Jolpan, some 25 miles north west of Stockholm in the outer skerries. There were a number of boats bows to the granite rocks fringing the anchorage, Baltic style, but there was plenty of room left to anchor in 4 metres in the pool. Ashore, the island seemed to consist entirely of a youth hostel with little cabins scattered across the island in between the pretty woodland walks. Small brown deer scampered through the undergrowth whilst, above them, red squirrels leapt from tree to tree. We came across a sauna (electric fired) by a secluded swimming pontoon into the sheltered bay. We went to the youth hostel reception and booked our sauna for 10am the following morning and returned to the boat for dinner.

**21 June.** Saunas have been part of the Finnish culture for centuries and every little harbour has a sauna to be used by visiting boat folk. On a brilliantly hot and sunny morning, Charles,

Jane, Maria and I went off in the dinghy for our first sauna experience. Overlooking the prettiest bay in total seclusion, with a little pontoon and steps down to the clear blue water, we steamed ourselves to the colour of cooked lobsters and then took the plunge. The sea thermometer said 13 degrees but on entry it felt a great deal colder - but, wow, talk about invigorating. Whilst swimming around, Maria tartly announced "I can't stand touching furry bottoms". As the closest thing to her was a naked Charles this caused Jane and me some consternation until we realised she was referring to the slimy weeds on the rocks underfoot!



**Maria keeps as far away from the furry bottom as possible**

Feeling invigorated and refreshed we returned to the boat and headed off for the 30 mile passage through the Blidösund to Arholma, a small harbour about as close as you can get for the passage the following day over to the Åland Islands which we were to circumnavigate.

**22 June.** Åland is a collection of 6000 islands and is an autonomous region with its own government, flag and postage stamps. The islanders speak Swedish but their passports are Finnish. Being in a key strategic position the islands have been invaded over the centuries by the Finns, Russians, Swedes and Danes so there is no shortage of ruins of past fortifications on the grey granite rocky islands. From Arholma we enjoyed a lively sail – lively enough to turn both Charles and Jane a little green at the gills - across to Mariehamn, the capital of the Åland Islands. We tied up, bows-to in the marina, just a few yards from the *Pommern* a magnificent 300 foot four-masted barque.

The *Pommern* was one of a fleet of windjammers operated by the legendary Aalander, Gustaf Erikson. With no engine they sailed the clipper route round the globe to Australia to embark their cargo of grain bound for Europe via Cape Horn. The fleet was fully operational until the outbreak of the Second World War. My interest, in particular, was that the *Pommern* was the

sister ship of the *Moshulu* in which Eric Newby circumnavigated the world as an apprentice in 1939, chronicling the last great days of sail in his excellent book *The Last Grain Race*.

We walked round the pretty well-planned town with wide tree lined avenues. Most houses are quite new but a handful were built in the 1860's. By the evening, fog, which hadn't been forecast, had come rolling in and the *Pommern*, just 100m away, had almost disappeared. Good thing we got in before. The fog certainly had no effect on dampening the spirits of the hard-drinking occupants of a nearby motor boat who, as the evening progressed, got rowdier and rowdier with music from their powerful hi-fi turned up full volume. Holding a conversation in the rest of the marina was difficult. Sleep impossible. It was way after 0200 before they drank themselves into stupefied silence. Unbelievable. Had it been an English marina I would have made my feelings known but being a foreign visitor I bit my tongue. The Scandinavians must be incredibly tolerant because, whilst disgusted at the behaviour of the yobs, none of them said a word.

**23 June.** Whilst Maria, Charles and Jane went into town to buy a Finnish SIM card and get information from the tourist office, I spent a wonderful one and a half hours going round the *Pommern* which is now a museum.



**The *Pommern* – in use until 1939**

At 1300 we set off for the first leg of our anti-clockwise circumnavigation of the Åland islands. The first stage was to go through the Lemström Canal into the Lumparn, almost a lake in the middle of the Åland Islands. This used to be where the Russians anchored their fleet. There is a low bridge across the canal which opens on the hour for 10 minutes. We had to average 7.5 knots to get there on time for the 1500 opening and, given the light winds, we motored round the Mariehamn peninsula and made it with minutes to spare. The RCC pilotage notes talk of a 21m cable over the canal which was of concern. Normally 22m is my comfortable limit. Even if I struck my masthead burgee, I would clear 21m only by centimetres. But my electronic chart did not feature the cable. The harbourmaster at Mariehamn confirmed that the cable had been put underground, so no problem. The Lumparn

has the reputation for being very beautiful but to be honest, it was a six mile lake with low lying hills all around. Perhaps I'm getting spoilt. But within an hour we were out the other side and going through the beautiful skerries again, heading for the anchorages of Bomarsund in between the mainland and the island of Prästoe. It is not entirely clear from the RCC pilotage notes exactly where Czar Alexander III had his favourite anchorage, but having nosed around we settled into the anchorage at Kilsviken on the west coast of Prästoe (60° 13.01'N 20° 15.1'E). It is stunningly beautiful. Surrounded by low-lying pink granite rocks fringed with trees, the light dapples into the wooded meadows behind. A couple of swans paddled on the foreshore with their clutch of four cygnets, one of which was almost albino. On a small rocky promontory in the SE corner grazed four brown and white bullocks. I lowered the dinghy and ferried Maria and Jane ashore to explore. Their walk revealed the extraordinary history of the island of Prästoe. It was occupied and fortified by the Russians prior to the bombardment by the British Navy. Walking through the dappled woodlands one comes across little graveyards for different religions of the prisoners and men of the garrison – Greek Orthodox and Jewish cemeteries being amongst them.

Charles is a professional artist and having just started daubing water colours myself it was fascinating to study his techniques. Painting and drawing for Charles is like a drug. In the same way as a smoker gets twitchy after an hour or so without a cigarette, so Charles gets twitchy when he isn't drawing something – anything. So as we drifted through the archipelagos, the pen and pad were never far away with everything being sketched from islands to birds, buildings and trees. He was very helpful in pointing me in the right direction and, knowing which side his bread was buttered, he was obsequiously complimentary about my crappy paintings.

**24 June.** Our circumnavigation of the islands took in Midsummer's Day which is a big thing out here warranting a bank holiday and, traditionally, villages deck out elaborate maypoles with birch leaves and erect them prior to a big community party. The day had arrived. One of the tourist guides said that Dånö right at the top of the Aalands had a particularly impressive maypole. There was also talk of a museum, fish smokery and other attractions. We were expecting to find a bustling little metropolis. At 7pm, walking from our anchorage half a mile away, we rounded a bend to find a bare maypole lying on the ground in front of three deserted houses. This, apparently, was the hub of the world. We were standing between the maypole and the houses when a car drew up with a man in it. We said hello and asked if this was where the midsummer celebrations took place. The man said "Yes. You are on private property". Immediately we felt warmly welcomed into this little community. On further interrogation, the man said rather vaguely that the celebrations would not start until about 8.30pm. Expecting the party to continue until the small hours, we returned to the boat to fortify ourselves for the evening (there being no sign of any bar or barbecue being prepared) and returned at 8.40pm to see a number of people drifting away from the village by car, bicycle and on foot. In the hour and a half since we were told of our trespass, the maypole had been decked out with birch leaves, all the residents from the surrounding area had assembled to ceremoniously erect the maypole - and that was it. Party over. We took photographs of the maypole and mingled amongst the few remaining residents, smiling and nodding but it was like we were not there. No one acknowledged our presence at all, so we went back to the boat to have our own party which was a lot more lively than anything this insular community had to offer. In fairness, the lack of friendliness we experienced in Dånö is completely contrary to the warmth of the people we had met everywhere else.





**Dånö's midsummer maypole**

**25 June.** We had a brilliant sail from Dånö to Käringsund on the island of Eckerö in a stiff F6 on the beam. Käringsund is a charming old fishing village with lots of old wooden boat houses - great for Charles to sketch. There was also a mobile floating sauna hut which was a first. Basically a small wooden pontoon with a tiny sauna hut on it; a bathing ladder and an outboard strapped to the back. Hire it, take it to the middle of nowhere, and enjoy the peace and privacy. Perfect. Conveniently, the large ferry terminal to Sweden, from where Jane and Charles were to leave the following day was just a short walk away.



**The mobile floating sauna**

**26 June.** It was Charles' birthday. We started drinking champagne at 0930. No other log entries for the day but presumably Charles and Jane managed to catch their ferry to Stockholm and back home. I hope they got there.

**27 June.** Maria and I now had the uninterrupted pleasure of each others company for a week. I awoke to discover that the for'ard head wasn't working properly and it required a change of valves. This was another spares kit which I didn't have on board but a phone call to the chandlers outside Mariehamn confirmed that they had the relevant bits. So we diverted into Mariehamn (thereby completing our circumnavigation of the Ålands) where I bought two valve kits – one to fix the problem and one for later use. They say that cruising sailors actually own two boats – the one they sail in and the spare one in the lockers, and I was rapidly building up the inventory of my second boat.

We then headed off to Rödhamn about ten miles south west of Marihamn, but a lot further when you have twisted and turned through the myriad islands. Rödhamn is a delightful little natural harbour which was used by ships going to and from Finland and Sweden whilst they awaited favourable winds. It was the principal posting stage between the two countries, the post being delivered in small sailing / rowing boats. In the winter, when the sea froze over, they simply pushed the boats laden with the post over the ice. It maintained its role as a communication centre until the 1950's when the radio and signal station was closed down. The old buildings, including the generators for the radio station have been preserved as a museum. In the winter the small island now has no inhabitants but in the summer the island is run by two women, Christina and Anette. Anette Gustafsson is a young artist who is gaining international recognition for her work which is on display. She lives there with her small child. The terrain is rough and whilst other small children in Scandinavia are pushed around in smart buggies, this one gets trundled around in a wheel barrow.



### **The rough terrain transport of choice**

All of the sailors in the Baltic are very friendly, but in this harbour the atmosphere was positively village-like with friendships being struck up by almost every boat that ventured in. A lovely atmosphere.

In the evenings, freshly smoked wild salmon arrives, still warm from the smokery on the next door island. In an area renowned for its smoked fish, this was the best we tasted. At the same time as buying the fish you place your order for fresh wholemeal rolls for the morning. The bread is delivered to the boat straight from the oven, in a brown paper bag with the weather forecast written on it.

**28 June.** The brown paper bag forecast strong northerlies. Mrs Barker, aka the Downstairs Skipper, is not too keen on strong northerlies, or strong fromwhereverlies come to that. So we decided to stay put at Rödhamn for a further day which was no great hardship. Anyway, I had the exciting prospect of stripping down the for'ard head and replacing the weeping seals. The forecast wasn't joking. The wind built during the day to 28 to 32 knots and gusting 38 kts. Having sorted the head out Maria and I had a lovely, albeit windswept, walk round the island.

**29 June.** Even stronger winds were forecast on the paper bag, but Maria had been persuaded that at least the water would be flat(tish) between the islands; we would only have a scrap of sail up and we really had to press on. And, indeed, notwithstanding the strong winds, we had a very pleasant and controlled sail to an anchorage on the island of Husö, in the archipelago between the Åland Islands and the Finnish mainland.

**30 June.** Moving on from Husö we went to a largish bay on the island of Kökar. There was a small marina at one end but too small for us. Instead we had a very pleasant night anchored in the middle of the bay. In the marina was a red ensign, belonging to *Tam O'Shanter* owned by Fay and Graham Cattell, vintage Baltic cruisers who head up the Baltic section of the

Cruising Association and who have contributed to many of the pilot books I had on board. Exalted company indeed.

**1 July.** We were lucky enough to have temporary membership of the Nylandska Jaktklubben (NJK). The NJK is the premier Finnish yacht club and they have a dozen or so private harbours scattered along the Finnish coast. All in the most beautiful secluded locations, each island has a small club house and a private wood-burning sauna nestled amongst the trees beside a bathing platform off the rocks into the cool pure unsalty Baltic. The first of our NJK club islands was Kråkskär, 30 miles south west of Turku. The whole of Scandinavia has a thing about flags verging on the obsessional. Give a Scandinavian a square metre of land and the first thing he will do is to erect a tall pole and run a flag up it. And so every NJK island has a flag pole and adherence to etiquette is strictly observed. The first member to arrive on site hauls down the “no one in residence” pennant and replaces it with the club flag which is kept in the club house. The last member to leave reverses the process.



**One of the NJK club harbours – with flag!**

The moment you have raised the club flag the next priority is to fire up the wood-burning sauna. Every island has a plentiful supply of logs and axes, log-splitters etc. Having chopped some wood and lit the fire you then come back an hour later to find the sauna stoked up to between 70°C to 90°C. Having steamed yourself for 10 minutes or so you then plunge into the cool water and then back to the sauna to repeat the process. You end up feeling tingly fresh and invigorated and ready for the first gin before lighting the barbecue (we had been enjoying a very hot spell – into the 30's). Maria and I had the whole island of Kraakskar to ourselves. Well we weren't entirely on our own. Wandering round the granite rocks we came across a number of extremely aggressive terns. Once batted, twice shy and I kept well away from them. But Maria, who unlike me still had the use of her right arm, armed herself with half a tree which she whirled around her head looking like a demented stag. However this was a very small price to pay for the privilege of having this little piece of paradise to ourselves.

**2 July.** Having enjoyed the warm sunshine on our deserted island we reluctantly left, heading a dozen miles to Lill Kalvholm, another NJK anchorage tucked behind some rocks. Again, no one was there. We picked up the stern buoy and approached the pontoon to tie up the bow, but



hit the soft mud about two metres from the shore. We tried various angles but there was simply not enough water for our depth. So reluctantly we moved on. We identified from the chart a likely looking anchorage a couple of miles further north in between Viberholm and Snackö at 60° 07.15'N 021° 42.6'E. It turned out to be very pleasant although as the shores of the islands consisted of summer house properties we were not able to go ashore.

**3 July.** We left the anchorage early and made our way to Turku. This would be the furthest north we would go at 60° 26.4'N 22° 14.8'E. The approach to Finland's second largest city (and at one time the capital of Finland) is delightful with large affluent Swedish style riverside houses with little sauna huts at the waters edge. Finns houses on the whole are nothing like as attractive as Swedes but this was the exception. The marina at Turku is slap bang in the middle of the city, mooring between piles on the north bank of the river. These were a tight squeeze for us, so instead we moored alongside the quay on the south side of the narrow river behind a new Oyster 66 *Angel Dust* owned by a recently retired Belgian, but Southampton registered so flying the red duster. At 2.7m draft and 28m air draft he must have been a little restricted as to where he could go, but he had been to St Petersburg and confirmed that my decision not to go there was wise – I haven't met anyone who thought it worth the hassle except if it was a particular box you wanted to tick. The quay had water and electricity and a large supermarket and ATM were less than 100m away. So it is a good re-provisioning location, albeit a bit public with the local drunks sitting down right next to the boat cradling their tins of cider. Getting to the far side of the river was facilitated by a free ferry service which plies the river just 50 metres from the boat over to the marina.

**4 July.** I had made an appointment to see a chiropractor to continue the treatment on my whiplash injury, which was better than it was, but still pretty painful. Whilst the Stockholm chiropractor inspired professional confidence, this one did not. His opening line was to express surprise and gratitude that I should consider using a chiropractor when almost everyone else thought that chiropractors were useless quacks. I can imagine why all his previous patients drew that conclusion. After two sessions, which involved all sorts of novelties like strapping me to a bench, swinging me upside down and then applying all sorts of weird electrical contraptions to me, all he managed to achieve was to put my lower back out with no discernible improvement of my neck injury, so I now had two painful problems rather than one.

In between the two sessions Maria and I went to a wonderful open marketplace with all sorts of smoked fish, fruit, veg and flowers. For the first time on the cruise we really felt if we had gone foreign. Turku was distinctly less European than Sweden and Denmark and had a different, more Russian atmosphere to it. The Baltic high which we had been enjoying for over a week had now really taken hold. Out on the islands it might have been a little cooler, but in town it was a sweltering 36°C, and barely falling below 30° at night. We found a traditional Finnish restaurant for lunch, selected in part because it had air conditioning, but the food was different and excellent.



### Turku harbour

Tom and Pippa Freeman arrived exhausted at 2030 after a long journey by both plane and train, to start the next stage of the cruise round to Helsinki.

**5 July.** We awoke to another cloudless day and before it got too hot, Tom and Pippa went off for an early cycle ride to see a bit of Turku before we left for the NJK harbour at Borgareluotö. This coast line is the densest archipelago in the world so the day starts with detailed planning of the maze-like route to our next destination and you can't relax for a second for fear of bumping into something solid. But it is wonderful sailing through this paradise of islands.

Borgareluotö is yet another exceptionally pretty little anchorage. We were the first boat to arrive but within half an hour, three other members had come in. They were all very friendly. We had already got the sauna fired up, Tom proving to be a master log-splitter and working up a good sweat for his and Pippa's first sauna. The secluded hut was on the far side of the tiny island. There was no need for a bathing pontoon as the rocks were very steep to, and a stout rope was used to lower oneself into the sea. After the heat wave, the water temperature had now reached an almost bath-like 20°C.

After barbecued chicken for dinner I was down below when Tom, not a sailor, hissed to me from the cockpit "Tim – come quickly – everyone's standing to attention in their cockpits!" I looked at my watch. 2059. Going on deck, the other skippers were standing rigidly to attention looking at the club flag pole. On the stroke of 2100 there was a blast on a foghorn and the club flag fluttered down the pole as everyone, in unison, marched to their pushpits and lowered their ensigns. I thought I was good on flag etiquette but this was some display!

**6 July.** We motored due to lack of wind to another delightful NJK island at Ramsskär. It is a beautiful natural harbour with a narrow - very narrow - entrance between rocks. Making our way gingerly through the gap, the keel slid over a submerged rock. There was no mention of

the in the NJK guide, so I guessed that boats with our draft were not frequent visitors. Whilst there are no tides in the Baltic, the water level can rise or fall depending on wind conditions and atmospheric pressure, and I hoped to hell that the water level wouldn't fall overnight or we could be trapped in the pool for weeks. Once again we had the place to ourselves and we enjoyed yet another sauna and a peaceful evening.

**7 July.** When I awoke at 0730 there wasn't a breath of wind, so I got the dinghy down and with a long boat hook sounded the entrance to find where the rock was that we hit on the way in. I couldn't find it at all but established that there was deeper water on the extreme east side of the very narrow channel. That was the line I would take on the way out. Some clouds were building in the north and the ensign fluttered as a light breeze picked up. Within five minutes we had 25 knots of wind across the deck. Not a moment to lose. We cast off and made for the narrow channel, but we had a problem. I had to go slowly just in case the rock reappeared but, going slowly, the wind was pushing me sideways into the hard granite at the side of the channel. Reluctant to find myself pinned to the rocks, I had barely got my nose into the channel when I decided to abort and we tied up once again. I called Turku Radio on the VHF and they obligingly gave me the forecast of 9-15 m/s (18 – 30 knots) declining later in the evening.



**Our bow is pointing to the very narrow and rock-strewn exit channel**

I was just reconciling myself to the fact that we were stuck here for an indeterminate length of time when there was a brief lull in the wind. We threw off the mooring lines, and Tom leapt into the rubber dinghy ready to act as a giant fender if we got pushed onto the rocks going through the gap. We just managed to get out in time. A few minutes later the wind had picked up again and we would have been stuck there for at least a day. A close call.

Mid-morning and we received an unexpected call from Peter, our son, to tell us the dreadful news about the London bomb attacks. Much of the day was spent thinking of those affected by the atrocities and it was a timely reminder that there is a real world which we have only temporarily left behind us.

Given the sudden wind, we made good progress to Hanko, the Cowes of Finland, to find it was regatta week and the marina was full to bursting. There was just one vacant berth with a large sign in red attached to the pontoon. It didn't take much to guess that it meant "No Mooring", but I tied up anyway on the grounds that I don't understand Finnish. It is always easier to negotiate with harbourmasters when firmly attached to their hardware. Sure enough the harbourmaster, a young lad who looked as if he was having a nervous breakdown, rushed down the pontoon and said we would have to leave. The owner of the berth was returning that evening and there was no other space. I said that I had sailed 1500 miles from London specifically to stay in his wonderful marina and it was inconceivable that he would turn me away. I added that I felt confident that a man of his resourcefulness would be able to find a solution. "Leave it with me" he said in perfect English, "I will see what I can do". He returned an hour later and directed me to a minute gap between the bow of a mega gin palace and the sterns of some moored yachts, beyond which, if I was able to spin on a sixpence there was just enough room for me to tuck alongside a pontoon – "If you can manage it" he said, throwing down the gauntlet.. If I can manage it, indeed. We cast off and headed for the gap. All the yachts along the pontoon were full of Finns doing what Finns do best – drinking large quantities of beer and having a good time. As we approached the impossibly narrow gap, the beer cans froze half-way to their allotted lips and a hush fell over the marina. The only movement was from the owners of those boats that I would wipe out if I didn't get it spot on, as they made a grab for fenders. By that stage we were committed. No going back. There was, literally, no more than three inches clearance fore and aft as I went through the gap, slammed the engine full astern and pivoted the boat. Much to everyone's surprise (not least my own, although I was determined not to show it), *Mina*<sup>2</sup> squeezed into the gap on the pontoon and nudged gently alongside. Perfect. There was a spontaneous round of applause from the other boats and the partying resumed. Later on as Tom and I were sitting in the cockpit enjoying what we felt was a well-earned "anchor nip", two attractive women passed by, one of them winking at us and saying "Nice parking, boys!" We felt pretty smug.

Saunas are such a part of Finnish culture that even big marinas in towns like Hanko have a sauna room. Just watching the young women walking down the pontoon to and from the sauna with nothing but a small towel loosely covering their nubile bodies was enough to make you feel invigorated. Quite charming really.

That evening, after walking round the pretty spa town, admiring the elegant timber-framed villas, Tom & Pippa took Maria and me out to dinner at Origo in one of the old wooden warehouses along the harbourside. We had been told the restaurant had "lots of atmosphere and an excellent meal". They were right. The only lighting was by hundreds of candles which had dripped years of candle wax down the rock walls. Their smoked reindeer meat is particularly delicious.

### **8 July.**

There was a great carnival atmosphere as we walked round the marina, most of which was occupied by yachts taking part in the annual regatta. I was surprised to see a fleet of sixteen Dragons, and a similar number of beautiful 6 metre and 18 metre boats, all in perfect condition.

We then had to extricate ourselves from our berth which gratifyingly generated another round of applause, albeit more muted this morning as everyone nursed their hangovers. We sailed a shortish passage to Munckshamn, another NJK anchorage.





**Hot, cloudless and no wind – but plenty of islands.**

Whilst we were enjoying our sauna, Tom hobbled back from a swim and warned us to be careful of the bathing steps which were very slimy. He had slipped quite badly on them. A couple of minutes later I noticed a pool of blood on the sauna bench. Without realising it, Tom had a deep cut on his ankle and he was in the process of emptying his veins. Tom seemed rather concerned to staunch the copious flow, whereas we were more concerned to get him out of the hut and try and scrub the disfiguring stains off the pristine pine.

Chatting to a friendly Finn on the next door boat I mentioned that we had a couple of days before been to Ramsskär. “What? In **that** boat?” he asked, pointing to *Mina*<sup>2</sup>. “Most of our members are too terrified to go there because the entrance is so difficult, and no one attempts to go there in a boat more than 36 feet long. One member a couple of years ago managed to get in in a 40 ft boat and has been lauded as a local hero ever since!”. He was staggered almost to the point of disbelief to hear that we had gone in in a 49ft boat. I'm glad we were blissfully ignorant of Ramsskär's reputation before we went there!

**9 July.** We decided that we would do a little pioneering rather than go to another tried and tested anchorage or harbour, so we identified a likely looking anchorage on the chart. When we arrived there, we had to slip through a very narrow, very shallow channel. I asked the Downstairs Skipper and Tom to pop down below to the chart plotter to con me through, and Pippa was despatched to the bow to keep a look out for shallow patches or rocks. Assured by the two navigators that I had got the channel lined up we were motoring through at slow speed. All of a sudden, one of the navigators yelled at me to turn to starboard, whilst the other simultaneously told me I was OK. It was too late, anyway. A split second later there was a loud bang as we came to a very sudden halt, the rig quivering with the shock of the impact, and Pippa was very nearly catapulted straight over the pulpit. I backed off and when in clear water went down to inspect our electronic track on the chart plotter. Instead of being coned down the centre of the channel, the track showed us going diagonally across it and straight as a die into the spot marked “+” on the chart. At least it gave me confidence in the accuracy of the chart plotter! A case of too many cooks, and my fault entirely.

Having had enough of pioneering we headed off for another NJK club harbour not far away at Hogholmen. The club harbour was on an island at the edge of a small bay. On the far side of the bay was a coast guard pontoon and I noticed a number of boats coming alongside, meeting officials and then heading off again. In the pilot books there was some reference to clearing out of Finland before going to Estonia, but now that Estonia was part of the EU I assumed that this information was out of date. But to be sure I paid a visit to the coast guards to find that indeed one did still need to have documents stamped and these would definitely be required when we arrived in Estonia. Just as well I found out.

**10 July.** We had a final 23 mile passage to Helsinki which would be the furthest east we were to go and, effectively, the turning point of the cruise. The weather remained very hot and windless. Having drifted under cruising chute for a couple of hours we had to press on so motored the rest of the way stopping only to allow Tom and Pippa one last swim. We arrived in Helsinki and headed for the marina which is on an island in the bay, with an impressive club house which used to be the headquarters of the NJK. There was only just enough room for us as there was a fleet of racing yachts taking part in the Baltic Sprint Cup series. A ferry service takes crews to and from the centre of the city.

Our expectations of Helsinki were not great. We had heard that it was very provincial in comparison to the other capital cities and rather dull but, whilst it can't compare with Stockholm (few cities can), we were pleasantly surprised. Helsinki has a lively, friendly buzz to the place and the centre is dominated by not one, but two cathedrals: one Lutheran and one Russian Orthodox and clearly they had both attempted to out do the other. They were impressive to say the least.



**NJK clubhouse and marina in Helsinki**

**11 July.** I had to say goodbye not only to Tom & Pippa but also to the Downstairs Skipper. Maria and I had had a marvellous month together and I would not see her again until late August when she would be coming out for another couple of weeks with Selina, our daughter. But meanwhile I had a couple of days for the usual maintenance work and other chores. One of those chores involved a long overdue haircut.

**13 July.** Venetia and Anthony Kenney-Herbert arrived late the previous afternoon. Anthony doesn't really enjoy sailing much, but doubtless thought that leaving his wife on a boat alone with me for a week was asking for trouble, so he sensibly came along as a chaperone. Our next stop was Tallinn in Estonia so, once a thick and unseasonable bank of fog had lifted, we beat all the way back to the NJK club harbour at Hogholmen, which is the nearest point on the Finnish coast for a passage across the Gulf of Finland to Tallinn. It also gave Venetia and Anthony the chance to enjoy the sauna experience before we left sauna country. It was a baptism of fire, the temperature of the sauna being a staggering 100°C, almost high enough to make your blood boil. They loved it.

**14 July.** We went alongside the coast guard pontoon with our pre-completed clearing out documents, had them stamped and then headed offshore, bound for the first of the ex-communist Baltic States. I was sad to be leaving NJK country. I was very privileged to have access to their wonderful club harbours, and we had managed to visit the majority of them. They were a real highlight of the cruise. But the mysteries of the Baltic States beckoned.

Half way across the Gulf of Finland we spotted a seal lazing in the water, the first I had seen since we left the Limfjord in Denmark. There are no facilities for yachts in Tallinn itself, so boats use the marina in nearby Pirita. We having completed the clearing in formalities, the harbourmaster was particularly helpful and found us a good mooring, despite space being limited, again as a result of the Baltic race fleet having beaten us there. There is nothing to see in Pirita itself but Tallinn is only a ten minute bus ride away from the marina gates. Whilst only 35 miles away from Finland, Tallinn is a million miles away in personality. The old medieval city is extraordinarily beautiful as are the people of Estonia. I had heard that model agencies send their scouts to Estonia and I am not surprised. They are all tall, blond, blue-eyed, slim and good-looking - but there didn't seem to be anyone over the age of 30. Perhaps they kill everyone off who shows any imperfections, like the ravages of time.



**Tallinn – as beautiful as its people**

I hate to think what the Estonians must think of the British. Courtesy of Ryanair, Tallinn has become the European stag party city of choice. Enterprising local entrepreneurs have catered for this new market and the place is awash with strip clubs, and the streets are awash with their clients. Unsavoury groups of drunken young Brits roam the streets, beer cans in hand, shouting, singing tunelessly, and dropping their trousers. Presumably the locals think we all behave like that all of the time, but I suppose the revellers are at least contributing something to the country's embryonic capitalist economy. Venetia, Anthony and I had an excellent dinner at a Russian restaurant, Restoran Troika, in the main square. Blinis and caviar, and freezing vodka poured from a great height into shot glasses. Excellent.

**15 July.** We made an early start for the long seventy mile passage round the coast to Haapsalu, beating most of the way and being overtaken (slowly, I like to think) by the racing fleet who were on their next leg. There are few refuges round the Estonian coast and fewer still in these generally shallow waters for a boat of our draft. We weren't quite sure whether we would be able to make it into Haapsalu, and the last mile or so was at dead slow speed as we brushed the bottom with our keel. However we eventually got there and found to our surprise that the marina was all but full. We headed for one of the few vacant bows-to slots but went firmly aground a few metres off. We backed off as the young harbourmaster rowed furiously out to greet us. "What draft are you?" "2.2 metres" I replied. He laughed long and hard. Having got a couple of boats to shuffle to one side, the harbourmaster eventually managed to squeeze us in a little further up the pontoon where we sat comfortably in 2.7m of water.

**16 July.** Unlike Sweden and Finland, the whole of Estonia is flat and rather dull, but the beauty and interest of the villages and towns more than makes up for it. It is like being transported back to the beginning of the 20th century although you can still feel the deadweight influence of the Russians in the ghastly flats and commercial buildings on the outskirts of the towns.

The town of Haapsalu is a classic example. About fifteen minutes walk away from the harbour, the town is dominated by a vast medieval fortified cathedral. We arrived to find the entire population in medieval dress. It was rather surreal and it was difficult finding out what was going on as no one seemed to speak any English. We eventually discovered that this was the Baltic equivalent of The Sealed Knot, made up of Lithuanians, Latvians and Belorussians, and today they were having a bit of a do. Apart from the stalls selling handicrafts; the medieval music and the dancing, there was duelling in the castle quadrangle and finally a battle re-enactment. The cost of entry was a medieval £1.50.





**Haapsalu Castle**



**Haapsalu – charmingly medieval**

The rest of the town is faded charm with lovely Estonian wooden houses in cobbled streets. Completely unspoilt. At one time the town had been a watering hole for the bourgeoisie and on the shores of a pretty lake was a large wooden tea-house.

In the evening we went to a really tasteful, smart, restaurant, Central Restoran. With starters for £2 and main courses at £4 with a very good Argentine wine at just £8, it hardly broke the bank either. In the evening the sky clouded over and it started to rain – the first we had seen for nearly three weeks.

Haapsalu was an unexpected gem and would be well worth a diversion.

**17 July.** Another long sixty mile passage took us to Kõiguste Lake on the south coast of the large island of Saaremaa. Way out to sea, we saw a couple of swans bobbing about. I still can't get used to the sight of swans in the middle of the sea miles from land. But the water is so brackish in the Baltic that they are as happy here as they are in a fresh water lake.

Venetia and I reckoned that Lake Kõiguste would be intrepid virgin pilotage in the true RCC tradition, with the need to anchor off and carry out some dinghy reconnaissance before conning through the narrow passage into the lake. In the event we arrived to find the entrance buoyed (albeit with very small, semi-submerged buoys) and what looked like a mooring pontoon close to the shore. There also appeared to be other pontoons half way up the beach. We found there was no depth for us to make it to the pontoon so we anchored a little way off and went in by dinghy. There was a small bar on the shore to which we were enthusiastically greeted by the young women who was in charge. She explained that a violent storm in the winter had raised the water level by more than two metres, the sea had rushed into the lake, ripping the pontoons from their moorings and dashed them onto the shore, destroying them. They hadn't enough money to replace them and as the Baltic sailors do not going in for anchoring much, preferring to tie up to solid land whether rock, tree or pontoon, business had been rather thin on the ground this year. No wonder we had such a warm welcome!



**Anthony, Venetia and barbecue at Lake Kõiguste**

**18 July.** Anthony is like a dog, albeit a charming and sophisticated one. But he does need to be put ashore regularly for a run. To let him burn off a bit of pent-up energy, Venetia and I left him with one of the bikes to cycle to our next destination of Kuressaare. A twenty mile ride for him and a thirty mile sail for us. Having ferried Anthony to the shore, I returned to the boat to find Venetia looking a bit shifty. “I’m afraid I have to tell you that the for’ard head is blocked. Well and truly blocked” she announced gravely. My heart fell into my boots. This is never a pleasant job. But the wind was fair so I decided to confront the unpleasant realities later, so we weighed anchor and shot off. After an excellent fetch, we bore away towards the dead straight, mile-long dredged channel leading to the small harbour with the spoil heaped up either side. We realised in the nick of time that the channel is so narrow that there wouldn’t be a chance of rounding up to drop the main until we shot at speed into the small harbour. By the time we arrived, Anthony had made friends with the harbourmaster, Oskar, and arranged a prime berth for us. As we entered the harbour, Oskar was running a Union Flag up one of the many flag poles to join the national flags of all the other visitors in the marina. A nice gesture.

So back to the blocked head. As Venetia was the last to use it there was an obvious assumption (by me, at least) that she was wholly responsible for the disaster. Venetia therefore took it as a point of honour to fix it before they left the following day. (The faint hearted may wish to skip the next bit). The highly unpleasant task of dismantling the bowl end commenced and it wasn’t long before we realised that the problem lay further along the waste pipe. We had to dismantle the wardrobe in the forward cabin to get to the plumbing and try to clear it. The blockage was absolutely solid and clearly ran down most of the length of the pipe. I was beginning to have a sneaking suspicion that perhaps Venetia couldn’t be entirely to blame for what was clearly years-worth of compacted calcium and excrement but, as she was valiantly up to her elbows in the stuff, I kept my thoughts to myself. After a couple of hours we gave up for the evening and, after very thorough showers, we went out to spend our last evening together in another cheap and good Estonian restaurant.

**19 July.** Shamefaced at her failure to fix the head, Venetia left with Anthony the following morning, but I had a couple of days to sort things out before the Lovetts arrived. To cut a long and rather unpleasant story short, I tried various ploys, but none of them worked, so I cycled into town and miraculously found some high pressure food processing hose of the right diameter which I hoped would do the trick. It did, thank God.

Having completed the job, I was washing my hands when the freshwater pump packed up. Luckily I had spares...

As a post script to the whole unfortunate heads episode, I did subsequently find a way of dislodging the rock hard blockage. You disconnect it, take it onto the pontoon and beat it to death. Bits of rock hard calcium and God knows what else come flying out like shrapnel. In no time at all the hose is as clean as a whistle. Very satisfying. And a source of entertainment for the other pontoon users as well. One chap passed and asked “Are you **very** angry with that hose?”.

So having got the dirty work done, I was free to explore the small capital of Saaremaa. First stop was the ubiquitous impressive castle. These were all built in medieval times by the local bishops as fortified palaces / monasteries / cathedrals. The castle at Kuressaare was picture book pretty but it had a fairly scary history. Rumour had it that a spanish knight turned up

once as part of the inquisition. The locals trapped him into an affair with a local girl and then, as punishment, bricked him up in a room in the castle. Sure enough, a couple of hundred years later, they were carrying out some work, pulled down a wall and there was his skeleton sitting in a chair. The bishop, who covered a wide see, used to turn up at the castle a couple of times a year and part of his duties was to judge cases of serious misdemeanour. He normally found the culprits guilty and the sentence, carried out immediately, was to chuck them down a well with a couple of lions at the bottom. No appeal. No messing.



**Saremma Castle – pretty on the outside, scary on the inside**

**20 July.** Estonia is very much cheaper than neighbouring Finland, so I took advantage to replenish my dwindling supplies of beer and cigarettes. (Whilst I seem to be the only person left in the world who smokes, having got a large supply of EU Duty Paid fags at £1 a packet, I'm afraid I will be continuing a little longer). I also went into an "antique" shop. Stuffed wall to ceiling with every artefact and piece of household equipment you could think of, ranging from old accordions to spinning wheels, large copper vessels, oil lamps – the variety was endless. I was attracted to some rather fine barrel-staved pots, each with a rustically but intricately carved handle and lid. These were, apparently, Saremma beer mugs from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which were made by young men when they came of age. "But they're enormous" I said. "Enormous?" said the antique dealer, "Those are small ones. Only three litres. The **real** men had five litre mugs!". I bought one as a memento of the cruise.

As I was returning to the boat with my trophy, a Canadian registered yacht was entering the harbour and quick as flash Oskar was hoisting the maple leaf flag up one of the poles. "I think you will find I have flags for any yacht that will come here" he said proudly. Impressive indeed. That afternoon another yacht entered. Oskar started twitching. "What flag is that?" he said. "Maltese" I replied. Oskar stumped off to greet the yacht, defeated. The only thing to be hoist that afternoon was Oskar himself – with his own petard.

The yacht in question was a new Hallberg Rassy 48 owned by an Irishman (the Maltese registration being part of a VAT scheme). Approaching the pontoon in a cross wind, he wrapped his skeg round the chain of the aft mooring buoy and ground to a halt four metres



from the pontoon. Nothing the owner did would free the boat. Oskar started looking a little happier. Oskar called out “Do you need the border guard to clear into Estonia?” “Why would I need a border guard – I haven’t arrived yet!” came the bitter reply.

Having helped the hapless owner to sort himself out, once the boat was extricated, tied up and cleared in, I was invited on board for the “anchor nip”, in this case a wide selection of malt whiskies. By the time Sue, David and Sophie Lovett arrived I was barely in a condition to greet them.

**22 July.** To head west to the Swedish island of Götland, one had first to go south round a twenty five mile spit of land, so it made sense to continue heading south and pop into Latvia on the way. Having bought a courtesy flag from Oskar, and got our exit documentation stamped in triplicate by the border guards, we cast off, all of us nursing hangovers, and started on the sixty mile passage to Ventspils. It was a lively passage with a good F5 WSW wind just for’ard of the beam. Poor Sue succumbed and spent a good part of the trip hanging over the lee rail.

Ventspils harbour is everything you would expect of a commercial Soviet harbour. Ghastly and depressing in a word. The border guard was a non-smiling crop haired arm wrestler (female) who filled in forms in quintuplet before reluctantly stamping them all. God knows what they do with them all.



### **Ventspils harbour – ugly beyond belief .... redeemed by the great market**

Ventspils is struggling to shrug off the influence of its communist past. But beyond the austere surroundings of the harbour and its non-communicative, uncooperative staff, it has its charms. The mayor has been dynamic in trying to attract tourism to the town and he has spent a lot of his own personal money in re-cobbling the streets, commissioning weird street sculptures and constructing large floral displays. But, despite this, the comparative poverty of the country was self-evident. The town market, once you get to the foody stuff, is incredible in terms of variety and quality of produce, and unbelievable value for money. We loaded our bags with wild mushrooms (transformed by Sue into a wonderful risotto that evening), smoked hams, honey combs the like of which I haven’t tasted since my apiarist grandfather died, beautiful local cheeses, wonderfully tasty vegetables, and berries of every variety. We bought them all and spent virtually nothing.

We saw more of Ventspils than we planned. Our intention was to leave that evening for a night crossing to Götland, but the wind was building. In the afternoon a sailing boat came in -

the crew exhausted. They said they had been experiencing storm force winds and mountainous seas. We had forty knots of wind across the deck in harbour and the weather was not forecast to improve, so that was it. I decided that we were to defer our crossing until the wind abated. Instead we went for a crazy walk down the beach. Normally full of happy families paddling in the still waters, we were standing at 45 degrees being sand-blasted by the violent winds, the beach having been transformed into a boiling, crashing nightmare of waves. I was very pleased we were not out at sea in those conditions.



**Ventspils harbour entrance – glad we weren't out there**

We returned to the boat to find that the large concrete block at the bottom of the harbour, to which the back of the boat was attached by a rope, had dragged in the storm force conditions. Mina was now at an oblique angle to the quay and our bow was grinding itself to destruction against the stern of a motorboat moored alongside. We rigged a very long line, bar taut, to a harbour wall behind us, and this kept us at a better angle and out of danger of further damage.

**23 July.** I raised the matter of the inadequacies of his mooring tackle with the harbour master who showed complete indifference, and still insisted on charging me for our second unwanted and unsatisfactory night in his harbour. Having seen the hard look and the loaded gun of the border guard who we still needed to clear us out of Latvia, I decided not to press the point.

So, a day late, we left Latvia bound for the Swedish island of Götland, through the sound at the top and down the west coast to Visby, the Hanseatic capital - a long leg of about 124 miles. The wind had abated but there was enough to provide a good sail for the first part of the passage. But later on the wind died completely and the latter part of the trip we peeled to the Perkins.

Sue Lovett is an enthusiastic film-maker and barely a moment passes without turning round and finding a camcorder lens pointing at you. When the action wasn't live it was carefully reconstructed simulations of me radioing the Latvian coastguard (who, in reality, never responded to any of my calls on any of their five working frequencies - thank God we weren't sinking). In her week on board Sue took about four hours of film and I am very much looking forward to seeing the (heavily edited) results - it will be good to have a video record of the trip as well as words and stills.

At 2300, having reached the turning point near the top of Götland, with the prospect of heading into the wind for a further 40 miles to make it to Visby, we threw the towel in and found a berth in a small marina in the Fårösund. It seemed a better bet to jump on a bus to Visby the following morning, and this is what we did, spending the day in this spectacular mediaeval walled city.

**25 July.** Having ticked the Götland box in our whirlwind cruise of the Baltic we then had another long passage of 90 miles to Nyköping which is some 50 miles south of Stockholm and, conveniently, ten minutes away from the airport that Ryanair flies into from Stansted. Coming into Nyköping we "crossed the line" of my 1000-mile circumnavigation of the Northern Baltic, and almost 2000 miles covered since leaving London. The marina was full and trying to tie up to the outside wall we went aground, so we backed out and tied up alongside the town quay which was actually rather nicer than being in the marina. We were opposite an excellent restaurant, and David and Sue kindly bought me dinner there as our "last supper".

**27 July.** Having done a great job cleaning the boat up ready for Richard and Essex Close-Smith's arrival at midday, David, Sue and Sophie left at 1130 to take a train to Stockholm where they were to stay for a couple of days before flying back to the UK. I knew that Richard Close-Smith was likely to want to leave immediately on arrival so I prepared the boat for instant departure. Minutes before the C-S's were due to arrive, I got a call from David Lovett to say that their passports were still on board with the ship's papers - he was rushing back to collect them. Just as well he didn't notice their absence until they were in Stockholm, by which time we would have been out of telephone reach in a remote anchorage miles from anywhere!

The week with the C-S's was a bonus. We were leaving Nyköping and delivering them back there a week later. We could go anywhere. Essex had not been to Stockholm before so we decided to make our way there via the inner skerries and return via the outer skerries. We left in the afternoon for a twenty two mile passage to an anchorage at Hökö where we anchored fore and aft due to a lack of swinging room, christening my new stern anchor. It was a beautiful spot and the first time we had been out of a marina in a week which was a relief.

**28 July.** We awoke to a beautiful sunny day, not that the C-S's were aware of it – they had a lie in until 1130. We, eventually, set sail with the wind behind us and the cruising chute up to the island of Muskö and laid the anchor in a beautiful spot with rocks all around fringed with mossy woodland and water meadows behind. I sacrificed the last of the cachaça (Brazilian cane sugar spirit) and fixed cocktails of caiprinha with the limes I managed to buy in Nyköping before going ashore for a barbecue on a rock. Dusk was falling as we finished our meal. A small red deer bolted from woodland behind us, alarmed by a deep, resonant, booming bellow not too far away – elk! We stalked the elusive beasts and whilst the air was filled with their rutting calls we didn't manage to spot any. I have since read that bull elks become extremely aggressive during the rut, so perhaps it was as well.



### **The C-S's before the elk hunt**

**29 July.** I awoke early to a beautiful dawn, the woodlands reflecting like mirrors on the glassy, slightly misty water. The elks were still booming their eerie call. It was wonderfully peaceful. We had a long motor in windless conditions to Stockholm through the stunningly beautiful archipelago arriving early evening. On reaching Stockholm, I had completed 6744 miles in *Mina*<sup>2</sup> compared with 6730 miles during the period of previous ownership. I now felt that *Mina*<sup>2</sup> was truly mine.

This being the first time Essex had been in Stockholm, such a romantic city, I insisted she and Richard spend the evening alone. This was not an entirely selfless gesture on my part as I was exhausted, and the moment they left for dinner I went to bed for a long night's sleep.

**30 July.** Richard and Essex spent the day sight-seeing whilst I retrieved my so called dud battery which I had left in Stockholm a few weeks before. To my dismay I had received a call from Michael to say that they had tested it and after a couple of days charging it was declared in perfect working order, so I had wasted £240 on a new battery for nothing. There must be something wrong with the charging system.

Late afternoon and the C-S's returned for an early evening motor to Lake Skrattan for the night, dodging dozens of very large cruise ships and ferries which all seemed to be pouring out of Stockholm at the same time. Skrattan was a pleasant anchorage, but not exceptional by our now exceptionally high standards. We were becoming spoilt.

Richard had got to grips with the chart plotting technology and in the evening planned the route for the following day to a promising anchorage at Byttan.



**31 July.** I love having friends on board. They are on holiday and I try to give them as relaxing a time as possible. But acting as tour guide, host and occasional cook as well as doing all the planning, navigation, sailing, running repairs and routine maintenance, together with the domestic chores of laundry, shopping etc, it can actually get quite tiring after a few weeks without a day's break. Don't get me wrong. I consider myself to be immensely lucky to have the opportunity to organise and carry out these campaigns but, for me, it is not a holiday - it is what I do - it is a project which takes up most of my time. Richard understood this and, whilst Essex was definitely on a much needed holiday, Richard appointed himself my Project Consultant. First he concluded that I had too much to do and some things were being allowed to slip. For instance, the hull was brown with built-up algae stains and, frankly, a disgrace (I think he was worried about bumping into another Royal Cruising Club member - the shame!). So whenever we stopped long enough he was in the dinghy polishing the sides until they gleamed and, once again, I had a boat I could be proud of.

But even I thought Richard, as Project Consultant, had overstepped the mark when he announced in the morning that today he was not only going to do the navigation but that he was going to relieve me of my responsibilities as skipper as well. Mutiny is a hanging offence and I wondered how Richard would look strung up from the yard arm. Perhaps I could invite Sue Lovett back and she could video the whole thing. But as I was surreptitiously backing towards the ship's cutlass (I think you will find I have most things on board), Richard explained that today I was to have a Holiday. Essex had been trained up as a Master Helmsperson and Richard would cover the rest. They would pour the drinks, prepare the food and do all the washing up. There was even talk of a Swedish massage thrown in.

Before we weighed anchor I heard a high-pitched girly screech I hadn't heard since Norway last year, and three white-tailed eagles swooped from behind some nearby trees to bid us farewell. A magnificent sight.

As the sails were set, I was firmly told there was nothing for me to do. The navigation area was, for me, a no-go zone and interference would not be tolerated. "Aye, aye skipper" I said enthusiastically as a freshly brewed mug of tea was placed in my hand. For the first time in three months I had nothing to do. So I painted, read books (I hadn't found time to read anything other than pilot books so far) and generally put my feet up all day, both physically and mentally. The pampering was complete and utter bliss. Richard and Essex will DEFINITELY be invited again. I hope that all my future guests get my drift, and will use Richard and Essex as role models!



***Mina<sup>2</sup>*'s new skipper and helmswoman**

We arrived at the anchorage at Lake Byttan which Richard skilfully piloted our way through rock-strewn shallows to reach. Despite the heavy drizzle, it was beautiful.

**1 August.** We awoke to another very grey drizzly day, but the sun metaphorically shone on the C-S's who were celebrating their 4<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. We had been given to believe that Byttan was one of the best kept secrets of the Baltic, not least because of the tricky pilotage to get in there, and that we were assured total solitude. Well, not exactly. The word had obviously got about and there were more than half a dozen other boats around us, albeit well spread out. As an indication that this was now a well known gem of an anchorage, through the gloom we heard a powerful engine and out of the mist shot a large rib packed with boxes, selling milk, bread, freshly baked rolls, sweets, water and fresh strawberries – a water-borne grocers shop. Having supported the local entrepreneur (who was likely to become very rich judging by his extortionate prices), and with the rain now coming in hard, we settled down to read our books.



**Byttan was rather less isolated than expected – the grocery rib plies his trade**

When the rain reduced from torrential to merely heavy, we set off for the next anchorage. What I hadn't picked up from the chart was that the idyllic spot I had carefully selected had been equally carefully selected by the Swedish ministry of defence as a top security military installation. We began to realise that this was no ordinary island when we observed that the whole thing was surrounded by razor wire and was bristling with antennae, bunkers, radar installations etc. It was not exactly welcoming, so we continued a further seven miles to Ankarudden which is a small fishing harbour and pilot station with four moorings, one of which we picked up (the first time we had come across a swinging mooring in the Baltic). It was quite a pretty place with a cosy looking bar on the quayside but we stayed on board, sacrificing the last of my confit de canard as a celebratory dinner for the C-S's anniversary (Richard providing the champagne).

**2 August.** The C-S's last day, and a thirty mile sail through dense skerries back to Nyköping. The sky was overcast but at least it wasn't raining and the wind in the north west augured well for our WSW passage. A rather satisfying part of the sail was one particularly narrow channel in a north westerly direction, straight into the wind. Richard and I short-tacked through the channel, throwing the boat onto the next tack within feet of hard granite rocks. We felt rather smug at our performance whilst all the other boats were taking their sails down and motoring through.

But pride, as we all know, comes before a fall. On the way into Nyköping, we made a short diversion to recce a possible anchorage for me in the days to come. I had identified a well protected patch of clear water, three to six metres deep with no obstructions, between two islands. We swept between the islands under motor at a reasonable lick when – BANG!!! – we came to a very sudden stop almost bringing the mast down. The impact was enough to bring one of the headboards (ceiling panels) crashing down in the saloon. With the rig still whipping backwards and forwards we bounced back and I put the engine astern. We must have missed seeing a rock on the chart, and before retracing our steps, we had a very close look. But no rock was charted (I hope it will be soon – I have notified the Hydrographic Office of the exact location and got a charming letter back from them saying they would advise their Swedish counterparts immediately). If anyone is going to cruise the area, do NOT pass over 58° 43.145'N 017° 10.905'E ! Shaken but not stirred we made our subdued way back to the marina at Nyköping where one of the few berths big enough for *Mina*<sup>2</sup> had been reserved for us.

**3 to 7 August.** As is so often the case in life it is either feast or famine and between the C-S's leaving and the Gordon-Walker's arriving I had a five-day break ("half-term" as Richard put it). The first two days was spent in Nyköping going through a long list of "things to be done". So what to do with the next three days? Only ten minutes away from a cheap Ryanair flight to Stansted, I could fly home for a couple of days - but that would break the spell; the illusion that I was a million miles from the hurly-burly of the real world. It would be like being airlifted off the peak of Everest to attend a business meeting in a suit and then be airlifted back again for the descent. I could hire a car, or take trains and buses, and see some of the interior of Sweden - but the joy of exploring new places is only complete if the experience is shared with others, particularly Maria. Staying in a marina for three days was not an option (it would be like sitting in a municipal car park), so I threw off the mooring lines and went to a beautiful, completely secluded bay about an hour away, and set the anchor.

The first day was warm and sunny and I painted. I am new to painting and not very good at it. Even though my subject matter consists mainly of trees, rocks, sky and water, they all look like the daubings of a three year old. So I devoted most of the day to experimenting with

different techniques and, whilst they still looked rubbish, they are less rubbish than they were. Whilst it is now two years since I had a proper job, I still have difficulty throwing off the puritan work ethic, and spending most of the day just relaxing and painting seemed sinfully self-indulgent, but I guess I'll get over it eventually.



**The skipper finds time to paint**

Day 2 in my own idyllic bay, and I awoke up to grey and windy conditions. But I also awoke to a fluttering sound coming from the saloon. Two swallows had come in and were flying gracefully around the saloon. Not panicking, bumping into the windows and shitting, like the birds that find themselves in the conservatory back at home, but gracefully and skilfully flying around; twisting, turning on a sixpence, hovering - just having a look around. When I surprised them, they made one last circuit and flitted outside and sat on one of the lifelines. Going into the cockpit, I was amazed to find that *Mina2* had become home to an entire flock of swallows. There was barely standing room left on all the life lines and ropes on board. Hundreds of them all bending into the stiff breeze and occasionally fluttering their wings to keep balance. They were completely unfazed by my arrival amongst them, and they stayed with me all day. I felt like a cross between "The Bird Man of Alcatraz" and Snow White in the Disney film where she is skipping through the forest with all the birds twittering around her (OK - an unlikely comparison, particularly given that the only thing Snow White about me was my two-day growth of beard). I was half expecting the seven dwarfs to come stomping up the bathing ladder.





### **A few of my feathered friends**

The rain set in so it was a good opportunity for me to go below and work on my pilotage planning for the next couple of weeks - a task normally performed day-by-day so it will one fewer thing to do.

The last day of my break, and I had to get back to Nyköping to collect the Gordon-Walkers in the evening. My intention was to leave the anchorage about noon and get back in time to do all the supermarket shopping before they arrived. But the sun had come out again and it was glorious and hot. After their day's travelling, I reckoned the G-W's would probably want a lie-in the next day giving me time to shop in the morning so, rapidly getting used to the self-indulgence, I stayed in the anchorage all afternoon. Alan and Louise Gordon-Walker arrived minutes after I arrived back at the marina and, unaware that the boat had virtually no food on board, I persuaded them that dinner out would be fun.

**8 August.** I got up early and biked to the supermarket for a mega-shop and managed to get everything stowed before the G-W's awoke. Our first destination was Örholma, a longish leg of 35 miles. It was worth the distance. A snug anchorage tucked amongst a cluster of islands. When we went ashore to explore we found the entire island covered angle deep in soft, springy moss – it clearly didn't get many visitors. On a shore of the inlet, a couple of birds were grubbing around for lunch. Alan asked me "Are those puffins". "No, Alan, they're Oystercatchers".

**9 August.** A beautiful morning and whilst I sat on the boat and painted, the G-W's went ashore to savour the peace and tranquillity of the island. But eventually we had to press on, so weighing anchor we set sail for our next destination, a short twenty two mile hop away. On the way Alan pointed to a bird in the water. "Is that a puffin, Tim?" "No, Alan, it's a common gull".

Flatvarp, on the island of Lilla Måsholmen, is a small fishing village. Apart from a few picturesque fishermen's huts by the quayside, it is not a place of notable beauty, but a convenient stopping off point on our way south. We had also been told that freshly smoked fish was available there. Well, not now it isn't, but we were told by a fisherman that there was a smokery a couple of miles up the road. Louise and Alan got the bikes out and headed off to

look for dinner. They found said smokery some way off the beaten track and enjoyed a long conversation with the joint proprietor. He and his brother ran the place. One would go out fishing whilst the other did the smoking. Alan and Louise came back laden with smoked eel, salmon and trout. It was the first eel I had had. It looks a bit off-putting - but the taste! Just fantastic.



**Pre-prandials before the smoked fish gastro-dinner**

**10 August.** We set off through the skerries towards Kelsö. Getting a bit bored with the motoring (no wind) we noticed a marina at Idö that didn't appear in any of the pilot books. As we were making good progress, we decided to investigate and found a brand new marina (57° 42.2'N 016° 45.85'E) with, most unusually, pick-up lines at the pontoon connected to the stern mooring. More Mediterranean style than Baltic. The marina was at the foot of a brand new swanky restaurant and conference centre. There was also a snack bar where we bought some ice creams before heading off again. As we boarded the boat, Alan grabbed my arm and said excitedly, "Tim, is **that** a puffin?" Alan might know a heap about publishing (probably Puffin books) but he clearly didn't have a clue about birds in general, and puffins in particular. "No, Alan, that is not a puffin" I explained patiently - "It is a jackdaw. You won't see any puffins here because there aren't any. The last puffin I saw was in Norway last year". Alan looked rather crestfallen. "Are you sure?" he asked. "Yes, Alan, I'm sure".



### **For Alan's benefit - the puffin we never saw**

We eventually arrived at Kalsö, a little group of islands just off the main drag south, with a small and well-protected pool in the middle: totally secluded and totally idyllic, notwithstanding the torrential rain which started the moment we had put the anchor down. But the clouds soon passed, the sun came out and we were in a paradise.

**11 August.** We awoke to a warm clear day and had breakfast in the cockpit. Alan said "Tim, what's that in the water over there?". I turned round expecting to see another of Alan's bloody puffins but instead saw this dog-like animal paddling resolutely from one island to the other, passing just a few feet from the boat. It completely ignored us. When it got to the steep granite rock on the island next to us, it leaped up and scampered off into the undergrowth. It was as big as a small to medium-sized dog, about two feet long, with a long tail. It was dark reddy-brown with a longish neck, small head and tiny ears. Its legs were quite long, keeping it well off the ground when it was loping across the rocks. A mink? Some sort of weasel? We didn't have a clue. Subsequent research indicates it was some sort of a marten.



### **The idyllic anchorage at Kalsö**

Just when we were thinking that this wonderful place had revealed all of its secrets, a magnificent white-tailed eagle swooped from behind a tree, circled a couple of times and flew off. It was with the greatest reluctance that we eventually hauled the anchor and headed towards the long island of Öland which lies off the east coast of Sweden

On the way, right in the middle of the open sea in the Kalmarsund, is a small, high (by Baltic standards) round island called Blä Jungfrun (The Blue Maiden). Now a National Park it is just one kilometre in diameter, so a circumnavigation makes for a pleasant afternoon's stroll. There is deep water all round the island and the holding is not good, so having laid a lot of scope, Louise and Alan went off in the dinghy to explore and I stayed on the boat for a post-ice cream nap in the sun.

We then sped onwards to Sandvik, half way down the west coast of the island of Öland, a favourite holiday centre for Swedes. There wasn't much turning room in the small harbour but we managed to squeeze in, late in the day.

**12 August.** As we were leaving Sandvik for Kalmar, my final destination with the G-W's, one of our neighbours helped us with our ropes. He was the owner of a very pretty German-flagged 38ft boat; sleek and narrow. I complimented him on her looks. "Thank you" he said, "she's very fast". Well, that's modest for you!

We left the harbour, well reefed for a comfortable ride, beating into a stiff sou'westerly, with Louise and Alan alternating on the helm. After about an hour's tacking, I noticed a little white dot shoot out of Sandvik harbour. On we pressed and, at the next tack, I noticed that the white dot was a lot closer than she was – and she was flying a German ensign. It was clear that we were being hauled in by our German neighbour, and that wasn't on. So I shook out all the reefs, trimmed the sails to perfection and threw Louise off the helm. The race was on. By this time he was just behind us. Every time he tacked, I tacked, desperate to keep him in my dirty



wind. Kalmar – and the finishing line - was getting closer and closer. Could we hold him off? On the final long tack, with his well cut overlapping genoa, he slowly clawed to windward of me and shot over the line a couple of lengths ahead. We saluted one another as we entered the harbour and tied up alongside the quay. At a little under four tons she had a slight weight advantage over my eighteen tons but, even so, he had been going like a rocket. Helmut, the owner, told me that they never motor anywhere: in almost any conditions he sailed faster than he motored and he added that he was never beaten by another boat – regardless of size. Which made me feel just a little bit better about the humiliation. Helmut and his lovely wife, Maren, an art dealer from Hamburg, joined us for dinner, finishing off the last of our supplies of smoked fish.

**13 August.** Kalmar harbour is bang next door to the railway station which is handy, as the G-W's were heading back to Copenhagen by train and the Taylor-Young's arriving the same way. (Blimey – what a lot of posh double-barrelled friends I seem to have: the K-H's, C-S's, G-W's and now the T-Y's!). But before the G-W's left we had to take in the ubiquitous castle, in Kalmar's case a particularly splendid example.

The history of this legendary castle stretches back over 800 years. The Castle acquired its present appearance in the 16th c, when the Vasa kings rebuilt it in the style of a Renaissance palace and furnished it in continental manner.



**Kalmar castle**

Under the ramparts of the castle and overlooking the most beautiful moat and arboretum is what looks like an old barrack building. With thick bars over all the windows; surrounded by high wire fences with razor wire at the top, and strategically placed flood lights, mirrors and infra-red cameras, it turned out to be a high security prison – almost in the middle of town. As we walked past, the front door opened and out came a prisoner, handcuffed to a warden. Both got into an ordinary Kalmar taxi and disappeared through the double security gates. Perhaps, having got fed up with the spectacular view from his cell, he was being taken to the cinema for the evening.

Having said goodbye to Louise and Alan, I had a day to sort myself out before Christopher T-Y and his son, Simon, arrived. But there were distractions. I seemed to have arrived in Kalmar coinciding with their annual festival. There were pageants, a pop festival in the town square, and all sorts of other cultural activities throughout the weekend.

Early evening saw me in the town square for the pop event but, my age showing, it was so noisy I headed off to the wonderful venue of the castle for a performance by a contemporary dance group. Now, I know I am not renowned for my culture, but this was challenging. A bunch of anorexic girls standing in a circle twitching, whilst some dragon caterwauled discordantly offstage. It was absolutely ghastly. So back to the town square where the pop groups had all gone off for an early night, and all the locals had come along with their deckchairs and Thermos's for an open air cinema displayed on a vast screen covering the entire front of the cathedral – which I have to say was great, notwithstanding I didn't understand a word of it.



**Typical old street in Kalmar**

**14 August.** Having expected to meet the T-Y's off the train, I was surprised to see them arriving by car. Apparently the train (and the following one) had been booked to capacity so they had rented a car and driven. But it was good to see them however they arrived. Christopher had been my boss in the day's when anyone was prepared to employ me, and I had worked quite closely with Simon, a one time investment banker, when we were selling the business.

**15 August.** During our six days together, the T-Y's and I were to make our way round the Swedish peninsula to Copenhagen, but on the way we were to take in the Danish islands of Christiansö and Bornholm. We set off south to the southernmost harbour on the south east coast of Sweden, Sandhamn, a longish forty two mile passage but well protected within the Kalmarsund. We had a satisfactory sail, albeit with the wind dying as we entered the harbour. There was a possibility that we might bump into Anthony Browne, the newly-appointed RCC Commodore who was scheduled to be in Sandhamn at about this time so, wanting to create

the right impression, we sailed into the fishing harbour, furlled the yankee as we approached the quay, and came to a perfect halt alongside. No engine but, come to that, no Commodore either, so a slightly wasted effort - but very satisfying nonetheless.

Christopher called Rosemary, his wife, on the mobile to tell her how the day had gone. “Where are you?” she asked him. Christopher looked round and saw a life belt on a stand with large black lettering on it. “We’re at a place called Trygg-Hansa – you’ll find it in the atlas”. It was after the call that I told him that he would see the name Trygg-Hansa on every lifebelt in every harbour in Sweden. It’s the name of the Swedish insurance company which sponsors them!



**Lots of places all called Trygg-Hansa!**

**16 August.** Having impressed the locals with our arrival the evening before, we had to keep the act up so we sailed off the quay and out of the harbour bound for Christiansö more than 50 miles away in the middle of the Baltic Sea. Allegedly life on Christiansö is like entering a time warp and I was looking forward to it. But first we had to get there.

The wind was a bracing westerly, a close fetch to our destination. For the first couple of hours we clipped along in the lee of the land. But when we cleared the mainland, the sea was decidedly more lumpy. Christopher became rather subdued, his gaze fixed on the horizon. But all the will-power in the world was not going to help him in these conditions. Eventually he succumbed. I suggested he get horizontal and close his eyes and, rather understandably not wanting to go below, he lay down on the lee cockpit seat, ghostly still, except for the frequent occasions when he raised himself onto one elbow to bleach my teak decks with the acidic contents of his stomach.

Knowing that extreme seasickness and hypothermia are close cousins, I wrapped Christopher in a duvet (his, not mine – there was fair amount of spray coming on board). Wrapped up like that, if the worst came to the worst (and Christopher later admitted that, at that stage, he was rather hoping it would) I could have popped a canon ball at his feet (I think you’ll find I have most things on board this boat), stitched him up where he lay and just rolled him over the side.



### **Christopher pre-wrapped for his burial at sea**

Wanting to make the poor chap feel as good as possible, at one stage I whispered into his ear that we were well over half way there – only three hours to go and it would all be over. There was a slight groan from his ashen lips. Christopher later told me that this wasn't so much the worst moment of the trip, but the worst moment of his life. He said it was like hearing his death sentence being read out. I really must sharpen up my diplomatic skills.

Christiansö is actually two islands with a narrow sound in the middle which constitutes the harbour, with the entrance on the south side. We passed the island and rounded up for the entrance. It was narrow, very narrow, and there were large rollers sweeping west to east across the entrance. As we approached the minute gap we were being picked up and thrown towards the east breakwater and, the next second, being thrown back by the wash straight at the west breakwater. You couldn't see the spokes of the wheel, it was spinning so fast, as I desperately tried to keep the bow pointing towards the gap. This wouldn't have been a good time to tell Christopher that we were aborting and heading off for another twelve mile beat to Bornholm. With one final surge we shot through the gap into the calm waters of the harbour – and found there was no room for us. The only quays that had enough water, on the east side of the harbour, were lined with boats about 30 to 35 ft long. If my 18 tons had gone alongside them in this cross wind they would have been matchwood in no time. The only other available space had a big sign saying – “For the ferry only – in constant use – no mooring allowed at any time”. We went alongside it and tied up.

In the event, we didn't have to argue the toss. The charming harbourmaster came round and said that the next ferry wouldn't be in until 1100 the following day, and we were very welcome to stay there. Phew!





### **Christiansö – a delightful time-warp**

**17 August.** Christiansö is an extraordinary island with an extraordinary history. Strategically important being the most eastern of Denmark's territories and slap bang in the middle of the southern Baltic it was an important and extremely well fortified garrison. The fortifications were built by convicts from granite quarried on the island itself, those small quarries now being used as reservoirs for the limited supply of fresh water (for drinking only – water for loos and for washing comes from the sea). Sanitation was clearly a problem in the early days as evidenced by the graveyard for yellow fever victims, the bubonic plague pits being on an adjoining island. The island is still owned by the Danish Ministry of Defence which rents the properties to the 100-odd residents – many of whom are artists. The community services include a small primary school, a resident doctor and a football pitch on the only piece of vaguely flat grass on the island. All the garrison buildings are still intact and well maintained and there is an interesting, operating light house.

It takes no more than an hour to walk right round the two islands – but what an hour! No cars and no dogs, the island is as pretty as a picture and crammed full of birds of every description (the two small off-lying islands are bird sanctuaries). It's absolutely delightful and I could have willingly taken my paint box out and stayed here a few days, but Bornholm beckoned.

However, before we left we had a bit of maintenance work to do. The mainsail had got itself well and truly jammed in the mast slot. We could only roll about half of the sail out, which was fine in the previous days brisk wind but we needed to sort it. Simon volunteered to go up the mast and do the technical pushing and pulling. Into the bosun's chair and up aloft he went. It took a little longer than expected. Simon slipped in the bosun's chair: his normally deep voice became rather high-pitched and his eyes began to water. So he had to be let down to readjust the harness half way through the exercise. I later overheard him on the phone to his mother telling her that he had been hauled up the mast by his scrotum!



**A good view for Simon – but a painful one**

At 13 ½ miles, Bornholm was only a couple of hours away and the wind had abated, so Christopher decided he was happy to give it another go. In the event, there was so little wind that we motored the whole way. Christopher and I are pleased to say he was absolutely fine. As we had an early start the following day for the long passage to Ystad, back on the Swedish mainland, we left before lunch so we had as much time to see Bornholm as possible. We went to the little port of Allinge on the north east coast and then took a long walk to a spectacularly large, but ruined castle perched on top of a hill.

**18 August.** Having completed our diversion to the Danish islands we were now heading back to Ystad on the southern coast of the Swedish mainland. Some thirty seven miles across open sea but, again, there was no wind so a boring but flat motor all the way there. The only excitement came when we were motoring along the Swedish coast towards our destination when an orange coast guard cutter came rushing up and enquired (in English) whether we spoke German, Dutch, French, Swedish or Finnish. “None of them” I replied “we speak English”. “OK” he said, “you have to turn south and motor as fast as possible for one mile”. I asked as a matter of interest why we needed to do that, and was told that we were in the middle of a firing range and the combined might of the Swedish navy was about to open fire on us. Fair enough, I thought. I threw the wheel over, opened the throttle and got the hell out of it.

I was expecting Ystad to be a rather dull industrial town, but not a bit of it. It is charming with a lot of picturesque old streets and houses. We had heard that the “Ystad International Military Tattoo” was taking place that evening so, after an early dinner, we headed off to find it. When we arrived it was already in full swing and, worse than that, there were now no tickets available. Not one to be put off by such a trifling setback, Christopher charmed (well, bribed actually) one of the security ladies to let us in. Front row seats, too. It had been a long time since any of us had been to a military tattoo and to say that the style had changed is an understatement. Now it is more like an American variety show – all sequinned uniforms and

artistic pirouettes. The Swiss Army band took the prize, prancing around like ballet dancers. We speculated whether you could now take a degree in military band choreography. I write this whilst watching the Band of The Royal Marines beating the retreat on the television marking the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Trafalgar. Their professionalism and dignity makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand up. The Swiss Army Band, on the other hand, made my flesh creep. The evening ended with a Grand Fireworks Display and I am afraid this is where Ystad's provincialism came through. It lasted a full thirty seconds, consisting of a few rather pathetic sparks and one not very loud bang. We laughed like drains and had a great evening.

**19 August.** The moment the shops were open I went ashore to buy some additional water colours for my basic palate and, on the way, passed an angling shop which had in their window some collapsible lobster pots. I had been looking for one for some time. The model ideal for catching enormous lobsters (for this was my quest, if not now then in the future) had a little inner net for the bait. The shop owner told me that good and easy bait was a small tin of fish-based cat food. So off to the supermarket where I purchased a small tin of "Pussy". Once stowed we set off on our final push to Copenhagen where Christopher and Simon were to leave me.

The south west corner of Sweden has a peninsula sticking out from it. During the war, the Germans laid mines across the strait between Denmark and Sweden, effectively cutting off one side of Sweden from the other to shipping. So the Swedes dug the Falsterbo canal through the peninsula, which cut about three hours off our trip to Copenhagen. Or it would have done had we not arrived five minutes after the bridge had shut and we had to wait an hour for it to open again.



**The Falsterbo canal bridge opens - eventually**

We carried the cruising chute most of the way and we were clipping along at more than eight knots most of the time. Great. But when we came to take it down, the snuffer jammed (not for the first time). I was hanging on for grim life and being lifted physically off the deck. I asked Simon to come and give a bit of weight to the problem so, before he ventured onto the

heaving foredeck, he popped down below to throw his life jacket on. He eventually emerged half an hour later having got his straps into a bit of twist. Meanwhile my arms were now twice their designed length, having almost been wrenched out of their sockets but, between us, we managed to get the sail down and stowed.

The approach, from the south, to Copenhagen, is quite spectacular. First of all you pass the immense double-decker rail and road bridge which goes almost all the way from Sweden to Denmark (the last bit goes underground into a tunnel, allowing big ships to get through the gap). Then you have an impressive array of wind generators which arc out in a curve through the sound. And, finally, the entrance into wonderful, wonderful Copenhagen itself.

Although there are a number of conventional marinas within a short bus ride of the city centre, we wanted to stay in the city centre itself and went to the Nyhavn. This is a short canal at the epicentre of town. It has a reputation for being a bit lumpy from the constant passage of tripper boats – and noisy. But for a couple of nights there is no better place to absorb the atmosphere. The Nyhavn is the old harbour where all the big merchants houses were, including the house (just opposite our berth) where lived the legendary Hans Christian Anderson. Now most of them are bars and restaurants. Conveniently, *Mina*<sup>2</sup> was berthed right outside the Phuket Thai Massage Parlour AND an off-licence. Couldn't be better located really. To mark the end of their week on board, Simon and Christopher kindly took me to an excellent restaurant on the Nyhavn for dinner.



**Our berth in Copenhagen's Nyhavn – conveniently by the massage parlour!**

**20 August.** The T-Y's went off sight-seeing whilst I made the final touches in preparation for the re-arrival of the Downstairs Skipper and her entourage. One final touch, of course, being the eviction of the last of the Thai masseuse (well, in my dreams anyway). Mrs Barker and the gang arrived in force. Daughter, Selina with boyfriend Jonny in tow, and two of Selina's friends: Sarah, an old school and university buddy and Sarah's beau, Neil the Geordie. Neil is a Lifeboatman. Respect.



We all wanted to go sailing, but enjoying Copenhagen came first. Following Christopher and Simon's example, arguably the best way for time-limited visitors to see most of Copenhagen is to take one of the bateau-mouche which leave from the Nyhavn where we were moored. Alongside a quay in the middle of the city was a private yacht quite literally the size of a small cruise ship. *Rising Sun* is, at 138m, the fourth largest yacht in the world and it belongs to Oracle's Larry Ellison. Oracle are sponsors of the US challenge for the America's Cup and a selection regatta was taking place at Malmö, just across the water in Sweden. Reputedly having cost in excess of \$200m *Rising Sun* allegedly has a submarine strapped to the bottom so Ellison and his family can get away if attacked by terrorists. Awesome.



**Ellison's *Rising Sun* – allegedly the running costs are even greater than *Mina*<sup>2</sup>'s.**

After a pleasant hour and a half being driven by somebody else for a change, we then walked through the old part of Copenhagen before the young and old contingencies separated for dinner.

**21 August.** So with the average age of the crew reduced from more than fifty five to less than thirty five, we headed off up the Sound to Helsingør (the Elsinore of Hamlet fame) where they were having a tall ships festival. At the harbour entrance there were two big signs: boats under fifteen metres were directed round the corner to the marina; boats over fifteen metres were directed into the main harbour where all the tall ships were. What fun it would be to be tied up in such splendid company. If you count the davits and dinghy at the back of *Mina*<sup>2</sup> we were definitely over fifteen metres so we headed into the main harbour. The harbour master was at the quay side. "You can't come in here, you are not big enough" he said. I told him we were more than fifteen metres. He looked sceptically at us and said he would have to measure us before giving us permission to moor up. But he obviously thought that life was too short, and then said OK, we were welcome to stay. So there we were, at the hub of the world, surrounded by the most magnificent square riggers, almost under the ramparts of the spectacular castle.



***Mina*<sup>2</sup> holding her own amongst the tall ships**

In the grounds of the castle, as part of the festival, were marquees with stalls selling all sorts of marine paraphernalia. One stall was manned by a bearded and toothless Norwegian fisherman selling marine antiques. My eye was drawn to a couple of large wooden blocks. Surprisingly, given we were in Sweden, everything on his stall was priced in Norwegian krone but we negotiated a price which seemed acceptable to him (judging by his toothless grin) and seemed good value to me. Another memento of the trip.



**“Elsinore” castle**

**22 August.** Getting into the main harbour at Helsingør turned out to be even better than I thought as, when I went to pay the harbour dues, I was told that because of the tall ships regatta, all mooring fees in the main harbour were waived. So we headed off round the top of Sjælland to Hundested. Conditions were ideal: hot, sunny and a good beam reach in the lee of the land. We anchored off a beach half way and for an hour or so everyone (except for me – I

am not really a beach person) antagonised the local nudists by frolicking around with clothes on and inadvertently hitting them with frisbees.

Continuing our passage, we saw, for the first time on the cruise, some harbour porpoises slowly undulating their way through the water. But, as always with this species, they showed no interest at all in the boat in their midst. Hundested, at the entrance of the Isefjord which we didn't have time to explore, is an uninspiring place but a convenient stopover and one of the few along this stretch of coast.



**A full house for dinner**

**23 August.** The Baltic high remained stationary bringing a continuation of the hot and cloudless weather, which was good. But it also brought a calm which was less good. So we motored to the island of Samsö to the west of Sjælland and, specifically, to the small harbour of Langö on the north east coast. We were motoring in a flat calm, with the young adults playing funky music at max vol in the cockpit and Sarah disco dancing on the poop deck. A motor boat rushed past. Standing at the wheel, I called out “Mind the wash”, for the benefit of those down below who might be caught off balance. I heard a dull thud from behind me. Sarah, who is new to sailing, had heard the warning and was now spread-eagled on the aft deck, clinging on for dear life to all and any ropes that came to hand, eyes tightly shut and holding her breath. She was clearly expecting a tsunami which would lay the boat onto her beam ends. Once the wash had passed, giving rise to no more than a gentle rocking, she opened one eye and got back to her feet, hoping no one had noticed. Neil, rather ungallantly I thought, was laughing like a drain and proceeded to tell everyone who might have missed it!

When we got to Langö, we chose to anchor in the small bay just outside the harbour. This gave us the perfect opportunity to try out my new acquisition. With Neil (the Lifeboatman) in charge of the dinghy and Jonny (the professional marine biologist) in charge of the lobster

pot, they carefully opened the tin of Pussy, placed it in the inner bait sack and deployed the pot close between other lobster pots laid by the locals.

**24 August.** The following morning, Jonny and Neil went off in the dinghy with great anticipation to retrieve our lobster dinner from the pot. It was full. Sadly, not full of succulent lobsters, but full of crabs. Clearly crabs go wild about Pussy. But being small and probably inedible, the crabs were all returned to their natural, Pussy-free environment.



### **Crabs go wild about Pussy**

We all went ashore and hired bikes to tour Samsö. Samsö is very “ye olde”, verging on the twee, but extremely pretty for all that. Many of the buildings were thatched which we hadn’t seen anywhere else in the Baltic until now. There is a marina on the west side of the island at Mårup which I had discounted because it looked much too small for us but, having cycled across the island, we found that it had very recently been enlarged and there was plenty of room with both box moorings and plenty of alongside berths as well.

In the afternoon we had a cracking sail, circling the top of Samsö, bound for the small island of Tunö to the west.





### **A cracking good sail**

Tunö has just the one harbour and we tied up alongside a quay. The wind had picked up in the afternoon and we all went off for a bracing walk along the low sandy cliffs. Jonny was in the lead. Jonny is a research zoologist and committed to the protection of all forms of wildlife. When in London he is a volunteer at the Wetlands Centre, for instance. That is the sort of chap he is. Walking along the clifftop path and admiring the sand martins who had built nesting holes in the sandy cliffs, there was a slight crunching noise. Looking down, we saw a rather pathetic sand martin. “Oh” said Jonny, “this poor little fella doesn’t look too good.” “I’m not entirely surprised” I said, “you’ve just trodden on him!” Oops.

Neil and Jonny had again deployed the lobster pot and on this occasion, along with more Pussy-crazed crabs, we got a wide variety of other marine fauna including a number of jellyfish, a two-inch long eel, and a crayfish so small you could hardly see it with the naked eye. Not the makings of a substantial meal for six people, so that evening we ate out in a friendly restaurant very close to the harbour.

**25 August.** The last day of sailing for Sarah and Neil and again the wind gave us a terrific beat to Horsens, at the end of the ten-mile Horsens Fjord, where we were to collect Isabel Burton, another friend of Selina’s, who was joining us for a week. I was left to fix things whilst everyone went off to rendezvous with Isabel and to explore the town. They found that yet another medieval fair was taking place and came back laden with mead and a bottle of Viking Blöd. We’ve not had the nerve to try it yet.

The atmosphere in the Baltic is infinitely cleaner than in home Channel waters. In the UK the decks and gel coat are filthy after a week, but up here just the occasional wipe keeps everything clean. But after three months with everyone trampling mud from the shore, the

decks were beginning to look decidedly grubby and in need of a scrub. There is a lot of teak and it is a long, hard job. I had the brush and bucket out and as the fit young crew wheeled round the corner I started scrubbing a small section of deck. The ruse worked a treat and within minutes I was relaxing down below with a glass of wine in hand whilst five strapping young people were bringing my decks up to a level of shining cleanliness rarely seen on *Mina*<sup>2</sup>.

**26 August.** We spent the day in Horsens with Sarah and Neil before the tearful farewells after a splendid week together. With decks gleaming in the sun we cast off in the late afternoon for the short distance to the entrance of the fjord to give us a head start the following morning for the long passage to the Gamborg Fjord. In Borresknob, tucked behind the east side of the spit, we found a mooring buoy which we picked up for the night.

**27 August.** Today I very nearly killed the Downstairs Skipper and my wife of twenty six years. One of the disadvantages of the navigation system I have is that the chart plotter stays down below. Normally this isn't a problem, but when one is carrying out close pilotage and needing to be at the wheel at the same time, the lack of access to a large scale chart in the cockpit can be difficult. We had negotiated the narrow twisting route of the Lille Bælt and were heading under power into the Gamborg Fjord. I was at the wheel looking out for a suitable spot to drop the anchor. At the entrance to the fjord there is a spit which comes out from the small island of Fæno. I thought I had given it enough room. I hadn't. Motoring at close to eight knots, we hit the mud tip of the spit. Not the grinding crash of hitting a rock, but when the platform on which you are standing goes from ten miles an hour to dead stop in about a tenth of a second, you tend to carry on in a straight line. Maria, standing with her back to the open companionway, was catapulted backwards and was about to disappear head first for the long drop into the saloon. She managed to grab the side of the companionway with one hand at the same moment that Selina, quick as a flash, grabbed her jacket. This was enough to cause Maria's body to swing round and crash into the hatch cover, thank God bringing her to halt. Maria was quite badly shaken and heavily bruised but, apart from that, was OK. It was all entirely my fault and my blood runs cold at the thought of what might have happened had her head and neck-first trajectory not been checked.

No more than a boat's length away there was plenty of water and we soberly resumed our course to the anchorage.

**28 August.** We took advantage of a stiff sou'westerly and headed off early on a beam reach in flat water shooting down the Lille Bælt, because we wanted to take in two places, the small island of Lyø, and then Fåberg. We anchored off Lyø (55° 03.1'N 010°09.6'E) and went ashore in the dinghy. Lyø is barely one mile by two so getting to the one and only village in the middle of the island is but a short stroll. Actually, for Isabel, it was quite a long stroll. She had been having problems with a knee, so found the easiest way of getting around was walking on her hands!



### **Knee problem? No problem. Isabel walks to the village at Lyø**

The island is an unspoilt gem with no traffic, and picturesque thatched wooden houses, all clustered around the no fewer than nine ponds in the village. Absolutely delightful.

However delightful, there is a limit to the amount of time you can spend in the one village so we headed back to the harbour to get the dinghy back to *Mina*<sup>2</sup>. At the harbour we found a grizzly-bearded old salt with a box of still-warm smoked fish, so that sorted dinner out.

From Lyø it was barely five miles to the town of Fåberg at the bottom of the large island of Fyn. Fåberg was a teeming metropolis in comparison with Lyø and whilst the outlying parts of town were modern with every facility, the centre of town had managed to retain its old world charm with brightly coloured half-timbered houses and beautifully carved and painted doors.

**29 August.** We awoke to a beautifully warm, sunny day with a brisk wind from the south west – perfect for our short fifteen mile crossing to Ærosköbing. Better still it was my birthday. The crew went ashore to get a variety of pastries for the birthday breakfast and, after the card and prezzie opening ceremony we had a proper walk round the very pretty town

before setting off. We enjoyed another brilliant, fast reach and we were there in no time. Yachts can either use the small marina or the commercial harbour at Ærosköbing. There is very little commercial activity and the ferry uses a small terminal just outside the harbour entrance so, in practice, most of the harbour is available for yachts (although there was a dredger alongside one quay when we went in, disgorging its load of fine, clean sand). Should the harbour be full (which is a probability in high summer in this popular destination), there is a perfect anchorage just outside. The harbour has a great atmosphere. The authorities have decked out the quay sides with occasional tables and benches for crews to eat and drink and there is even a dedicated, covered barbecue hut.

But the attractions of the harbour are as nothing to the attractions of the town. It is unique in having virtually no modern buildings at all. Most of the houses and cottages lining the cobbled streets are 18<sup>th</sup> century, with hollyhocks growing from the cracks in the cobbles outside the houses. It's as cute as custard. There is, however, a difference between the manicured old towns in this part of Denmark and, for example, the old towns in Estonia. With the houses here occupied by potters and artists, one feels like a tourist whereas the old towns in Estonia, just as pretty in their way, are simply old towns. They just haven't had the money to build modern houses there (and I hope they never do). Tourism in Estonia, apart from in Tallinn, is still in its infancy so one feels much more like a traveller than a gawping tourist.



### **Manicured tweeness ...**

Disappointingly, being a Monday, most things in Ærosköbing were shut including all the restaurants in town so, it being a lovely warm evening, my birthday dinner was substituted with a barbecue by the boat.

**30 August.** We had decided to spend two nights on the island so we hired bikes and went for a ride round the island which is a rural idyll. We cycled down to Marstal in the eastern corner which, though very pretty, isn't a patch on Ærosköbing itself. Exhausted after all the peddling



we went down to the beach at the back of which are strung a line of highly individual bathing huts, including one which was brightly painted and thatched. After an hour of paddling in the sea or (in my case) snoozing, we were sufficiently refreshed for the bike ride back to Ærsköbing.



**... even the beach huts are thatched!**

On our arrival, a couple of large German tall ships were shoe-horning their way into the harbour, and very pretty they looked. The restaurants had reopened and the deferred birthday dinner was enjoyed by all.

**31 August.** This week we seemed to have been blessed with cracking good sailing winds. Having clawed our way from Ærsköbing to the top of Aero island (we couldn't go south of the island as there was insufficient depth of water for us), we bore away onto a terrific run. As the wind progressively backed to the west, we were going faster and faster and ended up on a fetch. En route we lowered the Danish courtesy flag for the last time and broke out the German courtesy flag for the first time.

Maasholm is at the surprisingly narrow entrance of the Schlei Fjord which extends more than 20 miles to the town of Schleswig. Maasholm marina is large and as awful as your average marina but I was sorry that we wouldn't have time to explore the upper reaches of the fjord which looked very pretty with rolling, wooded hills leading down to the wide expanse of water, reminiscent of Falmouth harbour. Our first experience of German hospitality was with the harbourmaster of the marina who, unfortunately, was very offhand and not very helpful. Never mind, he must be an exception.

By the time we got into the fjord, the wind was decidedly brisk and getting stronger – and it wasn't forecast to ease up much in the next twenty four hours either. As the wind was now

belting in, gale force, from the south – from the direction we needed to go for the final leg to Kiel, I was getting concerned. The last thing I wanted was for the Downstairs Skipper's last sail of the cruise to be a challenge which would stick in her memory. I was thinking of contingency plans for changing crews in Maasholm rather than Kiel, but that would be a pain.

**1 September.** The wind was still coming from the south, probably the top end of F6, but a lot less than the gale which had been blowing the day before. I decided, and then got universal agreement, that we would stick our nose out with very reduced sail, and motor sail. If the Downstairs Skipper felt nervous, we would wheel straight round and go back in again, and then tackle the logistical problems of getting everybody to and from Kiel.

This strategy worked. Yes it was very wet on deck, but the ride was not too uncomfortable and the angle of heel moderate so, with me breathing a sigh of relief, we plugged on. In the event the wind backed towards the south east and, as we turned the corner towards Kiel and came into the lee of the land, we were able to get out all the sailcloth and we had very satisfactory, very fast reach for the final leg.



**The Baltic seems to be full of sail training ships**

There was a possibility that my sister and brother-in-law would be arriving the following evening to leave their boat in the Düsternbrook Marina for a couple of weeks, so that was where we headed for, rather than the British Kiel Yacht Club.

The only slot we could find had a sign on it saying that it was free for use at weekends. As this was Thursday evening I went off to find the harbourmaster to check the position. If the harbourmaster at Maasholm was offhand the one at Düsternbrook was positively rude. I asked whether we could stay in the box where we were tied up. He said he didn't know and he clearly wasn't inclined to find out or see if there was another berth available. (We stayed where we were and, in the event, there wasn't a problem). I asked where I might be able to fill up with diesel before entering the canal. "There is no diesel" was the reply. I asked where else in Kiel I might find some. "There is no diesel anywhere in Kiel". End of discussion. Can this

really be true? There are thousands of yachts in half a dozen different marinas and not one diesel pump? Seems like there's an opportunity begging to be exploited. But I left it. I hardly dared ask the next question which was where I could find a supermarket. With a long sigh, he produced a map slammed his hand over most of it and said "It is there", turned round, walked to his desk and sat down with his back to me. I took that to be the end of the interview. Having been overcome with the kindness and friendliness of every single harbourmaster in close to a hundred harbours around the Baltic over a three month period (with the possible exception of Ventspils), having bad experiences at the first two harbours I visited in Germany was not good PR. (In fairness, the Kiel harbourmaster was relieving the regular harbourmaster who, I was told later, could not be more helpful).

To me, the arrival in Kiel marked the end of the cruise. I had achieved my objective of taking *Mina*<sup>2</sup> round the Baltic. The transit of the Kiel Canal and North Sea crossing was just the passage back home – albeit a very pleasant one. Quite emotional. And after a wonderful two weeks with most of my family it was time to say goodbye, but not for long. Within a week I would be back with them in the UK.

**2 September.** Before the arrival of Gordon Reddell and Tom Mallaburn who were to help me get the boat back home, I found someone who was a bit more forthcoming about the location of the nearest supermarket (which was a good mile away). So out with the bike. There were two items I didn't need to get. I had sent an emergency text to Tom asking him to bring out some pork pies and scotch eggs – no offshore passage is complete without them – and they were on their way. Tom and Gordon arrived in the afternoon ready for the entrance to the canal the following morning.

**3 September.** You can theoretically get through the Kiel Canal in one day, but it is a hell of a push and we were to take a more leisurely two days, stopping off at Rendsburg, 20 miles up the canal. The canal has just one lock at each end and, after the traumas of the Göta Canal, the Kiel locks are almost unnoticeable, the rise only being about a metre.



**The east lock of the Kiel Canal**

Thereafter it is a leisurely motor through the German countryside waving to the passing cyclists. You really need a rear view mirror for the canal for about the only things to watch out for are the very large commercial ships that appear from nowhere and steam past you. At our level, all you can see is the canal towpath but from the bridge of these ships they can probably see the whole of Germany. Periodically you come across control towers with a string of lights. If there are three vertical reds flashing, you have to stop and pull over, but they never were.

Rendsburg is up a sleepy backwater (which we almost missed) and is a delightful spot. The town is very pleasant, albeit very quiet. About the liveliest place was actually on our doorstep. The restaurant at the marina was humming and we had an excellent meal there in the evening.



**The only navigation hazards in the canal come from behind you**

**4 September.** My plan, initially, was to get to the end of the canal on the second day of the transit but we had decided instead to push on for Cuxhaven on the other side of the Elbe. So we set off quite early, got to the end of the backwater to the “motorway” of the canal – and found a traffic jam. There were about a dozen leisure boats swanning around at the edge. I asked a Dutch boat what the problem was and he pointed to the control tower at the junction and said “He’s not letting us through but no one knows why not. Some boats have been here for over an hour.” A few large ships came through but nothing that would warrant closing the canal to us. Eventually one boat had had enough and tried to make a break for it, gunning his engine and shooting off up the canal. All hell broke loose with klaxons blaring and dire warnings shouted through loud speakers. The escapee held his hands up, turned round and returned to the pen. After a further quarter of an hour, without notice, the lights on the tower went green. It was like a Le Mans start as everybody shot off at once. There never was an explanation for the hold up.

We were spat out of the far end of the canal into the Elbe and heading across to the far side we were being swept sideways as the strong tide swept us out to sea. A novel experience, this was the first time in nearly four months we had been in tidal waters, but we used it to our advantage getting to Cuxhaven in no time at all.





**Tom Mallaburn at 0930 – being a medical man he promotes a healthy lifestyle**

**5 September.** We had one more adventure before we headed for home, and that was a visit to the island of Helgoland (or Heligoland as we Brits call it). About 35 miles off the German coast in the middle of the German Bight it used to belong to Britain, having been seized from the Danes in 1807. In 1890 we handed it over to Germany in exchange for Zanzibar. Given the island's strategic importance (it was used with great effect by the Germans as a naval base in both world wars), that must go down in history as one of the most stupid territorial exchanges ever. Geologically, the island is an oddity: formed from red sandstone it rises in a wedge 200 feet above sea level. It used to be an elegant Edwardian watering hole with impressive villas dotted around but there is now nothing but new buildings as the British took control of the island from 1947 to 1952, evacuated the population and used it as a bombing target. Not a brick was left standing. Now it is a popular tourist attraction with a relay of day-tripper ships anchoring in the sound and unloading their cargo of overweight tourists in liberty boats. As few of the tourists are fit enough to scramble up the steep steps onto the plateau of the island, the great attraction is the duty free status of the island. 80% of the shops in the town sell nothing but cheap drink, cigarettes and souvenirs.

We arrived in the harbour in the afternoon, followed by a motor boat. There was one remaining berth big enough for us. I manoeuvred the boat alongside the pontoon and we were in the process of getting lines ashore when I turned round and found the motor boat had come alongside us; their crew had leapt aboard and made themselves fast to our cleats. At that stage we weren't even tied to the pontoon!

Like all the other tourists we were lured by the bright lights of the duty free shops and we bought enough for a malt whisky tasting after dinner. Balvenie was the clear winner!

**6 September.** After the whisky tasting the evening before we took the morning quite gently before Tom and I headed off to explore the main island (the off-lying island is a bird sanctuary and has no facilities for boats). This turned out to be a wonderful highlight.

Walking high up on the sandstone cliffs on the east side of the island, we looked down into the clear shallow waters and saw dozens of seals fishing almost on to the beach. On the west side, the sandstone has been eroded into spectacular towers rising out of the sea.



### **Helgoland – a delightful stopover in the North Sea**

Down the side of the cliffs is a large gannet breeding colony. Gannets are one of my favourite birds and to see them at sea gracefully wing-tipping the waves is a beautiful sight. Here, at our feet, there were thousands of them perched on any tiny ledge they can find, sitting on nests of old fishing nets (how they get the fishing nets up here is beyond me). They had chicks at every stage of maturity from little balls of fluff to demanding juveniles still with their grey plumage. One rather pathetic gannet was diligently watching over her chick which was clearly very dead and in an advanced stage of decomposition. The gannets apart, the rest of the island was home to an enormous variety of other birds.

Having failed to find out where the diesel was lurking in Kiel, we filled our tanks with duty free fuel and at 1830 slipped our lines for our three-day passage back to dear old Blighty. I had originally intended to take the boat straight back to London but on the Saturday there was the annual RCC Meet in the Beaulieu river and I had been persuaded that, as this was likely to be the one and only opportunity of taking *Mina*<sup>2</sup> to the Meet for many years, it would be worth going the extra mile (or 60 miles to be precise). Having had favourable easterly winds for days it was typical that hours before we were due to head off the wind swung round to the south west, directly in our path. So for the first twenty four hours we were heading slightly north of west in the general direction of Newcastle. Newcastle and *Mina*<sup>2</sup> seem to be magnetically attracted. Last year when we were returning from Norway we seemed to spend most of our time heading for Newcastle. Eventually, half way across the North Sea in the middle of the Dogger Bank, and shortly after we had crossed our track from London to the top of Denmark at the start of the cruise, we tacked in towards the Dutch coast. Five hours later, still heading in the wrong direction, we realised at this rate that Tom would miss the race he was due to take part in on Saturday, Gordon would miss his daughter's school event and I

would miss the RCC Meet so, with heavy heart, we peeled to the Perkins. The engine stayed on for the rest of the passage.

One of the minor inconveniences of the passage was the unreliability of our autopilot controller. This was brand new and had been shipped out to us to replace the replacement which had been letting in water. This new one worked fine except for its habit of periodically turning itself off for no reason and without warning. Sometimes it was only once or twice a day and when day sailing with a full crew it was no more than a minor inconvenience. But on a long passage with single person watches it became a major inconvenience particularly as at one stage it was cutting out about every quarter of an hour.

**9 September.** At 1800 we entered the Beaulieu and approached the RCC fleet at anchor at Needs Ore Point. This was my first RCC Meet and I was determined to make a good impression in front of my new fellow members. I selected a space big enough to take us without crashing into the next boat at the turn of tide and gave the order to drop the anchor. Within seconds a large rib appeared from behind a raft of boats and Nigel Southward was barking at me “That’s not a terribly good place to anchor – you’re right out in the middle of the river!”. Oh dear, I’d cocked up already and my anchor hadn’t even hit the bottom. “But tell you what”, Nigel went on, “I’ve got a much better place for you. Why don’t you come round and tie up to the central raft”. Abashed, the anchor came up and I meekly obeyed my instructions. As I was coming alongside *Skat*, the Southward’s Hallberg-Rassy, I overheard someone saying “Good move, Nigel, look at all that extra deck space. Positively party-sized!”. So I was loved after all – even if only for my deck space!



**Nigel points out the error of my ways**

Richard Gaunt came round shortly afterwards in *Spoofers*’ dory and stayed for dinner and, the following morning, he left with Tom and Gordon. Nothing left for me to do but clear the decks for the various social events which would be taking place on the raft (and across my decks) and wait for Maria’s arrival by land. She arrived at about midday just in time for the

new members' lunch. From then on, there seemed to be a non-stop party until late in the evening. Having *Mina*<sup>2</sup> on the raft was a brilliant idea. Almost everybody passed across my decks to get to the booze, so I was in pole position to meet absolutely everyone.

I gathered that it was a tradition at the Meet to hoist the courtesy flags of the countries one had visited that year. This was my chance to show off as I whipped nine flags up into the crosstrees. Granted, there were only six country flags (Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Germany) but I put up the three island flags of Åland, Bornholm and Helgoland for good measure. Mind you I was completely upstaged by another boat on the raft that had about a dozen flags including Canada, USA, South Africa and a large number I didn't even recognise.



***Mina*<sup>2</sup>'s bunting**

I still feel slightly fraudulent being a member of the RCC. Most of the assembled company had at least a circumnavigation in their log book if not a transit of the North West Passage. It is definitely humbling being in the company of people who are comparing notes on anchorages in South Georgia (I kid you not). But a kinder, more interesting and unstuffy bunch of people you will never meet. It was a fabulous introduction to the club and the perfect way to end a memorable cruise.





## APPENDICES

### TOP DOZEN PLACES (in chronological order of visit)

**Livö** (56° 53.19'N 009° 05.96'E) Delightful small island with absurdly small harbour. No cars and no dogs, but hundreds of different species of bird. Watch out for the Munchkins!

**Marstrand** (57° 53.05'N 011° 35.2'E). It is as much the approach to Marstrand as the place itself which warrants a place in the top dozen. The Albrektssunds Kanal approach from the south east is very picturesque, the final bend opening up the wonderful view of the pretty town overlooked by the castle.

**Vadstena** (58° 26.8'N 014° 52.86'E). On the east shore of Lake Vattern, a spectacular harbour literally in the moat of one of the most impressive castles in Sweden. Excellent museum.

**Stockholm** (59° 19.554'N 018.05.647'E). The Venice of the North. Arguably the most beautiful city in northern Europe, and the marina is right next door to the Vasa Museum which cannot be missed.

**Byttan** (59° 05.40'N 018° 42.8'E). A particularly beautiful anchorage surrounded by small, pretty islands.

**Tallinn** (59° 28.09'N 024° 49.31'E). The position is of Pirita (the nearby port). The medieval centre of the city of Tallinn is as beautiful as its inhabitants.

**Kalsö** (57° 32.179'N 016° 43.625'E). A little group of islands just off the main drag south, with a small and well-protected pool in the middle: totally secluded and totally idyllic.

**Christiansö** (55° 19.2'N 015° 11.136'E) An extraordinary fortified island (well, two islands actually) with all its original buildings still intact. It's like walking into a time warp.

**Lyö** (55° 03.1'N 010° 09.6'E). An unspoilt gem with no traffic, and picturesque thatched wooden houses, all clustered around the no fewer than nine ponds in the village.

**Ærosköbing** (54° 53.394'N 010° 24.876'E). The little town has virtually no modern buildings at all. Most of the houses and cottages lining the cobbled streets are 18<sup>th</sup> century, with hollyhocks growing from the cracks in the cobbles outside the houses. As cute as custard. Good bike rides around the island as well.

**Helgoland** (54° 10.607'N 007° 53.698'E) A wonderful walk on the sandstone plateau with views of seals and the gannet colony.

**All and any of the NJK club harbours**

# LOG

All positions are WGS84. All Latitudes are North and Longitudes East (xxx°xx.xxx')

Date	From	To	Lat	Long	DOG	Engine hours
19/05/05	London	Lemvig	56.33.028	008.18.181	465.0	7.10
23/05/05	Lemvig	Venø	56.32.8	008.38.2	17.0	1.00
24/05/05	Venø	Livø	56.53.19	009.05.96	30.7	1.00
25/05/05	Livø	Ålborg	57.03.29	009.52.33	30.0	1.00
26/05/05	LAY DAY	Ålborg	57.03.30	009.52.34		0.00
27/05/05	Ålborg	Hals	56.59.44	010.18.37	18.2	1.00
28/05/05	Hals	Læso (Vesterø )	57.17.765	010.55.417	31.4	1.00
29/05/05	Læso (Vesterø )	Rød	57.41.934	011.38.420	38.1	1.90
30/05/05	Rød	Marstrand	57.53.05	011.35.2	13.8	4.00
31/05/05	LAY DAY	Marstrand	57.53.06	011.35.3		0.00
01/06/05	Marstrand	Göteborg	57.42.7	011.57.95	38.0	4.00
02/06/05	LAY DAY	Göteborg	57.42.8	011.57.96		0.00
03/06/05	LAY DAY	Göteborg	57.42.9	011.57.97		0.00
04/06/05	LAY DAY	Göteborg	57.42.10	011.57.98		4.00
05/06/05	Göteborg	Lilla Edet	58.08.44	012.07.02	28.4	4.70
06/06/05	Lilla Edet	Vänersborg	58.22.96	012.19.2	18.8	3.10
07/06/05	Vänersborg	Läcko Slott	58.40.6	013.13.15	37.2	2.40
08/06/05	Läcko Slott	Fågalö	58.49.2	013.48.1	24.4	3.10
09/06/05	Fågalö	Sjötorp	58.50.3	013.58.4	10.8	1.80
10/06/05	Sjötorp	Töreboda	58.42.4	014.07.8	10.7	1.80
11/06/05	Töreboda	Karlsborg	58.32.00	014.31.2	29.0	4.80
12/06/05	Karlsborg	Vadstena	58.26.8	014.52.86	13.8	2.30
12/06/05	Vadstena	Motala	58.31.6	015.01.5	8.4	1.40
13/06/05	Motala	Berg	58.29.1	015.31.9	21.2	3.50
14/06/05	Berg	nr Söderköping	58.29.35	016.18.5	26.0	4.33
15/06/05	nr Söderköping	Trässö	58.40.3	017.11.0	37.3	6.22
16/06/05	Trässö	Mörbyfjord	59.03.776	018.22.823	50.2	8.37
17/06/05	Mörbyfjord	Stockholm	59.19.554	018.05.647	31.0	5.17
18/06/05	LAY DAY	Stockholm	59.19.555	018.05.648		0.00
19/06/05	LAY DAY	Stockholm	59.19.556	018.05.649		0.00
20/06/05	Stockholm	Jolpan	59.28.68	018.48.545	30.5	4.20
21/06/05	Jolpan	Arholm	59.50.585	019.07.462	28.3	3.20
22/06/05	Arholm	Mariehamn	60.05.94	019.55.373	29.8	4.97
23/06/05	Mariehamn	Kilsviken	60.13.07	020.15.135	29.2	4.87
24/06/05	Kilsviken	Dånö	60.24.44	019.45.47	27.8	4.63
25/06/05	Dånö	Käringsund	60.14.02	019.32.44	20.5	3.42
26/06/05	LAY DAY	Käringsund	60.14.03	019.32.45		0.00
27/06/05	Käringsund	Rödhamn	59.59.17	020.06.03	33.3	2.10
28/06/05	STORM BOUND	Rödhamn	59.59.18	020.06.04		0.00
29/06/05	Rödhamn	Husö	60.03.94	020.48.28	27.7	4.30
30/06/05	Husö	Kökar	59.56.57	020.53.03	9.6	1.60
01/07/05	Kökar	Kråkskär	60.04.57	021.15.4	15.1	2.52
02/07/05	Kråkskär	Snackö	60.07.15	021.42.6	17.4	2.90
03/07/05	Snackö	Turku	60.26.40	022.14.77		0.00
04/07/05	LAY DAY	Turku	60.26.41	022.14.78	30.7	5.12
05/07/05	Turku	Borgareluotö	60.06.99	021.52.86	31.3	5.22
06/07/05	Borgareluotö	Ramsskär	59.49.7	022.26.7	26.4	4.40
07/07/05	Ramsskär	Hanko	59.49.01	022.57.96	16.7	1.00
08/07/05	Hanko	Munkshamn	59.50.59	023.28.37	16.5	2.75
09/07/05	Munkshamn	Hogholmen	59.57.98	024.24.28	33.3	4.20
10/07/05	Hogholmen	Helsinki	60.09.70	024.57.80	23.5	1.20
11/07/05	LAY DAY	Helsinki	60.09.71	024.57.81		0.00
12/07/05	LAY DAY	Helsinki	60.09.72	024.57.82		0.00
13/07/05	Helsinki	Hogholmen	59.57.98	024.24.28	23.5	3.92
14/07/05	Hogholmen	Pirita (Tallinn)	59.28.09	024.49.31	33.6	1.80

15/07/05	Pirita (Tallinn)	Haapsalu	58.57.54	023.31.64	66.8	6.20
16/07/05	LAY DAY	Haapsalu	58.57.54	023.31.64		0.00
17/07/05	Haapsalu	Kõiguste	58.22.3	022.57.86	57.9	9.65
18/07/05	Kõiguste	Kuressaare	58.14.7	022.28.31	30.6	0.80
19/07/05	LAY DAY	Kuressaare	58.14.7	022.28.31		0.00
20/07/05	LAY DAY	Kuressaare	58.14.7	022.28.31		0.00
21/07/05	Kuressaare	Ventspils	57.23.66	021.32.05	60.3	3.20
22/07/05	STORM BOUND	Ventspils	57.23.66	021.32.05		0.00
23/07/05	Ventspils	Fårösund	57.51.81	019.03.66	85.1	2.50
25/07/05	Fårösund	Nyköping	58.44.659	017.01.03	84.7	10.00
26/07/05	LAY DAY	Nyköping	58.44.659	017.01.03		0.00
27/07/05	Nyköping	Hökö	58.48.4	017.32.261	22.1	1.00
28/07/05	Hökö	Muskö	58.59.32	018.08.671	27.9	1.40
29/07/05	Muskö	Stockholm	59.29.6	018.05.662	36.6	5.60
30/07/05	Stockholm	Lake Skratten	59.26.13	018.24.78	14.4	2.50
31/07/05	Lake Skratten	Byttan	59.05.40	018.42.8	29.9	2.70
01/08/05	Byttan	Ankarudden	58.48.0	017.50	35.7	3.80
02/08/05	Ankarudden	Nyköping	58.44.6	017.01.03	29.7	4.30
03/08/05	LAY DAY	Nyköping	58.44.6	017.01.03		0.00
04/08/05	Nyköping	Marsö Enbeten	58.43.52	017.10.95	6.8	1.40
05/08/05	LAY DAY					
06/08/05	LAY DAY					
07/08/05	Marsö Enbeten	Nyköping	58.44.778	017.01.043	6.8	1.30
08/08/05	Nyköping	Orholmarna	58.19.672	016.58.235	32.5	5.30
09/08/05	Orholmarna	Flatvarp	57.59.308	16.48.43	22.8	0.61
10/08/05	Flatvarp	Kalsö	57.32.179	16.43.625	30.8	4.89
11/08/05	Kalsö	Sandvik, Öland	57.04.256	016.51.228	29.1	4.50
12/08/05	Sandvik, Öland	Kalmar	56.39.64	016.21.993	30.1	0.70
15/08/05	Kalmar	Sandhamn	56.05.5	015.51.8	41.9	4.20
16/08/05	Sandhamn	Christiansö	55.19.2	015.11.136	52.7	2.90
17/08/05	Christiansö	Allinge	55.16.7	014.48.06	13.6	2.90
18/08/05	Allinge,	Ystad	55.25.54	013.48.882	37.0	5.20
19/08/05	Ystad	Copenhagen	55.40.755	012.35.543	55.7	4.10
20/08/05	LAY DAY	Copenhagen	55.40.755	012.35.543		
21/08/05	Copenhagen	Helsingør	56.02.17	012.36.986	22.7	3.90
22/08/05	Helsingør	Hundested	55.57.934	011.50.845	32.8	0.90
23/08/05	Hundested	Langö	55.54.812	010.38.900	44.7	6.80
24/08/05	Langö	Tunö	55.56.94	010.27.269	15.2	0.90
25/08/05	Tunö	Horsens	55.51.42	009.52.3	32.8	1.40
26/08/05	Horsens	Borresknob	55.50.067	010.01.547	8.0	0.20
27/08/05	Borresknob	Gamborg Fjord	55.28.222	009.43.942	33.2	2.50
28/08/05	Gamborg Fjord	Fåberg	55.05.591	010.14.375	38.4	1.40
29/08/05	Fåberg	Ærosköbing	54.53.394	010.24.876	15.1	1.20
31/08/05	Ærosköbing	Maasholm	54.40.83	009.59.656	32.2	1.10
01/09/05	Maasholm	Kiel	54.20.406	010.09.441	25.2	2.60
03/09/05	Kiel	Rendsburg	54.18.38	009.40.275	21.1	4.00
04/09/05	Rendsburg	Cuxhaven	53.52.534	008.42.347	55.0	9.20
05/09/05	Cuxhaven	Helgoland	54.10.607	007.53.698	36.0	5.30
06/09/05	Helgoland	Beaulieu	50.46.749	001.23.368W	423.0	50.20
11/09/05	Beaulieu	Lymington	50.45.426	001.31.835W	9.6	1.10
					3320.5	331.64



## CREW LIST

19 May 2005	09 September 2005	Tim Barker	Skipper
19 May 2005	26 May 2005	Lawrence Wells	
		Gordon Reddell	
		Tom McCarter	
26 May 2005	02 June 2005	Hugh Barker	Father
		Noel Barker	Mother
04 June 2005	19 June 2005	Nigel Fawkes	
10 June 2005	19 June 2005	Jane Fawkes	
10 June 2005	11 July 2005	Maria Barker	Wife
19 June 2005	26 June 2005	Charles Penny	
		Jane Penny	
04 July 2005	11 July 2005	Tom Freeman	
		Pippa Freeman	
12 July 2005	15 July 2005	Venetia Kenney-Herbert	RCC
		Anthony Kenney-Herbert	
20 July 2005	27 July 2005	David Lovett	
		Sue Lovett	
		Sophie Lovett	
27 July 2005	02 August 2005	Richard Close-Smith	RCC
		Essex Close-Smith	
07 August 2005	13 August 2005	Alan Gordon-Walker	
		Louise Gordon-Walker	
13 August 2005	20 August 2005	Christopher Taylor-Young	
		Simon Taylor-Young	
20 August 2005	01 September 2005	Maria Barker	Wife
		Selina Barker	Daughter
		Jonny Miller	
20 August 2005	26 August 2005	Sarah Willan	
		Neil Thackray	
25 August 2005	01 September 2005	Isabel Burton	
02 September 2005	09 September 2005	Tom Mallaburn	
		Gordon Reddell	

## **Birds seen on cruise**

Kittiwake	Black Headed Gull	Grey Heron
Blackbird	Jackdaw	Wood pigeon
Oystercatcher	Mute Swan	Barnacle Goose
Skylark	House Sparrow	Canada Goose
Magpie	Arctic Tern	Montagu's Harrier
Swift	Common Tern	Goosander
Swallow	Common Teal	Black Guillemot
Pied Wagtail	Snipe	Velvet Scoter
Yellow	Great Crested Grebe	Red Breasted Merganser
Wagtail	Red Necked Grebe	Ringed Plover
Cuckoo	Lapwing	Redshank
(heard)	Mallard	Ruff
Eider Duck	Dunlin	Razorbill
Great Black	Scaup	Fulmar
Backed Gull	Willow Warbler	Gannet
Little Gull	Northern Wheatear	Twite
Great Spotted	House Martin	Buzzard
Woodpecker	Sand Martin	
Herring Gull	Cormorant	