

Issue No 27



the SEADOG

1993

BOOK ONE



"NICE DAY FOR SAILING!"

Brrr'

Brrr'

editor Peter French

THE SEADOG OWNERS
ASSOCIATION JOURNAL

B O O K O N E

FRONT COVER

SCENE ABOARD SOLWAY DOG

Cartoon sent to Reggie Lodge -
(past owner of SOLWAY DOG) -
by visitors from New Zealand
after their cruise with him
aboard SOLWAY DOG one summer's
day in the Irish Sea.

GLORY IN THE WEST INDIES AND BEYOND

by SUSAN HUBER

Plenty has happened since last year in the Windward Islands. By the summer of '92 I will have been on board for 3 years, sailed approximately 15,000 nautical miles, of which one half has been single-handed. I have visited 30 different countries and islands in the Caribbean and had thousands of unforgettable experiences.

I really wanted to go direct to the USA from the Virgin Islands, but after talking with other sailors, I decided to change my route. I had a lot of luck on the way, getting hold of charts, often picking up helpful tips and useful information from friends from all round the world about unfamiliar harbours; for example I bought a complete set of charts for the Bahamas in St Johns for the price of a beer. At the last minute in St Thomas I found an Ordnance Survey map of Puerto Rico in a flea market, and I was able to copy onto a piece of paper which I had with me the course to Samana (Dominican Republic). And on leaving the Bahamas, a single-handed sailor called Roger offered to loan me the whole of the charts for the US East Coast. I was to get to know Roger a lot better later on!

I idled away 2 weeks in the Virgin Islands between Virgin Gorda and St Thomas, a break in part from the hard trade-wind sailing and in part a holiday for me. The area is wonderful with only short distances between countless beautiful anchorages, clear water and remarkable reefs. What's more, you never sail in the open Atlantic - the area in between the islands is protected and like a lake - no wonder then that charter yachts are everywhere.

It is claimed that around there a driving licence suffices as a Yacht Master's certificate, but I can't criticise as I nearly caused a collision here myself. I was sailing leisurely along in light winds under self-steering, reading a newspaper, looking now and then at the course and other boats, when suddenly there was shouting only 15 metres in front of me there was a yacht beating to windward and naturally with right of way. Luckily they avoided me at the last minute and the yacht rushed past with an inch to spare.

On to Puerto Rico with some very sheltered bays on the South coast, and after that to the scenic, extremely interesting, but very poor island of Hispaniola.

Especialy interesting was a day trip to the interior of the Dominican Republic. The lush vegetation, tropical rain forests and steep ravines were a contrast to the dry barren islands of the northern Windward Islands. I joined up with a group and in a rented minibus this intrepid bunch of sailors drove to their destination only 15 km away. We took over an hour to do that because more than once we found ourselves bogged down in the dirt roads. Then we had to go on mules and horses. It was not at all easy to get onto my nag with its straw saddle and no stirrups (some thanks is due here to some eager male help), but a sailor fears nothing, and off we went over ditches and through bushes and knee-deep mud - it really was an adventure. Then a half hour jungle trek and as a reward, a cool shower under a waterfall and a wonderfully prepared local meal. Outside the big towns there is no electricity, the people live in poor huts and cook in mud ovens. However all the locals were very friendly and I had no fear of being robbed.

The 300 n. mile stretch to Great Inagua, Bahamas, was rough with stormy trade-winds. However after crossing the Northern Tropic (23 degrees) there were suddenly shifting winds, violent thunderstorms and dead calms.

The Bahamas archipelago stretches over 500 n. miles with countless islands, flat cays, an abundance of anchorages, wide stretches of crystal clear shallow water under the keel, and the colour of the water ranging from deep blue to turquoise to brown on the coral reefs. In narrow passages one must pay great attention to the strong tidal currents in order to stay in the deep water between the rocks, coral or sandbanks. The snorkelling trips were a wonderful experience, especially the Thunderball caverns on Staniel Cay. Harpooning is forbidden here and so the colourful coral fish come close enough to touch.

A lot of visitors feed the fish and so you are constantly swimming in a begging shoal. Such was my enthusiasm that not even a Nurse shark sleeping under a ledge disturbed me. I swam to the Grotto through narrow crevices and gullies with water shot through with turquoise - through an opening in the rock rays of sunlight were filtering down into the water. No aquarium could be as beautiful, this of course being not behind glass, but explored personally behind a mask. This is common in the Bahamas for there is wonderful snorkelling everywhere - lonely islands with white beaches and an iridescent sea.

On Allen's Cay I met Roger from the sailing yacht BANJO when we visited the wild iguanas. I spent some wonderful days with this kind, bearded sailor with his natural uncomplicated ways, and in fact we planned to sail together. But I wanted to get to know the USA and so we made a date for 3 months later.

THE MANY FACES OF THE INTRACOASTAL WATERWAY

In May I sailed the 390 n. mile stretch from Grand Bahama Island to Charleston, South Carolina, USA in light winds with thunderstorms and rainbows; however the strong currents in the Gulf Stream helped me clock up good speeds. (The Gulf Stream runs at up to 3.5 knots and on average 2.5 knots). Charleston has real Southern flair and the buildings are well preserved, lovingly looked after and are worth a visit. Check-in was a bit of a problem, being the weekend after the 4th of July holiday, however the Coastguard was very cooperative. On Monday I rattled down to Immigration and Customs on a bicycle, for these offices are about 5 km. from the anchorages and are in the city centre. The cruising permit costs 25 dollars and is valid for a calendar year. In the end, filling in the form was only a formality and I had no difficulties at all. However, it should be noted that sailors arriving in US territories still need a Visa.

From Charleston I motored in daily hops along the Intra-Coastal Waterway (ICW) to the north. It is amazing how natural and unspoilt whole areas are. When you become adjusted to sailing in the tradewinds, to the hot humid summer, to the days of dead calm and to the many hours of motoring, then you can really enjoy the romantic anchorages, the watery landscapes and the idyllic daily hops.

Everywhere, up the side arms of the rivers or waterways you can find sheltered anchorages and save yourself the cost of expensive Marina berths (approx. 75c to \$1.50 per foot per night). The right timing when planning a route is important, because with a rise in tide of about a metre, you can often have varying currents of up to 4 knots. (e.g. Winyah Bay or Cape Fear River).

In Georgetown (Mile 403) South Carolina, I saw two considerable alligators swim under the boat; in the winding, wildly romantic Waccamaw river I saw lots of turtles sunning themselves on the banks, and on the channel marker-posts it was not uncommon to see the nests of sea eagles. Everywhere in the USA people were friendly, extremely helpful and hospitable. Beaufort, N. Carolina, is a meeting point of sailors on their travels and the Maritime Museum places a free luxury car at your disposal for shopping. The shell collection and the Maritime Library in the Museum are extremely interesting.

Between Beaufort North Carolina and Norfolk Virginia you cross wide shallow sounds on which good sailing can always be expected. The friendliest town for sailors is Elizabeth City, N. Carolina. (ICW Mile 51). There, transient yachts are greeted with friendly words and welcome flags; there are free berths, a rose for the ladies on board, a dog biscuit for four-legged friends, and when there are sufficient yachts in harbour, even Cheese and Wine parties.

So without question it's worth putting in here and then sailing along the historic route of the "Dismal Swamp", instead of choosing the "Virginia Cut" - the ship canal. The Dismal Swamp Canal was opened in 1805 and is the oldest man-made waterway in the USA.

In many places along this part of the Waterway you can find banks covered with giant trees that tower over the narrow waterways which are only about 20 metres wide. At both ends of the 20 n. mile canal there is a lock that yachts can use at no extra cost to go up or down about 8 feet.

Finally I sailed for about 6 weeks in Chesapeake Bay - the dreaded summer thunderstorms were spared me, but light winds often necessitated the help of the engine. Chesapeake Bay is an especially beautiful sailing area with historical places and many new experiences. The Bay is well known for good seafood and even I learnt to appreciate crabs, oysters, mussels and shrimps. Besides the countless anchorages up the side streams and creeks of the Bay, the most beautiful places were probably Solomon's Island and St Michaels with interesting Marine Museums - also the sailing metropolis of Annapolis.

I can recommend this excursion in the USA for the wandering yachtsman.

THE WESTERN CARIBBEAN

I finally met Roger again in the autumn, and after a lot of thought I decided to sail with him to Central America. GLORY was found a safe dry berth in a good marina at Beaufort, North Carolina, and at the end of October, after weeks of preparation, it was direction south together on BANJO.

At that time of the year, all along the American east coast, down as far as Key West, the weather can at times be icy cold with temperatures down in the 30's and 40's - but as we continued south came the sun and tradewinds. At Cape Canaveral we watched the spectacular night launch of the Atlantis Spaceshuttle from the boat.

We left Key West just before Christmas and spent Christmas Day at sea in total calm overlooking Cuba, and we reached the Isla Mujeres in Mexico in time for the New Year celebrations. Mexico's Caribbean coast is not all that attractive at this time of the year because of the limited number of

sheltered anchorages and frequent "Northers" with their gusty strong winds, although Belize is fantastic. In the lee of a 200 mile long barrier reef we discovered great places for snorkelling and sailed in daily hops in sheltered waters. The water of the outer reef is crystal clear, the coral more beautiful than anywhere else in the Caribbean, and there is an abundance of fish. Day after day we lived on fish, lobster and conch that we caught ourselves in lonely anchorages in totally unspoilt areas.

A further high point for the cruising sailor is here in Guatemala. We crossed the river bar (7 feet) without any problems into the Rio Dulce and into fresh water surrounded by lush tropical vegetation. You can get about 50 miles upriver, partly through narrow gorges and partly across large lakes. The people along the banks live in simple palm-thatched huts as they have done for centuries, and paddle in dugouts to do their fishing. In contrast to this they have built a lively collection of marinas and meeting places for sailors where you can re-provision and find cheap places to eat.

Prices are very low and there is every kind of fruit and vegetable, fresh from the market or direct from the dugouts of the Maya Indians. On Lake Isabal there were trips to hot thermal waterfalls, river trips in dinghies with apes and parrots in the jungle, or anchorages in a sea of water-lilies and hyacinths. Excursions into the interior to the enormous Maya pyramids at Tikal, the rainforests, and for sale the magnificent colourful material and embroidery. So many yachts plan a visit of a few weeks and stay for a year in the Rio Dulce. The western Caribbean is a sailing region as yet unspoilt, and somewhat nicer than the over-run islands of the Antilles".

In the Spring of 1993 we received another letter from Susan posted in Fort Lauderdale, Florida:-

"Our fantastic time in Central America has come to an end and we are once again back in the United States. What began as a 6 month trip on Roger's 32' sloop BANJO turned into a 5,200 mile journey from the USA to Panama and back again. As you can imagine that for a good trip, more than anything else, it depends heavily upon a harmonious relationship with your partner, for we 3 (including Seadog lucky) lived together for months on end in the cramped conditions of a small yacht. This is the best way of really getting to know a partner, to discover all their good and less pleasant qualities and habits.

Not only have I improved my English - (my German and Lucky's native tongue were hardly used at all) - but I've also learnt a little worldly wisdom from Roger.

In spite of all this I now yearn for GLORY, my 30' ketch, which has so patiently awaited my return to Beaufort, North Carolina. In the autumn of '91 I put her into dry storage and now it is really high time that I paid her some attention in the form of an overhaul, giving her some paint and some varnish. Roger doesn't have an easy time of it with my stubbornness and although he finds it hard, he does have some understanding of my dream of sailing singlehanded.

For all those who have lost track of my route, the following is a brief resume of my trip since the start of 1989:

Summer 1989 Mediterranean: Turkey to Gibraltar

Winter 89/90 Atlantic: Canary Islands - Antigua - Grenada

Summer 1990 South America: The Coast of Venezuela

Winter 90/91 W. Indies: Grenada - Virgin Islands - Bahamas

Summer 1991 USA: East Coast - Charleston - Chesapeake Bay

Winter 91/92 Western Caribbean: E.Coast USA - Mexico - Belize

Summer 1992 Central America: Guatemala - Honduras - Panama

Winter 92/93 USA: back to Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Summer 1993 The plan is: the Bahamas, E.Coast of USA as far north as
New England

And now, a few words on our experiences of the past year spent in the still unspoilt and, without question, most beautiful region of the Caribbean:

CENTRAL AMERICA

After some exciting weeks spent in Rio Dulce with excursions to the Maya ruins in Tikal, to Guatemala City and the exploration of lonely jungle rivers, it was time, in May '92 to weigh anchor and set sail for Honduras.

From being spoiled by the flat calm of the river and the protection of the barrier reef in Belize, we now had to get used again to the much rougher conditions of Trade Wind sailing. But picture book anchorages with their crystal clear waters and magnificent coral reefs, ideal for snorkelling, awaited us in the Bay of Islands. We explored the environment on land too, and while climbing up to the Cochino Grande Lighthouse with the burning sun beating down on us we almost got lost. When we had gone past the same spot for the third time, Lucky went on strike and lay down in the shade, quite simply bristling with anger, and wanting nothing more to do with this stupid roaming around. We climbed higher, scrambling up scree-slopes and steep hills and tried to find our way through the jungle and palms.

Suddenly the 60' high tower of the lighthouse appeared before us - and, what a surprise - "Made in Germany!". The vertical ladder inside the tower showed to be more dizzy than expected but finally we were rewarded by a wonderful view over the island, bays and reefs. After discovering a huge and quite unfriendly-looking spider I decided I'd had quite enough adventure for one day, and we returned to the boat.

In Guyana two dolphins let me swim up really close to them and I swam behind them on a zig-zag course. These were wild creatures and not the superstars of the Marine Parks like "Flipper" and his family.

Under full sail and "foaming speed" BANJO sped on, ploughing through the reef-strewn waters of the Nicaraguan shallows. With two people on board everything was only half as bad, for we alternated three-hour watches, trusted the navigation to the near-perfect GPS satellite set and put our faith in the accuracy of the charts. While passing through the dangerous area off the swampy flat coast, the meaning of the name "Capo Gracias a Dios" came to mind, for many sailors have thanked God for the safe rounding of this Cape.

When finally not only the reefs, the strong currents and coral heads, but also the Mosquito Bank with its danger of piracy lay behind us we breathed a sigh of relief.

After three days at sea I spotted Providencia, a Colombian island which lies in the Caribbean, far from the coast, and all alone. Soon after we were at anchor, and Lucky was frolicking on the beach, we washed away the grime of all those days at sea, ate wild mangoes on the beach, and savoured the atmosphere of this remote, dream of an island far from the madding crowd. After a sweltering walk up the steep slopes above the protected anchorage the view over the green island and the distant coral reef in the deep blue sea was fantastic, even though we were nearly blown off the peak, and Lucky got very scared by a grazing bull.

But Providencia was only a stopping-off point on the way to Panama, and after three more days at sea, the tops of the first palm trees on the San Blas Islands rose over the horizon in the clear morning light. These marvellously beautiful islands lying like emeralds in the sea, are overgrown with giant coconut palms and surrounded by dazzlingly white sandy beaches. Just 70 miles east of the Panama Canal, they are still unspoiled by tourism, and the inhabitants, the Kuna Indians, have preserved their old traditions. When I started to count the islands on the map I stopped at just over 300 and accepted the belief that there is one "dream" island for every day of the year.

Soon the Kunas came paddling out to us in their dugout canoes to show us their artistic and colourful "Mola" embroidery. All the transactions were carried out by the women, for they were far more dominant than the men. None of the men raised any objections - extremely sensible.

The proud Kunas are not letting themselves be over-run by the wave of tourism with its hotel chains and masses of visitors. The women's costume consisted of a Mola blouse, bright material wound round them like a sarong, and a piece of red cloth tied over their short dark hair. With long strings of tiny pearls round their ankles, hardly taller than five feet, they are of course, barefoot, and with gold rings in their noses, they are clearly aware of their status. During our many visits to Kuna villages we picked up a few words of their language, and whenever we left they would often call out to us "panemalo" - "we will see you again"!

Once more I was captivated by my snorkelling trips to the underwater world, watching the tiny sea anemones, the coral eating, brightly coloured reef fish and the ever changing shapes of the coral itself. Hardly a day went by when we didn't discover another marvel. It might be a flying ray, a group of gloomy and grave-eyed barracudas, or the synchronised swimming of a shoal of small cuttle fish.

Through my mask I once noticed some reef sharks. Pretending to be asleep, I let some 10' long lemon sharks pass close by on their patrol, and I admit I felt more than a bit vulnerable.

After four weeks, we sailed to Colon at the northern end of the Panama Canal and the furthest extent of the Caribbean. While Roger and Lucky waited for me here, I had a marvellous opportunity of visiting Germany for the first time in three years, and landing in Munich after only a few hours on a Jumbo Jet, it was a bit of a culture shock to see these homely, beautiful and yet slightly foreign Bavarians!

I was so pleased with the welcome I received from all my family and friends. The Beer Gardens and the good food were the high points.

For all that my home is here on board, my homeland is always in my thoughts.

When I returned, although Roger and I toyed with the charts and dreamed of and talked about voyages to Alaska, Easter Island and Polynesia, we finally headed north again - the end of a journey to unusual destinations.

Non-stop from Panama to Florida, two weeks at sea in the roaring Trade Winds under a romantic full moon - a northerly wind in the rough Gulf Stream making us feel quite sick, and finally even a broken forestay. A little travel weary and salt encrusted, we licked our wounds in an idyllic anchorage in Fort Lauderdale - back to civilisation with its supermarkets, a postal address and all those not so really missed luxuries.

But the freedom to be found over the horizon is once more beckoning. Reason enough to set sail again and satisfy my wanderlust".

(ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:- Much of the foregoing was kindly translated from the German by our daughter Christine who is a teacher at the Anglo-Continental School of Languages at Bournemouth).

Some time later we had a letter from Germany, from Susan's father, Franz Huber. He wrote:

"Susan has worked a lot on GLORY in the dry in Beaufort, and we hope to meet late this year in the Bahamas, she with the boat and I will go by plane. Incidentally, when I was in Denia in Spain, I met Joe Lyons (HIBOUX) when he was working on his new boat, a Fjord 33 motorsailer, and he told me HIBOUX is now for sale. We couldn't talk for long as I had to leave next morning.

It was while I was at Denia I had a rather nasty and expensive experience. When they went to lift my boat out of the water, despite my protests, one of the lifting belts was positioned too far back, and we found that when the boat finally came out of the water, this belt had jammed under the rudder and had caused considerable damage.

Now we in Germany follow you in giant steps into the recession. It was unavoidable; highest wages, shortest worktime (35 hr. week), longest vacations (more than 30 days per annum) - oldest students (more than 12 semester average), youngest pensioners, highest payments for the unemployed the list goes on. It is time we find back to the bottom of reality.

But in the long term I am optimistic. With Russia opens a giant market for all products. Still they have problems with the economy, but in some years they will need everything. Totally every item is wrecked by the socialism, we see it with the new countries (former DDR), even famous names like Zeiss-Jena do not help, they broke down in the free market. Russia has the advantage to be the biggest oil-producer in the world - they will have money, which former DDR has not. We have to transfer giant sums to the DDR: 15 000 000 000 DM every year for at least 5 years, to rebuild everything - streets, trains, bridges, houses, charity systems, and Russia is more than 100 times bigger than the DDR; this makes Europe busy for many years. But they don't know any foreign language, no German, no English, no French. We must start to learn Russian.

We wish you all the best winds and always the famous hand of water below your keel!"

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THE FINAL CHAPTER

by ROY CROFT

We first planned to return via the Burgundy route, i.e. the Rivers Rhone and Saone, the Canals de Bourgogne & Yonne & the River Seine. But after chatting with a Dutchman who'd cruised the canals of France for many years, we changed our minds and chose the Bourbonnais route. This meant we left the River Saone at Chalon sur Saone and took the Canal du Centre, Canal Lateral a la Loire, Canal de Briare, Canal du Loing and joined the Seine at St Mammes.

Main advantages of this route are: more automatic locks, no locks with sloping sides as you get on the Yonne Canal, and 61 locks fewer overall.

We found it impossible to obtain up-to-date guides, even in Lyon where there are some good bookshops. The most recent were two years old. There are two series of guides to French canals:

"Guides et carte VAGNON de navigation fluviale" (Les Editions du Plaisancier) of BP27, 69641 Caluire Cedex, France, and:-
"Editions Cartographiques Maritime" of 9 Quai Artois, 94170 Le Perreux-sur-Marne, France. I think all may be ordered in England.

We wrote to the French Tourist Office, 178 Piccadilly asking for a list of the Chomages (scheduled closing of sections of canals for maintenance). All we got was a list of hire boats. We wrote to the Headquarters of the canal organization in Paris and got no reply. The most well known books on the subject are:

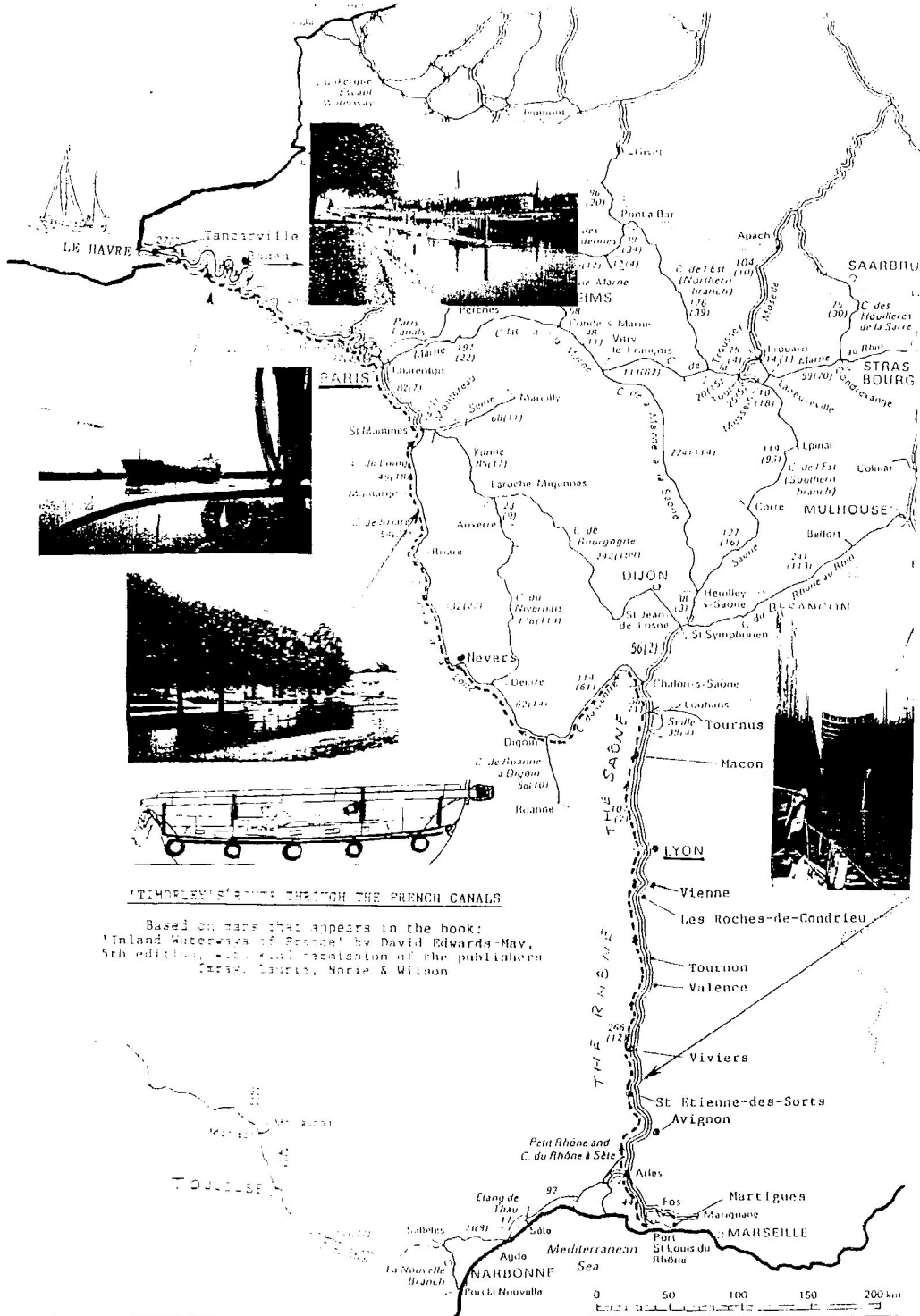
1. 'Inland Waterways of France' - David Edwards-May (Imray)
2. 'France - the Quiet Way' - John Liley (Stanford Maritime)
3. 'Cruising French Waterways' - Hugh McKnight (S-M)
4. 'Waterways in Europe' - Roger Pilkington (John Murray)
5. 'Through the French Canals' - Philip Bristow (Nautical)
6. 'Through France to the Med' - M. Harper (Cadogan Books)
7. 'Notes on French Inland Waterways' (Cruising Association)

We had 1, 5 & 7 aboard and had read 2, 3 & 6 from the library. We had charts or guides of every section, but none was completely accurate.

THE PREPARATION

The previous year we brought the engine home by road for a complete overhaul. When refitting it, the old alternator was replaced by one of the modern self-sensing type; this meant an almost complete rewiring of the engine compartment and replacement of the diode splitter unit with a relay. Numerous other jobs were done while the engine was out.

We made two crutches to fit in the tabernacles to support the masts side-by-side and high enough to allow the cockpit canopy to be raised. This meant removing the crosstrees in addition to the shrouds, halyards, masthead light, and VHF-HF-Satnav aerials. A motor car fog-lamp was fitted onto the pulpit in place of the bi-colour navigation light. 10 car tyres, two large red ball fenders and one or two others were placed in strategic places. It's quite difficult to protect the topsides.



TIMORLEY'S ROUTE THROUGH THE FRENCH CANALS

Based on maps that appears in the book:
 'Inland Waterways of France' by David Edwards-May,
 5th edition, 1968, and reproduction of the publishers
 George, Paulus, Norris & Wilson

On some of the tyres I stuck patches of carpet about 5" x 3". This worked remarkably well and I only wish I had done the lot. We also carried two long planks and hung one either side amidships, outboard of the fenders. Two strong metal pickets and a heavy hammer came in useful on a number of occasions for mooring to the banks. Another valuable addition was a plastic chair (of the kind used in the cheaper cafes). Placed with its legs straddling the port side cockpit coaming, this chair provided a most comfortable steering position and afforded an excellent view all round!

THE JOURNEY

TIMORLEY was put into the water on 4th of July and I was pleased to find the newly reconditioned engine ran smoothly but wasn't quite so happy when I found the idling speed had been set at 500 RPM instead of the recommended 650. The Perkins Handbook says this adjustment should only be made by Perkins trained engineers. So I left it as it was.

The following morning, Sunday, we set off down the canal to Port de Bouc. After about thirty minutes we saw ahead a medium sized cargo ship coming towards us. Without warning, when we were quite close, it suddenly sheered across the channel and despite dropping anchor, rammed its bow solidly into the opposite bank blocking our path. Immediately I throttled back and the engine stalled. Judging just how far I could throttle back without stopping the engine became quite a headache and accounted for many uncomfortable moments in the weeks ahead.

We joined the River Rhone at Port St Louis and started our slow tortuous journey upstream. We made it to Arles by teatime and stayed there next day. Next we went on to Avignon where we enjoyed a three night stay in the marina. That is apart from enduring one storm of torrential rain, giant hailstones and thunder and lightning. Weather was to be the one big disappointment with the trip.

On the Rhone we also stopped at St Etienne de Sorts, where it is like putting the clock back about thirty years - with the gloomy general store and the butcher serving meal from his living room. On the way to Viviers we passed through La Bollene lock, (claimed to be the largest in Europe) and were surprised to be locked through on our own (though they did close half of it off). Caught in another heavy storm today. We stopped at Valence marina (2 km before the town) for four days, which included Bastille Day and a wonderful firework display. One afternoon we visited the town's main church where there was some sort of rehearsal going on. One lady gave a beautiful rendition of 'Ave Maria'. When I asked when the performance was to be, a pretty young lady told me it was for her wedding the coming Saturday and she invited us to attend. Unfortunately we couldn't stay that long.

Next came Tournon where we left TIMORLEY in the small harbour - (thank goodness for the Seadog's shallow draught) - and took the steam train for a days outing through the beautiful hills and highlands of the eastern Massif Central to Lamastre. Then on to Les Roches de Condrieu, another marina. Next was St Romain en cal (near Vienne) where there is a delightful halt tucked away behind a headland. At a pleasure lake just beyond the mooring we witnessed a jousting match on boats. Then it was on to Lyon to join the River Saone for the next leg.

The nearest marina is some distance from the city centre and most chose as we did, to moor alongside the quay in the heart of Lyon. The only snag is having to endure frequent and heavy wash from passing vessels.

Sunday is the worst day, with dozens of pleasure speed-boats dashing up and down the river. We stayed three nights in Lyon and while there picked up some members of the family who had come out to join us for a week on TIMORLEY. It was here we were passed by a floating hotel, the huge "Princess de Provence" some 110 metres long and 11 metres wide. In some places on our way upstream towards the junction with the River Saone, the current was so strong we did only 2 km per hour over the ground. But it wasn't long before we left the worst of the current behind us and it remained that way until we reached the Seine.

The Saone turned out to be far more passive (and enjoyable) than the Rhone. At Port Jean-Savoyet, a private club about 7 km south of Macon we were invited to moor for the night. Next day, Thursday 23rd July we reached Macor where we moored to the town wall in a space just in front of a big barge. Some time later Jane looked out of the saloon window and called out that the barge was moving off and obviously hadn't seen we were there. When our initial panic died, we realised a second barge, much larger, had arrived and was rafting up to the first, but being so long, overlapped both it and us. We were well and truly hemmed in. Having heard there was a marina in town we walked along the towpath and found it two miles on. By then we didn't think it worth the hassle of moving.

The Saone proved extremely beautiful, wide in places, lots of wildlife, and pleasantly quiet. On to Tournous, then to Chalon sur Saone where we enjoyed both the marina and the city. After 3 days we left the boat and went by train to Dijon to see our guests off. Spent one night in a hotel there and wallowed in the luxury of hot baths and a really comfortable bed before returning to TIMORLEY on 28th July.

After the delights of the Saone, joining the Canal du Centre was like going into a different world. First we entered a grubby canal with an oil coated surface and encountered a lock. There was no one around. Went ashore and found Macame the lock-keeper. I suspect they keep you here for up to an hour just to let you know who's going to be boss from now on. But the lady relented after 30 minutes and let us through. The narrow canals were such a change after the lovely wide Saone. Weather now was much warmer and on the way to Chagny it became too hot for comfort. At Montchanin we met a family who had come up from Martigues in 9 days. The same journey had taken us 29 days.

Tho' mornings and evenings were cool the days continued uncomfortably hot with the occasional shower. At our next stop, Montceau-les-Mines, we moored alongside the main square. Two men came to us seemingly concerned we might go aground. It took some time for us to appreciate they were employees of the Canal Authority and were about to lower the water level by 15 inches. It was considerate of them, and happily we still had plenty of water under us. Next morning as we transited the lifting road bridge they sold us a kilo of honey. On to Paray-le-Monial with the canal meandering through pleasant rolling countryside. Lunch time we moored near a bridge and had a meal in the local hotel to celebrate our wedding anniversary. Next day after passing through a mix of industrial and agricultural landscapes we reached Digoin. The day following, after sweating it out for hours in blazing sunshine, we stopped for the night at Decize and the following morning set off for Nevers.

This was to be one of our most favoured stops and we spent 5 nights here. We were moored close to a large swimming pool complex and met Brian and Barbara Hervé, one-time owners of JACARAH. They now have a Dutch barge which they are fitting out. We saw a lot of the city and the sights, including the preserved body of St Bernadette in the Cathedral.

After city life it was back to the rural scene as we made our way to Herry where we considered ourselves lucky to be able to moor next to a Restaurant Barge. Unfortunately this restaurant catered only for coach parties and none were due that evening. All that night it rained and most of the next day. That afternoon we met what we had most been dreading. In a section of the narrow canal with brickwork banks and brick sloping sides we saw charging towards us in the distance a large barge pushing before it a great tidal wave of water. We couldn't do a thing about it. We were lifted unceremoniously and dumped onto the brickwork. We now have chunks out of our bilges to show for it.

We spent altogether three nights at the attractive and interesting town of Briare where on the Saturday we visited an open-air Art Exhibition held in the local park. Montbouy was next. Here we arrived at four thirty and found a most agreeable spot to moor alongside the local church. We had tea, listened to Alistair Cooke's 'Letter from America' and went for a walk in search of the Roman Amphitheatre, but never found it. This was a delightful place to stop and typical of the best of rural France.

The following day we reached Montargis where we met a French couple aboard their small home-made motor launch. Their home is on the Franco-Belgian border and they have been holidaying on canals for the past twenty years. Neither spoke English but we got along together well. So well so, that in the days to come we sailed in company and they showed us many places we would have missed on our own. On the way to Paris we stopped at Nemours for 3 nights, tucked away in a lovely little backwater we would never have dared enter on our own. The charted depth was 1.2 metres. For much of the time we had just a few inches of water beneath our keels.

Next was Moret-sur-Loing, a pretty little place where, on Saturdays throughout the summer, Son-et-Lumiere is the main attraction. We arrived around lunch-time and had lots of time to see the town and take photographs as well as buy fuel and lubricating oil at the local supermarket. In the morning, under overcast skies we set off for St Mammes where we joined the River Seine. St Mammes looks like a graveyard for barges - hundreds of them moored along the banks, sometimes rafted up thirteen deep. As we approached Melun during the afternoon the sun put in a welcome appearance. Once again we followed the French boat in behind an island for our night stop.

Saturday 22nd we left in fog which took some hours to clear. The Seine turned out to be relatively placid with not too much traffic, certainly far less than we expected. The one problem with the barges was that they didn't always keep to their proper side. When they needed to cross to the other side of the river they should have displayed a blue flag on their starboard side. Some did, some didn't. Houses on the banks were now looking more luxurious and the lawns more like English lawns than the inch-and-a-half of grass which seemed the norm further south. The buildings on the immediate approach to Paris were very interesting - distracting sometimes when one should have been concentrating on the river rather than taking photographs. We arrived in Paris about 3.30 p.m. We had heard all sorts of tales about the cost of staying at the Arsenal marina. Our French friends in the motor boat said it wasn't necessary for us to stay there and they would show us where we could stay for nothing.

We were kept waiting about three-quarters of an hour to get through the lock and into the Arsenal. Inside, our French friend Lucien went to see the Port Captain and arranged for us to go through the tunnel at the far end of the Arsenal.

We followed Lucien's boat through the tunnel - (quite a long one) - to the Canal St Martin, up a pair of locks and there we were, in the streets of Paris. Lucien had a word with the lock-keeper and obtained special permission for us to stay there the night. Next morning we bade farewell to Lucien and his wife as they headed for home. We continued through two lifting road bridges and a series of locks to Port Villette. This is a large open space of water with a Halte Nautique where you may moor for free. We stayed there four days, one spent visiting the Museum of Science and Technology where there is a convenient mooring in the stretch of canal which passes through the grounds. If you continue onwards along this, the Canal de l'Ourcq, you can reach the edge of the Retz forest, some 108 km away. Just before reaching the Museum there is a lock to the left which gives access to the Canal St Denis which leads, through a series of locks, to the River Seine at a point about 29 km downstream from the entrance to the Arsenal. Rather late in the day we learnt you are permitted to spend a total of 5 days only on these 'Paris Canals'. We could have gone back to the Arsenal then retraced our steps, but thought the trip down the River Seine through the heart of Paris would be too interesting to miss. On the morning of the 5th day we were woken by a canal official who explained that stops at Halte Nautiques are limited to a maximum of 48 hours only. He was friendly and helpful, advising we could go somewhere else for a night, then return. We motored up the Canal de l'Ourcq but found it a bit commercial, so returned to the Museum grounds and spent the afternoon there. Later we motored down to Port Villette, through a lock to the Basin Louis Blanc and spent the night there. The following morning returned through locks, road bridges and the tunnel to the Arsenal marina. In total we spent 9 days in Paris, of which we paid only for the 3 days we spent at Arsenal marina while waiting for a friend to arrive for the trip down the Seine to Rouen.

The day we came to leave the Arsenal to set off on our trip along the Seine through the centre of Paris it was overcast and dull with some drizzle. Poor for sightseeing and hopeless for photography. We reached Bougival that day and moored for the night beside a pleasant and peaceful grassy bank - another Halte Nautique. On Monday 31st August it rained all day long. We set off early and stopped for coffee at about 11 a.m. at Conflans St Monroine, another graveyard for barges. Just as we got ashore the clouds opened. Fortunately the cafe owner didn't seem to mind us dripping gallons of water on his floor.

From now on the river became wide and interesting. We attempted to stop at a place listed on the chart as being a marina, but it turned out to be a derelict marine shanty town, so we carried on in rain, thunder and lightning which continued until we reached Meulan at 5 pm when it gradually ceased. Next day was better, cool but dry. At Vernon we managed to find our way into the Yacht Club without grounding on the bank which guards the entrance. Here one is made most welcome - modest charges, and electricity and hot showers provided. Next morning we set off, once more in rain which continued on and off throughout the day. On reaching what was, we thought Le Mesnil de Poses - (and it might well have been) - we saw a jetty of somewhat forlorn appearance bearing the sign "WELCOME. HOT SHOWERS & BATHS. SHOP". With rain drops dripping off our noses we needed no further bidding and made for the jetty. Our guest, fresh from home, couldn't understand why we wanted more water when we were dripping with the stuff. Ashore, not a soul was to be seen, so we tied up and had a siesta. Presently a woman, well into her fifties, emerged from the building. She sported bright red fuzzy hair, extravagant make-up, a flowing white skirt that nearly reached her knees and kinky white boots. What she didn't have was hot showers or baths, and the shop it turned out was 7 kilometres away.

But there was a restaurant where that evening we enjoyed an excellent dinner - frogs legs, grilled steak, pomme frites and french beans, followed by cheese, ice cream and coffee. Washed down with a bottle of Rose wine, the meal for three cost FF 401.

We reached Rouen (in sunshine) on the 3rd of September - had a little difficulty interpreting the one-way system but think we got it right. Spent 5 nights here - lovely place. The Port de Plaisance is on the island across the water from the main part of the city. Close by are a number of useful shops plus excellent showers and toilets. But it's easy to mistake the pontoon of the next door boatyard for the marina. The Joan of Arc museum, though small is interesting and the new church erected on the site of her execution, constructed to represent flames, is most attractive.

At 7 am on 8th September we departed Rouen with some trepidation that we might not cover the 72 miles to Le Havre in one day. As it turned out we had a satisfactory and interesting journey down to Tancarville. By now the size of commercial vessels had increased to ocean-going cargo ships - fortunately not too many. We arrived at Tancarville bridge at four o'clock (59 miles at an average speed of 6.5 knots). On the subject of traversing the Le Havre/Rouen section the Cruising Association states: "ASCENDING - The fastest passage will be made by leaving Le Havre in time to reach the main Seine channel as the flood begins. Since the time of High Water is progressively later ascending the river, a yacht of moderate speed can reach Rouen on one tide. DESCENDING - Except in a fast boat, it is necessary to stop at least once below Rouen and wait for the tide" I guess that makes the Seadog a fast boat!

It was a much better trip downstream than anticipated. All the books make it sound horrendous. There are 4 recognised stops. Coming downstream, the first is near Duclair (Km 276) where the yacht club has mooring buoys; but the best stopping place is at Caudebec-en-Caux (Km 309.6), just over half way, where there are a number of buoys you can make fast to. It is advisable not to attempt to go close into the shore here for anything other than a short stop. There are two other stops listed, an anchorage at Quilleboeuf (Km 33) and mooring buoys just above the Tancarville bridge (Km 338) - though I confess we spotted neither of these.

With plenty of daylight left we continued towards Le Havre. After about 5 Km the water became so choppy the masts began moving about in their crutches, so we about-turned and motored back to Tancarville. The 5 Km going downstream had taken us 20 minutes. Returning against the current took 55 minutes. We had to wait till 7 pm for the opening of the Tancarville lock so we were pleased to be invited to moor alongside a floating crane, which was also waiting to go through. Just before we were due to cast off and move towards the lock, a large container ship came down the river at speed and its wash threw us all over the place, pulling away our stern cleat and part of the gunwhale.

There are two locks, an old one which is disused but still looks like a lock, and a new one which doesn't, the wide entrance of which dries at low water exposing great banks of mud. Of course we made for the old lock, realised our mistake in time, then followed the floating crane into the new lock which is huge. We spent that night just inside the Tancarville canal tied between two dolphins. Just as it was getting dark, up the canal from Le Havre came a barge with three decks full of cars, each deck having 3 cars across and 17 deep. Looked just like a passing factory.

Next morning in thick mist we set off down the canal towards Le Havre. For the first hour we had to stay within 6 feet of the bank simply to keep our bearings. It took all day to reach Le Havre via the many lifting bridges. The listed exit & entrance for yachts is now blocked off and the only way in or out is the entrance used by commercial vessels. Once at Le Havre we found our masts couldn't be stepped until

Friday, two days hence. We had plenty of jobs to occupy our time, and Le Havre is a pleasant town. Even when we had the masts erected we couldn't leave because of the poor weather. Saturday, Sunday and Monday we listened to every possible forecast. In desperation I rang the Met Office at Bracknell and asked them what chance we had of moving in the near future. They answered that by Tuesday winds should start to decrease, then a low sitting over Brest would give SE3 by Thursday. I thought "Good" - if we got to Cherbourg by Wednesday, then Thursday would be the ideal day to cross the Channel. Wednesday we were up at 4 am - over the VHF the Port Captain confirmed winds variable going to SE3. By 04.45 we were on our way. Cleared the harbour entrance by 5 am and the fairway channel by daybreak. Once away from the mouth of the Seine the water calmed and we were able to maintain 6 knots. By 15.30 we were off Point Barfleur. The 13.55 GMT forecast had given Easterly F4 or F5, veering SW so we decided to give Cherbourg a miss and head across the channel towards Straight Point which marks the eastern entrance to the River Exe approach.

Just after our change of mind the Satnav packed up - a little later the auto-pilot did likewise. It was do-it-yourself from then on. Then over the radio I heard the wind was forecast to increase to Easterly F5 or 6, becoming 7, later veering west. As the seas rose, waves five or six feet high speeded us on our way. Later during the night the winds further strengthened, though fortunately for us stayed in the southeast. Anyway at 08.30 the following morning Straight Point appeared out of the mist. We picked out the fairway buoy and had a bumpy ride along the approach channel and a fast trip up the harbour to our mooring in the River Exe, where we secured Timorley after an absence of nine years, two months and sixteen days. It was nice to be home.

LIST OF OVERNIGHT STOPS

<u>Place</u>	<u>Nights</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Facilities</u>	<u>Charge</u>
ARLES	2	Pontoon	E,W	Free
AVIGNON	2	Marina	E,W,Sh,Wc	Charge
ST ETIENNE DES SORTS	1	Wall	None	Free
VIVIERS	1	Bank	None	Free
VALENCE	4	Marina	E,W,Sh,Wc,R	Charge
TOURNON	2	Harbour	E,W	Free
LES ROCHES DE CONDRIEU	1	Marina	F,W,Sh,Wc	Charge
ST ROMAIN EN GAL	1	Bank	W	Free
LYON	3	Wall	W	Free
PORT JEAN SAVOYET	1	Pontoon	None	Free
MACON	1	Wall	W	Free
TOURNUS	1	Wall	W	Free
CHALON SUR SAONE	5	Marina	F,W,Sh,Wc	Charge
CHAGNY	1	Basin	W	Free
ST LEGER SUR DHEUNE	1	Path	E,W	15 FF
MONTCHANIN	1	Rafted	None	Free
MONTCEAU LES MINES	1	Quay	None	Free
PARAY LE MONIAL	1	Bank	E,Su.	Free
DIGOIN	1	Port de P	E(10FF) Sh(10FF)	Free
GARNAY SUR ENGIEURE	1	Halte N.	W	Free
DECIZE	1	Bank	None	Free
NEVERS	5	Bank	E,W	Free
HERRY	1	Bank	None	Free
BRIARE	2	Wall	None	Free
MONTBOUY	1	Bank	None	Free
MONTARGIS	1	Quay	None	Free
NEMOURS	2	Halte N.	E,W	Free
MORET SUR LOING	1	Bank	Su.	Free
MELUN	1	Halte N.	E,W	Free

Then from Newhaven to Littlehampton - we didn't have to pay there - we were guests of the Arun Yacht Club! We continued our cruise to Bembridge on the Isle of Wight. From Bembridge we went up to the lovely River Hamble; it was a very nice day and we met the Seadog Secretary Peter French and Olive at Crabbleck Yard and they showed us the Hamble. We walked up to Hamble Point. We passed a very fine day together and enjoyed it very much.

We continued our holiday, and sailed back to the Isle of Wight; we stayed for a few days at Ryde at the new harbour there. We dried out at low water, very comfortably on hard flat sand. We travelled around the island by bus. After that we had to go home. We sailed back to Bembridge and stayed there for a day because of strong winds.

Then we set off for Dover, making several overnight stops on the way. We stayed at Dover for a couple of days. Annie had problems with her back so that she could hardly move. From Dover we wanted to go to Dunkirk, but the sea was extremely rough, (although the squally wind was only SSW F5/6), due to a stiff gale which had passed through during the night. We did not appreciate this until we were at sea. We changed our plans once again and went to Calais where we stayed a day waiting for the wind to die down a little. Then we set off and had a good sail to Newport and Blankenberge with a moderate to fresh SW wind. At Blankenberge we stayed another 2 days - the harbour was very crowded with all the yachts coming in to escape the weather and none leaving.

During the night we heard a footstep on the deck. We thought - that's another boat coming alongside. But we heard nothing more, which was unusual. After a couple of minutes I looked through the window and saw a body lying on deck. I put my clothes on and went up to have a look. I moved the body and he came to life. He was very drunk. He moved back onto the pontoon, but not without first falling into the water. From Blankenberge we had a nice sail home!

MAYLINGS MANOR HOTEL - FAREHAM

6/7 FEBRUARY 1993

Just as final arrangements were in hand for the weekend at Philipps House, Dinton, several quite unacceptable conditions were imposed. It was a case of take it or leave it. We had no alternative but to cancel the booking - which put us in a quandary. We were almost fully booked, having taken many reservations at the Isle of Wight Rally in September. It seemed many were going to be disappointed. It was then the end of November, and with Christmas not far away, there wasn't much time to arrange an alternative venue.

However Olive has a friend who owns Mayling Manor Hotel in Fareham and she contacted her and asked if she would consider taking our weekend over, offering us the same facilities as at Philipps House. This she agreed to do but was unable to accommodate us for the planned weekend of 30th & 31st of January 1993. Luckily, on the Sunday, British Telecom had a special extra-cheap call concession in operation where all calls were charged at local rate, so Olive phoned everyone, explained the situation and asked if they wished to change. To her amazement everyone agreed. We had always thought it was the lovely venue that had attracted everyone to Philipps House - but we came to realise the most important factor was the opportunity of meeting friends with a common interest.

The first flush of bookings filled the Hotel, then we received another 8 applications which had to go on the waiting list; Olive and I had already given up our bedroom in the hotel to make room for two more - (we live only 5 miles away so could go home to sleep). In the event, the owner of Maylings Manor asked another hotelier if he would accept the extra 8 people on a sleeping-only basis, so no one had to be turned away.

Just before the weekend the weather changed from dense fog countrywide to bright sunshine, giving most people a good journey to the Hotel. This is an old Manor House built for the Duchess of Portland in 1906. After gathering for tea and biscuits and general conversation all dispersed to comfortable en suite bedrooms to get ready for the evening and how smart and attractive everyone looked as they sat down for dinner. The meal was excellent and, as is our custom, after dinner everyone stood up and introduced themselves. As always our good friends from Belgium, Willy and Marie-Louise de Crom made the longest journey, though others had come from Guernsey, West Wales, Yorkshire, Cornwall and other far flung places. After dinner we had a most interesting talk and film by the RNLI followed by questions. The RNLI was delighted with the amount of money collected - over £80 and sales at their souvenir table were brisk.

Next morning after breakfast we gathered round for an interesting illustrated talk and demonstration by Bart Groves (AFARON) on the repair and restoration of Antique Furniture - a subject on which he is expert. Following a coffee break came an interesting question and answer session on rigging and engines. We were lucky to have in our midst two highly experienced engineers in the persons of Alan Lowe (NSD) (whose business at St Peter Port in the Channel Islands deals with the installation and repair of marine engines), and of course Harry Manners (SEASCAPE) ex Submariner and the man responsible for the installation of the engines aboard the training brig ASTRID. Other contributions came from the floor.

While this was going on, in another room the ladies were entertained by Dee Chamberlain (STARDOG) who had brought along with her a selection of the beautiful craft items she creates - wonderful "Faberge" type eggs, water colours, greeting cards etc. Dee also demonstrated how to make Gift Boxes from paper, and this kept the ladies absorbed for ages. Dee is a kindly and sympathetic teacher as well as being a highly experienced Craft worker and we are grateful to her for contributing so greatly towards the success of the weekend.

After that it was time for a Roast Beef and three veg. lunch. Then it was farewell to all. We hope that Members making their first visit to one of our weekend breaks enjoyed themselves and made new friends and that everyone had a safe journey home.

In conclusion, here is an extract from a letter received from David Ridge (NICHOLA JANE):-

"Just a belated line to say thank you for a super Rally. It goes from strength to strength. Whilst the surroundings were not quite of the grandeur that I had come to associate with the Sea Dog Clan, they were much more practical and infinitely more comfortable! The food was excellent and as usual the company terrific. Now we are almost old hands, we have lots of friends to recap with and compare notes.

I, quite honestly, find it all rather terrifying, particularly the discussion of the engine and all those things that seem to go wrong all the time, or so our speakers would have us believe. It is of course made worse by the fact that everyone else seems to be a qualified engineer with workshops of Rolls Royce quality. "So I turned up a new crankshaft, reassembled the Borg Warner Gearbox and went to the football". Or so it seemed. I would still prefer to hope that if you keep things right it will keep going. Being used to a light displacement boat that even if the engine failed, could ghost out of an emergency, I now have my lovely old tub that in anything under about F3 prefers to go sideways, backwards and certainly where it wants forwards.

Never mind, she is lovely, and like a reliable woman, needs a lot of careful handling if the best is to be obtained".

G U E S T L I S T
(* = First Visit to a Seadog Winter Weekend)

BOAT	NAME	ROOM	HOME PORT
AFARON	BART & MONICA GROVES	3	SOLVA - PEMBROKE
* ARDESMOR	GORDON & JOYCE SPIRIT	5	POOLE
BONA	WILLY & MARIE-LOUISE DE CROM	2	ANTWERP
* DARLESSA	JOHN & JEAN ROSS	8	PORTSMOUTH
DOGMATIC	PETER & OLIVE FRENCH	-	HAMBLE RIVER
FAYE OF AUBIN	EDDIE FFL & SALLY DAVISON	Ave. Hotel	POOLE
* FURAHA	TIM BURKE	10	MALTA
GABRIELLE B	EILE & DOT TOMLINSON	15/16	MENAI BRIDGE
GALWYN	STEPHEN & CHRISTINE AXON	12	POOLE
* JACARAH	ARTHUR & LINDA GLAZEBROOK	Ave. Hotel	THORPE BAY
MER CALEB	BARRY & ANNA MATTEY	17	FOLLY INN - IOW
NATUNA	DICK & GILLIAN DURHAM	19	EMSWORTH
NEWANDERER	BILL & THORA RICHARDS	20	GRAVESEND
NICHOLA JANE	DAVID & BILLY RIDGE	21	PIN MILL
PALAFox	JACK & BOBBY PHILLIPS	22	SOUTH BENFLEET
PALAFox II	PETER & ROSEMARY BRAGG	18	FALMOUTH
* PEA GREEN	BRIAN KING	11	BRIXHAM
* SEA CANIS	RAY & NAN CLAUCHERTY	24	GOSPORT
SEEHOND	KEN & JESS WILLEY	25	GOSPORT
SEASCAPE	HARRY & CAROLINE MANNERS	--	GOSPORT
SHIELWATER	PETER & JUDY BARRALET	Ave. Hotel	DARTMOUTH
STARDOG	BILL & DEE CHAMBERLAIN	26	BENFLEET
* SUEBRE	IAN & SUE JURES	Ave. Hotel	POOLE
TALIESIN	ERIC & AVRIL RICHARDSON	28	LOWESTOFT
TIWANA	JOHN & EILEEN POXON	9	POOLE
WAGTAIL	NIGEL & GILL PACKMAN	23	CHATHAM REACH
* N.S.D. *	ALAN & JOY LOWE NICK LOWE	27 14	ST PETER PORT (GUERNSEY)
ex BORN FREE II	BARRY & LAURA YALDREN	--	POOLE

WE NEARLY MADE IT!

By Peter McDonald
(KYSOON KOBBA)

The following contribution arrived just after publication of the 1991 Newsletter - it got filed away so well that it missed the 1992 Newsletter too, but now here it is:-

"We tried very hard in our Seadog (No 7 KYSOON KOBBA) to join you at the SEADOG RALLY at Ostende in July 1990, and very nearly made it

Some weeks before, our daughter Chrissy's boy friend John decided to come along for the ride, but he had limited time and Chrissy and I were due off on a family holiday the following weekend. At best it would have to be a quick dash there and back. We planned to leave Harwich on Friday 7th, arrive Ostende Saturday 8th; leave again on the 9th to arrive at our home port of Mistley on Monday the 10th.

For days there had been strong winds and gales, and with a forecast of more strong winds on the nose for Friday we delayed departure. Saturday dawned warm and dull with a southerly F3 and a forecast of SW/W F3/4 possibly 5 - an ideal wind for us both ways. We decided to go and caught the ebb which gave us a comfortable 6 knots or so over the ground. Our course took us south of the Harwich separation zones and past the northern end of the Cork Sand lying inconveniently across our path. By the middle of the afternoon the wind fell away and came round onto our nose so we doused sails and motored towards our next mark, the Roughs Tower which is a wartime anti-aircraft tower, built of concrete and called "Sealand" by its inhabitants. Early evening the wind picked up again and we were able to make over 5 knots under sail alone. By this time the Roughs Tower and the Sunk Light Vessel were well astern and we were tracking nicely for Ostende, our Autohelm 3000 doing all the hard work - made harder by previously undetected play in the steering box - so that it was helming a long slow sine-wave about our mean course - no problem - Autohelms don't get tired do they?

The wind strengthened a little, then decreased - then it went round till we were on a close reach, and all the time the seas got bigger with small waves driven up from the south superimposed on the long northerly swell left over from the strong winds of the past few days. In the two minutes between 20.58 and 21.00 the wind increased to an estimated F7 and KYSOON KOBBA was averaging 8 knots - plainly now overburdened. Taking down the mainsail in the gusty conditions was not enjoyable, but the effect was to reduce our speed to a more comfortable 6 knots. The motion was violent - she was rising on the back of the long swell, heaving half out of the water at the top and smacking down into the troughs. No green ones came aboard, but flying spray was everywhere.

A quick check below showed all in order, but water was penetrating the saloon window surrounds (old seals had dried and cracked) made bunks and sleeping bags wet - after cabin too. The wind continued to increase and back; the Genoa was reefed to the size of an Enterprise dinghy jib but nicely balanced the mizzen so the Autohelm continued to do all the steering - certainly saves a lot of hard work.

By midnight with wind still increasing we were all either sick or feeling very unwell. Chrissy retired to the after cabin with an interesting bucket. We abandoned reading the towed log - it was too dangerous by far to attempt kneeling on the after deck to try to read a tiny dial by torch-light. Thankfully the Navstar continued to come up with consistent readings. Next we saw three lighted buoys where we expected to see only one (Garden City), but the motion was so violent and we passed so quickly

it was impossible to take note of their characteristics. By now the waves were breaking all around us, the spray blown off the tumbling crests flew past at cross-tree height and it was difficult to keep the boat speed down. Any less sail and there was a danger that control might be lost. KYSON KOBA's antics rearing over the waves and falling sideways off the breaking crests with a thump and a shudder would have looked impressive seen from a passing ferry, but aboard it looked and felt terrible.

By the time we reached the West Hinder Bank the seas were increasingly confused and we were being forced north of our track for Ostende. Navstar confirmed our destination was now directly up-weather of our position. To make Ostende we should have to motor directly into the wind and breaking seas, and with no sails, no steadying effect. Whilst the KYSON KOBA/PERKINS combination could probably handle it for 6 hours - (18 miles at 3 knots) - we on board couldn't cope with the extreme motion.

Bearing away would enable us to lay Blankenberge, but its narrow shallow entrance made it uninviting under the conditions. This left Zeebrugge. Deep and wide with a sheltered entrance (and downwind). But what then - weather-bound for several days perhaps and another rough trip back or leave the boat there and return on the ferry. None of these options seemed particularly good with our time constraints - and as the wind was favourable for home we decided to return there.

But when we tried to go about, even at 6 knots, KYSON KOBA just would not go. I didn't think to ease off the Mizzen - and to gybe was unthinkable - so powered round with the engine (needed an awful lot of power) and steadied on our course for Harwich.

It was then like being on holiday - the wind-roar reduced, speed dropped to a steady 4 knots and it no longer felt like we were being hurled off the edge of a cliff every 30 seconds. With the weather now coming from astern, KYSON KOBA was riding easily. By 05.45 there was enough light and what a horrible sight it was - mile after mile of grey heaving water, breaking waves and spray everywhere, but we were going home. Breakfast was a nibble of dry bread and a sip of water (and it stayed down).

09.57 Galloper
10.32 Sun came out
13.33 Sunk Light Vessel- Mizzen, Main & Genoa. 5.6 knots
14.30 Sudden squall. Reef genoa - down main.
14.46 Roughs tower.
15.30 Cork Sand
16.50 Harwich Breakwater.

Just as we turned into the River Stour between Harwich and Shotley a furious squall hurried itself down upon us, just to remind us what the past couple of days had been like. Then it was upriver to Wrabness where we waited for the tide to make sufficiently for us to reach our mooring at Mistley.

23.15 Stepped onto the Sailing Club slipway.

WE HAVE LEARNED:

1. A SEADOG can take comfortably a lot more than her crew.
2. To ease off the Mizzen when going about.
3. Not to believe in "Weather Forecasts".

ccc000ooo

26/27th September 1992

Olive and I arrived on the Friday so as to be there to greet everyone on arrival on Saturday - true to form, the weather was grotty - wind, rain, low clouds - not an inspiring start. However by evening conditions improved and next morning dawned hot and sunny with clear blue skies giving promise of a glorious weekend to come.

A large section of the shoreside pontoon had been reserved for our Rally. Because Newport is a drying harbour, arrival had to be between about two hours before and after high water. Several Seadogs arrived fairly late having gone to see the start of the "British Steel Challenge Round the World Race". The two deep-keel Seadogs which arrived dried out alongside the quay while others rafted two abreast alongside the pontoon. Newport harbour is not large and 12 Seadogs created a colourful spectacle.

DOGMATIC, dressed overall, wore her 'battleflag' - a large Seadog Flag presented to the Secretary by Alec Matthews (EMRA) several Rallies ago, and has now become the "Secretary's Flag". Some time during the afternoon we were hailed from the harbour wall and there stood Gill and Nigel Packman and the two little WAGTAIL'S, Hannah and James. They had driven from Sevenoaks and were staying with Gill's cousin who runs a guest house on the Island.

Dinner that evening was booked at the restaurant at the nearby Riverside Centre which is run in conjunction with the local Disabled Centre. The staff were most helpful and closed the restaurant to the public so we could have it to ourselves. Then, late Saturday afternoon we were chatting on the pontoon when three men came by, one clutching a slightly bent French loaf and a plastic bag. Passing us, he said, "We've gone off you Seadoggers" - when we asked why, he explained they'd gone to the restaurant to book their evening meal and had been asked "are you a Seadogger?". When he said "No" he was told "sorry, only Seadog members are allowed in tonight". So they'd gone into town just as the shops were closing and managed to buy a French loaf and some ham. Well, we couldn't have them go without a decent dinner, could we? - so we invited them to join us for the evening; they came and had a most enjoyable time.

Next morning with the weather again gloriously hot and sunny everyone mingled on the pontoon and on boats chatting, having coffee and taking photographs till the tide slowly lifted the whole Seadog pack and had them straining at their leashes ready for the trip homewards. When the time came to go, Harry Manners (SEASCAPE) gave a very slick demonstration how to leave a confined space under sail alone, then gradually the boats drifted off one by one downriver and out of sight.

Feeling rather lonely after all that company - (we decided to stay on for a few days and enjoy the fine weather while it lasted) - and were tidying our mooring lines when we heard sounds of running footsteps and shouts of "Olive - Peter". Turning we saw Judy and Peter Barralet (SHIELWATER) hurrying along the pontoon - they thought any minute we would be casting off. They had planned to come by sea, and were eagerly looking forward to making the trip when Peter was laid low for a week with a virulent tummy bug. In the event - (they live at Bristol) - they got up early Sunday morning and drove flat out for the Isle of Wight. Judy, who was driving, got nicked for speeding, and what with that and other delays, arrived just too late to meet the crowd. We welcomed them aboard and

spent a happy hour or two in their company before they had to set off to catch the ferry to the mainland and drive home.

The following morning, Anna Matthey (MER CALER) came for us by car and took us off to Ryde where we had coffee at a beachside cafe, then on for lunch at her delightful news house tucked away in a quiet cul-de-sac near the heart of Ryde. During the afternoon Anna drove us on a circular tour of the Island to visit viewpoints little known to holiday makers. Anna knows the Island well, partly because she is a resident, also because Barry her husband, is a native of the Isle of Wight and between them they know every nook and cranny.

Olive and I returned home days later than we'd planned; the fine warm weather, both during and after the Rally tempted us to stay on, and on the Tuesday we set off to visit the new (drying) harbour at Ryde. Just as we were about to cast off, Fred and Joan Ellingham (ex SEACANIS) came charging up the river in their fast motor yacht TOSHER and moored to the pontoon close to us. We had a quick exchange of news and views, a brief glimpse at their photo album and then went on our separate ways.

At Ryde we tied up to the pontoon and waited for the ebb. DOGMATIC took the ground on hard sand long before the pontoon to which we were attached reached bottom. By the time everything had stopped moving we had a 3 ft. drop from peak level to the top of the pontoon and all our fenders were dangling in mid-air. The harbour master provided us with a plastic beer crate to step onto which made getting aboard much easier. We thoroughly enjoyed our visit and the Harbour Master is a treasure.

When we mentioned the storm we'd experienced returning from Cherbourg on July the 20th, he said that night he'd been at the Harbour Office and seen lightning destroy flag poles along the seafront and flash along the railings of Ryde Pier; and while attempting to save some bunting he was nearly killed by a close strike and had to throw himself flat on the ground for a while. Taking cover later in a nearby amusement ground, he noticed the mechanical ducks and camels (though unplugged from the mains supply) nodding their heads in time with each lightning strike.

On Wednesday we crossed the eastern Solent to Portsmouth Harbour, where, just after entering, we were passed by the gleaming Royal Yacht BRITANNIA on her way out to sea. Suddenly the VHF crackled - it was the Coastguard - a windsurfer in trouble near Spit Sand Fort. BRITANNIA hove to and lowered a boat's crew to search for the man. 15 minutes later the VHF crackled again - "Sorry" said the Coastguard - "somebody's cocked it up. The windsurfer is in the water near Calshot Spit, not Spit Sand". I missed BRITANNIA'S reply. Continuing into the harbour we nosed our way in and out of men-of-war and assorted shipping to the start of a zig-zag route which took us close to the red warning flags of Lipner firing range, on past Portsmouth Castle, and through a forest of piles to the lock at Port Solent. This place has to be seen to be believed. It has everything. Thousands come by road each year to enjoy the restaurants and other amenities. A few nights here in a yacht does not cost all that much more than staying at Cowes Marina where amenities are basic.

Thursday - yet another pleasant summer-like day. At high water we took the ebb down to Cowes where we arrived early afternoon and went for a pleasant stroll in the warm sunshine to West Cowes. We noticed the Chain Ferry no longer charges for foot passengers.

Friday, with the weather still like summer, we left mid-afternoon for the Hamble River and had a very fine sail across. That evening we wine, dined and slept aboard at our mooring and over dinner relived a week of happy memories. My goodness - we both realise how lucky we are to be able to do things like this while the rest of the world is at work.

This end-of-season Rally was a great success - 12 boats arrived by sea, 3 were represented by their owners, making 15 in all, and 41 people sat down to dinner.

BOATS & CREWS ATTENDING THE ISLE OF WIGHT RALLY

AHMEEK
ARDESMOR

BORN FREE II
DOGMATIC
DOG ROSE
FAYE OF AUBIN
MER CALEB
MOHICAN
NATUNA
SALIA
SEASCAPE

SEEHOND

Jamie and Clive Lewis
Tim, Sarah, Joyce and
Gordon Spirit
Robert & Helen Moorsom
Peter & Olive French
Philip, Ann & Abigail Webster
Eddie Fell & Sally Davison
Barry & Anna Matthey
John Tattum & Tony Kelly
Dick & Gillian Durham
Peter & Val Bruguier
Harry & Caroline Manners
Peter and Jean Godley
Ken & Jess Willey

REPRESENTED BY THEIR OWNERS

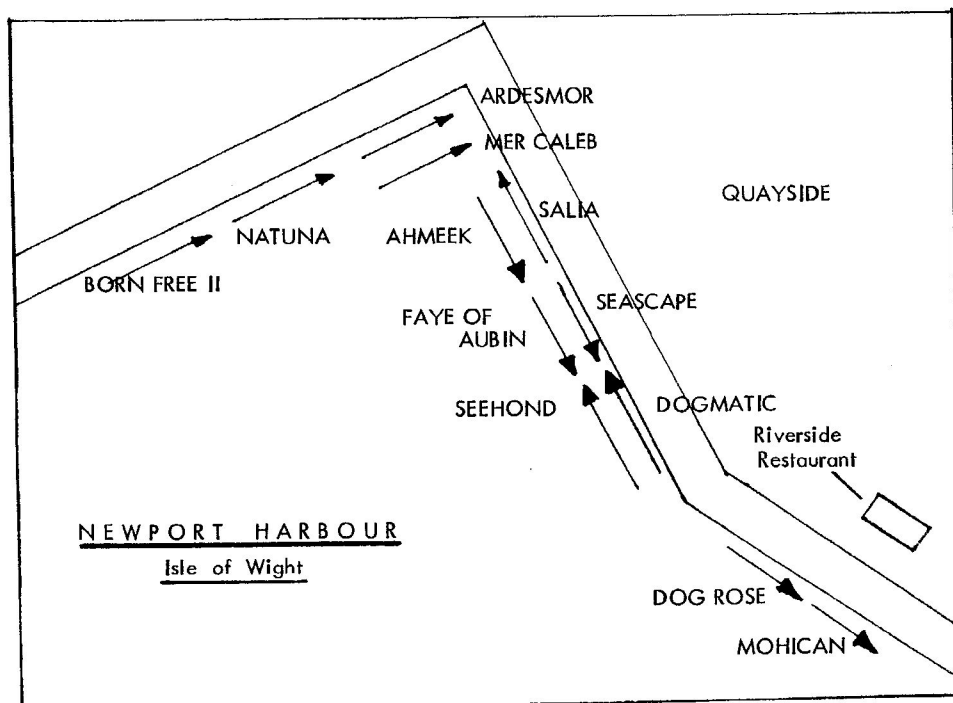
SHIELWATER
SUEBRE
WAGTAIL

Peter & Judy Barralet
Ian & Sue Jures
Nigel & Gill Packman
and Hannah and James

NON-SEADOG MEMBER

TOSHER

Fred & Joan Ellingham



By Ray Claucherty

Last autumn I drove to Scotland to inspect a boat I've always wanted to own - a Seadog. When I got there I found she was exactly what I had been looking for and bought her on the spot. SEACANIS lay at Ardfern Marina in Loch Craignish, which is to be found just north-east of the Island of Jura and a little to the south of Oban. The next thing was, how to get her to Portsmouth? Transport by road would be easy, but expensive - more than £3,000. I decided to sail.

Together with sailing friend John Hampson, I left home and arrived at Ardfern at 9 a.m. on the 24th of October. There was much to do before putting to sea. Rigging tightened, masts straightened, engine oil and filter changed plus 101 other jobs. Inevitably something got overlooked. When it was time to leave, the engine wouldn't start. Batteries were flat. This put us a day behind. October the 27th, the day of our departure dawned clear and cool and we cast off at 13.30.

It was very pleasant motor-sailing down Loch Craignish in the light southwesterly wind and to see in the distance the hills of Jura white with snow, and quite dazzling in the late afternoon sunshine. As evening approached, the wind strengthened. Suddenly, without any kind of warning, the autopilot misbehaved and presently stopped working. To add to our problems, we arrived early at the entrance to the North Channel, and found the tide against us. As the wind increased, conditions rapidly grew worse, with big seas knocking us back, so we bore away to the west hoping conditions might be better on the next tack.

During the early hours I heard a tremendous crash from the galley; quickly nipping below I found the cooker had jumped out of its gimbals. It was coming up dawn as we rounded the Mull of Kintyre and headed for the shelter of Campbelltown harbour to take stock of our situation. On the approach, visibility dropped to about half a mile, but as we had radar we weren't unduly bothered. We entered Campbelltown harbour in bright sunshine and stayed overnight while the gale blew itself out.

Next morning, with the sun once more shining brightly, we were keen to be off. We let go our lines and all day motor-sailed steadily southwards into a light southwesterly wind. Belfast Lough came into view just as dusk was falling. Lacking a chart of the Lough, and failing to identify the leading lights among the bright lights of the town, we made our approach with great caution. John, who was busy keeping a sharp lookout forward, suddenly shouted "Hard aport". I spun the wheel; seconds later an unlit buoy scraped past. We entered Carrickfergus Marina safely at 21.45.

The following day one of the Marina staff phoned Roy Barton (TIMELLA). Roy later paid us a visit, but was unable to help with the autopilot repairs, so we adjourned with him to TIMELLA where we enjoyed some very welcome refreshment. Some time later, when he popped back to tell us another gale was imminent, we decided to stay another night. When eventually we did get away, the strong south-going tide off Donaghdee gave us a good send-off, pushing our speed up to 8 knots over the ground. The wind freshened a bit and it seemed we might be in for a good sailing day, but mid-morning we heard over the radio yet another gale warning. So much for a good day.

We decided to seek the shelter of Ardglass. By the time South Rock Light was abeam, our speed had dropped to four knots and the wind had increased to Force 6. As the seas grew rougher in wind-against-tide conditions, we increased engine revs and crept close inshore. Time and time again, short steep waves buffeted us to a standstill, reducing our average speed to a scant two knots. Adding to problems, the tide then turned against us.

On top of that, SEACANIS has a lot of top-hamper; what with all those steps up both masts, plus that huge radar scanner, she won't go to windward all that well. Though we could see the entrance to Ardglass Harbour was not far away, perhaps half a mile, it took fully an hour before we reached it. At long last the sector-light turned white, and we were able, to our great relief, to turn in. Once inside we secured to the new harbour wall.

It blew hard that night and with the boat ranging ceaselessly backwards and forwards, our fenders rolled oil fouling the harbour wall onto our hull, creating huge oily black marks. Next afternoon, we moved SEACANIS over to the old harbour wall, further from the swell and the fishing boats. And what a good thing we did - later it blew Force 10.

Next morning the wind showed signs of abating, so we shopped for fresh food, had lunch and postponed leaving until we'd heard the 17.50 Shipping Forecast - which predicted westerly 3/4. We sailed at 19.00 - in the dark again - and kept the white sector-light dead astern until we cleared the bay. When hoisting the mainsail we found it was torn in three places and useless, so we carried on motor-sailing under jib and mizzen towards our next stop, Dublin.

From there the next stage of our journey would take us across the Irish Sea to Penzance, a voyage of at least three days. Our Decca Navigators, of which we had two, were for some reason faulty, so our navigation had to be by dead reckoning. But the darkness gave us one big advantage. There were plenty of lights by which to set our course, and position-fixing was fairly straightforward. At dawn the sun burst over the horizon with the promise at last of a good day. And it was. Dublin appeared over the horizon late in the afternoon, and it was just dusk when we tied up alongside a motor vessel in the marine. Next morning a local sailmaker pronounced our mainsail beyond repair. We wasted no more time and at 17.00 set off again on yet another night passage. (4th November).

All night long we sailed southwards down the inner passage between the coast and the sandbanks - it's a bit like the North Sea - and in the light of early morning continued buoy-hopping until we could see the Tuskar Light and were able to head straight for it. By 1045 the lighthouse was abeam - and we were now in the Celtic Sea. We hoped that from now on the going was to be rather better than we'd found it in the Irish Sea. The weather continued good. A light westerly wind accompanied a long, even south-westerly swell and all looked set for a comfortable and restful passage.

Breakfast past, John mentioned that during the night he'd nearly been hit by something heavy which had fallen into the cockpit. He handed me what he'd found. It was a long bolt. Peering up the mizzen mast, I was horrified to see the Radar Scanner swinging loose on its wires, its last remaining bolt about to drop out. With the nearest harbour more than 20 miles astern, I had little choice but to fix it. I rummaged around and found three bolts with nuts to fit. Then sails down, safety harness on, and up to see what could be done.

With the mast swaying some six feet from side to side I could see it was going to be difficult to hang on with one hand and fix a nut and bolt with the other. John kept the yacht headed into the swell to keep our rolling to a minimum, while I clipped the mizzen halyard to my safety harness in case I should slip and fall, and kept it taut as I climbed the mast-steps.

It didn't take long to reach the scanner where my first job was to stop it swinging. This was achieved by lashing the scanner to the mast; next I descended for a bolt and spanner; up the mast again to fix the bolt in place. Down for the second bolt and up to fix it. Down for the third bolt and up once more. Securing the radar scanner took over two hours during which I climbed the mast eight times; by the time I'd finished I was covered in bruises. When all was safely secured we resumed course towards the south.

Later that afternoon the wind backed to the southwest, forcing us on to a course of 260 degrees. This would have taken us too far east of our track. To put us in a better position to make Land's End on the next tack, I altered course onto 280 degrees for six hours. Next afternoon, while crossing the first shipping lane I called a passing ship on the VHF and asked for a fix which put us pretty well on course. After crossing the second shipping lane some time later, fog descended and visibility fell to about half a mile. Then the radar went on the blink.

Suddenly, through the fog and gathering dusk, we were startled to see breakers ahead. I immediately thought it was the Longships Light and turned due south. Unbelievably, five minutes later, more breakers appeared. I realised later we had been set inside Whitesand Bay which is just a few miles to the northeast of our turning point, the Longships Light. We were headed fast towards the cliffs of Sennen Cove. In unison we said "let's get out of here!" I spun the wheel onto a course of west northwest for one mile then set off to the south again. After about twenty minutes a dark shape made its presence known off our port bow - at last, the Longships Lighthouse. Strangely, although by now practically dark, its light was not on. Otherwise we would have seen it earlier.

Having reached our turning point, we altered course for Penzance and presently a strong light appeared on the port bow. This time we knew what it was. The Tater Du. As we approached Mounts Bay the fog gradually thinned, finally to disappear altogether by the time we reached harbour. SEACANIS settled for the night on even keels on the firm, sandy, though rather wet bottom of Penzance Harbour. Early in the morning, while we were still in our bunks, there came a knocking on the side of the hull. It was the Customs Officer who had walked across the wet sands of the harbour to reach us; his feet were soaked. Calling up to me on deck, he said, "I understand you have just come from Ireland". I had reported this fact the night before. After quite a long chat he left and clutching his Customs Forms, splashed back across the sands to his office.

While waiting for high water we had breakfast and stowed the dinghy; then, after checking engine oil, fuel and water, we had lunch. We cast off at 10.45 heading to buy diesel at Newlyn, but being Sunday there was no fuel to be had so we turned around and set off across Mounts Bay towards Lizard Point. Half way there the fog started to come down again, and by the time we had rounded the point it was already dark. I thought it best to put into Falmouth for the night. As time wore on the fog thickened, obscuring the Lizard Light and made it difficult for us to find the Menacles Rock, but we passed it on the correct side. We picked up the St Anthony Light at the entrance of Falmouth Harbour when we were half a mile from it, then made for Black Rock buoy. Shortly afterwards, in the

distance, we saw blazing lights coming from something that looked remarkably like a huge space-ship. It turned out to be an oil rig - it was enormous. We turned away from it and followed a series of unlit buoys into the Marina.

Monday 9th of November: went shopping in the supermarket, checked the boat over, topped up fuel and water tanks and left at 17.00. The weather was clear, with no fog, and in the darkness we thoroughly enjoyed watching all the lights ashore as we went along. It wasn't even cold, as the wind was W/SW about F4. At about 20.55 we raised the loom of Eddystone Light, then, as we drew level with the entrance to Salcombe Harbour, the tide turned foul and it took us a long time from then on to reach Start Point where we heard yet another storm warning from the Weather Centre. We had no choice but to scoot back to the shelter of Dartmouth where, at 07.50, we tied up at Dartmouth marina and went to bed. We wandered around Dartmouth that afternoon and went into a pub at night.

All day and all that night the wind blew hard, and again all next day; on the second night the wind got up to 75 knots. But by next morning everything had calmed down, so we decided to set off for Portsmouth. It was now Thursday 12th November. The Mewstone at the entrance of Dartmouth came abeam at 07.35 and we set course for Portland Bill. The sun was shining, the sea slight, and the wind on our port quarter: again it looked as if it might be a good day for sailing. But some time in the middle of the morning the Coast Guard came on the radio with a "Strong Winds" warning with gusts up to F8/9.

"*** it" - I thought to myself - "whatever happens, there's no going back now" - and carried on. We had the tide in our favour all the way across Lyme Bay, but lost it just as Portland Bill came abeam. For several hours we made little progress in the lumpy sea and our speed dropped to 2 knots over the ground. In time the tide turned once again in our favour, the moon came out, and we had a grand night sail all the way up to Cowes, where, for the last time on this voyage, the tide went foul on us. However, we continued on our way, till, at long last, we turned into Portsmouth Harbour and at 04.30, still in the dark, secured to a buoy in Spider Lake, just off the Hardway Yacht Club. Seacanis was in her new home.

The trip took 17 days, by the ship's log 730 miles were covered, and we used 249 litres of fuel.

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SEADOG RALLY - RIVERSWAY, PRESTON - AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY - 1992

For the second time in the past few years a Seadog Rally was held in the northwest of England. Looking back to the account of the 1989 Holyhead Rally, I found several similarities. To name a couple. First, the weather was horrendous on both occasions and once again tested those who ventured to come. Secondly, we received the same wonderful welcome.

Because Olive and I were unable to sail DOGMATIC to Preston for this event having other commitments that required us to be back down south soon after the Rally, Cyril and Barbara Porter very kindly offered us a berth aboard their Seadog TOPAZ TOO.

On the way to Preston Olive and I visited friends en route. First stop Portishead to see John and Audrey Lansdell, NSD members whom many of you know. Next day we stayed in the tiny hilltop town of Llantrissant in Wales where friends are currently restoring a large old property in the grounds of the ruins of Llantrissant Castle. The following day we drove through beautiful scenery to the border town of Llyncllys near Oswestry and stayed one night in a house perched high upon the edge of a rocky escarpment and having a fine view of that curiously shaped hill, the Wrekin in the far distance.

Next day, finding we'd arrived rather too early at Preston, we continued along the motorway to Blackpool where we were instantly trapped in an endless stream of traffic of all sorts; trams mixed up with horses and carriages and crowds of pedestrians all milling around in the cold and wet, wearing fancy hats, trying to keep cheerful.

We escaped as soon as we could and drove straight back to Preston where we got the warmest of welcomes and great big smiles from Barbara and Cyril Porter aboard TOPAZ TOO which was to be our happy home for the next four days. In no time steaming cups of tea were placed before us, and soon we were surrounded by lots of wonderful Lancashire folks. For the whole of the four days we were there we hardly stopped laughing.

This Seadog Rally was held in conjunction with the "Preston Guild" Celebrations which are held once every 20 years. A great deal of time and much money had been spent planning and staging events for the whole of the Bank Holiday week. There was much to see and do. In one corner of the 40 acres of water comprising Preston Dock was a gathering of canal boats from far and wide. These, being highly decorated and covered in flowers contributed colour and interest to the scene. Planned too were processions, bands, many water-borne events and a firework display.

But the weather was unrelenting - incessant heavy rain and winds up to gale Force 9 which battered the stands and tore down the decorations in the streets. We began to receive messages that some hoped-for Seadogs would never be able to make it against wind and tide - but despite that some did get through. The Docks at Preston are 14 miles inland from the Irish Sea, and to miss the tide means there is no way of reaching Preston because at low water much of the approach dries out.

On Saturday morning, Pam Hamlin (ex ARDESMOR), who organized the Rally, sailed off downriver in her westerly AMETHYST to greet incoming Seadogs and guide them to their berths. Not wishing to miss the action, Cyril and I drove to the observation tower at Ribble Cruising Club at Lytham where, with binoculars we were able to watch the arrival at the river mouth of the incoming Seadogs on their way to Preston.

There were altogether 5 Seadogs which arrived at the Rally:

<u>BELHOUND</u>	David & Isobel & Tim Jones from the Isle of Man
<u>GLASS LADY</u>	Paul & Ann Shaw from Barrow-in-Furness
<u>SALUKI OF ARNE</u>	John Martin & Freddy Graham from Conwy
<u>SOLWAY DOG</u>	Harold & Linda Broadbent from Barrow-in-Furness
<u>TOPAZ TOO</u>	Cyril & Barbara Porter from Menai Bridge

In addition Frank and Joan Laycock (SCOUBIDOU) came from Liverpool, Reggie Lodge (ex SOLWAY DOG) motored down from the Scottish Border, Mignon and Richard Cathcart (GLYFADA) drove over from Hull, and Avril and Eric Richardson (TALIESIN) came from Sheffield towing their caravan, and Olive and I (DOGMATIC) drove up from Southampton. Willy and Marie-Louise de Crom (BONA) had the longest journey for they drove from Antwerp in Belgium also towing a caravan - what great support these two long distance travellers have always given to the Association. Smiling, hospitable, they come to most of our Rallies.

That day Cyril and Barbara had arranged to take Olive and me for lunch at the Blackpool and Fleetwood yacht club at Skippool. This is an interesting and friendly club, the access road to which is frequently cut off by the incoming tide, so it was then or never, and we had to dash off to get there before it happened to us. On our return to the Marina at Riversway, we heard Mignon had slipped on the pontoon and had sprained her ankle so badly they'd had to go home.

In the afternoon, although the weather steadily worsened, nothing could dampen the spirits of the local folks who, as soon as the rain stopped for a moment, came out in their hundreds. But such was the wind and rain that the firework display had to be cancelled along with many other events - but all around there was a happy atmosphere that was unquenchable - particularly among the Seadogs whose crews visited each other's boats, swapped ideas and experiences, and enjoyed light hearted conversation and generous hospitality. That day there was an interesting coincidence. That was the gathering aboard SOLWAY DOG (ex MARECANE) of her past three successive owners. They were: the present owner, Harold Broadbent, the second owner Reggie Lodge, and the original purchaser, John Watson, who retained the name MARECANE for his new boat, a Colvic 40.

The next day, Sunday, the weather improved a little, though the wind at times was still strong to gale force. We set off and visited Fleetwood, looked at the new marina, then watched the start of the annual Fleetwood Trawler Race. Incredible. Rolling and pitching heavily in the rough water close to the harbour mouth, these trawlers, all of them dressed overall, were milling about at close quarters like a pack of excited greyhounds at the start of a race - how there were no collisions I can't imagine. It was a fascinating sight, the roads fronting the sea were packed solid with people and the traffic came to a standstill.

Pam Hamlin arranged for us all to dine that evening at the nearby "Waterside" pub, and just after 9.30 p.m. we sat down. It was a very pleasant meal and a thoroughly enjoyable occasion. After dinner Seadog Owners were presented, (compliments of Preston Town Council), each with a beautifully inscribed plaque commemorating the '92 Preston Guild and a special "Preston Guild" Tea Towel from the S.O.A.

On the Bank Holiday Monday SALUKI OF ARNE decided to brave the elements and battle home, but GLASS LADY, TOPAZ TOO, SOLWAY DOG and BELHOUND remained to be taken home another day. We spent the day being taken by Cyril and Barbara on a comprehensive guided tour of the area which neither I nor Olive had ever visited before, despite the fact that for a while during the war I was stationed at the R.A.F aerodrome at Burtonwood where occasionally, when we were short of eggs, I flew a Hampden - (which has been described as looking like a flying tadpole) - via the Blackpool Tower, to Jurby in the Isle of Man to restock. (So that's where the tax payer's money went, I can hear you say!).

We also visited West Lancashire Yacht Club at Southport where Cyril has for very many years been a valued member and twice Commodore, and heard all about the annual 24 hour non-stop dinghy race which takes place on the Marine Lake on the seafront. Later we explored the town which still retains some of the splendour of pre-war years, and looked at broad and once highly fashionable Lord Street which we thought had all the colour and character of a Parisian boulevard.

Next day it was time to head for home. We left early and followed Cyril and Barbara to Liverpool where we enjoyed a splendid lunch at the Royal Liverpool Yacht Club, a palatial establishment - very fine!

After saying goodbye to Cyril and Barbara we made a small detour to try to discover the whereabouts of a stretch of motorway which, I've been told, now runs along the line of the main runway of the old Burtonwood aerodrome which, in 1941, was the scene where, in a strong gale of wind, I made my one and only 'involuntary' backwards take-off in a military spotter 'plane. It was not an Auster as might be imagined but a special type of plane from America. The memory of this incident still lingers.

Olive and I both have fond memories of the Preston Rally - the warmth of welcome of the Lancashire people - the Seadog Members who braved highly challenging conditions of wind and tide that truly tested their judgement and endurance, and other members who motored long distances - all this far outweighed the weather and made the Preston Guild Rally a weekend we'll long remember.

When we got home we received the following article from David Jones (BELHOUND) describing his journey back from Preston; how well this underlines my comments about the stamina and perseverance of Seadoggers of the Irish Sea.

A N I G H T T O F O R G E T

By David Jones
(BELHOUND)

It was Thursday morning. The previous August Bank Holiday week-end had been spent in excellent company at the 1992 Irish Sea Seadog Rally at Preston. However, due to bad weather BELHOUND was still alongside the pontoon where Isobel my wife, and Tim my son, and I had berthed her on the previous Saturday.

We had intended returning to our home port of Ramsey in the Isle of Man on the following Tuesday or Wednesday, but strong northwesterly winds, dead on the nose, made it impracticable. Late Wednesday a weather forecast suggested there might be a brief window in the weather pattern which would allow us to make it back to Ramsey in reasonable comfort before the strong winds returned again late Friday or early Saturday morning. The Marinecall forecast at midday spoke of north westerly winds F4/5 decreasing to F3/4 overnight, then increasing to F6/7 by midday Friday.

We decided it was now or never if I was to be back in the office the following Monday. As the wind looked like being on the nose all the way we were going to have to motor-sail to avoid continuous tacking. A fuel check showed we had about 14 gallons in each tank, and at an average consumption of not more than one gallon an hour, there was plenty for the 14 hours or so that it would take us to get from Preston to Ramsey.

We arranged with the lock-keeper to leave at 15.00; high water was at 16.30, so we should be out of the Ribble Estuary well before half tide which - we had been advised locally - was the latest we could safely leave to avoid the shoals off Lytham. The following high water was 04.50 Friday morning, which would comfortably allow us to enter Ramsey, a drying harbour, at about 05.00.

At 14.50 we were hove to by the lock gates waiting for them to open but the control light showed red. It was still showing red at 15.15 when the lock controller radioed to explain he was waiting the arrival of a Customs vessel which wished to lock out with us. We finally left the lock an hour later than planned, and didn't reach the estuary until around 19.00, half an hour or so before half-tide.

As we motored down the muddy and winding River Ribble the prospects for a pleasant passage were not promising. The skies were grey and it was drizzling. As we progressed further into the estuary the wind strengthened to northwest F5. The seas were increasing in height, the drizzle turned into heavy rain and visibility became poor. The perches marking the channel were hardly visible and it was impossible to identify them with any degree of certainty.

Fortunately I had entered the 13 mile perch as a waypoint on the Decca, so we put our trust in it and at 18.30 altered course onto 285 magnetic. Though the visibility was very poor we could see the water breaking on the sand over Salters Bank only yards off our starboard beam - disconcerting!. Tim took the wheel while I watched the echo-sounder and shouted out depths and steering instructions. At times we were down to 4.5 feet, our draught being 3.6 feet.

Presently the depth began to increase; free of the shoals we raised the mainsail and set the auto-pilot onto 310 magnetic for Ramsey. Though it was still raining hard and seas occasionally broke over BELHOUND'S decks, up to now the Marinecall forecast had been accurate, so we looked forward to the promised decrease of wind-strength in a few hours time. Isobel and Tim settled into their bunks, and I sat at the top of the gangway steps to keep watch for the next couple of hours.

During those two hours conditions worsened considerably. Seas were now breaking continuously over the decks and the wind increased to the top end of Force 6. However, BELHOUND took it all in her stride as usual, and apart from the noise of the wind and the sea, things were not too bad, but we decided to keep watch for an hour at a time as none of us was really able to sleep.

By midnight the wind had increased to F7 and BELHOUND was pitching and slamming into the troughs of the waves. I was again sitting at the top of the gangway steps, waiting for each horrendous bang as BELHOUND crashed down every large wave, when, to my horror I notice water swilling about on the cabin sole in the area of the galley. I grabbed a torch and lifted the forward half of the cockpit sole, and on shining the torch into the engine compartment saw that the bilge was full of water.

I then noticed that a steady stream of water was coming from the Jabsco seawater pump which had developed a serious leak. Hastily I flew to the bilge pump, but after a couple of strokes the pressure fell away, indicating it was not pumping. There was nothing for it but to dismantle the pump and try to rectify the fault - no easy task in the dark with a big sea running. However I managed to dismantle it, after having been thrown round the cockpit a few times, and discovered that the rubber valve on the outlet had come adrift. I relocated it, reassembled the pump and tried again. To my relief, pressure returned, and after what seemed an eternity of pumping, I managed to empty the bilge, and the water on the cabin sole was no longer in evidence. However, because of the leak, it was necessary to continue to pump the bilge at regular intervals. The time was 02.00 and blowing a good Force 7. So much for the Marinecall forecast and their promised decrease in wind strength overnight!

During the last couple of hours, BELHOUND'S average speed over the ground had dropped from 5 to about 2 knots, and at that rate we were not going to arrive at Ramsey with enough water to get into the harbour. I didn't relish the thought of anchoring off to await the tide in this sort of weather. So we decided to make for Douglas harbour which can be entered at all states of the tide. Accordingly course was altered to 300 degrees magnetic, which at least took us off the wind a little.

BELHOUND battled her way through the high seas and the bilge was pumped at regular intervals until, at last, we could see the lights of Douglas. We were about 11 miles off, and it was beginning to get light. The end of what was the worst passage we had ever had during the ten years we had owned BELHOUND was in sight. Although there was no let-up in either wind or sea, I began to feel a little happier and was looking forward to crawling into a warm dry sleeping bag when suddenly things went much quieter.

The engine had stopped. I thought at first we had snagged something with the propeller, so I put the gear lever in neutral and tried to start the engine again. It turned over but wouldn't start. Tim and I lifted the cockpit sole and had a look but nothing appeared wrong. Tim decided there must be air in the fuel supply and he set to and bled the system. Fuel seemed to be getting through all right, so we tried to start the engine once more. It started, only to cut out again a few seconds later. We then hoisted a storm jib and tried sailing, but after an hour or so we could see we had made little headway and were being blown to the south.

As the wind was now blowing Force 8 at times, and we were all very wet, cold and tired, I decided to report our predicament to the Liverpool Coastguard before the situation got out of hand, in the hope there might be some other vessel in the vicinity able to take us in tow. After a few seconds the Coastguard informed us that the Douglas lifeboat had been launched and was on its way. We hove to and waited. At 07.30 the lifeboat came alongside, we were thrown a line, then towed into Douglas, arriving at 08.45. Over the radio I heard the lifeboat report our safe arrival to Liverpool Coastguard, also informing them that there was now a full gale blowing in Douglas!

We tied BELHOUND alongside and fell into our bunks, not having slept for 24 hours. Arriving home on the Friday I telephoned the engineer who normally services and maintains BELHOUND'S engine for me and told him what had happened. He already knew, having heard about it on the local Manx Radio that morning. He arranged to meet me the next day at the boat to investigate the cause. The following morning I found the engineer already aboard with the engine running. He told me that the engine had stopped because a vacuum had been created when the fuel in the starboard tank had got down to a low level, thus apparently preventing fuel from being drawn from either tank.

He had unscrewed the filler cap of the starboard tank, whereupon the engine fired almost immediately.

I had had new fuel tanks fitted at the end of last season, and the company which supplied and fitted them had neglected to provide them with a venting system. But when I informed them of the trouble this had caused, they said they had copied the original tanks exactly - and that the original tanks appeared not to have any venting system either. I cannot now with any certainty say whether or not this was so, but I'd never experienced any similar fuel problems with the original tanks. Needless to say, the filler cap of each fuel tank has now been fitted with an inverted "U" shaped vent pipe.

A light-hearted end to the Preston Rally came about when it was noticed that after the crew had left GLASS LADY to return home, the burgee and ensign were still flying. Accordingly the following letter was compiled on my behalf by Cyril Porter and David Jones and sent to Paul Shaw, who responded as befitting our oldest and much respected Seadog (No 0).



Peter French.
"Cresta",
27, Chapel Road,
Sarisbury Green,
Hants. SO3 7FB

4th September 1992.

Capt. Paul Shaw,
Yacht "Glass Lady".

Dear Capt. Shaw,

The Marina Master at Preston drew our attention 20.45 hrs. that the burgees were left flying at your port yard-arm, and your red duster was still flying at the top of your mizzen mast.

As I trust you are aware, flag etiquette demands that all flags be struck at sunset, or, when the vessel is left unattended. We are one of the leading Associations in the United Kingdom and it behoves us all to set an example to others.

Marina Master from time to time finds novice sailors or motor-boat drivers who, through sheer ignorance, leave flags flying. However, one does not expect a member of a long-established Association with a reputation for good seamanship, and having a Master Mariner as his mate, to behave in this unseemly manner. Clearly standards have dropped.

The Seadog Association disciplinary committee sat at 08.30 hrs. Tuesday the 1st of September aboard Topaz; in the chair - Peter French Esq., Gentleman, David Jones Esq., Gentleman, scribe to the Manx Courts, and Cyril Porter Esq., W.C. Chain and Bar, to consider this most serious matter of lack of flag etiquette aboard "Glass Lady". After due consideration the committee have decided that your punishment is as follows:-

For the remainder of this season 1992 and the whole of the 1993 sailing season you must arrange to be first in the bar at each yacht club or hostelry, and you must purchase the first round of drinks for all members and their crews that are present or expected to be present in the future.

We trust that you will accept this punishment and that in future you will be more cognizant of the need to protect the reputation of the Association, its officers and its members.

Yours sincerely,

p.p Peter French,
Seadog Association Hon. Secretary.

Copy to:-
David Jones - BELHOUND
Cyril Porter - TOPAZ TOO

The Seadog Owners Association
C/o Peter French
"Cresta"
27 Chapel Road
Sarisbury Green
Hants.
SO3 0FB

F.a.c. Peter French Seadog Association Hon. Secretary.

Dear Sir

There was a time when "Gentlemen" turned a blind Nelsonian eye to a Lady's indiscretions - but then Nelson also had his problems with their Lordships over his "Lady". They were "Dogmatic" in their traditional approach and "Hounded" him until the last "Bell".

This "Lady" submits that tradition is in the eye of the beholder and that leaving her flags flying was an act of foresight as it is traditional to show the colours to the enemy prior to an engagement, and clearly the enemy was in sight and so the orders were "Colours Aft". The "Lady" had harboured doubts as to the honour and true intentions of those berthed nearby, and it would appear that her doubts were fully vindicated when the scurvy bunch boarded her. They swept aboard in a most piratical manner, the fact that no resistance was offered at the time shows only that there were no steadfast and true "Gentlemen" there present to defend the Lady's honour.

The "Lady" knows not and cares not where this scurvy pack appeared from, seeking plunder and a dubious fame. She merely reminds you all that for "Glass" you should read "Diamonds" and like those rare and precious stones her honour is eternal.

Unlike "Topaz" which lacks the sparkle and excellence of the real thing.

P.S. If there is to be a chain gang, then Messrs. French, Jones and Porter should be made founder members and put to scrubbing out the heads at the next meeting, if only to delay their arrival at the bar!!!

Yours eternally

"The Lady".

CONTRIBUTIONS AND DONATIONS

Our most grateful thanks to the Members who made the following contributions and donations towards the running costs of the Association

Walford Taylor	- ALAKIEFIK II - £10 towards publication of the Journal
Gordon Spirit	- ARDESMOR - £7.50 for help in finding a Seadog
Pam Hamlin	- ex ARDESMOR - £1 excess on Burgee
Willy de Crom	- BONA (Belgium) - £20 comm. on sales of engine parts
John Watson	- CANUTE - £14.50 towards expenses
Stan Levis	- DAGOTIA - £10 towards Club funds
Cy Blackwell	- DOGBOAT - £1.50 towards postage
Alec Matthews	- EMRA - £2 commission on sale of Coasters
Stephen Axon	- GACWYN - £10 towards Club expenses
Aubrey Allso	- GUNDOG - £4.16 Excess on purchases
Brian Herve	- ex JACARAH - £100 on sale of JACARAH
Sidney Ellison	- LEONORA - £15 towards expenses
Dick Durham	- NATUNA - £15 two donations (£10 & £5) towards funds
David Ridge	- NICHOLA JANE - £10 for Club funds
Ralph Grundy	- ex NICHOLA JANE - £10 for Club funds
Peter Bragg	- PALAFOX II - £10 for Club funds
Brian King	- PEA GREEN - £10 for Club expenses
Roy Francis	- RESTLESS III - £10 towards Club funds
Ad Beaufort	- SARA OF WYRE (Holland) - £20 for Journal & for postage
Frank Laycock	- SCOUTIDOU - £2.50 - excess on purchases
Ray Claucherty	- SEACANIS - £100 for introduction to SEACANIS
Colin Whimster	- ex SEACANIS (Scotland) - £150 for the introduction to Ray Claucherty who bought SEACANIS
John Nightingale	- SEADOG - £10 towards running costs
Peter Barralet	- SHIELWATER - £10 towards Club expenses
David Mould	- SOYAKAZE - £5 for Club Funds
Robert Allmey	- SPINNER - £25 towards running costs
Peter Binkhorst	- SULISKER (Holland) - £10 towards expenses
John Poxon	- TIWANA - £2.50 for funds
Colin Craik	- TRESCO MAID - £10 to help with expenses
Ludwig Brandt	- TRIASID (Germany) - £10 to help with expenses
Nigel Packman	- WAGTAIL - £1.50 excess on Burgee
Bill Blackman	- NSD member - £10 towards postage
Ken Dewar	- NSD member (France) - £8 comm. on sale of Tee Shirts
John Jacobs	- NSD member (Scotland) - £1.50 excess on sale of Tie
Gill Seward	- NSD member (Eire) - £10 for help in search for a Seadog

When I started drafting this page it was February 1993 and I had every intention of getting your Journal to you by May. As you can see, the amount of interesting items to be included almost overwhelmed me until we had the idea of producing this edition in two books, one principally narrative, the other having a little more technical flavour. Both are equally interesting. This took longer to prepare, holidays came round and time ran out. However, I will print what was written in February and follow on from there.

"Since I retired and took over as Secretary of the Seadog Owners Association I've often wondered how I ever had time to go to work, but I've benefitted from all the hard work in that now I reckon I know more about the workings of a Seadog than most people. I've got files and records that cover many of the problems that arise. Hardly a day passes without a phone call or a letter from a member, either for a chat or with a request for help.

This morning for example, I had a phone call from Germany - Ludwig Brandt (TRIASID) needed a new part for his Walker Log; then came a call from Gordon Pinkard warning me informed about the sale of his boat. Gordon and Joyce Smith (APRISMA) called to collect an engine part I had obtained for them and stopped for coffee, and Ken and Joan Dewar (NSD members who now live in the south of France) dropped in yesterday as they were passing.

Earlier this year when we were spending a few days in Devon we had the pleasure of visiting Vic and Esme Holloway (WEATHERDOG). In April we have been invited by Bart and Morice Groves (AFARON) to spend some time with them at Solva in Wales, also to pass a few days in Sevenoaks with Nigel and Gill Beckman (WASTAIL). Bill Richards has invited us to crew for him in the autumn aboard NEWANDERER for the Annual Gravesend to Tower Bridge Yacht Race on the River Thames, and Franz Huber (ex GLORY) has invited us to visit him in the autumn to see, among other things, the beautiful new Ludwig Canal which joins the River Rhine and the River Danube. Finally, for our summer cruise this year we hope to take DOGMATIC over to Le Havre and up the River Seine to Paris - a trip Olive is very much looking forward to.

There were three very successful Rallies last Year. The Preston Rally on August Bank Holiday was all but washed out and blown away by the atrocious weather, but for the hardy types who made it, it was great - any discomfort far outweighed by legendary northern hospitality and sense of humour. A few weeks later came the end-of-Season Isle of Wight Rally held on the particular weekend in September that saw the start of the Round the World Yacht Race and benefitted from unbelievably good weather. It was encouraging for us to see so many people arrive, particularly the two Deep Seadogs, DOG ROSE and MOHICAN which were able to dry out alongside the harbour wall. The last Rally, our annual Winter Weekend Break, was this year held at a new venue - Maylings Manor at Fareham - the Hotel was filled to overflowing.

Once more, members generosity has kept the Association Funds in the black and I would like to thank everyone who gave donations this year. Some as a thank-you for help the Association gave in selling or finding their Seadog, and others who sent cheques and gave cash at unexpected moments.

Your generosity is greatly appreciated, as without these donations we could not run the Association as we do now, for it would be far too much work ever to attempt to collect annual subscriptions. I'm pleased to say that after paying for this larger than ever edition of our Journal we still have some money left to help with the cost of next year's Journal and the 1994 updated issue of "SEADOGS & THEIR OWNERS".

Apart from donations, the Association does receive a percentage from sales - i.e. Willy de Crom (BONA) makes a donation for every one of his Oil Filters & special Stainless Steel Heat Exchanger Nuts that are sold. Similarly with Ken Dewar and his Tee Shirts (see last year's Journal). Our thanks too for help given by Alec Matthews who produced the Bookmarks given as mementos at Maylings Manor. Don't forget Alec also sells very attractive personalised Seadog Beer Mats.

Inevitably several Seadogs have changed hands and so we have new Members to welcome. We hope you will enjoy your membership of the Association and use its facilities. Help is always at hand if you phone or write (SAE appreciated). And of course all members are welcome to call on us for a coffee should you be down south and anywhere near the Hamble River.

It is now the beginning of the sailing season - I wish you all fair winds and tides, a safe return, and as always look forward to your letters about cruises, problems and how you solved them - in fact anything of interest".

NOVEMBER 1993

Well we did all the things we'd planned and the memories will stay long with us.

Our visit to Bart & Monica (AFARON) was superb, and we had such a happy time in Sevenoaks with Nigel and Gill (WAGTAIL). Our 6 week cruise from the Hamble to Paris and back was a delight. The Gravesend to Tower Bridge Race with Bill (NEWANDERER) was an experience of a lifetime. Despite the weather, the Isle of Wight Rally at Ryde this October was well supported and much enjoyed. Our visit to Germany to Franz & Brigitte (ex GLORY) was so full of interest we didn't want to leave, but had to get back to start organizing the 29/30 January 1994 winter weekend break at Maylings Manor, Fareham.

All these events will be fully written up for the next Journal which, hopefully, will be published before next summer.

To those members who have made donations since April this year, my sincere thanks. These will be acknowledged in the 1994 Journal as the annual accounts are closed at the end of April each year.

Once again I thank you all for your support, and as always thank Olive for her unflinching help. We wish you a Very Happy Christmas and New Year and all you wish yourself - and may you all live to be a hundred, with an extra year to repent! Happy Sailing in '94



Peter French
Honorary Secretary

P.S. We have attractive items for sale in the shape of Seadog Association Ties (£8.50), Brooches (£4.50), Burgees (£10) - they make fine Christmas presents so if you haven't got yours, now is the time to send in your order.

THE SINKING OF CI-MÔR

by Terry James

We had an enjoyable 1992, sailing once again to Brittany (including the Ile de Sein), incurring only an increasingly problematical oil leak due to a worn oil seal outside the timing chain cover.

We kept the vessel in commission, intending a Christmas cruise - however this was not to be. At 7.45 am on Thursday, 3rd December we were telephoned by friends whose house overlooks our mooring that CI-MÔR had sunk, and could be seen semi-submerged on her side.

On arrival at 08.30 we found her on her starboard side, one third of the hull and only the tips of both masts visible above water. Having gathered my thoughts, my first impression was that she must be a total loss, and I could see no way we could get her upright, or close enough to the shore to be craned out.

However, with the help of three boat club members we secured a rope to the top of the main mast, a 48 gallon drum to the top of the mizzen, and with a making tide attempted to pull the vessel closer to the shore and to shallower water. I cut or undid all mooring lines. Miraculous though it may seem, with just the muscle power of four men and a rope attached to a vertical of the club jetty, we actually managed to pull her upright, albeit under water, but shallow enough (we hoped) to be uncovered at low water. I attribute our being able to do this to the fact that as the depth of water increased, her natural righting momentum (even when full of water) meant that the keel weight worked in our favour, despite the very shallow angle of pull from the rope attached to the tip of the mast.

We could do no more; with the tide making, she was now upright and on the bottom in, I guess about 12-15 ft of water. We now had to make preparations for when the tide would be at its lowest (a long wait because it was neaps). Attempts to find a sizeable pump in hire shops were frustrated by the fact that local flooding in Carmarthen had meant that supplies had dried up! We managed to get one in Llanelli, and had to wait until nightfall (about 4.15 pm) to get back on board.

The river was running very swiftly by now, and as soon as the water cleared the top of the coach roof, I was on board with my friend Tony with the petrol-powered pump. Frustratingly we could not start it. But eventually we got it going, with its 3" diameter hose lowered into the cockpit, just as the coamings were cleared by the falling tide. The pump was pushing many gallons a second, and the water was dropping noticeably in the cockpit, so soon we were able to open the main hatch (yes, the keys were still where we hide them!).

But oh! - we were not prepared (even in the dark) for the awful scene. Of course everything that could float, was floating. The water level was now about 2 foot below the main saloon ceiling, so here were all our bunk cushions, our charts (the drawer had opened), and all our many books, sodden and useless. But there was no time to ponder on this now, the pump had stopped and the tide would turn in an hour. Paper, etc., was blocking the inlet. Frantically we worked (already joined by Heather and Tony's wife Margaret). The pump was going again. Thus after some time we could get into the main saloon, but the water level was no longer dropping as fast, (if at all) - so was the cause of CI-MÔR'S sinking now manifesting itself?

in the blackness I suddenly realised, and then saw, that whatever the cause of her sinking, the self-drainers were working in the opposite direction, so, as the water in the cockpit was pumped out, it was being replaced by water flowing up the drains. Stripped down I tried and failed to close the seacocks - the depth of water inside was just too great. However, thank God, the pump was powerful enough to more than keep up with the ingress of water and when she started to float and the weight of water was out of her, water stopped flowing up the drains.

Inspection of her interior failed to show any sign of a leak. The pump however could not completely drain her, since it could not suck to a sufficient height. However, having satisfied ourselves that we had done enough, and having secured to a mooring, we left her for the night. She was floating!

The next few days were dispiriting in the extreme. Heather spent the first day removing all our "perishables" and soft furnishing. There are so many things one would never think about. The four drawers next to the sink had immediately swollen and could not be opened. But we knew there were things like pasta in them!

There was no way we could get her craned out for at least a week, because the tides were too small. On the Saturday Tony and I got the starter and alternator off the engine (a 1.5 Captain). To remove the starter you must first remove the engine, which we managed to do by winching it up about 1 foot with a scaffolding pole across the cockpit coaming. Having washed, cleaned and dried the starter overnight, we replaced it on the Sunday, and put the engine back on its bed.

We pumped what water we could from sump and gearbox, and ran an independent electrical supply direct to the starter (all electrical wiring otherwise disconnected). Turned the engine first by hand, then by power, and then put thin oil into the combustion chambers and the sump, kept turning her over and then changed the oil. We did this a few times. We then replaced the injectors and ran an independent fuel supply to the lift pump (a gallon can and a metre of plastic pipe), bled the system, and hey presto she started! So CI-MØR moved under her own steam on the evening tide to a safer mooring and on the following Saturday she was craned into our club compound.

All this is now history. The boat did not look all that bad, with very little physical damage. But it took some weeks for it to sink in what 10 or so hours under water can do. It was the insurance Assessor who really made me realise that almost everything would have to be replaced. Of course the easy answer would have been to put the boat into the hands of a local yard. But such things are not to be had on the River Towy, and in any case I doubted whether a yard would do either the work to the standard we would wish, or get her back in commission by the start of the 1993 season. In any case we had already done much of the donkey work. So despite both of us being busy professional people, we contrived to get the jobs we could not do organised, scheduled, etc while we got on with the more unpleasant tasks. Everything was removed apart from the main bulkheads. Almost all wood and fabric-based items were thrown out. She was hosed down many, many times and then left to dry out minus windows and hatches.

CI-MØR was re-launched in April 1993. The engine had been rebuilt, she had been rewired from the masthead down, all head linings (one of the most expensive jobs) were renewed, all soft furnishings, and of course everything electrical, from the navigation lights to the instruments replaced - saving the Navstar and VHF which were not on board.

I also took the opportunity to replace the fuel tanks with stainless steel ones, as well as the gate valves for the self-drainers with proper sea-cocks since the latter could not be removed with the fuel tanks in place. (The tanks and cocks were of course not part of the insurance claim).

Apart from a broken bobstay bowsprit-fitting there was no apparent damage to the rigging, and the folding cycles which were stowed in the forepeak, were in any case getting rusty. We must say the Insurers (Holders/North Star) were very helpful and understanding and our friends were wonderful, especially Margaret and Tony who did much of the refurbishing. She is now in tip-top condition, and many jobs that I had been contemplating, especially the rewiring, were done during the refitting.

So why did CI-MOR sink?

We will never know the precise cause. Her mooring is on a tidal river, and the Towy was in flood on the night in question (of 1 in 20 years' magnitude). I believe that during the night a large tree trunk must have got entangled in the mooring lines - (which because of club regulations are fore-and-aft) - and had levered the hull broadside to the fast-flowing fresh-water flood.

Held fore and aft, the force of the water against her keel made her list into the flood, the water then overflowed the coamings, flooded the cockpit, and sank the vessel.

BERNARD LEIGH

who was Managing Director and owner of
Reg Freeman Yachts Ltd. - Builders of the Seadog

Bernard writes from Bournemouth where he now lives:

".....I do not recognise any of the owner's names in the Owners List, although Mr Walford Taylor (ALAKIEFIK) rings a bell, but it is over twenty years since I was involved, and I expect that a lot of the old owners have passed on.

After leaving Hamble I did a stint in the Middle East, and then, based in Malta, cruising to the Greek Islands as a Professional Skipper. I have now returned to my home port, and no longer have any interest in boats, but am very much involved in photography, mainly doing commercial printing.

I do walk along the shore at Parkstone Bay in the mornings, and have noticed four Seadogs on moorings there.

Please convey my kind regards to all the Owners and wish them all good sailing in 1993."

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Honorary Secretary: SEADOG OWNERS ASSOCIATION Tel 0489-573436

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