

CORRESPONDENCE...

EXPEDITUS
M.N. AND R.G. LEWIS
267 Dales Road,
IPSWICH, SUFFOLK, U.K.
22.11.80

The Secretary,
R.S.A.Y.S.

Dear Sir,

You may be interested in the progress of the occasional yacht that departs on a cruise from Adelaide's waters, and I have therefore enclosed a copy of our progress report No.4, which covers our journey from New Zealand to the Falkland Islands. We have found progress reports to be the most suitable method of keeping in touch with the ever increasing number of people we correspond with, and if you can see fit to publish it in the next Newsletter I would be grateful, as no doubt some of the Squadron members with whom we are acquainted will be wondering what happened to the Lewises.

We are currently in Ipswich, Suffolk, U.K. and taking a break from our cruise to meet my wife's family, and work for a year or two in order to get financial again and enjoy a continuation of our cruise back to Adelaide. The trip up the Atlantic, non-stop from the Falklands to the Isles of Scilly, was a breeze compared to the Southern Ocean, with only 2 short gales and nothing else over 25 knots for the entire trip. We took 84 days to cover the 8000 miles, suffering from calms in both the South and North Atlantic variables, but having nice winds in the trades. Our only cause for alarm on the trip was in nearly hitting a ship, and running half its length only 6 to 8 feet away, too close to turn away because of end swing. This was one of those one in a million chances as it was not on a regular shipping route, and our previous look out was only 20 minutes earlier. Our fears of sailing up the English Channel were unfounded as we did it in day hops with fav-

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ourable winds and tide, but there were certainly numerous ships to be seen further offshore.

Regards to all our squadron friends, and hope to be back in a few years time.

MIKE & GAY LEWIS.

PROGRESS REPORT No. 4

New Zealand was enjoyed immensely, meeting old friends and making a few new ones, one of whom gave a film show of his trip around Cape Horn two years ago. He gave us a lot of encouragement as well as a few gifts. Chris Farrington came from South Australia and had a two week holiday with us in which time we cruised some of the Haueaka Gulf again.

We left New Zealand on the 4/12/79, having a farewell escort from our neighbour Tom who had been good enough to assist us in getting gas and in selling our aqualung which we figured would not be getting much use for the next couple of years. The first night we anchored at Motohuie Island, and attended to a few last minute jobs, such as extra lashings over the dinghy, etc., and getting a good night's sleep before leaving. The trip commenced with fine weather and light head winds, sometimes moderate, that stayed with us for 20 days, more or less, during which time we covered 2,000 miles. During this period we only had a couple of days of following winds in a gale. The passage of time seems to dull one's recollection of events, but in re-reading our Log I see it must have been a fairly substantial gale, as waves were breaking over the stern of the boat and water was spurting through the back hatch and rear vents. Had a couple of knock downs in which a life ring was washed overboard but, luckily, we got it back as it was attached to the Dan Buoy. Spent some time running under bare poles at 6 knots and also running under reefed Storm Jib (40 sq.ft.) sheeted in hard. All waves taken on the quarter.

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After these twenty days we picked up strong and consistent westerlies, at 47°S, the wind not varying much between NW to SW and our mileage beginning to average about 120 miles per day. We could have made faster progress, had we cared to hold on to a bit more sail as the wind got up, but we preferred to get a good eight hours sleep whenever we could. Days passed quickly, and we read books, listened to music and Adimovs Trilogy which a friend had recorded in Auckland. There were many birds to watch - petrels, albatross, and the tiny storm petrels, or foot tappers as Gay and I call them, dangling their legs in the water and fluttering around with the motion of a butterfly. On Christmas Eve we succumbed to the temptation of opening a few presents we had been given, justifying our actions as it was already 25 December on the other side of the date line in Australia and New Zealand. It gave us a great thrill and we got the boat decked out with Christmas cards and a couple of small Father Christmasses. We lazed around on Christmas Day, eating glazed fruits, chocolates, nuts and so forth, after a Christmas meal of chicken mornay, baked potatoes, carrots, pumpkin, etc.

Life carried on as usual for a while, in an area which seemed quite foggy, and often we could only see a few hundred yards. We gave ourselves a scare by looking at the barometer and seeing it plunge at over a point per hour throughout the day. This was in the early stages of our second gale and we made good progress for a while with four reefs in the main (60sq.ft.) and stay sail goose winged on a boom, some surfing on the crests of breaking waves to about nine knots until we decided it was getting a bit out of hand. The crests were what we describe as soft, i.e., plenty of breaking water but not steep enough for the waves to form big combers yet. As usual it blows harder as the wind backs to SW and the barometer rises, and we spent half a day under bare poles again. Some of the waves had rollers six to ten feet high on top, and one of them broke our plywood wind vane, inserted a spare vane and made provision to "end for end" the broken one.

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Fine weather again (force, five, six, seven winds and drizzle) until 20 January when we watched the barometer drop, at one stage falling eleven points in seven and a half hours, and we got the feeling that we might be "in for it" tomorrow. Had been eating a lot of Kit-kats and Mars bars, with the idea "If this ship is going to sink, I'm not going to leave all these nice Mars bars to the fish".

Well, that gale was our worst one, and it was a real corker. Two more self-steering vanes were smashed and we had to cut another one out of spare ply. Everywhere was white with huge combers, breaking on most waves and soapsuds scudding along the surface that made it look as if we were standing still, or going very slowly forwards or backwards. Had to look at the speedo to believe that we were moving at all (6 to 7 knots). This gale had a lot of South in it and must have created a considerable NE current, for it put us only a hundred miles off the coast of Chile, instead of 300 miles West of the Horn. Good weather followed (force 6 to 7) and most of the storm clouds now gave us hail instead of rain, but the squalls they brought were not too fierce. Saw some black and white dolphins which were three to eight foot long, good omen. Wind and swell dropping all the time as we approached an area where soundings jumped from 2,000 fathoms to sixty fathoms and which could be a terrible place for a gale. But we are in luck, and the sea was quite clam. See some jagged peaks and the blinking ice fields on Hoste Island 42 miles away. Get numerous sextant shots whenever there is a gap in the clouds. Pass between Ilde de Fonso and Diego Ramires Island in the evening without seeing either, and see land of Hermite Island at 9.30 on 24 January 1980. The wind is down to 15 knots and sea getting calmer so we head straight for the Horn, which appears at noon about 20 miles away. Fine weather, high steady barometer and settled conditions. Sail within a quarter mile of Horn as conditions are so excellent, taking photos, then wonder about anchoring for a day or two instead of carrying on straight for the Falklands. Go through a small passage between Herschell and Deceit

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Islands, marking time for a few minutes for a nasty black cloud to pass ahead of us (even in these fine conditions rain and hail clouds pass over every fifteen minutes or so) and then we were in very sheltered waters. See Magellan Penguins, numerous birds, three whales and a small Chilean naval shed in a bay. The Chilean flag appeared on a flag-staff, so we went in behind the whales, taking photos, to anchor in calm protected water in front of their "casa" just outside a band of kelp. Completed 5621 miles in 51 days.

With Spanish phrase book in hand we proceeded ashore to be welcomed by five Chilenos who man the outpost to report on enemy (Argentinian) and other shipping. Over the next five days that we were there we improved our non-existent Spanish tremendously, and, no doubt, the Chilenos improved their English/Australian. We ate many enjoyable meals with them, walked over the island to get more pictures of Cape Horn which we could see only a few miles away, swapped souvenirs of various sorts, talked about Australia, unemployment, sextants, war with Argentina and numerous other things. The phrase book became almost unnecessary on the last day. They recorded their national song for us and told us that there was "zero problem" to stay longer, or visit more of Chile. They were extremely patriotic and proud of their country and the military junta that has improved Chile so much since Allendes era. The fact that we were visiting there was transmitted on radio and papers all over Chile. Very sad to leave them. We are now in the Falklands and seeing a little bit of old England. Extremely friendly people here and it looks like we'll be enjoying out time here tremendously. Hoping to leave early March.

Having a really great time here in the Falklands. There was one other yacht here when we arrived. An American trimaran trying to do a non-stop circumnavigation in the Roaring Forties, but his rigging started to break up. Since then two other yachts have arrived from New Zealand waters (a 28' and 30') so things are certainly busy here, two boats at the one time is the most they have ever had before.

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Meeting some really fantastic people - going to tea tomorrow night with a millionaire "Jack" and today he introduced us to Lord Buxton (head of Anglia TV?) who would like us to give him a ring when we get to UK with a view to a bit of filming etc!! The people on the trimaran and ourselves gave an interview on the radio station here last night. Hoping to visit a lot of the Penguin colonies here.

(Expeditus is a ferrocement cutter 36½ ft. x 11½ ft. x 6½ ft. with 25 hp. Volvo diesel, built by its owners Michael and Gay Lewis to a design of Sampson Marine. Home address C/- P.O. Box 2, Port Adelaide 5015. - Information kindly supplied by Commodore Tom Flint.....Ed.)

CONTRIBUTIONS

ABOUT G.C. DEMPSTER

(Colin Hazelgrove)

The request for information about this crew member in The First Cruise of Nerida, the account of which commenced in the February Newsletter, brings home to me very strongly the passage of time.

In the nineteen-thirties George Dempster was one of the most widely known members of the R.S.A.Y.S. He was an agent for the A.M.P. and I doubt whether there were many members of the Squadron in those days who hadn't had a life insurance policy sold to them by "Curly" Dempster as he was usually known, for reasons which I will explain later. I think his territory in his younger days extended south from Darwin to Adelaide and he more or less settled down in Adelaide in the early thirties.

George was a likeable chap - no great sailor really, but