

AMELIE'S OYSTER WORLD RALLY 2013 - 2014

Stephen & Debbie's Blog

BON VOYAGE

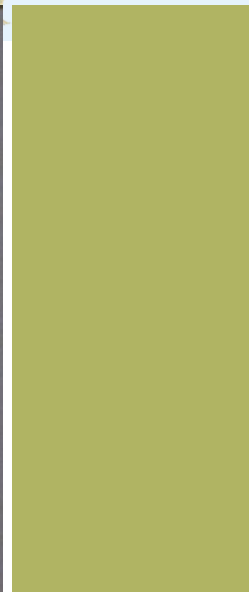
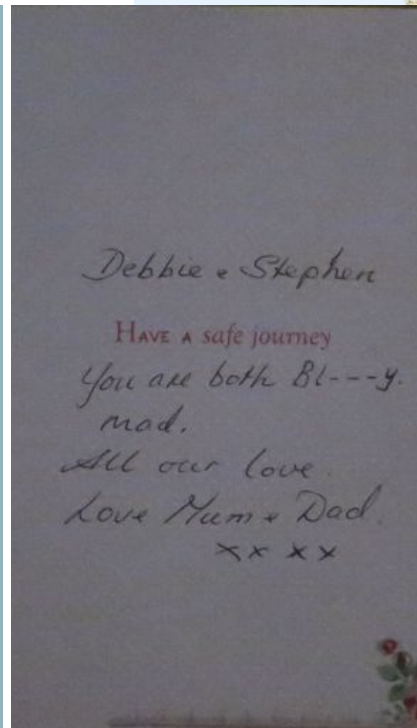
October 31st, 2012

On Sat 27 Oct Family, Friends, past & Present Colleagues joined us to celebrate our new life as sea gypsies - and what a party.

Since then we've been on an emotional roller coaster with goodbyes, to some who we won't see for a long time. Messages keep coming in. The excitement is building - the tears still there.

It was a great relief to leave our letting agent in our house this morning and apart from finishing off the normal household chores we enjoyed a wonderful lunch at the Jack in the Green.

Now settled in a Gatwick Hotel - with our luggage checked in - a bank holiday in Lanzarote means we can't leave for Gran Canaria until Friday. Looking forward to seeing our new friends in Las Palmas on Saturday.

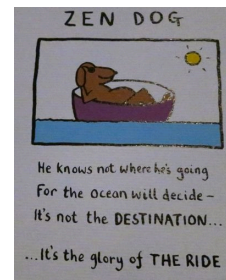


Preparation

- Us - Medical
- Us - Training Courses
- Amelie - Modifications
- Amelie - Spares & Contingency Planning
- Exiting life on land!

YACHT AMELIE

sjgratton@zap-email.com



So this is it Retirement!



SO THIS IS IT RETIREMENT!

November 1st, 2012

So this is it - retirement - clear out the old land life - fly away to a new floating life.

It had seemed liberating to offload our plethora of possessions, gathered over a lifetime of consumerism, and free ourselves of the shackles of modern life, however most of the 'beneficiaries' have been our children. Does this mean we're now burdening them with a life attached to 'things'?

As I'm writing this our Easyjet flight is clearing over the Rias of Portugal as we head towards Lanzarote & our awaiting Oyster 53, Amelie. This 1,500nm will take around 4 hours the next trip of the same distance will take around 300 hours, or 12 days. Life is now going to be lived at a very different pace.

We're landing on a Bank Holiday in the Canary Islands so whether our plan to sort out some food & clear off for Gran Canaria tonight can be fulfilled remains to be seen. If we can't then so what!



Antigua, English Harbour 17° N 61° W

Log 13170

Still in Antigua January 15th, 2013

First email address - the zap email was set up as sjgratton@zap-email.com , ie no full stop! Please use this new address.



Why we have only sailed around the corner thats the real story. We had a 3rd mast check in Antigua (previously 2 in Canaries gave us the all clear)! And they picked up a failure in our mast spreaders. We're temporarily a motor boat whilst they rebuild our spreaders with the mast having been taken off Amelie. It appears that Selden 'dry built' our spreaders. There are Stainless Steel Fittings to the mast which are riveted into the Anodised Aluminium body of the spreaders, without a barrier there has been electrolysis/corrosion which caused the Aluminium to crack and the stainless fittings to bend. To rebuild they've welded Aluminium Plates on the outside of the spreaders and through bolted the new structure before epoxy painting to prevent corrosion. The alternative of new spreaders was a 4 month wait - not good for our rally plans.

The rebuilt spreaders are now complete and the crane is booked for tomorrow to get our mast back on. We then hope to leave Antigua heading for St Lucia for a couple of days before onward to San Blas and then Panama.

Apart from this all well.

We Start at Last January 20th, 2013



Finally we escape Antigua's clutches exactly 2 weeks after the Rally start. Our mast has been taken off, fixed and put back on. We've also taken the time to get both generator & main engine professionally serviced and beefed up our supply of spares for both; had the installation of our Hydrogenerator (Wally Watt & Sea) strengthened; had new fixings for our deck awning; the Rib has been completely overhauled and generally everything has been rubbed & scrubbed.

So now we have a full diesel tank, we provisioned for England yesterday at Epicurean for food and Crab Hole Liquor store for drink so now our waterline has gone down yet more.

So what of Antigua, we will remember the friendly people, the lush hillsides, the green/blue clear sea, Shirley Heights Parties, BBQ's on the dock and of course getting to know the Oyster family and Sun-downers.

Finally the saying of this part of the trip was "they know how to charge here"!

We're now off to Saint Lucia and more from us when we get there.

From a Happy Smiling Amelie



Saint Lucia



JANUARY 22ND, 2013

Fantastic sail from Antigua - beam reach most of the way - hard on the nose for the final 6 hours - not Debbie's favourite form of transport

Saw a Sperm Whale off Guadeloupe - got pretty close and he/she was about the same size as Amelie

We got into Marigot Bay about an hour before dusk and are made up to a mooring buoy in the outer harbour - photos to follow.

Very sad day today for Stephen & all his family his Mum passed away. She was taken into hospital at 04:00 and slipped away around 12:00. Photo attached shows Mum & Dad in Jersey, on Amelie, in 2008 - - rest in peace now Mum.

We managed to erect our very fancy awning without falling out and the Oyster support team would be proud of how it looks. Keeps the sun and the heavy rain downpours off us.

Boat boys are very friendly and leave us in peace when we're eating but are a constant source of bananas, fish and taxi services whenever we want them.

St Lucia, Marigot Harbour 14° N 61° W

Log 13384

Marigot Bay

January 24th, 2013



We got this photo of Marigot Bay from above - very peaceful anchorage at night, very busy in the daytime with other boats, boat boys and tripper boats coming and going.

Swimming off the bathing platform this morning, before breakfast, very chilled.



Castries

January 24th, 2013



Yesterday we did a trip to Castries, capital of Saint Lucia. The picture above is the Cathedral, Church of the Immaculate Conception, and we shared a few quiet reflections in the beautiful interior, and lit a candle for Mum.

Much of Castries is modern have been virtually destroyed three times between 1900 and 1948 by devastating fires.

A major destination for cruise ships, there was one there yesterday with three more expected today.

Compared to St Johns, capital of Antigua, the city was a little disappointing.



OFF TO SAN BLAS AND PANAMA

January 25th, 2013

We've had a great 4 nights in Marigot Bay, Saint Lucia but now it's time to head off across the Caribbean Sea to the San Blas and Panama. We won't get wifi again until around 13 February when we get to Shelter Bay Marina so communication between now and then will be emails on our zap email.

Wish us fair winds and we'll be in touch soon.

Hi Stephen and Debbie, glad to see you made it to the rally, last saw you in Agadir when you were prepping for the rally, hope AMELIE is ok, it was a real pleasure to meet you guys and stay aboard, have fun!! Gavin Jeckell (senior team leader) Oyster yachts, Wroxham.

Gavin Jeckell

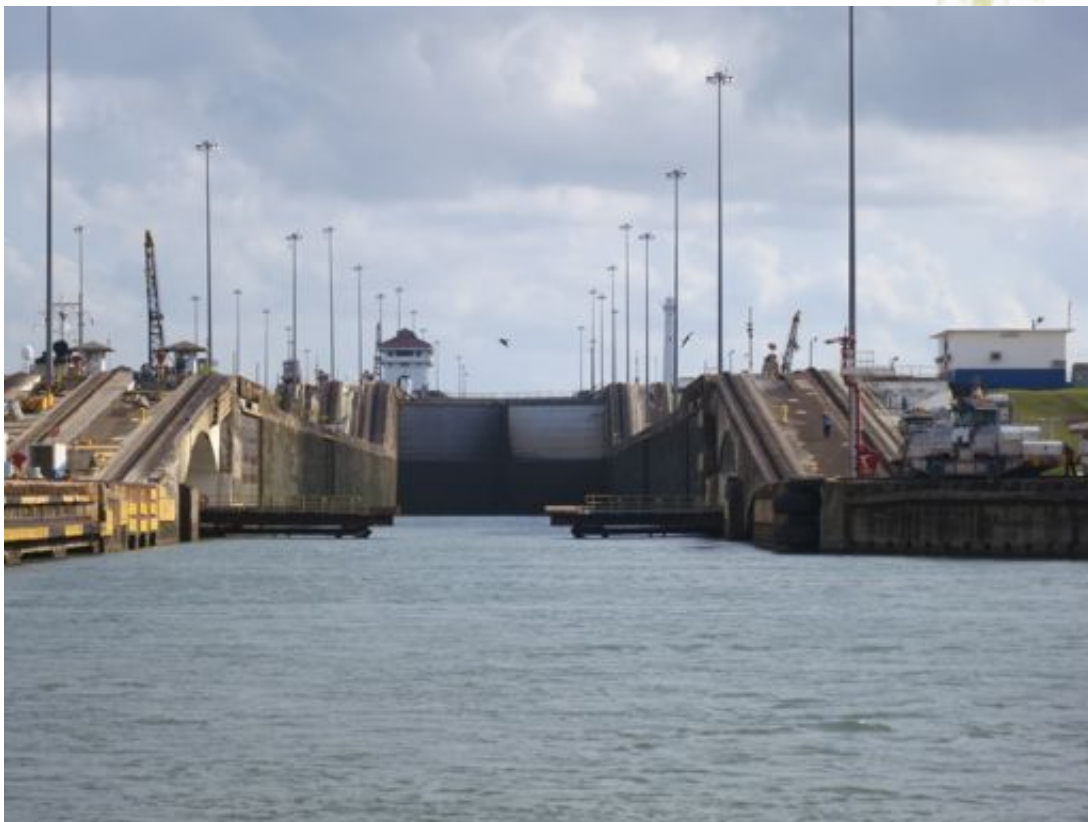
Hi Debbie Sorry to hear about Stephen's Mum glad to hear you are both chilled apart from that. You are missing nothing in the UK weather wise, snow last week +11c today, more rain and possibly snow on the way. Have now found you on the tracker and will enjoy seeing where you and Stephen are over the next year and bit. While you are sailing in the sunshine I shall be slaving in

the library!!!! At least I can appear sensible!!!!

Carol Beardmore



SAN BLAS ISLANDS TO THE PACIFIC



San Blas, West Holandes Cay 10° N 79° W

Log 14539

After a storming sail from St. Lucia to Porvenir in the San Blas Islands, where we beat 200nm in a day in Amelie, we checked in with immigration, navigation and the police. They were based in one house, all the rooms were bare except for a table, 3 chairs and a filing cabinet. No curtains, carpets and bare lightbulbs gave the formalities an austere atmosphere. Formalities were carried out in Spanish, not understood by Stephen, so sign language and broken English got us through. At the end of this process, our passports were stamped, Panamanian cruising permit issued together with the ZARPE (permission to travel to the next port) and relieved of \$300.

We spent 10 days in Western Hollandes Cays, snorkeling (as diving is not permitted), partied onboard Amelie and other Oysters, celebrated Stephen's birthday on the beach watching the sunset and dancing to music. Life there was spent watching the Pelicans fishing around the yachts with the back drop of waving Coconut palms on the shore and of course, sun all day. The Kuna Indians regularly visited the Oysters, paddling in their dugouts, selling lobsters and fish for the BBQ plus their handmade Molasses.

Saying goodbye to Paradise we sailed overnight to Shelter Bay marina, formerly the US naval base, Fort Sherman (when the US operated the Panama Canal). We had a busy few days working on Amelie during the day and partying with the rest of the OWR fleet in the evening and at Fort San Lorenzo, where we had a magnificent Pirates' party and lunch, overlooking the Chagres River, entertained by a local dance troupe.

Amelie was measured for her canal transit. This is a legal requirement and she went from a 53' to a 60' yacht!!!! Preparations for transiting the canal included obtaining 4X38m mooring lines and a minimum of 3 additional crew to handle the lines.

We met our advisor, Roy, at the start of the canal, who was the lead advisor dealing with Debbie from Oyster regarding the Oyster fleet. Transiting the canal. Ships that go through the canal are attached to mules (trains) that pull them through the locks. Yachts are rafted in threes with the outside yachts passing two lines ashore to line handlers. The centre yacht (Amelie) provides propulsion and steerage and the outside yachts are passive. We were in the first raft as Roy wanted to control the passage of all the yachts.

SAN BLAS ISLANDS TO THE PACIFIC (CONTINUED)



The first day was spent going up the first 3 locks away from the Atlantic Ocean and into the Gatun Lake, where we spent the night. The lake proved to be a stunning sight, being a manmade lake created in the middle of a rainforest. We could hear Howling Monkeys and strongly advised not to swim off the boat because of Crocodiles. Early the next morning, Roy boarded Amelie and we motored 30 miles through the lake towards the last three locks. Amelie led the Oyster fleet into the Pacific Ocean with cheers from some of the OWR in the viewing area. We toasted our new ocean as we passed under the Bridge of Americas. We are a long way from Devon now.

Amelie anchored in Playitas, close to Panama City for a few days. Provisioning was required as our last was in Antigua. Retail was on the agenda as it is inexpensive. Frankie, our friendly taxi driver took us everywhere including places that we never wish to visit again. Belated Valentine's dinner in Trump Tower was memorable, food and cocktails great and another chance to wear THE red dress (10 years old and still looking good).

We set sail for Las Perlas, islands in the Gulf of Panama and spent several days in idyllic settings. Our favourite was Isla de San Jose, a private island who welcome visitors. The hotel Hacienda del Mar was empty and they served 28 Oyster owners and their crew from 9 Oysters in the bay, a tasty dinner. Macaws flew around during our pre dinner drinks. The amount of wildlife we saw in the Las Perlas was amazing - hoards of pelicans, frigate birds, terns., dolphins, whales, sharks and turtles. Regrettably swimming was tricky due to the annual infestation of jellyfish who were holidaying in Las Perlas at the same time as us.

At first light following our dinner party at Hacienda del Mar we set sail for the Galapagos Islands (Archipelago de Colon). We had a great sail for the first 12 hours but then have spent the last 36 hours going through the Doldrums, mainly motoring. We now have some wind and currently 600 miles from the Galapagos Islands.

Crossing the equator - here we come!

Panama, Shelter Bay Marina 9° N 80° W

Log 14654



CROSSING THE EQUATOR

March 6th, 2013

Neptune, Amelie and each other before anointing Amelie and the Pacific Ocean with a splash. Virgins no more!!!!

The excitement was palpable and very special as we did it together and our dream goes on, getting better and better.

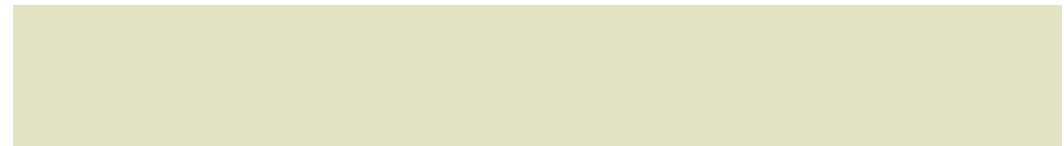
From a very jubilant Amelie

At 22.45 on Tuesday, 5th of March (local time - the photo shows Universal Time and we were in UT-5 hours) Amelie crossed the equator together with her co-virgin crossers, Stephen and Debbie. The log was duly noted and Neptune's ceremony was booked for 10am the following morning. Collecting buckets of water in the dark, perching on the transom and feeling tired is unsafe and we wanted to savour the moment.

After the excitement of crossing the equator we settled down to our respective watches. The night was hot with little wind, so despite

sailing across the equator, we motored for the rest of the night. The sea was calm so enabled us to open our cabin hatch for ventilation whilst sleeping. Debbie was woken at 4am to take her second watch on deck until dawn. Sleepily crawling out of bed she touched something cool and rubbery on the sheets. After gasping and calling Stephen, lights revealed a small squid had flown in through the hatch to settle and die on our bed. Neptune has a sense of humour although Debbie thought this was Stephen's idea of a joke. Shortly before our ceremony we had a huge downpour of rain which was

so refreshing and cleaned the sails and deck. It set the scene for buckets of the Southern Hemisphere briny to find themselves emptied over Stephen and Debbie's heads - we had been suitably ducked according to ancient maritime tradition. We toasted with champagne,



In Search of the Trades

March 17th, 2013



Today is Sunday, 17th of March and we left the Galapagos Islands yesterday afternoon. We are headed south to find the trade winds before we can set a course for the Marquesas. Currently the Doldrums are around the Equator, therefore the Galapagos Islands. If we headed straight for the Marquesas it would take forever. As it is we've unexpectedly been able to sail ever since we lifted our anchor in Academy Bay, Isla Santa Cruz.

We ended up staying 9 days in Santa Cruz, topped with a dive with the sharks on Friday in Floreana (2 hour boat trip from our anchorage), photo as above. Santa Cruz is a wild beautiful island with lush flora changing from the highlands down to the sea.

We've seen Giant Tortoises in the Darwin Museum (research and breeding facility) and in the wild; Whales, Iguanas; Marine Iguanas (swimming across the bay avoiding the water taxis and other craft); Blue-footed Boobies; Rays (some of which flip high out of the water resembling a flexible dinner plate; this behaviour is to rotate the eggs on the females and to remove parasites); Turtles; Pelicans; Frigate birds; variety of Darwin Finches; White-tipped Sharks; countless tropical fish and of course, lots of comical seal lions.

We also went 'caving' in the lava tunnels, ending up on our hands and knees to make it back into the light. Last Monday our watermaker decided to pack up. This is crucial for our fresh water supply on board. Thanks to Eddie Scougall from the Oyster Support team, who identified a blown run capacitor to the high pressure pump and the loan of a new one from Richard Smith on Sotto Vento

gave Eddie what he needed to fix the problem. We've also done a generator and engine check, replacing anodes and impellers as necessary to prepare for the 3,000 mile crossing. Debbie does the intricate replacing of 'O' rings and retrieving bits of impeller whilst Stephen does the taking apart and putting to together again. Sometimes simple tasks take a long time in this humidity and confined spaces. Naturally the language is not always savoury!

During our stay, we enjoyed many a 'Happy Hour' with the rest of the fleet; plenty of eating out at the various restaurants and even wriggled our bodies at the local nightclub - Discotheque de Panga.

Formalities for entering the islands started two months ago when Servigalapagos were appointed our agents and we had to file a crew list, copies of our passports and boat papers. On arrival we were boarded within half an hour by our agent, Yvonne, a military official, national park official and the island immigration officer. Apart from the paperwork the national park official determined that we didn't have any oranges onboard (apart from the ones we had squeezed the night before) and checked that our food in the 'fridge and freezer were in good condition. The immigration officer then enjoyed a refreshing, cold glass of orange juice! We were cleared to go ashore that night but the following morning we took a taxi to an unmarked bungalow in the middle of nowhere to wait for an immigration police officer to arrive and stamp our passports. This process we had to repeat on departure. Every piece of paper, of course, cost money and with the agent, clearance and national park fees, they managed to shake \$700 out of us. Oh well, we guess the new fancy roads that they

In Search of the Trades (continued)



are constructing need to be paid for by someone. Apparently they get 1,000 new visitors arriving in the islands everyday.

Provisioning was mixed but on our final morning we visited the weekly vegetable/fruit market. The choice was outstanding as was the quality. Prices were fine - a huge hand of bananas for \$1. In fact every item was \$1. We had fun with a stall holder who only spoke Spanish and a local shopper (who spoke English) with choosing fresh goods to bring aboard. He explained how to cook some of the items (we still don't know what they are) and how to use/eat them.

We hadn't expected to enjoy the Galapagos Islands as much as we did but the mixture of varied and abundant wildlife together with lots of fun with the fleet made sure we had a great time.

In great spirits, French Polynesian Islands, here comes Amelie!

Galapagos, Isla Santa Cruz 0° S 90° W

Log 15749



9 DEGREES AND WEST TO THE MARQUESAS

March 22nd, 2013

Since leaving Isla Santa Cruz, Galapagos we have been fortunate to have favourable winds that have quickly blown us down to 9 degrees south on a port tack. This is lucky as it is common to have little wind in this sea area and our instincts told us that we may need to use the engine a lot, hence we filled up with Diesel in Galapagos at \$6 a gallon. The engine on Amelie is used as little as possible on passages (unless we are traveling less than 1knot over a period of time). It's main purpose is to get us in and out of port and anchorages. We have used the engine for only one hour in five days.

Peace is.....the sound of water rushing past the hull and the wind in the sails without the constant drone and vibrations of the engine.

Life was at a tilt to starboard (right) but quite manageable.

At 18.37 on Wednesday the 20th of March we turned towards the West (right) in the direction of the Marquesas. As we are writing this blog we have 2,480 nautical miles to go and the boat is sailing flat. Debbie is also eating peanuts out of Stephen's hand as he doesn't want oily fingers on his Macbook keyboard! See photo for life in the office!

The only wildlife we have seen (apart from ourselves) are thousands of flying fish and the odd seabird. This is spectacular at night when the flying fish skim across the waves illuminated by our navigation lights. We are entertained by a couple of light-coloured birds swooping down in our lights to fish. Life is never boring at sea.

Twice a day we are in contact by way of the SSB (single side band) radio with Yantina (fleet radio controller). We give our position, distance to finish and details of wind in our

area. If any of us have any issues with our boats or equipment, we generally share our ideas for solutions and most often a remedy is gained from the fleet. There is a sense of comfort and support with this twice daily ritual. There is normally some banter regarding supper ideas; who has caught a fish and how big it is and despite this being a rally there is a sense of competitiveness regarding who will be the first in port. Amelie being one of the smallest vessels is generally one of the last in but we are not in a rush, just enjoying the glorious sailing.

Since our departure we have spotted only one container ship about 5nm from us, possibly heading towards Peru.

Star and planet gazing is a feature of our night watches and Stephen has downloaded the 'Star Walk' app on our iPads. We are keen to see the Crux (southern cross) which

is a small constellation but visible in the Southern Hemisphere.

We had the best starter of the voyage last night (the only one so far) - Globe Artichokes leaves dipped in melted butter followed by Teriyaki Giant Prawns with noodles. Very happy, full tummies last night.

Stephen has cast our hand fishing line. Our best lure which was attached by wire was bitten straight through. The famous one that got away! This why we won't go swimming in these vast oceans when becalmed, there are always creatures looking for their next meal. The second lure is now on the line and we are hoping for fresh fish for supper - perhaps we will defrost something from the freezer as a back-up plan.

If the trade winds do as they're told we should be heading due west for the next two weeks and then we'll be at the Marquesas.



IN THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE

March 28th, 2013

We are presently 1,500nm from any land and as far as we know, this is as remote as it gets. We've had the most fabulous sailing and now in our twelfth day, we've only motored for 1 hour since leaving the Galapagos Islands.

The story so far, starting with the not so good. Despite the rest of the OWR fleet catching Tuna, Wahoo, Mahi-Mahi and Sailfish, Amelie's skipper managed to land a tuna which leapt overboard when it spied the humane killer in the form of a bottle of rum heading in it's direction. We identified it later as a Blue-finned Tuna, displaying beautiful, shimmering colours and weighing approximately 7kgs. We haven't had a bite since, he/she has obviously warned his/her friends. Each morning we clear up the carnage on the decks - dead flying fish and squid that have launched themselves onto Amelie overnight.

Another minor setback has been "Wally" (hydrogenerator). The stainless steel fitting holding Wally to the transom has failed. We tried to jury rig Wally back in place using some vectra which gave us an extra 12 hours before we had to lift Wally. We are looking forward to finding a welder who can fabricate something more substantial. We are needing to run the generator for 4 hours a day instead of 2, therefore using more diesel. You can see from the photo that the welding on 2 of the 3 lugs through which the pin fits has failed and the straight pin is now very bent!

Apart from this everything on board has been working well. Our sleep patterns are tuned into life at sea and we've been taking turns in preparing supper with Debbie always doing the washing up.....nothing changes there I suppose!

The weather has been fair with the odd rain shower that has washed the salt from the stainless steel, decks and rinsed the sails.

The Pacific is known as the peaceful ocean however we have experienced some huge swells and the odd wave turns Amelie into a 53' surfboard.

The last few nights have not been dark since we are in a full moon phase and it restricts the quality of stargazing. The rising of the moon in the past has caused alarm as initially it resembles a huge, illuminated vessel on the horizon which is obviously not depicted on AIS (Automatic Identification System) and radar.

Sunsets have been occluded by cloud but the dying rays give us a beautiful display of coloured lights raining behind and through the clouds. One evening the setting sun looked as if there was a huge fire in the

ocean. We experience dusk here unlike off the African coast and sailing across the Atlantic. In those areas, daylight and darkness changed like a flick of a switch.

Trade wind clouds are distinctive and the easiest way to describe them, is to watch the start of "The Simpsons" - those clouds are trade wind clouds. We have "Simpson" skies all the time now we are 10 degrees south. The wind strength and direction are consistent (east to southeast, 15-20kts); the twin headsails (Yankees) are flying and we are heading directly to the Marquesas - checking in at Taiohae Bay, Nuku Hiva around the 5th/6th of April.

Wishing everyone a Happy Easter.



MAVE MAI NUKU HIVA

April 16th, 2013

Amelie and her crew arrived in the Bay of Taioia'e on Saturday 7 April at 06:30 hrs, to the fragrance of the islands' flowers. We set the bower and kedge anchor to stop any uncomfortable rolling. A boat normally lies on a single anchor with its nose into the wind, if there is a swell from a different direction then you put out a second anchor from the stern to keep the nose into the swell. We lowered the Rib and headed for shore to the village of Taioha'e. The welcome and the beauty of the island was preparing us for a fantastic stay.

The first few days were about catching up on our sleep, laundry, minor boat repairs interspersed with lunches ashore, fresh fruit platters for breakfast and Oyster Happy Hours at various establishments. Menus were similar in all the restaurants/cafes and universally the best option was Poisson Cru (fish marinated in Lime Juice and Coconut Water) - delicious.

On Tuesday the 9th we went on the Aranui 3 cargo ship and were given a talk on the remoteness of the Marquesas (Te Henua 'Enana - The Land of Men) and certain unique aspects of its' marine environment. For example, apart from the polar regions the Marquesas have the greatest density of plankton creating the opportunity for abundant and varied fish stocks. Scientists keep 'discovering' new fish species which the locals have been naming, fishing and eating for centuries. Their heritage is based on the ocean most vividly told by the Polynesian stories of how the islands were formed and their navigation expertise using the stars.

We came to understand why the islands were so lush and many a time we were caught in torrential downpours, sometimes lasting for hours. Amelie got a good fresh water wash most days.

When we arrived, Amelie's waterline had created its' own marine garden which thanks to Jan from Madagascar and his hard work has been restored to gleaming white fibreglass.

On Thursday we saw some of the interior of Nuku Hiva as we went off road quad biking. The indigenous trees and countryside was awesome as you can see from the photograph. The Tikis (stone statues) which are symbolic are everywhere in various forms and sizes. However the majority of the central part of the island was a harebrained EU project when all the natural habitat was displaced by a pine forest. This was undertaken at a huge cost but with no management the trees are worthless on the international market. We followed the old airport road which in good weather took four and a half hours to travel 16 km, if it rained the road became impassable and visitors to the island were ferried from the airport to the

main village by fishing boat which took three and a half hours - a wet and bumpy ride.

The highlight of this experience was to summit Mount Tekao (1,224 m) with its' panoramic views. During the day we passed traditional horse backed hunters with their guns cocked and dogs running alongside. Flour bags with their catch was slung across the horses.

Friday the 12th of April was a day of celebration as the islanders gathered to welcome the Oyster fleet to the French Polynesian Islands. The festivities started on Taioha'e beach with welcome songs, Marquesan drums and dancing - the Haka and the Pig dance - only performed by the men. We had an afternoon of further dancing and drumming by the local children and teenagers, dressed in traditional costume and headdresses. The dancing expressed their culture and beliefs - very moving.



MAVE MAI NUKU HIVA (Continued)

We were encouraged to taste the fruits of the islands including dried banana, pamplemousse (very sweet grapefruit), guava, mango, papaya, pineapple, pawpaw and fermented breadfruit (Kaadu). We were offered 'Kumu hei' a fragrant bouquet which is traditionally worn in the hair. This is called a 'love potion' and said to have aphrodisiac properties. There were other activities i.e coconut shaving, making seed jewellery, wood carvings and the chance to get a tattoo. Stephen took part in the bareback horse riding on the beach whilst others paddled the traditional outrigger canoe.

Later that evening we ate a Marquesan feast of pork, chicken and goat cooked in the earth ovens; raw crabs, octopus in coconut milk and many other delicacies complimented by more dancing and drumming. The contrast between the male haka and pig dances (powerful and virile) with that of the feminine dances which are

graceful and emotional is tangible. Debbie was invited to dance with the women, her attempt was interesting and she managed it without dislocating her hip.

The evening continued on a more modern theme - a disco and everyone joined in - a memorable day. The following day with aching joints we accompanied two other Oysters to Daniel's Bay (Haku'i) where we spent the afternoon on a fabulous walk towards the Vaipo waterfall. We were stung by the pest of the Marquesas - Nonos - stinging insects which are on the beaches. As we passed through the village we bought green coconuts, the tops sliced off with a machete and we drank the thirst quenching coconut water. Breadfruits, pamplemousse, mangoes, pineapples and coconuts were in abundance. Stephen had a near miss from a falling coconut, which split about a metre from his head. Many varieties of Hibiscus

lined the path and the fragrance of the flowers in the air enhanced the experience.

We returned to the Ribs to find that the tide had come in and seawater and sand was pouring into the boats. Fully clothed we dragged the bows of the boats into the swell while others were baling. Both Ribs started first time and the seawater eased the itching of the stings of the Nonos. BBQ and drinks for 9 aboard Amelie finished off another special day in paradise.

Sunday afternoon we upped anchor and are presently sailing towards the 'Archipel des Tuamotu' - first stop Makemo, then

Fakarava for some independent diving and finally the pink sandy beaches of Rangiroa before heading to the Society Islands and the island of Tahiti, towards the end of the month.

A noho oe, Goodbye.

Nuku Hiva, Taiohae Bay 9° N 140° W

Log 19085



BEAUTY IN THE DANGEROUS ARCHIPELAGO

April 25th, 2013

The Tuamotu Islands are the oldest of the French Polynesian Islands; almost all of them are atolls with lagoons and motus (coral outcrops). Navigation through the passes and into the anchorages are by "eyeball" with the backup of electronics. The atolls are low lying, some are rarely seen until 10 nm (by Radar picking up the coconut palms on the islands), or submerged reefs and around 2 nm, if there is the presence of white water (breaking waves) - hence they were called the dangerous archipelago.

The soil is stony coral and very little is grown on the Tuamotu except coconuts and the farming of black pearls. We had stocked up Amelie with fresh produce in Nuku Hiva before we had left.

Makemo (Philipps Island) is 40 miles long and 10 miles across the lagoon, there is nothing but water in the centre of these

atolls, the Island proper has disappeared long ago. Its like having an ocean within an ocean - outside the reef is the Pacific with its normal waves and currents, inside is a quiet ocean teeming with fish. We entered the lagoon at slack water low by Passe Arikitamiro on the North East side, with the village of Pouheva on the West of the pass, the channel is divided into three by a coral reef, Rikiri, and a coral shoal, Ekoedo. The passes can be turbulent with fast flowing currents - good visibility and slack water is essential. Amelie entered just after low water with 2 knots of current against us, according to the pilot book this would strengthen to 9 knots by mid tide.

The first thing that struck us was the clarity of the water, in 20 metres we could see all the details on the seabed. Having anchored in 17 metres we were able to snorkel and see all 70 metres of chain and the anchor. On our first step on land we met the friendly

Gendarme who welcomed us without any entry formalities, the only thing we exchanged were broad smiles. We wandered around the village and stumbled upon a Boulangerie with fresh baguettes warm out of the oven. Further along the path we were surprised to find a decent supermarket, a superb French restaurant owned by chef Moana and a pizza parlour. Over our stay we had two excellent meals at Moanas, a mixture of French and local cuisine, with some of the other OWR boats.

Stephen discovered a Post Office and bought some more stamps for the logbook. The gift shop on the jetty sold handmade crafts, with the ladies actively engaged in shell sculptures, jewelry making, weaving and basket making. Some of the traditional costumes and headdresses were for sale.

Snorkeling and diving around the reef was fun. Unfortunately some of the coral was

dead or dying but there were areas that were abundant with marine life. A huge Moray Eel and several small black tipped sharks were spotted amongst the colourful variety of fish.

Makemo is a busy place with singing and drumming heard throughout the day. As we walked to the Restaurant in the evenings we passed the church where the angelic voices of the children filtered out into the evening air. A magical moment. The shrine outside the church is decorated with abalone shells and black pearls. Unfortunately it was observed that some of the black pearls had been prised off.

Amelie's tender was subjected to some violation as we returned to find her battery had been stolen and the pods were deflated. We reported the crime to the police who promised that if they found the offenders they would get them to clean Amelie on our return next year.

Beauty in the dangerous archipelago (Continued)



Tuamotu, Isle Makemo 17° S 145° W

Log 19609

We left Makemo on Monday and had a fantastic sail to Fakarava, a beautiful atoll with thatched huts on the beach (as you can see on the attached photo). The diving here is reported to be magnificent but alas time has whizzed by. We snorkeled on the reefs close to Amelie and went swimming with the Black Tipped Sharks - awesome.

We left the Tuamotus today for Tahiti - looking forward to greeting Jaz when she arrives on Monday. We knew the Tuamotus would be beautiful from the photos in the Pilot Books however the real thing was totally breathtaking and beckons us for a longer stay next time.

Still sailing - Still smiling





French Polynesia May 26th, 2013

We left you as we were leaving Fakarava to sail to Tahiti but neglected to tell you that we left Henry, one of Tony's crew from Wolfhound, in a dinghy hanging onto a buoy. This was not his daily exercise but his kind attempt to help us take a mooring buoy in the pass. As we battled with the tide in the pass and observed how close the buoy was to the reef, we abandoned our planned last night with Tony and Henry in Fakarava and set sail to Tahiti.

French Polynesian culture is focused on the ocean and we were appropriately welcomed into the pass through the reef into Tahiti by exuberant dolphins. We next had a 'first' for Amelie. We had to wait for a Boeing jet to take off. The lagoon from the pass to the marina cuts across the airport runway and we awaited clearance to cross from Papeete flight tower. In the event we sailed around in circles until the L.A flight had taken off and we were given clearance to cross. During

our waiting time we were entertained by a local fisherman in his dugout canoe spearfishing with a wooden spear - surreal!

Marina Taina proved to be welcoming, helpful and efficient. Within 15 minutes of arrival, the marina staff removed 'M' (poorly RIB) and had her sitting forlornly in a dinghy stand on the dockside. Our experience with the company who finally repaired her was not so good. It took them almost a week to collect 'M' and at the moment of her relaunch it was discovered that they had lost her plug (with a 'it wasn't our problem' attitude) and we nearly lost the plot. It was eventually sorted with the help of Philippe (Marina Manager) and Bob from Crazy Daisy who enabled her to take to sea again.

Papeete itself was pretty run down and a disappointment however Tahiti did redeem herself in other ways, which we will now tell you about.

First, Jaz joined us, her flight arriving at 5am - we draped the traditional floral garland around her neck and welcomed her to paradise. That day we went black pearl shopping and having been to the 'Pearl Museum' which was really a 'Robert Wan' showroom and shop, we then visited pretty well every other pearl shop in Papeete - and there were lots. We finally agreed on who would take our money and Jaz got her birthday present; Katie a slightly belated one and for good order, Debbie got a very belated birthday gift. Well worth waiting for.

The following day we resolved that Amelie should not be the only boat in the fleet not to have caught her supper. Yves from Satika took Stephen shopping for some serious fishing equipment. That evening the Tahiti Tourist Board had organised an event for the Oyster World Rally fleet. We were treated to traditional dancing, drumming, garland making, pareo tying and fire dancing (the

youngest looking only around 5 years old). The highlight of the evening was a traditional Skippers Blessing which was basically: a very warm welcome to their island, enjoy yourselves and make sure you know you're leaving! Stephen was anointed with coconut milk and adorned with a garland by one of the beautiful Polynesian girls. This was an improvement on the OSTAR blessing when the vicar forgot the words of the Lords Prayer!

Michael and Serena from Fario, who sadly are no longer in the fleet, had entrusted us with a 1988 Pomerol to be drunk in Tahiti. We shared this with Richard and Claire from Sotto Vento in trepidation that the age and the traveling may not have fared well for the wine - it was delicious and we toasted absent friends.





French Polynesia (Continued)

Before setting sail from Tahiti we celebrated Jaz's birthday and the highly recommended restaurant looked like a beach shack (well it was a beach shack) but they served excellent French/Marquesan cuisine overlooking the reef. In the evening the youngsters of the fleet (oh well not us then!) took it upon themselves to ensure Jaz would have a birthday never to forget - including gatecrashing a Super yacht pontoon party. For us the following day (for Jaz a continuation of her party landing) we did the dreaded provisioning trip to Carrefour with Jaz nursing a hangover (makes a change from the hospital patients). It was the best supermarket since Antigua and we duly filled 4 trolleys at huge expense. We need to eat it all before Australia because of their restrictions on food imports.

Our next stop was Cooks Bay, Moorea with stunning mountains and terrain as a backdrop to the anchorage. The snorkeling

was a disappointment as the visibility was poor. The original plan from Moorea was to sail to Raiatea and join in the Pearl Regatta. A lively overnight sail, motoring through a narrow pass into a fabulous anchorage lifted our spirits only to be dashed later that day. The heavens opened for almost 4 days, visibility was poor and various boat equipment issues caused us to abandon plans to join the Regatta. This was later to prove a bonus for Jaz who, whilst missing a few Regatta parties, ended up swimming with Tahitian Stingrays in Tahaa instead. Tahaa proved to be a great spot (photo of Skipper, 1st Mate and M attached) and during our 6 nights we had 3 trips to the 5 star Relais & Chateau Hotel restaurant and 3 boat parties with other Oyster World Rally yachts in the anchorage. Snorkeling in the Coral Garden was stunning and some great views from Amelie of Bora Bora.

Our last port of call in French Polynesia was Bora Bora and our expectations had been tainted by gossip of hotels and commercialism. The reality is that Bora Bora is about the most beautiful island we have seen so far. We took an off road 4x4 tour of the island, and yes Landrovers even make it this far. Joshua our guide was both entertaining and informative. Together with Paul and Trish from Babe, we got some great views of the island, lagoon and reef. We hadn't known that Cook had been unable to enter Bora Bora (originally known as Pora Pora) because the only pass was deep enough only for canoes. It wasn't until the American occupation in 1943, when they blasted a deep passage in the coral reef, that allowed access for their water craft and later the OWR fleet. We found the people really helpful and friendly, even towing a revitalised 'M' to the fuel dock when the skipper set out without enough petrol. A valuable chance for the girls to do some

unsupervised retail of local crafts, including a coconut shell bikini top!

There were a number of meals ashore but they were eclipsed by the farewell party at Bloody Mary's. They opened especially for us on the Sunday evening, band and crews partied with gusto on a floor of sand. Yes, we did end the evening drinking Bloody Marys. The party continued on Amelie until the early hours of Jaz's last day. Her return now included a short flight from Bora Bora to Tahiti and we joined her on the water taxi to the airport. A few tears later, Amelie was back to two crew.

Now on our way to Tonga - we will be in touch.

Tahiti, Marina Taina 18° S 150° W

Log 19993

Adventures on the high sea

May 29th, 2013

Once upon a time (last Wednesday) on a hot, sultry day on a mooring buoy in Bora Bora, the crew of Amelie were completing their last minute inspections of the boat before venturing out to sea to Tonga (1,300 nm). The crew (always prepared!) checked the generator oil, fan belt, wasting anode and impeller and happily turned on the generator to test its function. The generator, engine and sails are our lifelines - the generator runs the watermaker, cooker and charges our elderly batteries. Gertie the generator fired into life but after about 10 minutes stopped. We had forgotten to switch back on the seawater intake and the cut off switch halted the generator to prevent any further overheating and damage, Alas the impeller was in bits - not a big problem as between us we extracted all the pieces from the heat exchanger and fitted a new one. The generator failed to fire up. Eddie from Oyster advised us to press the reset button - we didn't know we had one! Stephen went off to collect Eddie from the shore and within seconds, using only his primary digit, the generator started. Relieved that the generator was working but delayed by all the fiddling about we postponed our

leaving until first light the next day. A real hardship as we had a nice supper ashore.

The following day our first port of call was the fuel dock. We did have half a tank of diesel but like to have a full tank for longer trips for all eventualities. We were told they were all sold out which, at first, produced the first expletives of the trip but we later discovered this was a blessing in disguise since those that filled up the day before, from the near empty fuel station, were getting problems with dirty fuel and water

Day 2 of the trip we discovered that two of our shrouds had broken single strands of the stainless steel wire. We would need to nurse our rig and keep a careful eye on further developments to make sure the situation didn't worsen. We also put on the running backstays to take some pressure off the shrouds (also helps support the mast if they were to fail).

The next day, whilst creating a seafood risotto the Yankee sail took off from the sheet which had parted at the end of the spinnaker pole. Remarkably we were prepared for this and had made up the lazy

Yankee sheet on the same side as the working sheet and were able to quickly furl away the sail and get on with our supper plans. We waited for daylight before dropping the Yankee and retying the sheets.

In a very roly sea Debbie started to look off-colour and her appetite dropped (a sure sign of impending doom!) and even the skipper had a dodgy tummy. As the next couple of days rolled by there was no improvement, the first mate was very sleepy, not much use to the skipper and becoming confused (the skipper thought this was normal!). The skipper did however have a brain wave (also hard to imagine!) that perhaps we were suffering from carbon monoxide poisoning. Why didn't the alarm warn us?! We had not been running the main engine but had made frequent use of the generator and remembering our earlier run in with Gertie, we investigated her first.

Soot and more soot. Yes, we had a bout of carbon monoxide poisoning. The connection from the exhaust manifold to the exhaust elbow had failed and the exhaust fumes were no longer leaving the boat. Again we had this covered as we had a spare exhaust

elbow and together with calls to our Westerbeke guru, Bob from Crazy Daisy, we set about to replace the elbow. By now it was of course dark. We did remember to switch off the seawater before taking apart the plumbing but had forgotten to switch off the power supply. When the skipper started removing the screws to the heat sensor a rather large spark erupted from the space and the first mate scrambled to switch off the power. Apart from that we were doing pretty well! Instructions attached to the new elbow informed us of the need for a high temperature sealant to secure the connection of the gasket between manifold and elbow - bugger what's that? Another phone call to Bob suggested that without gasket sealant the first mate should scrub both surfaces scrupulously clean - and then pray. The skipper buried himself in the 'odds and sods' bag only to discover we did have the Red high temperature sealant after all, he then remembered he had only just bought it in Bora Bora as a gasket maker - the prayer had been answered even before we had prayed. Meanwhile first mate was scrubbing. Out came the old elbow, in went the new, electrics on, seawater on and then nothing!



Adventures on the high sea (Continued)

Scratching our heads we then remembered the spark. We had blown the fuse - where are the spare fuses? We were prepared again and our iStorage inventory program on the iPad directed us straight to them - Simple! New fuse = generator now running. We charged up the batteries and started our night watch slightly later than planned. Some hours later while first mate was on watch the troublesome automatic bilge pump came back to life and on checking the bilges running water was heard - generator here we go again? Correct - the seawater was pouring from one of the hoses attached to the exhaust elbow. Our friend Bob was called again since any new hose was

several days away in Tonga and he suggested we find something to join a separated hose. The search commenced for some steel piping to enable us to cut away the split part of the hose and restore its length with piping in the middle. Breakfast was helping our thinking process as we motor sailed to restore charge to our elderly batteries - suddenly the mainsail took off from the end of the boom. The stitching was shot and we rolled it away to await some attention in Tonga. We looked at each other and laughed insanely - what else can you do?

To summarise that at that point we had no generator and therefore no hot food, no watermaking and no aircon - but could charge the batteries with the main engine and we also had no mainsail but could, in enough wind, sail on Yankee alone - at that moment we had no wind. Tonga 370 nm away. Replenished by breakfast we searched our spares list and fell upon plumbing for a new tap to serve remineralised water from the watermaker - not yet fitted. We found the ideal length of stainless steel piping and hey presto we were only a mainsail down and Debbie could have hot food and limitless showers. And yes it did work.

On a very high note Stephen (after 6 months of patience) successfully caught an *Acanthocybium solandri* (no its not a tropical disease) - a 4 foot Wahoo - guess what's for supper tonight. Picture attached - not photo shopped!

If anyone needs an electrician, plumber, generator engineer or advise on fishing - please seek out an expert!

So much for plain sailing but from a tired, hungry yet elated Amelie

We'll be in touch soon.



Tongan Teaser

June 9th, 2013

Anchoring far enough away to avoid encroaching into his space, put us in the sight of rocks, the sound of breaking water and the uncertain of unknown territory. We did end up having a comfortable night, catching up on much needed sleep and respite from the high winds and enormous seas.

We eventually made it to port on the Saturday afternoon and completed the formalities with the Tongan officials in a friendly and welcoming manner. Welcome to Tonga.

The harbour was full of Oysters but not their crew as they had gone to the Botanical Gardens to enjoy a traditional Tongan feast - Lu pulu, roasted suckling pig which are cooked in an underground oven ('umu').

We had the inevitable list of jobs to be done on Amelie, however the two most important

being the repair of the mainsail and the rigging would prove to be beyond Tongan help and would need to await our visit to Fiji.

The northern islands of Tonga are truly beautiful, heavily wooded, white beaches and the bluest waters. The reef protecting the lagoon from the waves produced idyllic sailing conditions. The waters were clear although the harbour was infested with "non stinging" jellyfish.

We had many fun days and evenings but one day was extremely special - Thursday. Tonga is one of the poorest nations in the world with an average income equivalent to \$4,500 per year. There is no state support for education or social benefits. Oyster had arranged for snorkeling equipment to be supplied to a project which most of us had supported.

One particular school was commended to us for their work with under privileged children - Fiji Kindy, run by a living angel, Dorothy and her dedicated team of teachers. Her mission was to send her children into higher education with not only the basic education skills but with the ability of free thinking and citizenship based on a broad Christian concept.

We spent the morning in their school, looking at their work, joining in their dancing, talking to them about our life on the sea and the pinnacle, the children singing the Lord's Prayer to us - beautiful beyond words. We had taken a quantity of clothes, electrical goods, notebooks, pencils, erasers, sharpeners, torch and a fishing rod, which was gratefully received. We also wanted to know how we could help with any priorities that they had. The children do not have parks or proper play equipment, not all of them can swim despite

their lives being heavily influenced by the ocean. Like all children they have loads of energy that sandpits can't contain. Dorothy and her team were saving to buy a secondhand trampoline which we offered to buy and collect there and then - unfortunately it had been sold. By sheer coincidence we heard that a delivery of new trampolines were coming to the island in July, to be donated to the schools in the area. The lovely Mike from the Aquarium Cafe hopes to get one for the Fiji Kindy. We left the school with a skip in our step and laden with fruit that each child had brought in that morning plus Debbie was given two traditional tapas made from pandanus leaves, from the teachers, one of which had been handed down from mother to daughter. Debbie promised to wear them at various events with the respect that they command.



Tongan Teaser (Continued)

That afternoon we joined our friends from Satika and went off road safari in a kart around the island. Dogs, children, pigs, horses, cows, goats and fruit bats were part of the entertainment. Many waving and beaming smiles as we passed. The views were spectacular and the coastline treacherous but majestic. The afternoon sun gently dipping as we sat in the Botanical Gardens sipping a cold beer and listening to the owner explaining his lifetime dream of this "Garden of Eden". Meanwhile his wife, Lucy, was feeding us Taro chips and homemade mango chutney which until six months ago she made in the evenings by the light of a hurricane lamp. She was celebrating her good fortune at having electricity which we take for granted.

Later that evening we were invited to join a group of ex pats for supper at Laurie and

Don's. We talked about their lives on the island and their views of the Tongan way of life - fascinating. Tonga is the only Pacific country not to have been controlled by foreign powers and is the last remaining Polynesian monarchy. The family is at the centre of Tongan life and everything is communal. The islands were converted to Christianity by Methodist missionaries in the 1820s who sold the idea of eternal life for everyone, whilst their old beliefs reserved this for the Royals and the nobles (5% of the population). Food became an important topic of the evening particularly what we craved and couldn't readily obtain. HP sauce was high on the list with Don parting with his last drop.

This was a "stand out" day and of all the places we have visited has produced the

strongest desire to return in the future, to catch up with our new friends.

Tonga's national sport is rugby and as Exeter Chief supporters and general rugby fans, we watched a senior boys' semifinal game. Passion, discipline and a huge amount of support provided us with another lasting memory of Tonga.

Most of the OWR joined up for one last meal ashore and a few of us went to a Tongan nightclub to taste Tongan nightlife. We were old enough to be their parents and the

shortest skirts and highest heels were adorning the Faka Ladies. It's amazing that a country so deeply religious is so accepting of men wishing to dress up as women. The club closed at 1am according to local law which was enforced by the local police who escorted us back to our dinghies.

Lasting, teasing memories of a quick stop in Tonga, now sailing to the Lau Islands, Fiji.

'Alu a

Amelie

Tonga, Neiafu 19° S 174° W

Log 21543



Lau Islands, Vanua Balavu 17° S 179° W

Log 21886

Lau Blog

June 17th, 2013

Bula or Cola (pronounced thola, in western Fiji).....Hello.

We arrived late last Monday afternoon in Vanua Balavu (Long Island) in the northern Lau Islands, Fiji. The Lau group of islands are remote and there have been restrictive permits in the past - as a special dispensation the OWR fleet were cleared in and out of Vanua Balavu. The islands are off the tourist track - no shopping, stores, restaurants, bars or resorts - completely unspoilt. The Fijians on these islands follow strong traditions passed down over the centuries and as visitors, we had strict guidelines to respect their culture.

We navigated the picturesque Tongan passage into the lagoon using old fashioned navigation skills - binoculars and eyesight. The electronic charts are not accurate for this area and there were plenty of hazards to

avoid i.e. rocks, coral heads, shallows and the stunning reef.

We anchored in the fjord type harbour called the 'Turquoise harbour', Mbavatu, surrounded by the Bavatu plantation. After customs clearance ashore at the 'Royal Exploring Isles Yacht Squadron' (the only yacht club in the world that doesn't sell beer, in fact it doesn't sell anything at all but the welcome was exceptional) which was opened and given royal approval by the late King of Tonga in the last decade, we settled down on board for an early supper and a good night's sleep.

The following day we relaxed visiting other OWR yachts and enjoying their hospitality. Our welcome party to Fiji was organised ashore and we were honoured with tribal dances from the men and women from a nearby village, followed by a delectable banquet of coconut crab, pork, clams, taro

and locally caught fish - a truly beautiful evening.

The following day we joined the snorkelling safari in 'M' and visited the fabulous Bay of Islands - fantastic snorkelling, caving and swimming in cool waters. The rest of the week was spent snorkelling, a particularly special BBQ on a nearby beach sharing food and wine with our friends and generally relaxing with plenty of laughter.

We were encouraged to walk through the plantation to the western outlook over the Bay of Islands. Several wrong turns and retracing our footsteps brought us to the most magnificent sight (see photograph) erupting from our viewpoint amongst the rocks and trees. Along the way we came across huge spider webs with red/black stripy monsters in the middle looking menacing and hungry - apparently they are harmless. We kept our distance!

We left the anchorage on Sunday morning with the sun high in the sky to view the hazards and tentatively motored through the tricky Qilaqila passage. A very rolly night sail followed but Amelie passed the half way around the world mark - what an achievement.

Amelie and crew are heading for Port Denarau marina on the western side of Viti Levu Island for repairs to the main sail and yankee plus two new D1s (part of lower rigging) if they arrive in time! Stephen and Debbie intend to put in three days of hard work to make Amelie clean, comfortable and organise additional repairs to 'Wally'.

After this we will take a 'well earned break' and visit the Yasawa group of islands before checking out of Musket Cove, Malolo Lailai Island on the 4th of July to sail to Vanuatu.



Maintenance in Port Denarau Marina Fiji June 23rd, 2013

Amelie arrived in the marina on Tuesday morning to an initial unhelpful "welcome". Debbie put on her 'bad cop hat' and managed to persuade a better outcome - enough said. Swiftly with the help of four of our strapping, handsome, young guys on the OWR the mainsail and yankee were removed, bagged and carted off to the sailmakers for necessary repairs.

The next day, Wally followed the same fate for repair.

Supplies from Oyster arrived in two batches and we embarked on three days of hard work to get Amelie straight. We hired a small, battered car, mainly for Stephen to go hunting for his cigars, having not been able to buy any since Panama except for the kind gestures from other visiting OWR crew. Alas he came back empty handed - Trish and Paul saved the day a few days later.

The D1s arrived in the second batch of supplies and we made contact with Bruce the Rigger who eventually turned up on Saturday morning without his tools! Together with our tool supply and Stephen acting as chief winch man, Amelie has two sparkling D1s in situ and the mast is again secure.

Every evening was party night, watching the rugby and enjoying our only full meal a day. We worked through lunch every day.

With the sails repaired and hoisted; Wally returned stronger and fit for purpose, we were ready to leave on Sunday morning for the Yasawa Islands.

Tradition dictates when visiting the outer islands that you present Kava (Piper methysticum, a root which produces a drink with sedative and anaesthetic properties) to the chief of the village. A ceremony is performed with chanting and clapping whilst

the roots are pounded (used to be chewed) mixed with water and filtered through a silk cloth or hibiscus fibres. A small bowl or half shell of a coconut (Bilo) is filled and it is expected to be downed in one. Once the mixing receptacle (Tanoa) is empty and the stories have been told, the ceremony is completed. This is an acceptance into the village.

We bought umpteen packets of Kava for this purpose plus replenishing our wine supply.

Amelie cast off her lines at 09.15am and is now heading for Navadra, an uninhabited island in the Western Islands. The picture

attached shows our first glimpse of the outer islands.



Fiji, Port Denarau Marina 18° S 177° E

Log 22161



Fiji
July 8th, 2013

Following our flurry of activity in Port Denarau Marina, completing some of Amelie's maintenance, we headed off to Navadra Island. We gingerly navigated the reef and entered the protected bay by mid afternoon. We had been advised that the electronic charts should not be relied on in this area and the paper charts showed areas of 'unchartered information'. It is imperative to have the sun behind you; a 'coral head spotter' on the bow and abort all journeys if the visibility is poor or the sky overcast.

The radio schedule with the OWR fleet took on new life with skippers sharing waypoints between the islands which were free of unmarked hazards. Also Yantina with her forward looking sonar became a popular lead boat when making passages through

tricky reefs. The essence of the rally camaraderie is now fully established.

Navadra Island is outstanding in it's rugged beauty. Wild goats bleat along the shoreline - the avenue of trees are all nibbled at the same height by the goats. The water is sapphire blue with the corals poking their treacherous heads out at low water.

We were woken to a small cruise liner asking us to shift our anchor to allow them to swing safely on their anchor. We duly did so, hoping for a bottle of wine for our neighbourly efforts - nothing materialised. After a few hours the vessel and passengers motored off to see the other islands, leaving us with the anchorage to ourselves again.

Local fishermen from Waya Island visited Amelie requesting water and food, as they were stranded on Navadra until the sea state improved. We traded these items for their next catch of lobsters - no lobsters appeared.

Snorkeling around the reef was excellent as the coral was varied and looked healthy. Fiji is renowned as being the 'soft coral capital of the world'. The fish were plentiful and we observed a Nurse shark dozing on the seabed.

We ended up diving in the bay to release our anchor chain that had become wrapped and trapped around an enormous coral head. The exertion used up our air and a few coral lacerations later we were ready to lift the

anchor. The sky had darkened and visibility was not perfect, so we re-anchored and stayed another night - a real hardship!

The following day we followed other members of the OWR fleet to a bay off Naviti - one of the Yasawa group. We swam with Manta Rays in Tokatokaunu Pass, between Drawaqa Island and Naviti. Apart from the tiny stingers that constantly irritated us, we observed these huge, majestic creatures gracefully swim over and past us.

Later that evening, Amelie hosted a Roast Lamb supper for several of the OWR fleet. We went to bed when the alcohol ran out.



Fiji (Continued)

A much quieter crowd left the anchorage the next day and travelled to the Blue Lagoon anchorage, Matacawalevu (where the film of the same name was made starring Brooke Shields). Near by the sea planes took off and landed on the water adding to the feeling we were in a film set. Although a tourist haven, the area has maintained it's beauty and the tourism wasn't intrusive. We had a wonderful supper ashore in true Fijian style. Semme and his family prepared a typical Lovo for sixteen of us. Semme's accommodation is situated on the beach and he prepares these feasts for passing yachts. Pork, chicken and fish are contained in coconut frond woven baskets and placed on the heated rocks buried in the ground. Banana leaves and more coconut fronds are

placed over the top and buried in the ground for a few hours. The food was succulent and plentiful with a selection of sauces and vegetables plus home baked bread. We sat crossed legged on the ground and devoured our feast, with flame torches and the stars for light while Semme and his family serenaded us. We returned the next day to offer gifts for their hospitality and warm welcome. It was an absolute delight to see the children gnawing on ice cold chocolate from Amelie's 'fridge - even Auntie got a piece.

We made one last visit to the Manta Rays, although they were shy this time and then had a magnificent sail to Musket Cove, Malolo Lailai Island. Amelie became a

lifelong member of the Musket Cove Yacht Club on arrival and we had a memorable stay in yet another beautiful spot. We moored stern to overlooking the bar on the sandy island opposite. We had our final Fijian party on the beach with a buffet dinner and a live band. We danced the night away on the sand with the additional sight of Debbie with a tambourine dancing to Mustang Sally and Dancing Queen. Unfortunately she peeked early and retired to bed, waking the following morning fully attired from the previous night - fantastic evening.

Our penultimate day featured our least exhausting provisioning ever. We completed a shopping list, handed it to Sophie at the

marina office and the goodies arrived on Amelie ready to be stacked away. We managed to get almost everything we ordered except for apples and BBQ coals.

After another day of chilling, we left Fiji with heavy hearts, promising to return, to sail to Vanuatu for more exciting adventures - watch this space.





Vanuatu July 18th, 2013

Vanuatu was first charted in 1774 by Captain James Cook and he named the archipelago, New Hebrides. The islands became an object of rivalry between the UK and France until 1906 when they jointly administrated the islands. Since the 1960s the indigenous people wanted and achieved greater autonomy. Independence was declared on the 30th of July 1980 and New Hebrides became the Republic of Vanuatu.

Vanuatu is an archipelago of 80 islands straddling two continental tectonic plates on the Pacific Ring of Fire.

We arrived late afternoon in Port Vila (capital of Vanuatu) on the island of Efate (formerly known as Sandwich Island). The following day after customs and immigration clearance, we walked the Lini Highway (main street) which is a banking and trading area. The famous, busy market was hectic and we

discovered many duty free shopping opportunities.

During our stay we had to spend one day cleaning Amelie and preparing supper for some of the OWR fleet.

Thursday, we had a leisurely breakfast that manifested into a lengthy lunch with Sotto Vento and Spent and then went to Independence Park to watch the local rugby, which never materialised. Oh well, back to the bar. Later that evening a gang of OWR frequented the local casino. Stephen was just ahead of his stake but Debbie, who rarely gambles, won enough to pay for the next day's adventure.

Friday, we donned a stunning Harley-Davidson helmet for Stephen and an equally attractive Viking two horned helmet for Debbie and hired off road 'Karts' to drive through the jungle, visiting a village on the

way; beach karting (which was great fun) and finally across farmland. Everywhere we went we were met by happy children, waving and asking our names. On the beach two sisters were checking their brother's hair for head lice, while he drew in the sand with a stick. A warm and caring vision. We were covered in mud and our final drive was along the Lini Highway at rush hour..... a fantastic day.

Celebrations leading up to Independence Day include the island's 13th running of the annual horse racing event. Local butcher's boys wearing crash helmets on horses that have been taken away for the day from their beef ranch duties, race a muddy course in the grounds of the island's slaughter house. There were eight races with two horses running in three of them - Tanna and Spotty Bum, both favourites to win. Debbie went back to her non-gambling and in fact didn't see a horse. Stephen successfully went

through the day without taking a dime from the bookies. No entrance fee and the crowd was enormous, drawn from a combination of locals walking to the ground to well off merchants and farmers dressed in their finery. The police manned the shops and supermarkets on race day to ban the selling of alcohol to prevent the locals getting roaring drunk before the races. If you wanted booze that day, you had to go to the races which was part sponsored by the brewery. We followed this event with a hoe down at the local bar.

Vanuatu, Port Vila 18° S 168° E

Log 22854



Vanuatu (Continued)

Sunday was the highlight of the week. Together with the crew of Crazy Daisy and Pearl of Persia, we were driven to the airport in a thatched roofed bus. Security wasn't quite up to Heathrow's standards, as all the security guards were on the tarmac taking photos with their iPhones of a classic, privately owned Hercules.

We were weighed and then told where to sit and with whom on an ancient three prop 'plane, stepping on an upturned bucket to get into the plane. 45 minutes later we landed at 'White Grass' airport on the island of Tanna to start our adventure.

If you think off road, then that's the main highway in Tanna. After a speedy lunch we set off on the one and a half hour drive to Yasur Volcano. The drive was incredible driving through the centre of the island, passing close to indigenous villages where local tribal customs are still practised to this day. Huge Banyan trees (used as meeting places for the community to discuss issues) dotted around the island and evidence of the

famous 'Tanna' coffee plantations. Great numbers of people making their way back from church or older children walking back to boarding school on Sunday afternoon in an unhurried fashion. Life is much slower on this beautiful island.

Our driver, Jack, who was born and lives on the island told us that when the missionaries came to the island the first two of them went into the cooking pot but after that the tribal leader made a deal to allow the missionaries to preach. He claimed that the tribal leader was his great, great, great Grandfather.

As we got closer to Yasur, the soil became black and the sky darkened until we were in the shadow of the fire mountain. The volcanic dust plains resembled a moonscape which encircled the base of Yasur. We approached Yasur from the windward side through a beautiful woven tollhouse operated by local village men. No money was exchanged but they counted heads in the trucks. In 1972, two Japanese tourists and their local guide didn't return

after disregarding local advice. Apparently they were running away from Yasur as it erupted and failed to observe where the tossed rocks fell.

Jack parked the 4X4 and we made the final 400metres by foot to the edge of the crater. It was very windy which gave us good visibility of the eruptions. The first eruption had us by surprise. We hadn't expected the ferocity of the explosions with the loudest noise that we've ever heard. To see rocks and magma being flung 500 feet into the sky was simply staggering. We were spellbound watching eruptions every 3-4 minutes and our guide did not hurry the experience.

Resident scientists monitor Yasur's activity levels on a scale from 0-5. At zero, nobody goes as nothing is happening (very rare); levels 1-2 (currently at level 2), you are allowed to walk to the crater's edge; level 3, you view from car park; level 4-5, we don't know but maybe in past times the locals who preferred their missionaries grilled could have found a use for the volcano!

The day ended by a sunset flight over Yasur. The full spectacle of the size of the crater and the clouds of volcanic dust and ash was breathtaking. The power of nature with the glow of molten lava inside the crater at twilight is an experience that we will never forget. The pilots kindly flew over the crater several times with the copilot snapping away with his 'Go-Pro' attached to the 'plane's window screen.

The following day, obligatory check out with more forms to fill in but with the bonus of the duty free shopping form, so we could spend our money, tax free. There is no direct taxation and Vanuatu is one of the last 'true' duty free zones in the Pacific.

We had a flurry of jobs to complete before we set sail to Australia (never thought we would hear ourselves say that) at 14.30 (local time).

Down Under, here we come, hope you're ready for us!



Stephen the gale hunter
September 3rd, 2013

We always check the weather before leaving port and our GRIB files predicted E to SE prevailing winds, averaging 25 knots. Perfect sailing weather for Amelie and our route to Mackay. We had heard that local bad weather was expected in Vanuatu on Wednesday, so at 14.30 hours on Monday afternoon we set off in a moderate sea to arrive in Mackay for the 23rd of July for Amelie's annual antifouling, replacement of anodes and new batteries.

Our route planning took into account the number of natural hazards we needed to avoid; apart from one rock there were various reefs in the middle of nowhere, most of them charted on the paper charts and the Navionic charts.

The first 24 hours, Amelie was sailing towards her first waypoint - D'Entrecasteaux Reefs after passing Petrie Rock hours before. The wind and sea were building but

not impeding Amelie. She covered a healthy 187nm in the first 24 hours.

By the second day we were aware through the SSB radio call that the wind was likely to increase, which it did over the following daylight hours, gusting up to 44 knots at one stage, with Amelie's speed over the ground peaking at 14 knots, which far exceeds her hull speed. Amelie became a 53 foot surfboard. Feelings of exhilaration, tiredness and for Debbie, some fear prevailed. By nightfall the wind had dropped to around 30knots and the rough sea abated. We achieved another record of 203nm travelled in 24 hours - hardly surprising. During this epic sail we passed the unchartered Sandy Island and headed for waypoint 3 - Bampton Reefs-243nm away.

The third day involved the wind gently dying and it was necessary to motor overnight. The sails went up on the fourth day and we had

a warm, slower but enjoyable sail, passing the Bampton Reefs during the early evening. The warmth was further increased by a fiery Moroccan Beef Curry which nearly blew Stephen's head off. He was calmed down by homemade Rhubarb Crumble with cream and a cold beer. Stephen's taste buds have changed on this trip, he adores curry but generally the milder Korma varieties.

We are travelling towards the winter months in Australia and it is noticeable on board. Nights are colder, we are wearing warmer clothes sometimes with jackets. It feels very constrained to be wearing lots of clothes.

We are busily eating our supplies as it is not clear what the authorities will allow us to take into their country. We generally eat well on our trips, taking it in turns to cook but this time we are being more liberal with our ingredients, i.e; Korma became a Vindaloo!

Fifth day was sunny, warm and the wind had dropped to 15 - 20 knots in a E/SE direction. We had a visitor the night before - a large, strange looking, bewildered, scraggy bird with a huge sharp beak, sitting on the bimini (protective cover over the cockpit). Stephen hates birds getting too close to him so he shouted and thumped the bimini to frighten the bird from the boat. The bird stayed for another 4 hours depositing the contents of its bowels on the deck, ropes and cockpit seat. Truly hilarious watching Stephen in his extra large, green marigolds using hot, soapy water to clean up the mess the bird caused. Living at such close quarters for days on end can make us cranky with one another but overall Stephen still makes Debbie roar with laughter at his antics and sayings.

Stephen the gale hunter (Continued)

We passed Marion Reefs that morning heading towards the Hydrographers Passage into the Great Barrier Reef, our final leg of the trip.

Sleep deprivation has been the monster on this passage. It makes you emotional, grumpy and at it's worst, poor decision making and potential personal injury. As a team, we ensure the other is safe at all times and most decisions are discussed before putting them into action. The skipper, of course, is always right but the first mate does challenge at times. This took some getting used to but we've had to adapt as the rally goes on and it is better to have a double checker (the nurse coming out in Debbie). How many times has Stephen heard "prevention is better than a cure"? Yes, decisions and actions sometimes need to be immediate according to the situation on Amelie but most can be delayed to reach a healthy and rational outcome. A full night's sleep will be delicious.

We are missing a family wedding during this trip so congratulations are sent over the oceans to Ben and Beth on what will be a fabulous day. We will toast the happy couple as the sun goes down over the Southern Pacific on the sixth evening at sea. The wind dropped considerably and went directly behind us. Time to get the twin headsails up.

We take about an hour to drop and hoist the sails; get the spinnaker pole adjusted; make the boom into a makeshift spinnaker pole; put the soft shackles on; rethread the various sheets and then hey presto we fly both sails. The wind died and after an hour we abandoned our efforts and cranked up the iron sail (engine).

Sunday means roasting a ham which Stephen painstakingly soaked over the previous day and boiled in a homemade stock. The aroma in the galley was divine. Stephen's famous roast potatoes cooked in goose fat and hopefully some vegetables.....but Stephen doesn't do vegetables!

We entered the Maritime National Park zone during the late afternoon and our efforts had paid off, we were going to enter the Hydrographer's Passage into the Great Barrier Reef on a flood tide in a moonlit night. The passage is used by all shipping so is well buoyed and lit. The watch system changed for this passage as we both needed to be alert and awake on deck. The initial stage is quite shallow with the reef all around and there are various tidal gates to navigate through. Eventually we hit a foul tide but as the wind was light the transit was not a problem. Our concern was for our fellow OWR fleet several days behind us

who are predicted to have 25 knots of wind against tide in the passage. It will be a bumpy ride for them!

We were very excited to arrive in Mackay mid Monday afternoon to a warm welcome from Debbie and Eddie. We were bubbling over about the fact that as a couple we had sailed all the way to Australia - what an achievement!

Customs, Immigration and Quarantine personnel quickly arrived and spent over an hour processing us. They were respectful, cheery and visibly sad to throw some of our frozen meat away but they allowed us to keep the Kava. We still haven't tried it but some of the youngsters on the rally maybe using it for their parties.

Mackay is a mining town with a marina and boatyard 6.5 km away. Amelie was lifted out of the water two days later in 26 kts of wind and with the help of Proteus's crew with their rib, family from Dreams Come True plus Nelius, Stephen successfully reversed Amelie into the slings.

During the 10 days that she was out various jobs were done including redoing the gooseneck that was done in Antigua. The whole experience was stressful and we both had a sense of humour failure at times but

Brad, Tim, Jim and Rob looked after us well. Amelie now has a new bank of batteries (replaced in 3 hours with minimal disruption to life aboard) and new guardrails as well as a squeaky clean bottom.

We had planned a break in Sydney during this time and flew from tiny Mackay airport to the international one in Sydney. We had booked a serviced apartment which felt like a mansion after spending the last 9 months on board. We spent four days catching up with a friend, eating in fabulous restaurants, having a decent haircut and obviously some retail therapy. The two highlights of the trip was the bridge walk which was fascinating and the unexpected chance to go to the opera at the famous Sydney Opera House. If this is normality, then we need it occasionally but we wouldn't want it for long. The freedom and adventure of sailing plus taking your home to some of the most stunning places in the world does not encourage us to become land based. For us this is our dream come true and we are going to live the dream for as long as our health allows us to.

Going back to Amelie meant leaving Mackay and heading for Hamilton Island before exploring the Whitsundays and the Great Barrier Reef.

Australia, Mackay Marina 21° S 149° E

Log 24020



Whitsundays to Cairns September 2nd, 2013

Leaving Mackay early morning in glorious sunshine and a decent breeze for sailing, we glided up the Coral Coast to Hamilton Island for the Oyster party the following day.

Hamilton Island has beautiful views but resembles a Disneyland theme resort. Extremely expensive for everything and very touristy. We were not that impressed. The Oyster party was set in a stunning location with seafood platters delivered to the table by wetsuit clad, fit bodies, announced by a firework display as darkness fell. We had a fun evening finishing with Debbie accidentally dropping one of her new shoes in the marina, only to be followed by the other one out of frustration. Replacements have been bought and Stephen will be in control of handbags, shoes etc when climbing on board in the future.

We were keen to anchor off Whitehaven beach and enjoy the company of others plus

try out our stinger suits. We look very odd in skin tight 'babygros' but it created much laughter. Jellyfish (stingers) are not around at the moment but we weren't taking any chances. The Box and Irukandji jellyfish are potentially lethal and being in remote anchorages, immediate medical help was hours away. However we had litres of vinegar aboard Amelie to deal with any stings. Vinegar inactivates the stinger cells and reduces the further injection of venom.

After three days in Whitehaven we needed a change of scenery, so off we sailed to Butterfly Bay on Hook Island. Snorkeling here was cold with some visibility. The coral was reasonably healthy and there was plenty of life. We organised a beach barbecue ashore with several other rally participants and spent the afternoon, eating, drinking, chatting and playing volleyball.

The weather was settled so the decision was made to sail out to the Great Barrier Reef to snorkel and dive. A surreal experience tied to a buoy in the middle of the ocean. We stayed in Bait Reef for several days watching the Humpback whales fluking (flipping the tail before diving), blowing, flipper and tail slapping, breaching by the juveniles, gliding through the water whilst they migrated. Calves were copying their mother's behaviour. In the distance we were able to observe through binoculars Humpbacks lunge-feeding for hours. We will never forget this experience. We were warned that we would be fined if we were within 100 metres of a Humpback, so we kept our distance. Humpbacks are known to be inquisitive and reports of people being killed by breaching Humpbacks landing on their boats were a deterrent.

Sadly whilst on the Great Barrier Reef we received the news that Stephen's father,

Peter, had been taken into hospital and was deteriorating. We made the decision to get to Cairns quicker than planned to enable Stephen to fly back to the UK. Apart from an overnight stopover in Wallaby Reef, totally alone in the middle of the ocean, we motored constantly for several days to Cairns.

During Stephen's 9 days away (see separate account of Stephen's farewell to his Dad), Amelie was cleaned inside and out; tidied; provisioned fully and some retail was necessary! Naturally a supply of Gin was at the top of the list. OWR looked out for Debbie and were very supportive. Several couples were in daily contact and respected Debbie's privacy when needed. Cairns, initially was used as an outlet port to transport gold from the near by goldfields. Cairns expanded by the wetlands being filled in and then became a tourist destination, which is huge today.



Cairns is a lively, friendly place with a huge backpackers population. Marlin Marina is tidal and at times Amelie was touching the seabed. The marina staff were exceptionally efficient, kind and supportive.

Strong weather warnings kept Amelie and her crew in port for longer than planned but we used the time to sightsee. We went on the Kuranda railway from Freshwater station in Redlynch through the wet tropical rain forests of Far North Queensland. These are claimed to be some of the oldest on earth. We wound our way through the rugged mountain pass through tunnels and over bridges with waterfalls falling into ravines that you could almost touch. Our destination was the township of Kuranda. The railway began construction in 1886 and completed in 1891. Men with picks, buckets, shovels and dynamite built the 37 kilometres of track to serve the goldfields. Premature explosions and disease claimed lives but

their sacrifice and back breaking work still serves the community.

Kuranda and the surrounding area is a world heritage site with the heritage buildings being used as cafes, shops and galleries. We embarked on a beautiful walk through the jungle and along the river back to the village. Stephen and Bob mistook swimming ducks as crocodiles, much to our mirth. After a hearty lunch we visited the butterfly sanctuary viewing the local species. Standing by the nectar stations we had butterflies settle on us, some of which were enormous. Many pictures were taken for Jon to identify back in Swansea.

The trip back to Cairns was by Sky rail which 'sailed' over the rainforest canopy in the afternoon light. The bird calls were crystal clear as we were so close to them and the views towards the Coral Sea and the reefs were unbelievable. Some of the pine

trees were over 50 metres in height, erupting through the dense canopy. Huge ferns were in abundance aged at over 150 years old. A very tired crew retired to face the following day, to attack the never ending jobs on Amelie.

Amelie is now ready to continue towards Darwin which will be a passage of 1,200 nautical miles (7-8 days sailing), our last port of call in Australia before heading to Indonesia.

Whitsundays to Cairns (Continued)



Australia, Cairns 17° S 146° E

Log 24409



Farewell to Dad September 3rd, 2013

Sadly whilst on the Great Barrier Reef we received the news that Stephen's father, Peter, had been taken into hospital and was deteriorating. We made the decision to get to Cairns quicker than planned to enable Stephen to fly back to the UK and for Debbie to hold the fort on Amelie. Apart from an overnight stopover in Wallaby Reef, totally alone in the middle of the ocean, we motored constantly for several days to Cairns. Unfortunately Peter died within hours of us reaching land and plans changed again for Stephen to fly back to the UK for the funeral.

Reeling from grief, Stephen organised his trip and helped Debbie prepare Amelie for her extended stay in Cairns. The watermaker

was preserved, we hooked up to marina shore power and had dock water passing through our external filters to fill our tanks. The frustration of intermittent communication which has haunted this trip, reared it's ugly head again. We were desperate to communicate with family in the UK but at times the quality was poor.

Emotional goodbyes saw Stephen flying to the UK with Debbie in charge of Amelie and providing .Stephen's trip to attend his father's funeral, whilst very emotional and tearful was also a chance to celebrate his 86 years and share the grief with children and family. Peter had only given up his farming last September and was to rejoin his wife, Val, who only passed on in January of this

year. The church was packed to the gunnels and the village, Ashcombe, where he had farmed for 60 years put on all the food for the wake in the village hall. The attached picture shows Peter enjoying a spin on the Rib whilst we were in Jersey, he never did have his own passport but could use his drivers license to join us in the Channel Islands on Amelie.

Despite the sadness of the reason for Stephen's UK return there was the chance for catching up with his three; Katie, Tom & Sam and reliving some memories of his Dad's haunts, surfing at Putsborough and an evening in the pub at Instow.

Dad, God Rest.



Around the Top September 21st, 2013

We finally left Cairns behind on Wednesday 4 September on a cold wet stormy morning, but the sailing was fast and furious, the wind gusting up to 40 knots. We were in tandem with Crazy Daisy with the skippers sharing plans over the VHF, and it was decided to do a night stop over at Lizard Island - anchoring off in the dark at 04:00 in the morning in 30 knots of wind, the anchor held first time. Not a place to stay, though, with no chance of launching M and Amelie straining on her leash. We left at first light the next morning and had a fabulous sail to Flinders Island, arriving before sunset in a much quieter anchorage. Sadly we left at first light the next day - a place to remember when we're in this area, next time around.

From Flinders onwards we were sailing within the confines of what makes up the Great Barrier Reef as it narrows towards the Australian mainland - night watches were more intense than normal as we weaved our

way through the shallows. We were covering the ground at 8 to 9 knots so progress was swift for Amelie.

We entered the Torres Straits on Sunday, saying goodbye to the Pacific where we had been sailing since 17 February. We quickly sailed through with a fair tide entering the Endeavour Strait later that day. The exit from the Strait was through some very shallow water and we were certainly relieved when our navigation worked as planned - we were still only a couple of miles away from Crazy Daisy. The Arafura Sea runs along the top of Australia and we were now crossing the Bay of Carpentaria which we completed by Tuesday 10 September. We celebrated our Wedding Anniversary with a champagne and Gravadlax breakfast followed later that day with a Roast Chicken and Roast Potato late lunch - finishing off the champagne in the process. The wind was now to slacken off considerably and we spent three days

sailing gently before finally conceding defeat and motoring for the last 27 hours into Darwin. The attached photo was our sunrise just before our arrival. We anchored in Fannie Bay, Darwin, on the Saturday. We were quickly visited by the specialist Fishery Department's diving team who squirted something nasty into our seawater inlets, a precursor to being allowed into the marina. We were not allowed to move for 10 hours whilst whatever it was did its disinfecting work.

We entered Tipperary Marina through their lock on the Sunday. Keith was the lock master and marina manager and we have yet to meet anyone so friendly and helpful in any other marina. Darwin here we are.



Australia, Darwin 12° S 131° E

Log 25668



The Outback September 22nd, 2013

Darwin is in the Northern Territory of Australia, a multi cultural capital but still in touch with it's rich indigenous culture. The Aboriginal people, the original custodians of the region, continue to have a unique relationship and respect for their land, creatures, weather, seasons and dreams.

Darwin was heavily bombed in WW2 and then devastated again by Cyclone Tracy at Christmas in 1974. There is evidence of the continued rebuilding, almost like the Phoenix erupting out of the fire and the waterfront is particularly busy.

First impression of Darwin was not favourable, a totally different feel to that of Cairns, although Darwin is becoming a thriving backpackers delight, particularly as it is so close to the World Heritage parks with their stunning escarpments, wetlands, creatures, waterfalls and evident Aboriginal culture.

Bob, Stephen and Debbie hired a 4X4 and drove over 230 km to Jabiru in the Kakadu National Park. This is seen as one of Australia's cultural and ecological treasures. We stayed in a serviced 'lodge' (corrugated metal shack with aircon) which was basic but very comfortable. There was nature all around us with the differing calls depending on the time of day; Cockatoos, Kookaburras, bats and numerous birds of prey. We were entertained by a lightning storm (which was several weeks early, according to the locals) and as it is forbidden to buy alcohol as take out, we soon sought an alternative drinking hole other than our lodge. We had supper and wine at the near by Gagudju Crocodile Holiday Inn. The structure is in the shape of a crocodile, hence the name, but you've never been in a Holiday Inn where the restaurant felt like a school hall. We made our plans for the following day.

After an early breakfast we drove to the Bowali Visitor Centre where we bought our park passes. We headed off to Ubirr to view the Aboriginal rock art which show aspects of traditional law and learning plus the bush tucker found in the region. These paintings are thousands (if not tens of thousand) of years old. There are different art styles and new paintings are superimposed over older ones. Apparently it was forbidden to touch up another's painting but quite alright to paint right over the top. The rock art is hugely important to the Aboriginal owners of Kakadu as it is a historic and scientific record of their ancestors occupation of this region. We continued our climb to the lookout where we were taken aback by the panoramic views across the wetlands towards the escarpments heading towards Arnhem Land, the sacred Aboriginal land which is unspoiled wilderness with a small community of Aboriginal people whose traditional culture is mainly intact without the

interference of the 'Europeans'. Access to these lands is heavily restricted and we were fortunate enough to join an Aboriginal tour in the afternoon which allowed us to walk a few metres onto the land.

We drove to East Alligator River and for the first time we saw 'Salties' in their natural habitat swimming effortlessly in the heat up and down the river. After lunch we returned to the river to join the Aboriginal owned Guluyambi Cultural cruise. Our guide was a local young man who gave us an insight into his culture, mythology, traditional bush survival skills, death and funeral protocols, bush tucker and close up views of the crocodiles in the water and lounging on the muddy banks. He moored the boat on the Arnhem Land riverbank and we were encouraged to walk up to the lookout to see further up the river and into the sacred lands.

The Outback (Continued)



He also showed us a practical display of traditional hunting and gathering implements.

Towards the end of the day we were keen to see the sunset over the wetlands, a short drive brought us to Mirrai and we ascended to the Mirrai lookout quite a steep walk for 20 minutes. Unfortunately the views weren't great so before it became too dark to see our footing we made our way back to the car and travelled to Muirella to watch for activity at Sandy billabong. We saw some wild boar and one kangaroo and millions of mosquitoes. We soon headed back to our lodge for tucker but became members of the local sport and social club to get a well earned alcoholic drink first.

Our last day in the park was spent in the Cooindu area. We visited the Waradjan Aboriginal Cultural Centre which tells the story of the culture of two Aboriginal clans spanning over 50,000 years. This was a fantastic interactive display and we met one of the women who is prominent in the Binini clan, Violet. She and her people are very keen to share their stories and land with visitors to the region as this encourages respect and understanding of what they are trying to maintain in this hectic world.

Coffee in the Gagudju Lodge was necessary for the next part of the day's planning. We drove off road through Black Jungle Spring, across South Alligator River with crocs swimming so close to the car, willing us to get out for a swim, along Old Jim Jim Road (where we photographed a dead water buffalo) with military presence on both sides out onto the Arhem Highway into the Mary River area heading back to Darwin. Our outback trip had come to an end and we now had to prepare Amelie for our trip to Indonesia.



Land of Dragons

October 13th, 2013



We approached Indonesia with some trepidation because of stories about boat theft, sailing in convoy for security and corruption amongst officials. As this story unfolds you will see all these worries were for us, unfounded.

We were amongst the boats that arrived in Kupang on the 23rd of September for a prearranged meeting with all the officials who would need to sign us into Indonesia. As a prerequisite to our arrival we had received visas in Darwin together with a cruising permit which we only obtained because we had been "invited" to join the Sail Komodo 2013 Rally, an event that had finished before we had arrived!

In the event apart from one official who had his beady eyes on Debbie's Grey Goose vodka (and

ended up with a bar of chocolate), the process was smooth and organised. We had four officials on board and then went ashore where quarantine, customs, immigration and port authority had set up stalls to process our entry.

We had been helped ashore, as there was only a beach landing for our RIB, by a large group of beach boys who charged \$5 a day to haul our dinghy up and down the beach, always smiling.

We were legally in Indonesia but Kupang was not for us to hang around. It's predominantly a commercial area and it's main claim to fame is it's where the Japanese formally surrendered at the end of WW2.

We were treated to life in the fast lane when we had a half hour taxi ride to a cafe and witnessed the

apparent chaos of their traffic systems. It seems everyone in Kupang were not where they wanted to be and were tearing around in scooters and motorcycles to get where they did want to be.

Although notionally they drive on the left, to us many appeared to see this as optional. We since learned that no one uses their mirrors, the guy in front rules the road and you need to keep out of his way. Consequently we did not hire a car but used taxis.

Amelie's washing machine decided to die in Kupang and after hours spent trying to fix it plus cross words, we decided the best use for it was as an anchor. Needless to say, the machine is still on board with the option of replacing it in Durban. It will be interesting to see how we get the old one out and the new one in,

hopefully with some help, a strong rope and an electric winch.

Watch for further updates on this story.

We embarked on a two night sail to Lehek Ginggo, on the West coast of Rindja.

Three OWR boats had a very comfortable 24 hours in this beautiful bay, viewing monkeys running along the beach in the late afternoon, together with the infamous partying.

The following afternoon we had a fantastic sail to Leehok Buaja (Crocodile Bay). Swimming here was not an option voluntarily.

Unfortunately after a very enjoyable afternoon and evening with others, we said our goodnights and attempted to board our dinghies.



Land of Dragons (Continued)

A slip produced a domino effect with Debbie closest to the water.....yes, she went in. With the crocodile in mind, Stephen, almost instantaneously hauled her out. Everyone sobered up fast. Earlier on in the day Stephen had witnessed a crocodile erupting out of the water to attack a huge sea eagle who for the third time was trying to scoop the fish. The sea eagle obviously hadn't heard the story about lighting the third cigarette whilst in the trenches. Just as well Debbie didn't fall in three times! We saw three different breeds of sea eagle, red kites and monkeys playing on the beach and on the sand flats when the tide went out. We also witnessed a sea eagle seeing off a beautiful blue/grey heron. The noise was deafening. The heron obviously encroached on the eagle's fishing patch. We had the most fantastic wildlife experience whilst in this anchorage, understandably we stayed longer. We went ashore at dawn to see the Komodo Dragons in the wild. Ugly, huge lumps of flesh who can run for short

distances up to 30mph. Their favourite repast being the indigenous water buffalo whom they poison by scratching and biting and then stalking them for up to a month, watching them become weaker and finally feasting off them, sometimes before they die.

We then set off for Gili Lawa Laut, a small island just off Komodo Island. The snorkeling was fantastic here, beautiful soft and hard coral. Large Napoleon Wrasse swimming close by, showing their sides, which we interpreted as aggressive but we were later told that they enjoy their sides being stroked. One look at their sharp teeth put us off going anywhere near them. Masses of tropical fish in the clear water and sea turtles swimming around Amelie. Geoff witnessed two dolphins following us as we snorkeled, we were oblivious. Again we fell in love with the place and we stayed for longer before setting sail for Bali. Our fuel supply was low and therefore whilst all the

other boats were going north of the island chain, mainly motoring, we sailed south to the forecast wind. The fuel is not only used for propulsion but for the generator and watermaker. It was imperative that we used what was left sensibly. We experienced an exhilarating sail through a narrow strait west of Komodo Island where at one point our instruments tried to tell us we only had 3 metres of water. Bit scary because at the time we were in a rough tidal race and our brains told us we were heading into a shoal. Our charts were correct and we had 100 metres of water. We then had fun with Motor Vessel Srikardi who was on collision course and every time we changed direction to avoid her, she changed direction, seemingly to hit us. At 2 miles distance we called her on the VHF and she claimed to be having problems with her steering, we finally passed her starboard to starboard at a safe distance. We had two nights of sailing to look forward to before our scheduled arrival in Bali. The scenery along the southern

coast was unbelievable, some of the best this trip. Huge cathedral like arches had been etched by the sea out of the cliffs and at various points there were Hindu monasteries perched on the cliff edge. We witnessed volcanoes spewing out clouds of ash together with forest fires along the coastline. Dolphins were everywhere during this trip mainly fishing, not interested with playing with our bow waves. It was not only the dolphins that were fishing but we passed countless small fishing boats, mostly at night when the sea and wind were calmer. Night watches required numerous course changes to avoid collision, some were lit and others only switched on a torch when we were close. As dawn arrived you could make out black blips in the waves, the last morning we spent several hours hand steering our way through the fleets of boats. We also witnessed what we think was a humpback whale who dived just in front of Amelie, fluking as it dived.

Land of Dragons (Continued)

Arriving in Bali after sunset was not an option because of the outlying reefs and because the port is closed at night. At one stage in the day with the help of the tide, we were doing 9 knots and it looked like we were going to arrive at around 4pm. That plan was scuppered when at 2pm the tide changed and we were doing 1kt with 15 miles to go. We diverted to Lembogan Island where there was a safe night anchorage. On the way in we came through a tidal race that made Start Point look like the Serpentine. It was exciting and turbulent. We thought we saw above the headland tens of hang gliders but when we spied them through the bins, they were spectacular kites, apparently a local tradition. We anchored up before sunset with our entry to Bali delayed until the next day. A disrupted night's sleep due to the tide saw us leaving when the tide turned and we arrived in Bali International Marina at 10.30 hours, with 50 litres of diesel left out of our 750 litre tank which is thankfully now full.

Before we could explore Bali we had three days of sorting out to do on Amelie. Stephen had broken a tooth underneath a crown and had developed a dental abscess which was being treated with oral antibiotics which we carry on board plus a liberal quantity of gin. He was seen in the Dental Clinic on Monday and the tooth removed with difficulty. The wounded soldier is repairing nicely.

Together with two other OWR boats, Amelie had developed a crack in the aluminium foil that houses her main headsail. The parts had been flown to Bali from Germany and two days were spent with the able assistance of Eddie from the OWR support team and the lower three metres of the

headsail foil were replaced. Debbie spent a while in the anchor locker rewiring the headsail furler, often disappearing and causing some surprise to Eddie who was working on another foil on the pontoon beside Amelie.

Wally, our hydrogenerator, in trying to claim the prize of our most unreliable piece of kit, had broken down again, mainly due to poor workmanship in Nuku Hiva and Port Denereau, Fiji, in the previous repairs. Wally was sent off to a stainless steel workshop and is now looking better than when he was new.

By Wednesday morning we were ready to explore Bali and hired a taxi for the day. Our plan was to visit some of the Hindu temples and view some of the internal countryside. We took advice from the other boats and wanted to see the best sights without being dragged around the Taxi driver's favourite shopping haunts. We did our deal on the price for the day and set off for the central mountains and in particular the sacred Hindu temple on the lake of Danau Bratan. This was a two hour drive from the marina and once we escaped the countless shops and stone carving workshops we saw the fantastic rice paddy fields in terraces circling the mountains. Their history dating back to the first Chinese occupation in 2,500BC. We were also to learn that it was an auspicious day for weddings and throughout the villages we saw decorative evidence of this. Bali is the only Indonesian island which is predominantly Hindu and their devotion to their Gods is evident everywhere you looked. We spent an hour at the temple witnessing various processions and acts of devotion in the most beautiful setting.

Slightly out of place were large scale Disney cartoon animals for the unmissable photo opportunity. On the way to the Royal temple, we requested to stop for lunch and enjoy the traditional suckling pig. This was the only disappointment of the day. We stopped at a local diner and ate cold food which was not appetising. This was not typical and we will return to enjoy the real McCoy.

We visited the 15th century Pura Taman Ayun temple in Mengwi, also known as the royal temple. The quietness was palpable interrupted by the Cockerels kept in ornate cages surrounding the main temple. We later discovered that these cockerels were used for fighting without the betting. They were used as an offering to the Gods.

Finally we were taken to Ubud, the main cultural heart of Bali but a major tourist destination. Here we went shoe shopping for Stephen yet another pair of sandals have bitten the dust. His shoe needs are quite particular and at one stage Debbie thought that the whole of Bali could not offer him what he required. He settled on a pair of grass slippers which were hard to walk in. Within minutes we were in a European surf shop buying another pair. The following day during our provisioning, he managed to buy just what he wanted and Debbie insisted that he bought several pairs. During our shoe quest we did enjoy a decent espresso coffee made from Balinese coffee beans but did need to fend off numerous young girls offering massage services, mainly to Stephen.

The Sacred Monkey temple in Ubud was stunning and guess what, there were thousands of monkeys of all shapes and

sizes. It was great to get out of the heat and walk through a small part of the temple's grounds. This must be heaven for the monkeys as they are regularly fed in a jungle habitat. The temple is covered in monkeys, grooming and playing of the Balinese Macaque variety. We watched other tourists much braver than us allowing the monkeys climb all over them for that golden photo opportunity. We gave them a respectful berth. We returned to the marina around 7pm having seen some of the true Bali.

It wouldn't be our blog unless we said something about food. The onsite marina cafe had reasonable food at reasonable prices and it was cheaper to eat there than eating our precious provisions. We had two very nice dinners at Balinese restaurants, very different from one another.

Visiting Bali it would have been remiss not to have experienced food at Teluk Jimbaran (Jimbaran Bay) at sunset. We arrived as the sun was setting and walked along the white sands with the crashing surf getting closer to the diners, fending off numerous waiters thrusting menus in our direction. As far as the eye could see, the beach was a blanket of candle lit tables along the shore. Eventually after soaking up the atmosphere we chose a seafood warung and chose our fish, how we would like it cooked and sampled the local red wine.....pretty young would be a kind description. The food, company and setting were perfect, a great

Indonesia, Bali 9° S 115° E

Log 26754

Land of Dragons (Continued)



Our last night in Bali was an absolute treat and we visited the highly recommended Sardine restaurant in Kerobokan. The restaurant is set in a bamboo pavilion with open air tables overlooking a rice field, torch lit lighting, the atmosphere was elegant but casual. We ate the best food that we have had since arriving in Indonesia.....lobster cooked over coffee wood, baramundi steamed in banana leaves, Grey Goose vodka martinis and puddings to die for. The French chef owner had made his mark. A great send off from Bali.

The following day we had to say goodbye to some of the OWR participants which always leaves a degree of sadness but now we are sailing towards Cocos Keeling very gently.



Amelie in the Indian Ocean

October 28th, 2013

Writing our blog today is poignant as it is exactly one year since we said good-bye to our family and friends, at our 'Bon Voyage' party, moreover, it would have been Stephen's Dad's 87th birthday. Without knowing it, we shared his last birthday together.

Off the coast of Bali as we were settling into our first night shift, we heard a loud hissing noise, perplexed before we discovered that the black tape holding the 'Jon Buoy' in position had disintegrated due to sunlight damage. This is an inflatable man overboard recovery system mounted on the stern. In the dark we were able to see the inflatable for a short time but to our dismay the light didn't work. Sensibly we did not attempt to recover the buoy but notified Falmouth Coastguard in case we set off a sea search mission.

En route from Bali to Cocos Keeling we were to sail very close to the north of Christmas Island, named because it was first sighted by the English Navy on Christmas Day, 1643. It is administered by Australia and exports phosphates. It is also home to many beautiful birds including the rare Golden Bosun which is unique to the island. We were privileged to spot two of these rare species with their fantastic yellow plumage gliding over Amelie. There was also plenty of life in the sea and we had a close encounter with a Humpback whale swimming on the surface, passing within 5 metres of Amelie's bow, as usual no camera to hand. We watched this whale for ages, blowing and fluking together with another that joined him/her.

Passing so close to Christmas Island, we spied yacht Valentine anchored in Flying Fish Cove. We had a great chat on the VHF

and this was while enjoying a hearty meal cruising at 9 knots in a stiff breeze.

At 1,200 nm our passage to Cocos Keeling Islands was long enough to get into our watch system. We have made changes and adaptations to our cruising life along the way, one very important one is reducing our meals from three to two a day. This was because eating early in the evening clashed with the SSB roll call, tiredness, trying to eat in the dark and then sleeping on a full stomach. Everything became rushed and not enjoyable. Food is one of the pleasures of our cruising day and it is important that we don't let this lapse. We now have a later breakfast, enjoying a full English when provisions allow, followed by a mid-afternoon main meal of the day. Preparation and eating is far more enjoyable now - no longer feeding our ears, nose, clothes, etc. Beer o'clock is religiously adhered to at midday and sundown.

The Cocos Keeling Islands were noted by Captain W. Keeling in 1609 but not settled until 1826 when two individuals saw it as a Copra business prospect. This partnership dissolved and John Clunies-Ross remained, importing Malayan labour to assist with his enormous Copra plantation. In 1886, Queen Victoria awarded the islands to the descendants of Clunies-Ross but continued to be administered by the British until 1955, whereupon it became an Australian dependency.

Arriving in Cocos Keeling Islands late Friday afternoon meant we had to stay aboard until checking in with Cocos police the following

Coco Keeling, Direction island 12° S 97° E

Log 27900

Amelie in the Indian Ocean (Continued)



Cocos Keeling Islands consist of a round shaped lagoon about 7 nm in diameter with a reef connecting the 27 small islands around its perimeter. Only two of the islands are inhabited - Home Island which is Muslim and the population predominantly Malay; West Island which has the airport (doubles up as a golf course) and populated mainly by Australian ex-pats. The only anchorage for Amelie was in a mini lagoon off uninhabited Direction Island. We heard from one of the locals that there is an annual walk at low water around the lagoon - sounds fun and one for the return visit.

A huge highlight of this stop was catching up with our friend, Leo on Duchess. It was so good to see him and catch up on news. We also had the pleasure of meeting his partner, Karin. Many more fun days and evenings to be enjoyed with them to come during this rally.

Flights (generally always full) on a Tuesday, Friday and Saturday from Perth by way of Christmas Island are mainly for government officials, mail and fresh produce with the odd tourist thrown in. The produce which arrives on the Friday flight is organised by a cooperative directed from Home Island. We were lucky enough to use this facility by pre-ordering produce by email before we arrived.

Amelie in the Indian Ocean (Continued)

The only 'drinking hole' is on West Island and is housed in the island's cyclone shelter. This also acts as the official off licence.

Our second night we enjoyed an impromptu BBQ on Direction Island with OWR, singing along to a guitar around a campfire. The following day we were generously entertained in a beautiful setting on West Island, drinking Champagne, eating al fresco and swimming in the surf as the sun was setting. It was after this BBQ that the majority of OWR boats set off to Mauritius but we decided to stay in this slice of paradise for a few more days on our own. We spent time exploring Direction and Prison Island, visited West and Home Island for lunch and some shopping but the icing on the cake was the drift snorkel in the 'Rip' and around the reef. The colours of the water here were vibrant and there was every shade of blue imaginable, unspoiled beauty to the eye. The 'Rip' is a shallow, strong current that whips around the corner of Direction Island. We drift snorkeled here several times awestruck by the varieties and health of the colourful coral. The abundance of marine life, large and small was almost too much to take in. Our heads were swiveling back and forth; our eyes drinking up the underwater world in perfect clarity. The seabed was clear of rubbish as the islanders are vigilant

with their recycling and burning the rest in fire pits. Roger from yacht Mariella was responsible for organising a plastic pick up from the beach, mainly flip flops and plastic bottles which had swept across the ocean from distant shores.

We were entertained by giant Jackfish and a variety of cod (indigenous of the island) swimming past, appearing to be oblivious to the aliens in their fins, snorkel and masks. A massive Wahoo ignored us as it went about it's daily business. From 'M' we disturbed a few rays, their speed still surprises us.

With the other boats gone, we became the focus of the Direction Island 'welcoming committee' - six black tipped reef sharks. We swam and snorkeled with them, and they visited Amelie each morning and evening. Although they looked menacing, they are not known to be dangerous. We kept a respectful distance from one another - and we enjoyed the sight of them effortlessly gliding through the strong current with their characteristic markings.

From the various docks that we went by RIB or ferry, we witnessed turtles swimming playfully, appearing quite nosey and disappearing under the waves with the wave of a flipper.

Crabs everywhere. Hermits scurrying around; tiny, pale crabs at lightning speed across the sand not leaving a trace and much larger, darker ones toppling over the rocks into rock pools in their hundreds, desperate to get away from our shadows but in defensive mode.

Quietly contemplating life on Amelie in the anchorage, pilot whales and dolphins spent hours dancing around the boats. The whales moving gently through the water whilst the dolphins playfully leapt and performed acrobatics for their audience.

We monitored VHF channel 20 as there were repeaters around the islands. We were alerted to some fun and games when Cocos police put out a message that all vessels were to stay clear of the western passage. We had noticed two brightly coloured fishing boats anchored outside the anchorage and rumours of trafficking illegal immigrants by these vessels were rife. The Australian government are strict regarding this issue, returning the immigrants to their country of origin and disposing the boat if it isn't taken out of Australian waters by it's owners. One of the fishing boats was towed out to sea and immediately after the radio warning, the vessel went up in flames with a fireball shooting into the sky. The billowing smoke

could be seen all afternoon. We assume the vessel is now in a watery grave.

Early Thursday morning we prepared Amelie for her ocean passage of 2,400 nm to Reunion Island, we up anchored and to our delight one of the sharks did a swim by as we set off into the Indian Ocean.

Whilst reflecting on our wonderful stay in Cocos Keeling we felt the following; Life being life and being in such close proximity to each other at all times, there have been inevitable misunderstandings and differences between us but in Cocos Keeling we found the tranquility of true togetherness.





La Reunion

November 20th, 2013

We are currently sailing gently off Madagascar with 1,000nm to go to our next landfall, Durban. So far, the sailing in the Indian Ocean, for us, has been fantastic and during our passage from Cocos Keeling to la Reunion Island, we broke our 24 hour sailing record and achieved 211nm. In fact over a three day period, days 6,7 and 8, we recorded over 600nm. During the passage, Debbie's son, Jon, celebrated his 21st birthday - a day of reflection but Jon and Jaz are visiting us in South Africa, so the celebrations will continue.

We arrived in La Reunion Island knowing little about the island. 95% of the visitors are French and we think as a holiday destination it is overlooked by the rest of the world. In particular the island has now dropped it's visa requirement for South Africans to try to divert those who fly direct to Mauritius. La Reunion Island is an adventurer's playground.

La Reunion Island was formed 3,000,000 years ago by an undersea volcanic eruption. The island is an oceanic island and part of the Mascarenes group (La Reunion, Mauritius and Rodriguez). The group were named after a Portuguese Admiral, Pedro Mascarenhas, whose fleet anchored off 500 years ago.

Uninhabited until the early seventeenth century, the islands were visited by the Dutch, French and English. The French named the island, Bourbon and after an unsettled period a French governor was appointed to oversee the island. Prisoners, slaves and pirates arrived together with exiled French revolutionary aristocrats fleeing from their motherland. Island life was harsh but the highest toll was on the ecological system - thirty species of birds, including the Dodo and the Solitaire together with large reptiles became extinct within a few decades.

The royal name of Bourbon (it remains a feature in the culture and products to this day) was changed to Reunion after the French Revolution, later changed to Bonaparte Island when Napoleon Bonaparte was in control of France. In 1810, the English captured the island and changed it's name back to La Reunion only to pass it back to the French in 1814 at the Treaty of Paris. Reunion has been a district of France since 1946 and the Reunionnais refer to France as the mainland.

We were looking forward to some French cafe culture and we were not disappointed. That is only a small part of what La Reunion has to offer with the fantastic interior created by the three Cirques (collapsed volcanoes).

Apart from the token industry of sugar production the main income for the island is earned by tourism. France has invested

heavily in the road and tunnel system. The 800,000 inhabitants populate the roads with 400,000 cars, which during rush hour creates spectacular traffic jams.

Tourism has been affected over the past few years by shark attacks and swimming is not permitted unless supervised within the reef. This is a great shame because the diving, surfing and swimming is fantastic. Kinley from one of the OWR boats braved the waters and had "the wave of his life".

We arrived on Friday and just to add to the traffic chaos immediately hired a car. The marina is part of the commercial port and apart from two on site cafes, we were a number of miles from anywhere. Saturday, we ventured off to the capital, St. Denis and enjoyed a typical three hour French lunch in a restaurant which could have been easily mistaken for a Parisian establishment - except for the climate.



La Reunion (Continued)

La Reunion, Marina de Galets 21° S 55° E

Log 30416

The Reunion tourist board organised a day's excursion on the Tuesday into the island's interior. We travelled through ten microclimates ranging through lush rainforest, sugar plantations, forests and the moonscape that makes up the area around Piton de la Fournaise. We enjoyed a Creole lunch with Alex, our senior tour guide who later arranged for our laundry to be serviced from the marina. We finished off the evening dancing to a fantastic live band and there was rapturous applause for Roger who took to the stage with his harmonica.

Wednesday evening, the OWR fleet were invited to a cocktail party with traditional dancing - Maloya and savouring traditional fare. Each boat was kindly presented with a present of local produce - chocolate, vanilla pods, honey and a woven plate.

The next day we were due to take a one hour helicopter flight to view the interior of

the island, of which many parts are inaccessible or others requiring you to get up at 2am to climb to summits by sunrise. The trip was delayed due to low cloud cover and we retreated to St. Gilles Les Bains for a typical French breakfast.

Cigars are always a feature of our everyday life on Amelie. In Tahiti we spent two hours in a taxi without buying any. Stephen now has a pipe as a backup. This time, he put out a plea on the SSB radio net for any boat visiting Mauritius to buy duty free Cuban cigars. They came in all shapes and sizes, gratefully received by Stephen. The cigar stores are plentiful on Amelie - no doubt he will run out by the time we reach Durban.

Saturday morning, bright and early, we arrived at the heliport to be told that our flight was going to happen this time. With only six people in the helicopter, everyone had great views. We saw the Cirques of

Salazie, Cilaos and inaccessible Mafate - flying through the caldera valleys and ravines, skimming the fantastic waterfalls and pools of Salazie, low flying over the Piton des Neiges in the centre of the Cirques with it's numerous, small extinct craters. The views were breathtaking and at times, heart stopping as we climbed up the side of one ravine, over the top to the crowning vista of more of the mountainous scenery. For us, this was the highlight of our time spent on the island.

We found the Reunionnais people universally friendly and helpful, from our first contact with Pierre and Claire in the marina, to the staff of restaurants and bakeries, tour guides and finally a Biologist from the hospital, who brought his wife and son aboard Amelie to get a sense of life on board a sailing boat.

Sadly, time flies and time to move on again. Excitement as a new adventure unfolds with Christmas around the corner and the added bonus of having some of the family for Christmas.

Twenty-four hours out to sea we had a private display from a couple of Humpback whales, finning and fluking, in the setting sun - life can't get much better.



Durban to Cape Town and Happy Christmas December 24th, 2013

We enjoyed a fast and furious trip from La reunion to Durban, however the last 24 hours will be a time that we will wish to forget. Although we had wind from a favoured direction, a North Easterly, which was running with the Aghulas current, the waves were nevertheless pretty scary and sea water found its way into our precious home, not causing any great damage but nonetheless not a great outcome. Goodness knows what it would have been like in a South Westerly which for the avoidance of any doubt we would have stayed well cleared off and like some of the other yachts, who were in front of us, we would have stood still and waited for favourable wind.

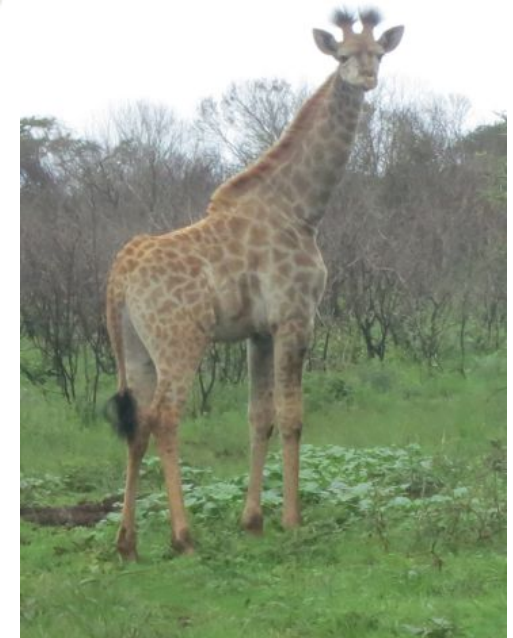
We anchored off Durban Marina for 2 nights whilst Malcolm the marina manager did his conjuring acts to accommodate all the oyster yachts. The Royal Natal Yacht Club had taken the oyster fleet under its wing and we received not only a great welcome but practical help, with booking help on the boat, booking tours, girlie pampering and of course restaurants and bars. We were lucky enough to arrive the day before they threw a party for participants. Their hospitality was exceedingly generous and Debbie retired back to Amelie around 1am. Some while

after that Stephen insisted that he buy the Commodore a drink; Graem's response was 2 bottles of red wine please-they are now drinking mates. Very early Sunday morning Tosh, Olly and Eddie arrived to help remove the offending sea anchor (washing machine). Not many tears were shed by Debbie at this parting, not to mention the sight of two young men flexing their muscles during the extraction process. The following day a shiny new Miele arrived which with the return help of the Proteus boys, and much to Debbie's continued delight, marital strife is now officially over. The boat has returned to its famous Chinese laundry look.

So we had arrived on a Friday and had kept busy awaiting the arrival of our friends James and Dawn who flew in on the Monday. We set aside boat chores and enjoyed five days of being tourists. On the Tuesday we visited the waterfront and lunched beside three pretty big sharks who eyed us up as lunch, luckily there was a glass screen between us and them. On the Wednesday Debbie took a boat break to go Christmas shopping whilst Stephen, James and Dawn went out for a day sail having informed Durban Port Control we needed to under go sea trials. We had replaced the chocks where the mast enters the boat

through the deck, more that ably orchestrated by Eddie, and it was reassuring that they held after our sail.

Thursday and Friday saw us head off to Zululand Private Game Reserve. The first drive on the evening of our arrival was in the private game reserve where we were treated to encounters with water buffalo, baboons, giraffe, antelope and many bird and plant species. Our 2 hours were completely filled with one sighting after another. The whole experience was incredible with stilted log cabins overlooking a waterhole and visiting antelope.



South Africa, Durban 30° S 31° E

Log 31880



For the main event we had been up at 04:30 for a 5am entry into the Hluhluwe-Imfolozi Game Reserve. This is one of the largest and claims to be the oldest natural park in Africa, consisting 960 square kilometers of land, so I guess it wasn't surprising that our 3 hour game drive was not minute by minute quite so intense as the previous evening. It was nonetheless awesome to see 13 rhinos, hippos, zebra, baboons, water bison, and Debbie got very excited about seeing 2 pumbas (warthogs). The park with its breeding programme brought back the rhino from near extinction since in 1900 there were only 20 rhinos world wide compared to the 10,000 today; 1,000 of which were in the park itself. The lack of sighting of any lion, leopard or elephant merely fuelled our appetite to do it all again. Morning breakfast brought momentous news that at the age of 95 Nelson Mandela had passed away, it had only been 2 days previously that we had

been to see his autobiographical film the Long Walk to Freedom.

Saturday saw James and Dawn leave to see their family, and Stephen and Debbie whilst borrowing Pearl of Persia's car headed off to an iPad maps incorrect airport site, in fact it was completely the opposite end of Durban.

Jaz had landed and refreshed herself with a drink before they had even managed to find the correct airport, Debbie was panicking.

So now we come to the billing for the next stage of our journey from Durban to Cape Town. With the fierce Aghulas current, an average of 3 day weather windows and 800 miles to sail this would be the most difficult part of our entire world rally, well done Jaz for choosing this trip, we now know she likes a challenge. But hey you have to sometimes enjoy the unexpected and the fact is that we did the whole trip in 4 straight

days enjoying the fastest sailing that Amelie has ever done and no sea water in the boat! We sailed past Cape Aghulas, which is the most southerly point of Africa, at sunset and saved sunrise for a fantastical sail around the Cape of Good Hope (otherwise known as the Cape of Storms). We were treated by strange looking fin like objects in water which we have since discovered were sunbathing seals. We used Jaz's eyes as our pilot to guide us through half an hour of really thick fog before breaking through to the fantastic site of Cape Town dwarfed by Table Mountain. Wow! We've done it!

We wish everyone a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year!

Durban to Cape Town and Happy Christmas (Continued)





Amelie in Cape Town
January 19th, 2014 by Owner

As we sailed with Jaz out of the fog and witnessed the magic of Table Mountain before us we were excited about our Cape Town visit. This early impression was not a false start and we did indeed have a wondrous time in Cape Town.

South Africa claims to be the “cradle of mankind” and north of Cape Town, ancient fossilized footprints were discovered and believed to belong to the Sans and Khoekoen tribesmen, the first known humans.

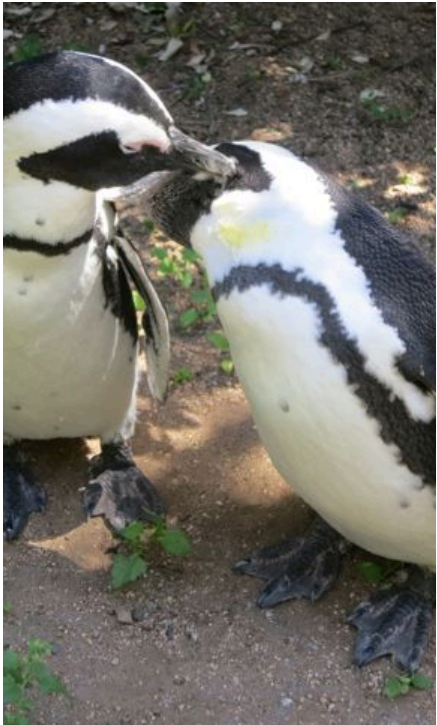
In 1488, Batholomeu Dias, a Portuguese navigator, sailed around the “Cape of Good

Hope”, later explorers describing it as the “Cape of Storms”. Not until 1652 did the Dutch East India Company establish Cape Town as a supply station for Dutch ships. This was the start of the colonisation of the Cape; start of the Slave Trade and the mixing of races and cultures. There ensued a tussle for control between the Dutch and British but by the 1800s the British had control, although even today there is a strong legacy of Dutch in the Afrikaans language, in place names and the architecture. Large deposits of diamonds were discovered in Kimberley and Cape Town became the gateway to South Africa’s

mineral wealth. During the 1900s the Cape wine industry flourished. The mid 1900s saw the infamous ‘state of being apart’, Apartheid, which was imposed by the ruling white state and every person was classified by race. This disrupted the lives of families, neighbours and colleagues. We witnessed, even now, the aftermath of this in District Six which, because of its racial mix and proximity to the city centre, was bulldozed down to displace its inhabitants into separate areas. The area today is largely undeveloped and is a scar remaining from the Apartheid era.

We are not suspicious and we arrived uneventfully in Cape Town on Friday 13th. The following day Jaz and Debbie couldn’t resist the pull of the V&A Waterfront Mall, a short walk from Amelie. It was named after Queen Victoria and Prince Albert (Mother & Son) and is South Africa’s most visited tourist destination. Not only is it a vast shopping mall but a working harbour with docks for passenger liners, ferries, fishing boats and yachts but also of interest to us, hundreds of restaurants. Our marina was slap bang in the middle of it all. That day may have been window shopping but real retail activity was to follow.

Amelie in Cape Town (Continued)



On Sunday, Jon flew in from the UK and mother and son were reunited after a year apart. We found a good place for steaks and Jon rekindled his fondness for Carling Black Label beer. We hired a taxi for the next day and set off to see the Jackass (African) Penguins at Boulders Beach on our way to a land side view of the Cape of Good Hope. That whole area is a national park and we witnessed Ostriches and Baboons in the wild. In the evening our close friends from Babe shared with us a joint early Christmas celebrations (they were going to family in Australia) and a belated 21st celebration for Jon in the highly recommended restaurant Dash.

South Africa, Cape Town 34° S 18° E

Log 32734



Amelie in Cape Town (Continued)

Tuesday was earmarked for Christmas shopping and the V&A finally saw the colour of our Rand. We set off in pairs, reconvening for a quick Pizza before the quest for Jon's 21st present. The next day we set off together for a long awaited hairdresser appointment followed by Debbie & Jaz enjoying the spa and Stephen & Jon a Wagyu beefburger. Thursday evening, Oyster had arranged a party at the Groot Constantia estate. This is South Africa's oldest wine farm and reputed to have supplied Napoleon during his incarceration on St Helena. It was a great evening of free flowing wine and exuberant dancing. Returning to the marina by bus, Stephen & Debbie prolonged the evening by a visit to a nightclub, ostensibly to help Paul (from Lush) to celebrate his birthday. The music was great but we were certainly the oldest there. We got back to Amelie as dawn was breaking. Jaz returned at the same time with Oliver (Pearl of Persia) and everyone

thought a nightcap a good idea! Funnily the rest of the day we were in recovery mode.

You have to choose your moments to visit the summit of Table Mountain. Many days the cable-car doesn't operate because it's shrouded in clouds (the tablecloth). We sat at breakfast on the edge of the waterfront looking up at Table Mountain with its white tablecloth thinking today is not the day. Instead we set off on a city bus tour to get an open topped view of the city and some of its famous beaches. The tour took us to the base of the cable-car station and by the time we arrived the clouds had disappeared, the cable-car was running and there were no queues, so we hopped off the bus. A number of the other boats had queued for two hours to get up and an hour to get down. The mountain top view was spectacular.

Sunday was to be a quiet day for Stephen, the rest of the Amelie crew set off for Kleinbaai harbour in Gansbaai (160 kms from Cape Town). Debbie, during a weak moment, had promised that she would go Shark Cage Diving with Jon. At 05:30 we were collected and driven to the harbour for breakfast. We spent four hours on the boat anchored in Shark Alley off Dyer Island witnessing Great White Sharks. They are controversially lured towards the cage by Gladys, a seal cut out, and a Tuna head as chummy. Jaz took some fantastic photographs of the experience, while Jon and Debbie donned thick wetsuits and plunged into icy water inside the cage in order to get close to these magnificent predators. An awesome experience that is unforgettable.





Amelie in Cape Town
(Continued)

The next two days were similarly nature related as we headed off to stay at the Aquilla Private Game Reserve. This was Jaz's first safari and what an initiation it turned out to be. Not only did we see Elephants, Lions, Rhino, Buffalo and Leopard but also hosts of other animals. We had the excitement of our vehicle being charged by a Buffalo and also witnessed a Buffalo and young bull Elephant having a set

too. The encounter stopping after the Elephant, using his trunk, threw a log at the Buffalo! The evening of our return saw the Oyster World Rally crews gather at the Ferryman's bar to celebrate Debbie's birthday. There ensued a splendid evening quite literally including dancing on the tables and drinking a variety of shots (Soweto Toilets, Springbok and Tequila). One of life's little miracles is that we got Debbie into a

McDonalds, with our friends from Proteus, to fix a carb craving in the early hours of what was now, Christmas Day.

Christmas Day was bitter sweet for Debbie, great to share lunch with Jaz and Jon, but sad to see Jaz off to fly back to London later in the day. Anyway not long until March when Jaz joins us again in Guadeloupe. Boxing Day Jon organised with the Oyster World Rally crews, a climb up Lion's Head

Mountain for sunset. The Lion's Head looks up to Table Mountain and has 360 degree views of the city, sea, bays and beaches. 28 of us reached the summit and we celebrated in true Oyster style. The climb up the cliff face was strenuous albeit aided by sweaty rungs, ladders and chains. The attached picture shows us all just before we descended in the fading light.

Amelie in Cape Town (Continued)

Another active day followed with a cycle ride through the winelands, stopping at Groot Constantia, Buitenverwachting and Steenberg estates for wine tasting. The day ended magnificently with an elaborate picnic in the sun within the grounds of the Steenberg estate. Upon leaving, we started our purchasing of the beautiful wines sampled on this estate. Stowing the huge quantity that we bought displaced some of our regular stores and other homes, within Amelie, were sought out. We now have the odd occasion when we can't find what we're looking for!

Saturday was Jon's last full day in Cape Town and we decided to find a sports bar that was televising the rugby at Twickenham.....Exeter Chiefs v Harlequins. Jon and Debbie got into the groove and adorned themselves in the Chief's colours, using different shades of eyeliner for the purpose. Unfortunately this display did not help Exeter Chief's fortunes.

Seeing Jon off outside the airport was very emotional but we have since reflected on the time we spent with both, Jaz and Jon, full of laughter, humour and general catching up.

Theoretically, save for some New Year's Eve celebrations, it was down to work, getting Amelie ready for her Atlantic crossing. We started well on the Monday by getting the sails down for checking and repair plus chasing people to fix Wally (the hydrogenerator); check the rigging (Amelie was found to have a cracked cap shroud but luckily our emergency rigging kit and new chocks in the mast gave her a clean bill of health); clean the hull and stainless steel and repair a faulty freezer condenser plate.

After one day of effort, New Year's Eve was already a lazy day with Debbie being pampered in the spa and Stephen making friends with Kym, George and Andre from the News Bar. More to follow on our new friends who now call Stephen, Mr. Sparkle as he had enlisted their help in trying to track down some sparklers for some Dutch kids on another boat.

New Year's Eve was held at Den Anker restaurant and 54 Oyster World Rally participants attended, successfully organised by Jean from Legend IV. We enjoyed a fantastic five course dinner liberally washed down with South African wine, which incidentally, we found far superior to Australian wines and at a fraction of the price. Sadly for Debbie there wasn't any dancing but nonetheless we had a great evening socialising, as evidenced by Debbie not arising from her bed until 4pm on New Year's Day.

Thursday and Friday saw us working hard on Amelie, interspersed with visits from friends; drinks at Jean and Alan's apartment (overlooking the marina) and restaurant suppers. During the day on Saturday, we joined Ian on Yantina to see the start of the 'Cape to Rio' race, not aware at the time of the tragedy that would ensue when one crew member from the Angolan boat, Billie, lost his life when the fleet hit extremely bad weather. The South African yachting community went into mourning. Stephen also had news from his Auntie Gill that her husband, Peter, had finally lost his battle with cancer. He was a giant of a man in life and as was his way fought his illness stoically and with humour, his rest now is well earned.

That evening we joined Leo and Karin (Duchess) for a night out at the Waterfront. Stephen discovered the following day that he had lost his debit and credit cards. Getting replacements would be a logistical nightmare and we would have been without them until Jaz's visit in March. Luckily our waitress found them and locked them in the night safe until we collected them. Stephen is now a proud owner of a nice slimline wallet!

Back to our friends from the News Bar. They had kindly invited us to Chez Kym for a traditional South African Braai (Barbecue). Additionally, Andre had prepared and cooked a Pojikee (difficulties finding out how to spell this - meat stew with dumplings, traditionally cooked in a cast iron pot over fire) which was truly delicious. We spent a warm afternoon in Kym's garden (a novelty to us as our garden is the sea) eating, drinking and getting to know one another. We decided to return the compliment by inviting them to a roast supper on Amelie the following weekend.

Monday the 6th of January marked a year from the start of the first Oyster World Rally and we celebrated the following day with an impromptu 'Jump Up' on Amelie. Duchess, Babe, Purusha and Wolfhound enjoyed a variety of takeaway food with Karin as the DJ using our new bluetooth speaker. We danced the night away. Remembering the numerous distractions in getting Amelie suitably prepared, Stephen called time at midnight and got everyone off the boat, much to the dismay of Trish and Debbie.

During the final week we managed to get through our two page list of chores which

was helped enormously by Kym being on holiday, not only running us around in her car but having the local knowledge of where to buy what we required. Distractions did include a sad farewell to Tim and Fay (Dreams Come True), a very nice dinner in a Japanese/Peruvian restaurant with Debbie and Eddie; supper with Serendipity and Babe's wine tasting evening.

George and Kym joined us on Amelie for a roast lamb supper with roast potatoes cooked in goose fat, Yorkshire bullets (sorry, puddings) for Kym and to keep Debbie happy, some vegetables. Alas, Andre couldn't make it but he sent his plate to be filled together with a bottle of wine dressed with the South African flag. It was George's first time on a boat and not only did he look the part, we believe he enjoyed the experience.

Our final evening in Cape Town was spent with Stephen (Valentine) and Richard (Proteus) in the Royal Cape Yacht Club looking out over their windswept marina. Something we hadn't mentioned before, the mountains produce some very strong winds which locally they call the 'Cape Doctor' as it blows all the germs away.

At 08.15 on Tuesday, 14th of January we set off from Cape Town, closely followed by Pearl of Persia, Babe and Satika, to get some sailing after a month in the marina.

Cape Town, you looked after us well with your warm welcome, great wines, new friends and unforgettable memories. Dankie.

Southern Atlantic, here we come.



Cape Town towards St Helena

January 21st, 2014

Leaving the V&A waterfront in Cape Town, was an exciting if nostalgic feeling. Looking back as we motored through the Bascule and Swing bridges into the bay, taking the last photographs, made us reflect on how far we had come and how lucky we were to be living our dream.

As Debbie entered the first log in the log book at the start of our southern Atlantic crossing, her iPad came to life and she had a short Skype conversation with her good friend Jane. How poignant a call - as Jane was with us a year previously, crossing the start line of the this first Oyster World Rally.

We motored for the first four hours and then had the most glorious sail up the western coast of Africa with a SSW wind, gusting up

to 26 knots. The following day, when the wind veered to a SSE direction, we were able to hoist our twin headsails using the spinnaker pole and boom, to pole the sails out (see picture attached), racing across the ocean very comfortably.

Food is our passion and important to us on these passages. We don't have a microwave so we are disciplined in defrosting our main source of protein, as we cook breakfast. Stephen is the "King of Grills" on board, whereas Debbie tends to experiment - not always successfully but whereas cooking was a chore for her on land, it has become an enjoyment on the sea. Stephen continues to control the reins on her insertion of chilli and certain spices into our daily cooking. Despite this, Debbie is able to enjoy the

spicy array of dishes around the world whilst in port. We generally make all our sauces, marinades, dressings, gravies and salsas from scratch with our growing number of ingredients on board. Our store cupboard ingredients are quite different from those we used when we lived on land, which we have collected globally.

Apart from drinking in port, our lifestyle on Amelie is reasonably healthy with the odd treat of chocolate, crisps, shortbread (when we can buy it, as Debbie cannot bake this successfully; best shortbread so far is baked on the premises of the News Bar, Cape Town) and salted, roasted nuts. Working out on board is tricky with the constant movement of the boat and wave action on the hull but Debbie (with the help of Jon's

adaptations) attempts to exercise daily. Age and reduced activity equals loss of tone, despite both of us losing weight over the year. This bothers Debbie more than Stephen, as she was super fit at the start, with help from Shane at "Fitness Matters".

On the 19th of January, we decided that we would bypass St. Helena. The sailing was exceptional and we were in the groove - why change? We set a new waypoint taking into account the currents, prevailing winds and obstructions. Presently our next stop is Salvador, Brazil. Neither of us have been to South America and albeit a short visit, we were keen to make the most of our time there. Stephen will guarantee to celebrate his birthday there, as originally we were most likely going to be at sea.

Cape Town towards St Helena (Continued)



After one week at sea, Wally the hydrogenerator is behaving. We will need to change the electrical connection (which we know we can buy in the UK) as the dampness seeps in and Wally groans so loudly that it sounds like a jet engine. WD40 solves the problem temporarily (why didn't we take out shares in WD40?).

Spirits are high on Amelie; the sea state is kind and so far, the wind has remained consistent and in our favoured direction - long may it continue. Excitement levels are rising with the help of copious amounts of reading material on Salvador. Estimated arrival date around the 3rd of February.



A fortnight out - 1,331 nm
to go
January 28th, 2014

This past week at sea has been notable, as on the 20th of January, we celebrated leaving Antigua, twelve months previously, after spending an extra two weeks there having emergency rigging repairs. Additionally, to date, we have sailed 21,873 nm on this rally.

It has been a week of brisk and light winds - we have maintained the twin headsails but progress has ranged from healthy to slow. Despite this, we are enjoying the sailing and haven't needed to use the engine since leaving Cape Town.

The Southern Atlantic is very similar to the North - devoid of sea life. After being spoilt in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, this is sadly noticeable.

We passed the "Meridian of Greenwich" at 20.53 hours on the 21st of January - we crossed over from the East to the West. Ship's clock is maintained on UT (Universal Time, used to be called Greenwich Mean Time) and we are presently one hour behind UT (UT-1) following the setting sun. The sunsets have been spectacular which hasn't

been the case in general throughout this rally and Debbie witnessed the green flash last evening or rather a lime green glow for a second. Stephen is blue/green colour blind so poor devil couldn't make it out!

Midnight on the 24th of January we reached halfway between Cape Town and Salvador, the miles are ticking off.

It was great to hear from some of our family and friends regarding their news. The one email that Debbie didn't want to read was notification of a speeding fine whilst driving in La Reunion. The fine of 45€ will be paid by internet in Brazil as she doesn't fancy a jail term in Guadeloupe, our next French port of call!

We sailed for days without seeing another vessel and the excitement of a blip on our radar screen and then, "Bow Clipper" (a monster) passing within 2.5nm of Amelie, was fantastic - didn't feel quite so alone out here.

As of Monday, severe cigar rationing came into force. For Debbie, the dreaded pipe has resurfaced to feed Stephen's tobacco habit

and this results in yet more mess in the cockpit.

Sleep management is more difficult for Debbie than Stephen. He can lay his head down and grab a couple of hours during the day whilst Debbie finds it harder to sleep in the daylight hours. Surprising as she didn't have any trouble sleeping during the day when she was a nurse on night duty.

The culinary experiences continue on a voyage of exploration with Stephen's "Potato Boulangerie, as an example. Fresh supplies are dwindling, however, buying fresh from the "Food Lover's Market" has proved to be a success. After two weeks we still have healthy looking specimens (apart from Stephen) so we haven't resorted to the tinned supplies yet. A great find in Cape Town was a traditional, woven herb container which allows fresh herbs to breathe and dry naturally. Also looks great in the galley.

Amelie having skipped St. Helena has now joined with the other boats heading for Salvador. Sulana and Duchess leading the

way and following behind, Crazy Daisy, Pearl of Persia and Babe. Serendipity heading for Ascension Island first. The party in Brazil beckons us.

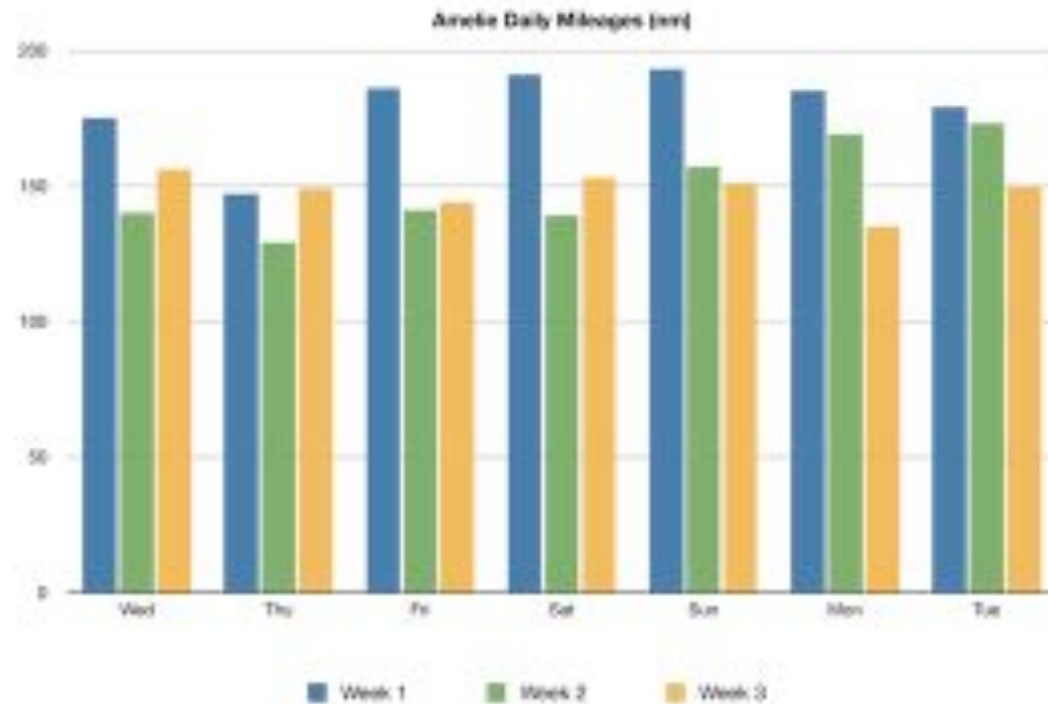
We enjoy watching films, sometimes cuddled up in the afternoon together sometimes alone during our watches. We transferred all our films and TV series from DVDs onto a hard drive for this purpose. Stephen spent a few afternoons transferring the six series of "Sex and the City" onto Debbie's new iPad. On Debbie's first night watch armed with all this entertainment she was disappointed to learn that her French was not quite up to what was going on! Now redone in English after the computer tried to dub it in German first.

Writing this with the aroma of pork chops grilling with the promise of a sundowner whilst watching, hopefully another wonderful sunset.....and, of course, lastly, a piece of shortbread.

All being well for the next log we should be pretty much in Salvador, heres to happy sailing continuing.

Three Weeks in a Boat

February 4th, 2014



No sooner had we sent our blog, whilst cooking breakfast, the generator overheated. There ensued four days of “heads in generator compartment”. We checked fresh water coolant for seawater ingress; pumped a sample of oil from the sump looking for water; checked hoses, clamps and plugs for leakage and it remains a mystery why we’re losing around a litre of engine coolant a day. The good news is we have 20 litres of coolant and when we replace each day, the litres that we have lost, we have no overheating and we can continue to cook and make water. To be investigated more fully and hopefully solved in port.

How do you cross 3,700 nm of ocean in a vessel that only travels around 6 nm an hour? The answer is obviously slowly! For planning purposes we work on covering 150 nm per day and as you can see from the chart we started our trip on a bit of a flyer. Several days we almost achieved 200 nm. Since then our progress has slowed and at current rate we expect to be in Salvador on Thursday. A total of twenty-three days at sea.

Salvador will be the first time either of us has been in South America and we look forward to reporting our findings soon.



Salvador, Bahia, Brazil
February 27th, 2014

Bahia de Todos os Santos at Salvador was discovered by the Portuguese in 1501 by Amerigo Vespucci. In 1530, Tome de Souza was the first governor of Brazil (named after a tree with dark wood which was used by the indigenous people to make a red dye - pau brasil) based in Salvador da Bahia, the country's first capital.

The Dutch had a short spell in Salvador but from 1640 onwards the Portuguese were dominant. Rubber, gold and diamonds were transported to Portugal through Rio de Janeiro and the central seat of government was transferred there in 1763. Rio became the new capital.

Brazil's history has been checkered since with abdications, social discontent, military coups, abolition of slavery, dictatorships, economic expansion and decline, communism, reforms and finally Brazil becoming a republic in 1994. Brazil served with the allies towards the end of WW1 and the whole of WW2.

Brazil, Salvador 13° S 38° W

Log 36393

Salvador, Bahia, Brazil (Continued)

The official language of Brazil is Portuguese (our sprinkling of Spanish was absolutely no use at all) and the currency, the Real, was introduced in 1994. Brazil claims the largest concentration of Roman Catholics in the world.

There is a heavy influence of African culture in Salvador spanning back to the slaves on the plantations and sugarcane mills. Their practice of African rites was forbidden so the slaves practiced their rites in a Catholic guise and paid homage to Orixas (their Gods) through the Roman Catholic saints. Today a number of Afro-Brazilian cults still exist - Umbanda, Macumba and Candomble.

Salvador is on the north-east coast of Brazil, between the equator and the Tropic of Capricorn. Their summer or dry season is from November to March with NE trade winds and the temperature between 26 and 35 degrees. Salvador is the capital of Bahia.

First sight of Salvador at dawn was like looking at an enormous Manhattan Island; an area pushing out to sea crammed full of majestic skyscrapers. The natural harbour, All Saints Bay, is a huge area and one of the fleet suggested resembled San Francisco Bay and indeed it is the second largest harbour in the world. Despite emails flying to and fro the marina and the presence of our Oyster support team stating our ETA, we were not expected by the marina support staff. Chuckling, we dropped our anchor and motored astern to moor up beside Crazy Daisy and remained there for the duration of

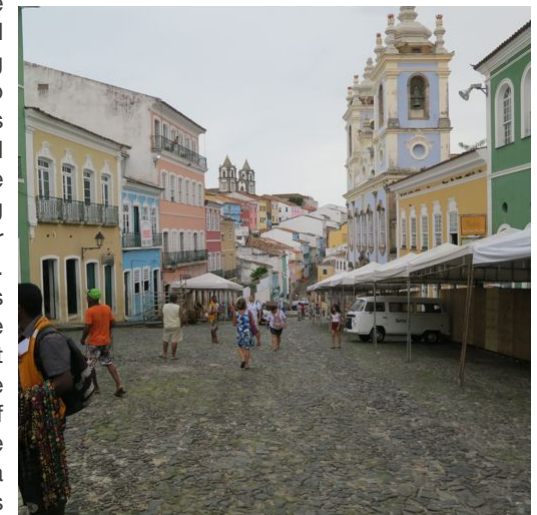
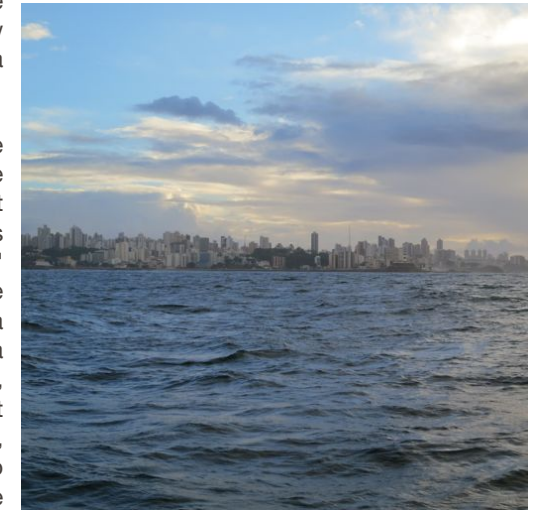
our stay apart from a great trip to one of the bays.

Within two hours, Debbie Johnson had us on a mini bus (courtesy of the yacht club who provided us with Carlos as our driver and Luis as our interpreter for the duration of our stay) to complete our official check in at the various departments around the city. After lunch, Luis and Carlos took us to ATMs and the absolute necessity of buying Stephen his much needed cigars. Tobacco is a valuable commodity of the Bahian region and the cigars are locally produced; inexpensive and good, according to the expert. Stephen rarely smokes little ones anymore, they now resemble chimney pots growing out of his mouth. The only bit Debbie likes about this habit is the beautiful wooden boxes that the cigars are packed in. Lighters have become a problem too, refilling is an option but rarely successful. Lighters appear to die regularly and now the ship matches are taking a pounding. Having no gas on board does prevent Stephen from taking off his eyebrows on a daily basis, although he has been known to light his habit from the barbecue. Debbie often finds Stephen contorted in the corner of the cockpit trying to light a huge cigar and the look of contentment when he has succeeded is comical. Gradually falling asleep on off watches with the aroma of cigars gives a comforting feeling, as Debbie knows that Stephen has remained in the cockpit, has settled down for his watch and she is safe in the knowledge that he is watching out for Amelie and our continued safe life at sea.

Getting back to the blog, later that evening after a few bottles of the fantastic South African MCC, the various crews in Salvador wandered up to a restaurant within the beautiful marina and quaffed down a few G&Ts and our first Caipirinhas followed by a lovely Prawn Risotto.

The following day, a group of us went to the colonial, colourful old city, Pelourinho. The buildings are painted in beautiful vibrant colours interspersed with very old structures which are ornate and the stone masons' craftsmanship on the churches are magnificent. The overall feeling in this area is a busy, lively and quaint quarter with a touristy twist. The shops sell local goods, arts, craft and Brazilian memorabilia but somehow keep it real rather than fake, touristy trappings. The women who encourage you to visit their shops are traditionally dressed in the Bahian white laced garments with huge skirts, colourful beads, good luck charms and wearing turbans on their heads. We were advised to leave all jewelry and watches on our boats but these women were adorned in gold and semi precious stones, sashaying around the streets, greeting us Gringos but not being offended when we declined their encouragement to view their items for sale. Street merchants tied Bonfim ribbons around our wrists. It is traditional for these ribbons to be knotted three times, each knot a wish or request for protection by the saints. They should be allowed to fall off naturally and your wishes would then be granted. This is a strong belief and not a child's fairytale story. One of the churches

we came across in the square was fluttering with colour from believers tying Bonfim ribbons on the railings outside the church.



Salvador, Bahia, Brazil (Continued)

The restaurant diners were a refreshing mix of locals and tourists alike. Generally speaking the food was of a good standard and reasonably priced.

Saturday saw the rest of the Salvador Seven arrive in port and the OWR tradition is to quaff a few bottles of Champagne. No breakfast and celebrating us all being together made us very merry and despite soaking up the alcohol with a lovely lunch, some of the guys peeked early. We returned to Pelourinho for Alan's birthday supper and ate outside in a stunning courtyard eating local fare.

The event of the year was on the Sunday...Stephen and Sussanne's birthday. Again we started celebrating mid morning and luckily Stephen had the foresight to arrange a very late lunch back in the old city. We stayed late ending up in an open air bar where a few of us danced the Samba with local people. It was encouraging that we will be able to do this for many years to come based on the ages of some of the dancers that night. They were friendly and we believe thrilled that we joined in. Perhaps thrilled is not the word, rather they were amused by our efforts. Some of the younger local dancers were simply amazing with moves that you could really appreciate but would have wrecked our backs even if we'd tried some of the simpler moves.

Alas this is not always a glorified holiday. Stephen spent the following day arranging for a new heat exchanger for our generator to be flown to Salvador.....it transpired after a week that it had only got as far as Miami. Many promises on timing and delivery then changes of plan then the main man not available for a few days caused us to waste a fair amount of time waiting on Amelie. Debbie joined a few others to go shopping in the local mall and returned with some great bargains.

The Salvador Seven arranged to spend a couple of nights away inland. We travelled over five hours by minibus, which was not comfortable, to Lençóis in the Chapada Diamantina region. A region of great beauty with Lençóis once being the diamond capital of Brazil. The mining for diamonds has ceased but their trails have now opened up to tourists to explore the landscape. After a much needed lunch, some of our party went with a guide to trek along one of these trails to the Primavera Waterfall. We enjoyed the coolness of the water by swimming over to the natural water slide, where upon several of our party were brave enough to try the slippery rocks. After much laughter we were entertained by a local guy sliding on his feet from the top, to show us how it is really done. Naturally, as an unassuming crowd we cheered him heartily only for him to repeat it many times. We left the falls as the light started to dim and along the trail we were

able to buy green coconuts to quench our thirsts. This watering hole is well stocked and built with natural products from the forest. The stall holder lives in a tent in the clearing close by with his cats. Everywhere is swept clean and even the waste bins are woven from leaves. Recycling is in evidence with the locals fully engaged in the process. Very tired and well fed we retired early in preparation for another full day of activities.



Salvador, Bahia, Brazil (Continued)

The following day we grouped after a hearty breakfast and took the minibus further into the region for us to swim or snorkel in the Lapa Doce Cavern followed by a local lunch and then for us, an amazing walk through Pratinha Cavern in Iraquara. The torches illuminated the stalactites, stalagmites and a few speleothemes (where stalactites and stalagmites meet). The guide encouraged us to use our imagination to describe the shape of the various forms, some resembling jellyfish, a sombrero and many other things. The light picked up blue and purplish hues in the stagnant water and the fine shale. At one point, the guide asked us to sit on meditation stones, switch off our torches and remain silent. The visual effect was disorienting and although there were plenty of us, you felt alone in the blackness. We climbed out of the cave through lush greenery into the heat and sunlight. Our last visit of the day was a scramble up Pai Inacio hill in Palmeiras overlooking the Capao and Paty Valleys. At the viewpoint the panoramic view is staggering with a resemblance to a small Grand Canyon. This area is steeped in legend and mystery.

That evening we walked into the town of Lencois and ate at one of the street restaurants. A common and sensible feature that we experienced here and in Salvador

was the sharing of kitchens. You could order your starter from one restaurant and main from another. The bill was uncomplicated and the various restaurants sorted out the different orders. It was not unusual to see a steaming plate from one kitchen delivered to the table with the same waiter walking up the road to get a pizza from another kitchen for the same table. Drumming is a feature in the streets and we were entertained by a local drumming troupe practicing for the upcoming carnival. Conversation died as you couldn't hear a thing. The hat went around the table afterwards for small change. Additional to this, as we sat eating our food, a couple of young girls offered us homemade truffles for a few Reals. We felt safe and thrilled that we had walked away from the hotel to find this little treasure.

The next day back in the minibus we had the hot journey back to Salvador in time for the OWR party at the Bahia Yacht Club. We all dressed smartly and were royally entertained by constant canapés with copious amounts of champagne and whisky. They had set up a Caipirinha bar, although delicious they numbed your lips. A huge table grumbling under the weight of exquisite tiny sweet canapés tempted the sweet toothed guests. Sitting outside with Stephen we discovered another table with liqueurs and chocolates.

The attention to detail, ambience and generosity was fit for royalty. Willy Pickett made the evening fun by helping us to interpret the speeches and explaining Brazilian protocol. A fantastic drumming troupe was the highlight of the evening and their dancing whilst playing the drums was spellbinding. The emotion was visible in their faces and the leader was trance like at times. Young men who could have been on the wrong side of the law had found a passion and lifestyle, embraced it and made it an evening that we will never forget.

Bahia Yacht Club is vast and built on different levels. The stairs and lifts were used during our time there but on leaving we were encouraged to use their funicular railway to our taxis. The gentleman who was operating the railway was soon redundant as a couple of us (not mentioning any names as we'll never be allowed to go back) hijacked the railway and became 'fat controllers' collecting the stragglers but mainly having a great time going up and down into the opulence of the club. The operator was bemused. The final drink on Duchess pushed the rest of us over the edge and we slept late the following day.....Valentine's Day.



Salvador, Bahia, Brazil (Continued)

A slow start with Stephen collecting his ordered cigars. Yes, he had bought them out of cigars earlier in the week. Debbie, Sussanne and Trish discovered how many outfits you could make out of a sarong with the help of the hair of the dog. Later that evening Stephen and Debbie had a romantic meal together in an Afro-Brazilian street restaurant in Pelourinho, discovering the traditional dish, Feijoada, a black bean and meat stew. The quantities are enormous and even Debbie couldn't get through half of it.

The weekend was upon us and a decision was made for five of the boats to sail over to Ilha do Frade for a beach BBQ. After changing the anchorage late in the afternoon we individually organised ourselves and travelled by dinghy ashore with our portable BBQ, food, drink and music. With a full moon, candles and solar lamps, we had the most enjoyable party, dancing on the beach and Leo almost sharing his steak with an enormous Coconut Crab.

Sunday evening we all ended up traveling to a Brazilian Steakhouse, Churrascaria. Various meats and poultry are speared on a sword and cooked over an open fire. The southern Brazilian Cowboy (Gaúcho) cooked in this fashion when herding cattle for weeks on end. The meat is brought to the table and carved individually, this was accompanied by one of the best gourmet salad bars that we have ever encountered.

There are always boat chores to be done so the following few days whilst waiting for information on the heat exchanger, we replaced a hose on the generator with help from Eddie, provisioned for the onward journey in the best supermarket of this rally and arranged our papers for checking out. Stephen discovered that the heat exchanger was still in Miami so organised for Debbie and Eddie to collect it during their overnight there before flying to Grenada and we will collect it from there.

Willy Pickett organised for us to meet up in his home district of Rio Vermelho to see the

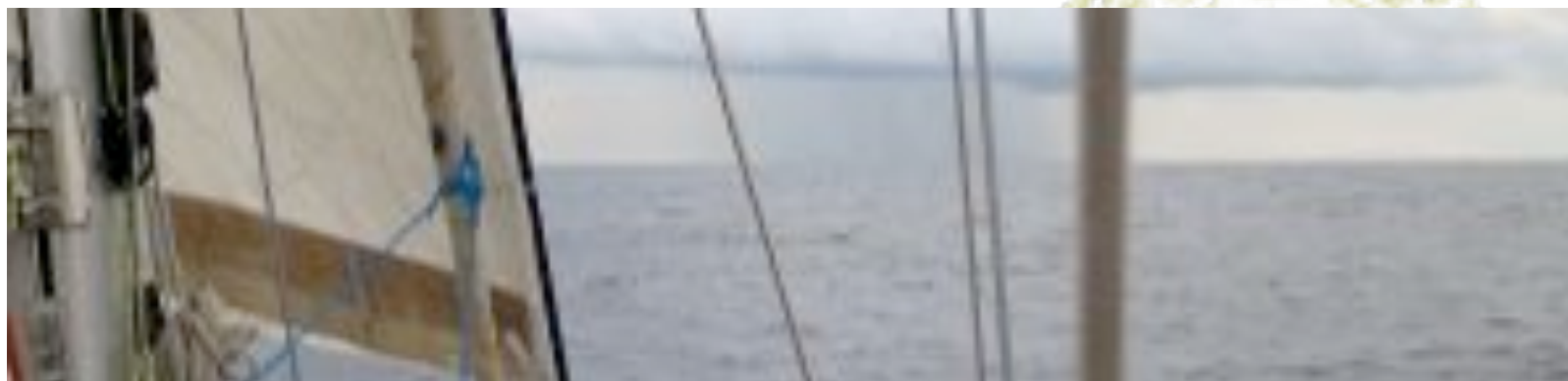
real Salvador. He took us to a Spanish tapas restaurant which was exceptional. The place was small, many homemade crafts and tableware....felt like being in the owner's home. Despite overwhelming our hosts by 17 turning up for a table for 3, they made us feel welcome, got us seated quickly, wine started flowing and dish after dish embellished the table. Other private diners mainly in couples were in for a lively evening and appeared happy with the situation. Willy ended the evening by taking us Gringos to an opening night at a local Samba-Reggae bar. Drinks were in plastic cups and Willy taught us how to Samba....properly. One of our party did his party trick by balancing a water bottle on his head. This created friends and we were quickly accepted in the local community. Hysterical evening and we remember most of it. Again we got kidnapped by Leo for another last drink on Duchess. Yes, we are now officially all alcoholics!!!

Wednesday morning the Salvador seven boats became the Salvador seven people,

since Babe, Crazy Daisy and Pearl of Persia all departed and Alan and Sue had gone off on their nine day excursion. More Amelie boat chores for preparation for a Friday departure and in the evening the Salvador Seven met up for Burger and Chips.

Thursday was clearing out day and last minute provisioning. Stephen kept his promise to keep the afternoon clear for exploring the old city. In the evening we started off eating outside at L'Archangelo with the others until torrential rain encouraged us to finish off inside. The Italian fare was excellent particularly the homemade breadsticks and a very pleasing finale to our Brazilian experience.

The final morning brought thunder and lightning whilst awaiting it's passing we finished our preparations and refuelled Amelie for the first time since Durban, literally an ocean away. We got underway at 14.30 local time and headed for Grenada, some 2,600 miles away.



Brazilian Blast

March 1st, 2014

Leaving Salvador, Brazil under a darkened, stormy sky, Amelie ventured out into All Saints' Bay. Our two week stay barely touched the surface of exploring Salvador and beyond. Unfortunately, waiting around for parts for the generator which never materialised is common in Brazil but it is also the nature of sailing around the world in a complicated machine. Another visit is necessary and with more time on our return journey, we will do Southern Brazil justice.

The wind and sea state was kind to us despite all the horror stories that we had heard over the past few months. In February, the prevailing wind is predominantly north easterly with a southerly running current. Our passage, to get around the corner of Brazil was expected to be a north, north, easterly direction, therefore beating into the wind - hard going and can be unpleasant sailing. Our grib files showed a favourable wind window and for the first few days we had a healthy south easterly wind. We also

chose to sail close inshore to pick up a counter current to boost our speed. After that the wind settled into an easterly - fantastic sailing for Amelie and her crew.

Sailing close to the shore, we encountered many fishing vessels of all sizes. We needed to keep vigilant at all times.

Another hazard were the oil fields, as we needed to give them 5nm clearance. Most of them were charted and we could allow for them in our passage planning. There is always an exception to the rule. We came across an uncharted oil field and had to make a 20nm detour plus we were chased by a patrol boat which was patrolling the security boundary of the rigs. He watched us all night to make sure that we didn't get any closer.

We met with the odd squall which generally brought heavy rain and an increase in wind. Afterwards there is quietness and the wind

dies for a spell. Amelie wallowed waiting for the wind to pick up and off she would go again.

Humidity was overwhelming on this initial stage. It interfered with comfort and sleep. It was necessary to increase drinking fluids even if it was beer. Cooking breakfast and supper was hell, as the galley became a furnace. Night watches were slightly cooler and most of the time we were scantily clad.

Day 2 our watermaker decided to cease functioning whilst attempting to fill our water tank. Luckily we always store extra water in containers for this eventuality. Despite spending most of the day trying to fix it, we made a decision to ration our water supply and sail as fast as Amelie would allow to Grenada. Eddie was alerted and he was on the case immediately, ordering parts from Eloisa back in Ipswich. They should arrive in Grenada before we do and hopefully fix the problem. Others have experienced this

problem on the rally but we hadn't appreciated the impact on daily life. To be completely honest, initially Debbie did not handle the situation well but what option did we have? Salvador had proven to be unreliable with obtaining parts, so we made a plan and spirits improved. We had enough water for consumption but 'flannel washes' were of the order of the day. Hair washing would have to wait until we reached port unless some of the rain squalls resembled a power shower. We got excited about rain clouds and the hair and body wash lived on deck. We collected rain water in an empty water container, feeling increasingly like the ancient mariners. Washing up occurred once a day. Thank goodness for disinfectant spray and wipes which helped to keep the galley and heads clean. We feel fortunate that there is only two of us on board and others are not subjected to this discipline. It isn't fun but proves how much water we unnecessarily waste.

Brazilian Blast (Continued)

Day 4 the generator overheated and shut down. By this point we were laughing hysterically about eating cheese and biscuits, bowls of muesli and cold baked beans until our arrival in Grenada. Stephen discovered the problem and rectified it. We continue to enjoy cooked food twice a day.

Amelie's sails have been magnificent but the main yankee appears to be on it's last legs. A tear has developed in the upper third of the sail along the seam. We temporarily patched it and if this can be repaired in Grenada, then we will be overjoyed. Pete Sanders maybe getting a call at the end of the rally for a replacement.

We passed the equator at 21.36 on Friday evening, 28th of February. This was our second crossing but the first from the southern to the northern hemisphere. We naturally toasted Neptune and Amelie with a dribble of Champagne (far to precious to waste) and there wasn't a ceremony this time as we're no longer equator virgins. The Doldrums (ITCZ - Inter tropical Convergence Zone) as before meant lack of wind, flapping of sails and a decrease of Amelie's speed

interspersed with squalls and high winds under the rain clouds. These are easier to spot in the daytime as shown in the photograph however during the hours of darkness, you need to keep an eye on the radar, that does pick them up. If you don't prepare yourself for these squalls, you'll find the wind will increase from 5 - 25 knots and you'll be flat on your ear. We are loathed to use the engine but when needs must, the iron sail is in operation. The engine is quiet but the noise destroys the tranquility of sailing. One thing we have is plenty of diesel, although we only used the engine for three hours. Once we were through the ITCZ we sailed in a robust north easterly. Stephen read that during a Clipper race, one of the boats was becalmed in the ITCZ for eleven days. Race rules state the engine can only be used to charge the batteries and not forward propulsion.

Amelie became a boat taxi to a bedraggled seabird with a fearsome beak. After landing and having a spruce up, the bird settled down on the dinghy for a rest. One of the few seabirds seen along this Brazilian coastline. Where is all the sea life in the Atlantic?





Grenada in sight March 12th, 2014

The second week of our passage from Salvador to Grenada, was dominated by 200nm days. The wind, sea state and currents were in our favour. We ate up the miles, sailing on the tilt most of the time, averaging 9-10 knots, which is very fast for Amelie.

The sailing is exciting and not scary at all. Stephen is in his element. With the issues affecting Amelie and her crew, this has tainted the sailing for Debbie. As Stephen says, it's "boys' sailing" - very little washing, the galley sink piling up, sweaty bedlinen, coffee grounds everywhere and cigar ash all over the cockpit. At times this has made life miserable for Debbie, being the cleanliness fiend, she is, but she mostly keeps a positive demeanor. Emailing her friends and kids back home has helped enormously. Once we touch land in Grenada, we will have 'Hollywood Showers', pre-wash and boil wash the bedlinen, ventilate the cabins

and spring clean Amelie inside and out and enjoy a champagne celebratory meal ashore.

The camaraderie on the OWR fleet still out at sea has been great. Amelie has been the butt of many stinky jokes, causing much laughter. It keeps our spirits lifted.

The sky has been hazy and grey most of the time although remaining hot. This is unlike anything we've seen before on this rally. Visibility is relatively poor and thank goodness for radar and AIS. An example of this was during a night watch. The radar suggested either a squall or an unidentified blip. Debbie watched this for ages, ready to adjust the sails if the squall hit us. At 2nm from Amelie, the night sky didn't show any signs of bad weather or vessels when suddenly a huge ship cleared the mist heading straight for Amelie. A VHF call to the captain of the Nikkei Dragon, alerted him

to us and politely and efficiently he changed course to avoid us.

We crossed over from Brazilian to French waters (opposite French Guyana) at midnight on the 3rd of March. We have been asked how we will cope without the Oyster support after the rally. We have learnt so much about Amelie both on our own and with the support of Eddie Scougall. Luckily we've got his mobile number on speed dial! Seriously, we have plenty of spares and always buying more. We are capable of most things but at times, you accept your limitations and hand it over to an expert. There are plenty of very capable specialists in their fields throughout the world. When there are issues, we either fix it or watch others at work - learning all the time, hoping to become even more self-sufficient. Preparation is essential and we should be better at this. Having the right tools for those unusual jobs is a necessity and our

collection is increasing and periodically used by us and others on the rally. Lastly we bought an Oyster because of their world renowned aftercare service and for us, this has been spot on. We have Eloisa back in Ipswich who always gets us the parts we need and posts them to Jaz or Jon or whoever is visiting us. Oyster experts are at the end of a telephone with contacts with all the manufacturers of the equipment on board. We feel comfortable and positive about continuing on our own and continuing the learning curve.



OWR Final Blog

April 6th, 2014

Antigua, Falmouth Harbour 17° N 62° W

Log 39632

The facilities at Port Louis, Grenada, are exceptional so we intend to live there for six months from the 1st of June. The marina is on the main bus route around the island; dinghy ride from the capital city and the shops plus the staff are amazing.

Replacing the new heat exchanger took longer than expected because the brackets supplied were not the same as the fitting for the engine. No problem though we just used the old ones. We "high fived" when we completed. We'd done it all on our own. The rest of the time we cleaned the boat and chilled out with our OWR friends. Good news of the week is that Jaz joins us in Guadeloupe on Monday and our good friends, Jackie and Mike are visiting us in June.

After a week in port we set off north to Guadeloupe to meet Jaz from her plane on Monday evening. We have already reported that en route we completed our circumnavigation. More good news was that our home rugby team, Exeter Chiefs, beat

Northampton Saints 15:8 to win the LV cup, the club's first major silverware in its history. We arrived early Monday morning in a bay off Deshaies village, Guadeloupe, and after checking in on the internet celebrated ashore with a leisurely lunch. A very excited daughter and Mum were reunited that evening and again we celebrated on board.

The following day we chilled with swimming, exploring the village and enjoying a tasty supper ashore. That evening the wind picked up but the following morning it didn't deter a couple of dolphins and a turtle gliding past. By the 19th it was time to move on to a calmer anchorage so we set sail 35nm south to the stunning Ile de Saintes. We gently anchored in Petit Anse, Terre de Haut, in a less crowded anchorage. Over the following two days we swam, snorkeled, walked and explored the quaint village, again partaking of the local fare. The decision was made to move on to Marigot Bay, St. Lucia. This involved an overnight sail, not wholly popular but necessary. The sail was lively and bouncy particularly in the wind

acceleration zones between the islands. Memories of sailing in the Canaries came flooding back.

We arrived in Marigot Bay at 07.00 hours under a heavy sky and were greeted by St. Jacques who helped us moor up. Within the hour we had Bocky selling us fruit and vegetables from his brightly coloured boat. Whilst in Marigot Bay we enjoyed time with our friends from Pearl of Persia, Serendipity, Pandemonium and Dreams. We supped on boats and at one of our all time favourite restaurants, The Rainforest Hideaway. For our final journey back to Antigua we decided on another stopover at Ile de Saintes. During our stay we celebrated Lorraine's birthday with a typical OWR booking at the restaurant. Initially booking for twelve, more and more boats arrived and we ended up with a party of twenty-eight. We danced until the small hours finishing off on Mariela, dancing on their aft deck until 03.30.

We enjoyed a very pleasant final sail, making very good time to Falmouth Harbour, Antigua.

We had arrived in good time for the OWR finale party and the Oyster circumnavigation presentation.

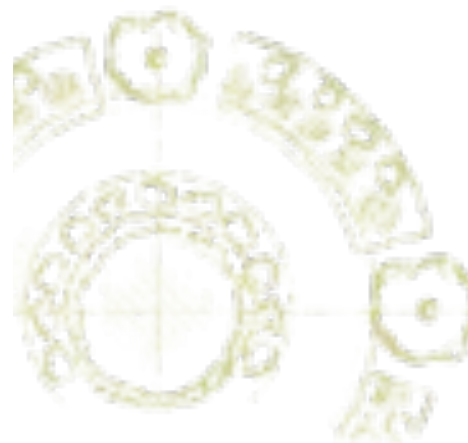
The Oyster presentation event was an emotional occasion and there was barely a dry eye in the house. Amelie was presented with her silver Armada plate and a personalised world chart which now hangs in pride of place in the saloon.

The evening's event was celebrated with most of the boats, presenting ditties or songs or whatever was their particular talent. Crazy Daisy had also put together a video presentation with the yachts contributing adaptations of "We didn't start the fire". The evening was finished off in Abracadabras and with no sleep, Jaz and Debbie flew to Guadeloupe to meet Jaz's flight home to the UK. Thirteen hours in an airport with limited food choices and nothing to do was grim but allowed us to party until the bitter end.

The OWR has now seen it's course and Amelie and her crew look forward to doing it all over again very, very slowly.

Particulars of Amelie

Make & Model	Oyster 53
Builder	McDells, Auckland
Hull Number	51
Port of Registry	Jersey
Length Overall	16.20 m
Beam	4.65 m
Draught	2.20 m
Registered Tonnage	24.23 Tonnes
Sail Area	150 sq m
Downwind sail	2nd Yankee
Rig	Cutter
Masthead height	21.20 m
Length waterline	13.90 m
Auxiliary Engine	Yanmar 100 hp
Fuel Capacity	750 l
Generator	Westerbeke 7.5 kw
Hydrogenerator	Watt & Sea Cruising
Battery monitoring	Mastervolt MICC
Battery Bank - Service 24 v	460 amp/hr wet cell
Battery engine starting 12 v	2 x 88 amp/hr sealed
Genset starting 12 v	1 X 88 amp/hr sealed
Battery charger	Mastervolt Mass24/75
Inverter	Mastervolt 24/2500
Second Alternator	Mastervolt 150a/24v
Cooking	Electric Force 10
* Note no gas onboard *	
Watermaker	Seafresh H206
Water Tank	700 l
Main Anchor	CQR 34 kg
Anchor cable	100 m 12 mm Galvanised chain
Kedge Anchor	Fortress
Kedge Cable	10 m chain 100 m 18 mm Octoplait
Propeller	600 mm Brunton Folding 3 Blade
Tender 1	Ribeye 330 20 hp Yamaha
Tender 2	Tinker Tramp 3.5 hp Mercury
Davits	Cooney S300 Electric
Bowthruster	Sleipner 11 hp



Amelie - Some Numbers and stuff

Electronics

Autopilot	Raymarine ST 7000
Autopilot drive	Twin24v linear drives
SSB	Furuno FS157
VHF	Furuno FM2721
Handheld VHF	2x Icom
GPS	Furuno GP320
Handheld GPS	X2
Main Plotter	Furuno 1834
Cockpit Plotter	Furuno 1734
Satellite phone	Iridium 9505
Dedicated boat computer	12v Vasari with remote touchscreen
Boat speed, wind & depth	Raymarine ST 6002
Radar detector	Seame
Navtex	Furuno NX300
Barograph	Antique, working, Negretti & Zambra

Sail handling, etc

Mainsail	In mast Selden electric furling
Yankee	Reckmann electric headsail furling
Staysail	Harken manual furling
Main sheet	Lewmar 48 Electric winch
Yankee sheet	2x Lewmar 65 Electric winches
Staysail sheet	2x Lewmar48 Manual winches
Main sheet traveller	2x Lewmar 16 Manual winchws
Halyards at mast	2x Lewmar48 Manual winches
Backstay tensioner	Harken B503
Vang	Selden rod kicker manual
Windlass	Lewmar V4 24v electric capstan

Note on Spares

We have too many spares to list but share the following:

- We log everything on our iPad using eStorage
- There are 545 spares items in 48 locations with 342 different types of spares
- We carry a complete refit for our autopilot system, course computer, controller, compass and linear drives
- Auxiliary engine, generator and watermaker are the next priority
- We have a Sta-Lok emergency rigging kit for all shroud fittings and for both Dyform and Standard wire

Amelie - Some Numbers
and stuff
(Continued)

SOME CREATURE COMFORTS

Miele Washing Machine

La Pavoni Coffee Grinder and Espresso Maker

LED lighting throughout

Converted wet locker to food storage baskets

Fridge, Keel cooled Frigomatic DC

Freezer, Frigomatic W50 twin compressor

Air conditioning, Cruisair 16000 btu

Hot water shower on bathing platform

Bimini and Awning

Four cabins, Master, Double Guest, Twin Guest and Junk Room!

Dive compressor, Bauer Junior II and 3x scuba gear

Wedgewood china

Folding bikes, x2

Inflatable Kayak

Amelie - Some Numbers
and stuff
(Continued)

Details for the trip

Days in port	289 days
Days at sea	168 days
Total trip	455 days

Main Engine Hours	750
Generator Hours	1,043
Distance Travelled	26,462
Average nm/day	159
Average Engine Hrs/Day	4.52
Average Generator Hrs/Day	2.29
Longest time at sea	Cape Town to Salvador 23 days
Longest distance	Cape Town to Salvador 3,654 nm

