

Following our 3 year spell in Saudi Arabia, we returned to England keen to prepare EXPEDITUS for the water again.

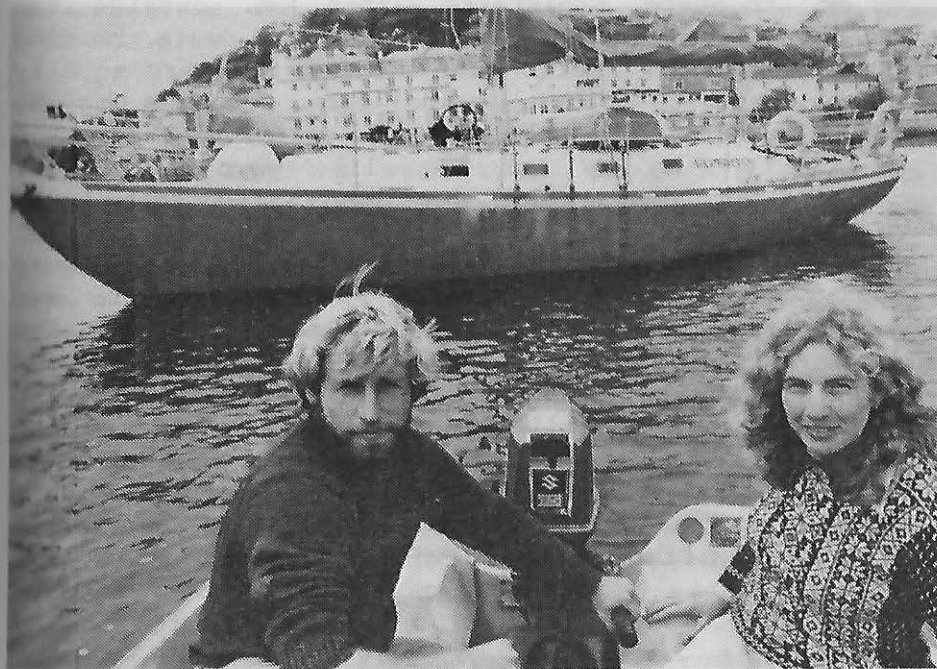
The short summer was spent having a major overhaul and a thorough check of everything on board, and we finally relaunched her at the start of August 84. Life continued to fly past at a very fast pace as we prepared charts, restocked for our cruise, took family and friends out sailing, and squeezed in a shakedown cruise to Holland for good measure.

The North Sea was very kind to us - so kind that we had to motor all the way to Holland on an oily flat sea. Our first locks into the canal system were at IJmuiden, but after going through half a dozen of them during our time in Holland, we felt like old hands at the game. It was a matter of having fenders and lines ready, looking out for the wash of the prop on the barges, and even having a couple of 'submersible' fenders for the barges that were laden down with only an inch or two free board. The inland sea was breezy enough to give us some fast sailing and the local boats made a beautiful feature in front of the spires of small villages on the shore line. Harbours were very full with cruising yachts, some rafted up to 12 deep at the dockside, but the congestion was handled in a very orderly and efficient manner by the harbourmasters. We marvelled on several occasions at the skill of the crews in manoeuvring quite large sailing vessels into a tight berth in a crowded and windy harbour.

We finally left Ipswich (UK) at the end of September, much later than intended. Our first night was spent at anchor only a few miles down river, but it gave us the chance to get over the trauma of

leaving, as well as the opportunity to get tidy and shipshape. The trip down-channel was just what we expected - wind on the nose at force 5-6!

We made a long and leisurely cruise of it by day sailing when the wind wasn't too strong, and stopping at harbour at night and in windy weather. Rounding Portland Bill, we took the inside passage which gave a smooth path of water only 30 metres wide. Further offshore, the sea was very choppy for several miles due to the extreme currents that run off the point there.



Mike and Gay shortly after their arrival at Salcombe, England.

Finally we arrived in Falmouth to await a break in the weather, along with several other yachties who were also heading south. Unfortunately there was no respite from the gales, and we listened with nervous stomachs to the perpetual run of force 8 gales forecast in many areas, and even a force 12 off Biscay! Eventually, at the end of October we left and headed south as fast as we could to avoid the winter gales.

It was a miserable trip since we'd been off the boat for several years, and also, unlike the Southern Ocean, these gales were now on our nose. We gradually made progress, staying outside a line joining Cape Ushant to Cape Finisterre (that is, outside the Bay of Biscay) even if it meant we were heading north west for a spell. The weather was very squally under lines of cloud, going from force 4 to 8, so it generally meant that we were undercanvassed to avoid going up and down like yoyo's for sail changes (oh, for roller furling!?). At one stage we lay ahull for 8 hours during a gale, the first time we had tried this. With no sail up and beam on to the breakers it was very comfortable and much more pleasant than trying to bash into it.

Gales followed us down to 34° latitude, but at last we made landfall at Lanzarote in the Canary Islands after sailing 1674 miles in 18 days, our slowest ever passage. At dusk we tucked into a calm anchorage between Lanzarote and Grasciosa Islands, but fate came in with a gale at 3 am (why do dramas only occur at 3 am?) from the only exposed direction. The chain stopper collapsed, the anchor shackle pin bent, and we very nearly pulled the anchor winch out of the deck, but luck was with us and our big 40 kilogram fisherman anchor held. We felt peeved since we had decided that it would

be safer to anchor than to heave to, off a dark coastline in shipping lanes, when we were both tired at the end of the passage.

Our impressions of the Canary Islands were not that favourable as the number of harbours and bays was minimal. However, it is so much warmer than UK and Europe and a cheap place to visit for some winter sun. We still had a good time, even though it was not a yachties' paradise and the fishing harbours we visited were filthy with oil and rubbish. Lanzarote had a very lunar like landscape, although Tenerife was not so barren, with the 12000 ft Mount Teide capped with snow in winter. We hired a car there and toured with another yachting couple for about £10 per couple.

The Atlantic crossing started on 1st December 84 and we arrived in Martinique on 26th December 84, a 25 day crossing with which we were pleased as we had 3 calms and most yachts were crossing in 22 to 32 days. An out of season cyclone "Lilly" gave us some torrential rain and some amazing lightning storms, but no wind to speak of. Other highlights of the trip across were having 2 whales play with us for a couple of hours, swimming up from behind and cutting across our bows. It was great to watch and we didn't feel at all nervous as they were so obviously friendly and playful. We saw 3 other yachts on the crossing (it's a busy route) and had a chat with one on the radio. We also picked up a passenger - a pigeon that landed on us 2 days out from the Canaries, and stayed for almost 2 weeks! As a result of his daily activities, we nicknamed him "Turdbird", and had a running battle to keep him outside the hatchway. We settled on making up a paper dirt tray several times a day and set it on the top step of the companionway

to catch any dollops. At night we put him to bed in a bucket lashed within a lifering on the pushpit, and fitted with a perch. We hope he found another yacht or ship to continue his journey, as he departed in mid Atlantic Ocean. Fishing was not too bad this trip and we caught 2 or 3 dorado of about 20 lbs.

We spent a few days in Forte de France, Martinique, managed to get our gas bottles filled, visited Napoleon's statue of Josephine, and in general relaxed, swam, and took it easy. From Forte de France, we carried on north to St. Piérre, the town that was destroyed early this century by the famous volcano, Mt. Pelé. A total of 30,000 people perished and there was only one survivor, a prisoner in jail. Next stop was Dominica, where we met up with some Polish friends again at Laylou River, then on to Portsmouth at the top of the island. Here we were hassled by the natives: "Hey, skip, want me to look after your dinghy, buy some limes trip up Indian River car tour for £70" and various other things. It was all too pushy and expensive, so they got no business from us at all. We found a river here to do our washing, then carried on to "Les Saintes", just south of Guadeloupe. These were a very picturesque group of islands, with clear water, humming birds, iguanas, and water spouts! There was also a dramatic view of the inter island aircraft coming into land on a short strip between the hills and the ocean. Guadeloupe featured green valleys, high mountains, pretty villages, and above ground graveyards. Antigua cost £22 to enter and was very officious - the price you have to pay to enter the prestigious English Harbour established by Lord Nelson. Here we caught up on a bit of maintenance whilst waiting for Gay's father Ron, and Mary, to join us for 6 weeks cruising.

We covered 500 miles of day sailing with our guests, visiting Nevis, St Kitts, St Barths, St Martin, St Eustatius, Montserrat, Guadeloupe, The Saintes, and back to Antigua. The weather gave us everything from calms, pleasant breezes, stiff winds through to force 8 line squalls. Many of the islands had indifferent open harbours and a rolly anchorage, so we considered that Antigua was not so bad after all. We saw much of interest, including a manta ray, flying fish, tropic birds, frigate birds, brown pelicans, turtles, and dolphins, and on land, mongoose, humming birds, iguanas, and a monkey. Our favourite spots were English Harbour in Antigua, Pinney's Plantation Beach in Nevis, and Cockleshell Bay, St Kitts where we caught lobsters and saw our first wild monkey. However, on reflection, it is hard to come up with favourites as most places had something to offer and pleasant memories.

I will continue our story in future editions of "Squadron Quarterly", however before proceeding further, some more notes:-

STORM FENDERS: On arrival in a harbour that is a bit exposed, search around for a couple of storm fenders (eg truck tyres) and have them available for use on the dockside. We have had regular car tyres doubled up and squashed flat on one occasion, and there is just not enough room aboard to carry adequate fenders for extreme conditions.

MAIL: We found it best to have all mail sent to one contact address and then forwarded to a specific location every couple of months. Better to send 3 parcels of 10 letters than 1 lot of 30 and risk losing them all. With a change of cruising plan you then have only to notify one person, rather than dozens who may be corresponding with you.

AROUND THE WORLD IN EXPEDITUS CONTINUED

A letter sent in advance to the Postmaster at your next major port, explaining that you are making a passage by yacht, is a courtesy and will often encourage them to hold mail for you longer than they normally do.

BOOM PREVENTER: We always set a boom preventer, even on the wind. It gave us security as the boom could never gybe when we were on the cabin top reefing. We have met several people who have suffered severe knocks on the head due to accidental gybes.

SHIPS: Always aim to pass behind a ship as they are always travelling much faster than you tend to judge.

MIKE LEWIS



FINE ROMANCE IN BASS STRAIT

The crew: Ion and Margaret Ullett, Peter and Jenny Last and Peter Darton.

After staying in Sydney to enjoy the "Experience of a lifetime", the Tall Ships and First Fleet's visit, we coasted our way down the East coast of NSW with plenty of stops including Port Hacking, Jervis Bay, Ulladulla, Crookhaven River, Batemans Bay, and Eden. Whilst waiting in Eden for a front to move through we were able to receive on 2524 the weather from Coastguard LOXPORT and here I might recommend any yacht crossing the Oil Rig paddock to make contact and listen to LOXPORT weather. The weather is given for the next 2 days with anticipated wind and strength at the rigs at 6 hour intervals, giving you plenty of advice for the dash across the paddock.

We sat out another front at Refuge Cove and then a delightful 50 mile reach to the Kent Group. This Group consists of 4 islands; Deal, Erith, Dover, and North East. Deal Island, the principal island in the Group, rises to a height of 290 metres and is topped by the highest lighthouse in Australia. Murray Pass, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile wide and 2 miles long, separates Deal from Erith and Dover Islands. Anchorages can be chosen at either East Cove, Deal Island or West Cove on Erith Island. We chose West Cove as the wind was SW. West Cove is a great anchorage sheltered from all winds except a NE gale. In the morning we moved over to East Cove for the crew to visit the lighthouse and museum. The walk to the lighthouse was very energetic and was extremely steep, but gave breathtaking views of Bass Strait from Wilsons Prom to Flinders Island.

The 30 mile reach took us to the Furneaux Group with our first stop at Killiecrankie Bay on the