

Over the Sea to Skye

It took over half an hour to wash the Chesapeake Bay mud from the chain and anchor. With fuel and water tanks pressed full, we headed away from land and our comfortable existence. It was our third Atlantic crossing. The sun and pleasant breeze soon gave way to head-winds and sloppy seas. The Gulf Stream carried us forward, but we slowed to about four knots to retain a modicum of comfort. Day three was Karin's birthday and having spent the previous one bouncing in the Gulf Stream off Cape Hatteras, she was building up a huge supply of credits.



The genoa blew out a seam in mid-Atlantic

Bob McDavitt's routing plan indicated that we should tack and head southwards after about four days and the grib weather maps showed a large developing depression in our path, confirming Bob's advice. The NOAA forecasts from the US had a storm warning in effect for the depression area. So we followed the isobars and after a day or two we were back on an easterly heading. The wind soon

settled into the south-west and we had several days of easy reaching and running all the way to the Azores, certainly a much easier trip than our first crossing 20 years ago.

Our AIS again made such a difference, automatically warning us of ships and warning them of us. Time and again we would see a ship change course a few miles away. Surprisingly, we were picking up ship contacts at over 100 miles, seemingly impossible with VHF ranges that are at a maximum of about 30 miles between the biggest ships. However, this 'super-propagation' is quite common and seems to be an effect most prevalent in anticyclones.

Karin first heard a noise that sounded like a helicopter when we were in mid-Atlantic. A large grey helicopter circled us closely. We could see crew looking at us through binoculars and "NAVY" painted on the side, obviously from the US. It hovered just astern for several minutes but made no reply when we called it on the radio. We supposed it was some sort of exercise and for a few days we heard VHF conversation from aircraft to surface ships, as well as AIS showing a distant US Coastguard ship.

As soon as we arrived in the Azores we found that it was much more than an exercise. A Beneteau 40 had capsized in the bad weather with four lives lost. It was one of several yachts that were heading back to Europe from the Caribbean where many had been cruising or racing. After reporting leaking keelbolts, the yacht *Cheeky Rafiki* lost her keel in the area of gales that we headed south to avoid. Several other yachts near her position came through the heavy weather without any problems and at least one had joined in the search. Our encounter with the helicopter was about a hundred miles south of the search area and three

days after she lost the keel. There is an article in "Boating New Zealand" we have written about this tragedy and about yachts losing keels.



Horta in the Azores is a crossroads for yachts

We spent 10 very nice days at Horta in the inexpensive marina and hired a car to look round. The Azores is part of Portugal and immediately the cobbled streets reminded us of our time in Brazil in 2012, but with efficient and helpful officials. The harbour is a key focal point for yachts

crossing west to east in the Atlantic. The authorities encourage each yacht to paint their name and date on the marina walls and walkways and there are thousands of boat-names just in the last few years, with earlier ones weathered away.



We added Victoria to the thousands of names



Karin had a very nice birthday dinner (a present from Andrew and Jess) and the sun let us catch up on boat chores and varnish. It's a place where it would be easy to stay.

Landscape at a volcano that erupted just 50 years ago on the Azores



This place was described as a 'port' in the Azores

Our sail to Ireland started out fast, fresh and bumpy. Later the motor was needed to get the last few hundred miles to Ireland. Dingle was a treat. We drove round the peninsular in a treeless landscape looking at ruins going back 3000 years.

But we needed to get on as quickly as possible towards

Norway. The long days with only a few hours of darkness helped and we started having to work with the tides on the Irish west coast as we visited remote islands and anchorages in sunny weather with no swell. The locals said it was "never like this" and the radio warned of a heat-wave with temperatures as high as 26C.



Farm in west Ireland

Just as we were getting to like Ireland it was time to cross to Scotland and we anchored in fog and rain just a mile from the



Laphroaig distillery on the island of Islay. Pity Karin does not like single malt and walking there on my own in the pouring rain just did not have sufficient appeal. Radar, GPS and plotter were all we saw on the way to Ardfern, a bit south of Oban.

Bridge and Stately home, Loch Aline

We picked up a mooring for the night off Ardfern Yacht Centre.

Someone ashore told us it belonged to Princess Anne, who often keeps her yacht there. Judging by the price we were charged, they were probably correct. The weather cleared and it was a treat to see trees in the sheltered anchorages and Scottish villages after the barren slopes of Ireland.

With settled weather, we headed through the Inner Hebrides where timing the tide-races dictated our movements. As a favourable tide carried us at 10 knots through the narrow Kyle Rhea channel into Loch Alsh and under Skye Bridge, we couldn't help thinking about Bonnie Prince Charlie and his voyage in a small boat to Skye nearly 300 years ago, but it was



hard to imagine the wind and waves immortalised in the well-known lyrics. Following the attempt by the Jacobites to put a Scot on the English throne, the bonnie prince escaped to Skye after being routed by the English at the Battle of Culloden. The journey today takes less than a minute in a car across the bridge over the narrow channel to Skye.

The bridge to Skye

Fellow Royal Cruising Club

members whom we kept meeting advised us not to miss Rona, where we threaded through rocks and shoals to a wonderful sheltered spot. A long walk to the other side of the island was fascinating, seeing the deprivations that past inhabitants suffered. A whole village left to settle in Australia or New Zealand and the crumbling stone houses are their only legacy. *Rona Island Inner Hebrides.*

After buying lobsters and venison from the farmer, Jim managed to lose his wallet (with bank cards and driver's licence) into the sea while we headed back to *Victoria* in the dinghy. This gave Jim's sister, Mary days of work in Auckland sorting it all out with banks whose security barriers put the US border control to shame.



The further north we got, the stronger the tides. In

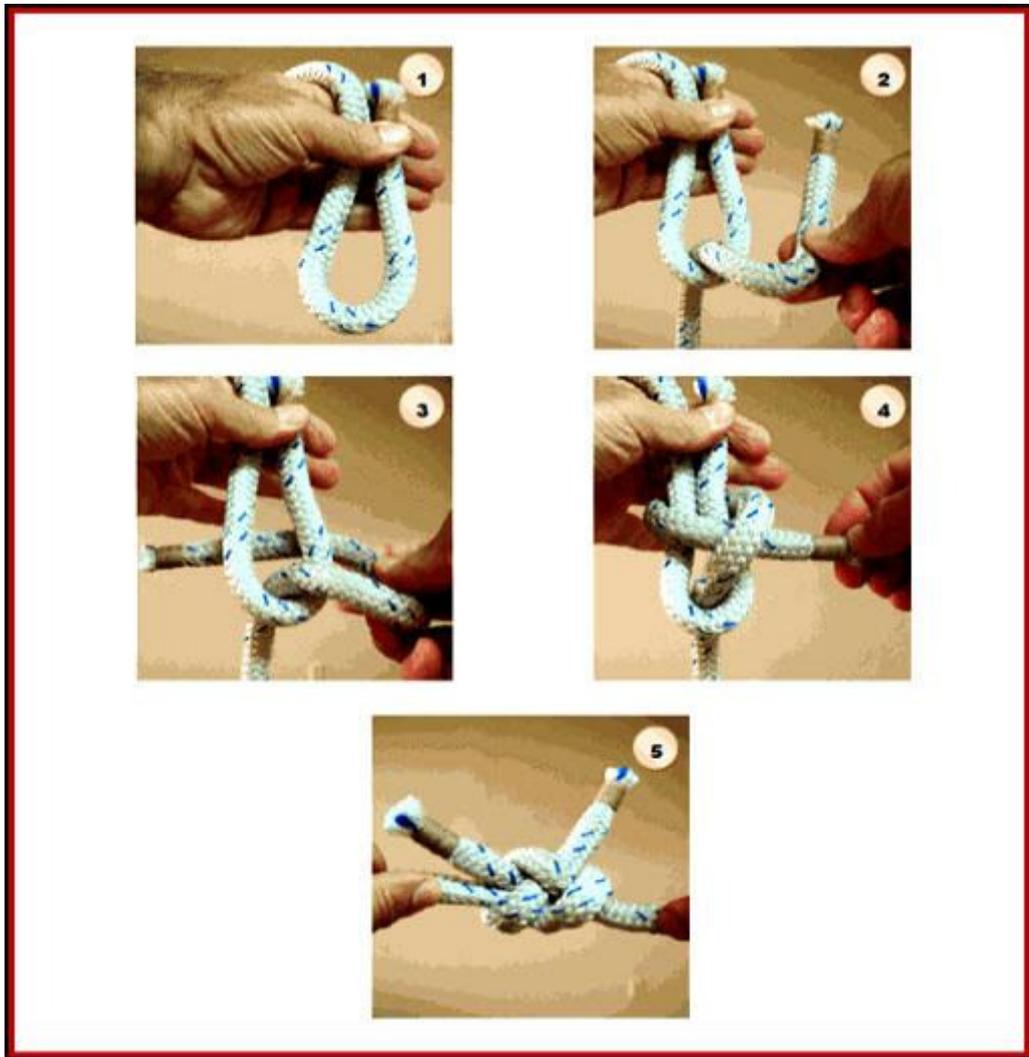
Pentland Firth, between the Orkney Islands and Scotland tides run at 9 knots and all the way out to the Shetland Islands the charts show overfalls and tide races. We rounded Cape Wrath in a flat calm with normal daytime visibility in the midnight twilight as we headed towards Lerwick in the Shetland Islands, our last stop on the way to Norway.

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Tie This Super Sailing Knot in Just Seconds!

From <http://www.skippertips.com/public/2217.cfm>

Use the becket bend (also called "sheet bend") to join together two lines. Use the single becket to join a heaving line to a docking line to get the line ashore or when you are in a hurry and need a secure knot that will not be under shock loads (tension and slack, tension and slack).



Follow These Three Fast Steps

1. Make a Teardrop

Form an upside down teardrop (or raindrop) shape with the larger of the two lines--or one of two lines if they're the same diameter. Hold the teardrop in your non-dominant hand with the fat part of the drop facing down (illustration 1).

2. Pass the Becket

Pull the other line (or the smaller line) through the back of the teardrop and bring several inches toward you. Form a loose loop on one side of the teardrop. Pass the line around the back of the teardrop and through the loop. (illustrations 2, 3, and 4).

3. Cinch Up the Knot

Make your knot tight and compact. Pull on both standing parts and bitter ends a bit at a time. You want the knot to stay put under surge or shock load (illustration 5).

THE DIARY



A ferry in Wellington Harbour is nothing to blink an eye at, but one sitting on a patch of grass near the Hayward hills? An interested Capital Day reader took this snap, which your diarist has since found out is of an old Westpac Ferry called Tigerlily, which a Wellington couple have plans to restore. The pair bought the property especially to carry out the project, as the ferry's previous home at Seaview Marina was too costly. When it is restored they will relaunch Tigerlily and use it as a bach-cum-art studio in the Marlborough Sounds.

WANTED :

Need a diesel mechanic to remove and refit his 4 cylinder engine into an Athol Burns.

Has the engine. Easy in easy out!!!

Needs assistance. Can/will pay. Contact me in the first instance.

Ross 0274820827

Website Changes

The following 2 links have been added to our web site and both include Celestial Almanac and sight reduction tables:

http://www.erikdeman.de/html/fr_sail.htm
and select Celestial Navigation

<http://www.navsoft.com/downloads.html>

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