

THE ROUND BRITAIN CHALLENGE - A SUMMARY

by Liz Dodwell (High Barbaree)

It was really sad to say goodbye to everyone and wonder when and even if we'll meet again. Of the twenty boats that went round England (16 of us went through the Caledonian Canal so only four went round the northern Scottish mainland so actually circumnavigating Britain) we became quite close to the owners and some of the crews of 16 of them, and certainly we want to keep in contact with some if not all of these. Here are some more general comments and statistics (but I don't guarantee it's all correct):

The Dutch boats were Windbreker, Vlieter, Morgaine, Raven, Cine Mare, Windflower, Leonora and Snoopy (who was the smallest boat and went round fast and single-handed in an opposite anticlockwise direction so we didn't meet until Cowes).

From the East Coast came Bonify, Witch, and Peggy.

From the South came High Barbaree (us), Bonita, Cygnet of London, Toucando, Moon River, Syene and Annabel J (who had a charter crew, some of them for the whole trip).

From Wales came Minstrel (though Eric lives in the south) and Capraia.

The boats were of different types, size and ages. Four were smaller than us and most of the rest were just a bit larger. Three of the eight wooden boats were over 100 years old; four of the Dutch boats were steel; one boat was concrete and five were modern and made of fibreglass like us.

Personally we travelled 2,318 nautical miles in 107 days or about three and a half months. We were on the move for over 500 hours but with sail only for just 29% of the time. Our average speed was therefore about 4½ knots. Most of the time we were motor-sailing and this was mainly because of the tight schedules under which we travelled and the need to continually think about the tides. Different people on the trip had different objectives and restrictions, like some were still having to do some work! One of our ambitions was to visit as many places as possible. So, apart from the organised events which usually lasted several days, and those occasions when we were wind-bound, having decided that the forecast was such that we'd better not travel, we only spent an extra night in three places. We visited 68 different places, only 20 of which we had been to before. One of the main challenges was navigation and I think there were tidal restraints on entry times at 37 of our destinations. Another of our ambitions was to see some of our friends and relatives who don't live near us, and we met up with over 30 of them, plus the eight who came to welcome us home in Cowes. Fourteen people came as crew staying mostly about a week on board - eleven of these were family. We were one of the few boats who rely on paper charts and don't have a chart plotter but I definitely think we'd try to get one before we tackle another long trip!

We started out thinking we might sell High Barbaree after this trip but that's not the idea now!

There are over sixty of you who've been receiving my e-mails or following the blogs and Tim has been sending his own notes to quite a number more.

It probably hasn't cost us a lot more than a normal short holiday, mainly thanks to the free moorings we've enjoyed as part of the Round Britain Challenge. We had one quite expensive and unexpected repair, plus a few replaced ropes. The newly painted hull has survived without any real scars!

The worst problem was the cold in May and June but we had heaters we could use once we were stopped in the evenings. When it was cold I wore six layers of clothes under my boating waterproof trousers and jacket and that included two that were meant to be 'thermals'!! Unless we had to, it was our intention not to travel much overnight, after the first long passage with our neighbour David as crew. We did two nights and a day on our own non-stop from Falmouth to Milford Haven, which was not fun. David helped us again to do an overnight passage from Milford Haven to Holyhead and otherwise we ran late, arriving in the dark, on only a few other occasions.

We have kept in good health, without even catching a cold, and both of us have lost a bit of weight. I started out limping from that ski injury and come home much fitter. About six times in the rolling seas I've taken stugeron to help with seasickness, and Tim is the one who gets most meals when we are at sea. In these conditions or when it's really rough I prefer to stay in the cockpit despite the cold!

We were the oldest on the Round Britain Challenge in the newest of the British boats - Cine Mare, one of the Dutch boat, is newer than High Barbaree. Barbara on the 23 foot Moon River earned our admiration as, being in her 60's, the oldest single-handed sailor, especially since she took just a couple of weeks off to have an operation on her knee!

What have we missed most? Not much! We've eaten and drunk very well. We consider we've been pretty comfortable on board. We've slept well and our cabin is homely and cosy especially with the oil lamps burning. We've had little idea of what's been happening in the world outside not bothering with radio or newspapers though I did watch Andy Murray win Wimbledon on a hotel screen. We've come home to lots of rather tedious jobs! We've missed church and that fellowship but we've visited some special churches of very varied types. We've seen charming and inspiring sights and buildings, learnt quite a bit of local history and enjoyed spectacular scenery and wildlife. We haven't opened most of the books we took with us, nor bothered with the our better radio and CD's – stowed too deeply and once found needing to be kept safe when at sea! We didn't miss much or forget to take many things, but I was glad when Jeni left me her thermals! I was sad I hadn't got my favourite boaty earrings with me and it was a relief to find them mixed up with our bath towels once I got home. We were quite self-contained but used shore electricity when available, especially after our rectifier connection gave out and we couldn't charge our two computers. Since I was continually trying to tell you all about the trip, lack of Internet connection was a bore for me, but Tim managed well with a dongle. Mobile phones and texts are a godsend.

Yes, the Almighty did indeed care of us, and we were aware of that. There were certainly times when we prayed for some tough ordeal to be over but this time I don't think we ever felt we were in danger. Several times we neglected to keep a good lookout astern and we were hooted at by a ferry in Milford Haven and elsewhere silently overtaken by two large vessels of which we were quite unaware. Maybe we need wing-mirrors fitted? We had lots of senior moments and little mishaps but that was probably our worst error. Most of our charts and my navigation calculations worked out well but sometimes they benefitted from that second check! Occasionally we felt our age but not often!

Thank you for your prayers and interest. It's been great knowing how many people have been interested in our trip. Yes, it probably will be very good to sink back into normal life for a few weeks.

Here are a few photos of us from earlier in the trip, taken by Sue Lewis (Bonify) and Edgar (Windbreker):



With Pirates in Milford Haven



Storming along towards Scotland



Rounding the last real corner, the South Foreland near Dover

