

Baltic or Bust!

This was the moniker proudly displayed on Naomi's baseball cap, (should never have brought that labelling machine with me). Jenny was similarly endorsed, but less politely worded. The girls won their campaign and so it was that two boats, Sheer Stress and Imoths, left Borkum for Brunsbüttel one single handed with no self steering, one with three crew and an Autohelm.



29th July Depart Borkum 15:15 30th July Arrive Brunsbüttel 17:20 116 Nm logged in 26 hours

Jenny stayed up with me until midnight and Naomi kept me company through the wee hours. Brilliant blood red moon which changed to white early in the morning, followed by a memorable sunrise and a porpoise sighted just after dawn. There is something very special about night sailing.

Left the girls in charge while I caught up on my sleep, woke up after 20 minutes to find them both dozing in the cockpit. Can't get the crew these days.

'Pizza de Tono' for lunch. Light NE winds meant we had to use the engine to make our tide window up to Brunsbüttel.

Locked in with other yachts and a lighter. Easy due to floating pontoons and crack crew, (they're OK when they're awake).



Went into small marina next to the new, larger locks. Look out for the ferry! We were beckoned into a gap between two boats that was way too small for us, somehow we pushed them apart & squeezed in, even managed to get a stern rope on the buoy. Naomi was befriended by Karl on the boat next to us who invited us for a nightcap on 'Nice Girl'. Karl, who had just retired, was off to the Caribbean and gave us all his unwanted charts of the Baltic, which later proved to be invaluable.

The following day we still had not heard from John. Went into town to get some engine oil, (first service) & food. Walked back via the river & came across John in the outside marina. Four for dinner & Scrabble on Imothes.

1st August Depart Brunsbittel 07:30 Arrive Rendsburg 17:30 37 Nm logged in 10 hours

Met up with John as he came through the locks, another baking hot day, 32 degrees in the shade. Jenny and Naomi did their usual aerobics to the radio and were wolf whistled by the very large passing ships.



Stopped at Rendsburg for the night and encountered our first post mooring. Only caught one post, and our stern lines weren't long enough. Neighbouring boats were not impressed with our technique until Naomi swam out to the other post and put a rope round it.



2nd August Depart Rendsburg 10:30 Arrive Kiel 14:30 15 Nm logged in 4 hours

First rainy day, John complained about his hands going 'pruney'. Logged 52 miles for the canal in total. Took Sheer Stress alongside to motor into the lock, during which manoeuvre John got his ankle caught between the boats. Very lucky to escape with light bruising. The passage through the canal is €11 for boats of less than 10 metres.



From the locks it is 2 miles to the Dusternbrook Yacht Haven, the largest in Kiel. We had our first encounter with officialdom here, with a visit from the Zoll, (Customs). They were concerned that I had red diesel, and asked John if he had any weapons, before apologetically welcoming us to Kiel. To which I responded that I was just glad that they weren't from the marina wanting us to move. The Kiel Yacht Club restaurant, which is recommended by the Pilot, is part of a, (far too posh for us), hotel. We found a pleasant café by the water and were entertained by a girl on a monocycle during our dinner.

The following day we sadly said goodbye to Jenny and Naomi who set off by train to join Pudmuddle in Amsterdam. John & I found an Internet Café in the library, €1 per ½ hour, and caught up with our correspondence. Sore feet by the time we returned to the boats, for an evening of pizza, wine and passage planning.

4th August Depart Kiel 07:15 Arrive Marstal 15:10 35 Nm logged in 8 hours

Little wind so I motored out of the Estuary. Eventually a pleasant sail. After docking at Marstal with much needed assistance, I went into the town, got some money and bought a Danish pastry, (well this was the first Danish port). Marstal is a small town on the island of Aero with a busy fishing harbour and large active dockyard which not only did repairs, but was also building a large ship. Marstal is also famous for its own brand of marine engines.

Good facilities for visiting yachtsmen especially for those with kids there being an adventure playground with a great zipline. John arrived about 1900 and we went into town for fish & chips, before retiring to a local bar where we drank 'bitter' which is some kind of local 40% proof spirit.

5th August Depart Marstal 10:15 Arrive Assens 19:50 43 Nm logged in 9½ hours

The day started off with F3/4 E before dying away in the late afternoon. We decided to abandon our plan of making Bago, and anchored in a bay just north of Assens instead. A bad idea to keep Sheer Stress alongside all night as we noisily snubbed.

6th August Depart Assens 06:30 Arrive Vejle 15:45 52 Nm logged in 9¼ hours

Early start in light NNE winds. Lost sight of Sheer Stress when he went South of Brandso Island and I went North. The wind was fickle through the channel past Middelfart and Fredericia, but once clear of the Lillebaelt it picked up to F4/5 NE. We had originally intended to circumnavigate Fyn and perhaps visit Odense, but the wind was on the nose as we headed around the top of the island and was accompanied by a heavy chop, I had also lost the use of my Autohelm due to a loose tiller pin. I made an executive decision to go to Vejle which was to the West. It is 12 miles up Vejle Fjord to the town itself. The shores are littered with small yacht harbours which looked very inviting, perhaps another time. Excellent meal in the restaurant by the very large yacht harbour.

7th August Depart Vejle 13:30 Arrive Strib 20:00 23 Nm logged in 6½ hours

Vejle is near the town of Jelling which is where the Kingdom of Denmark was mentioned for the first time. This is an area packed with history; stones, burial mounds and the world's largest stone ship. Left after fixing my tiller pin with some locally sourced epoxy. Unfortunately I missed John's deck when I threw his bow lines on board. He soon noticed when he got one caught around his propeller. Good thing he has an outboard.

Very light winds and a Northerly stream through the Lillebaelt meant we only got as far as Strib before anchoring for the night. Blew up the dinghy for the first time and went ashore for a beer.

8th August Depart Strib 08:00 Arrive Assens 18:30 29 Nm logged in 10½ hours

I was awoken at 06:30 by John bringing my dinghy back. When I upped anchor 1½ hours later he was only a few hundred yards away due to light winds and current. I could see my anchor lying on the sandy bottom with the catenary of chain snaking up towards me.

Motored past John and anchored behind the Island of Feno where I did my washing and went ashore to read my book on a small hill whilst waiting for John.

When John arrived I set off after him under sail. I didn't want to start my engine as I thought I might suck in a jellyfish, you wouldn't believe how many there were. Lost John when he went the other side of Bago. Anchored for the night near Assens, rowed ashore and bought a pizza while waiting for John. John missed his toy boat on leaving Imothes, but only got half wet. Must have been the red wine.



9th August Depart Assens 07:30 Arrive Faborg 16:00 34 Nm logged in 8½ hours

Lost Sheer Stress when I tacked across to Als, F2 ESE, but picked him up when I tacked back to Fyn, he had made better time keeping inshore away from the Northerly stream.

I was welcomed by fellow Shipman Owners in Faborg. I had tried to let them know of my intention to attend the Rally, but I was using the wrong E mail address. I was nevertheless made very welcome, no British Shipman had ever attended before. In the evening went on a guided tour of Faborg by the town watchman, (unfortunately in Danish). The town was easily the best we had seen with a great deal of Medieval architecture and the statue of a cow and two people intertwined that no-one could explain to us.

The next morning was spent looking at each other's boats. In all 16 Shipmans turned up. Did a few minor repairs including fitting new cams to my mainsheet block.



In the evening the Club organised a barbecue. John and I didn't realise that we were meant to bring our own food, but our plates soon overflowed with the offerings of others. The evening continued with the singing of Shipman Songs, in Danish. Songsheets were handed out which meant even the non-Danish speakers amongst us could join in, although I'm sure our pronunciation was a little off.

A few more drinks down the hatch had everyone joining John in the chorus to 'Waltzing Mathilda' and, I seem to remember, the odd Beatles tune. The 'hard core,' of which the Jo(h)ns were two, didn't retire until 01:30.



11th August Depart Faaborg 09:30 Arrive Dagelokke 17:20 28 Nm logged in 7¼ hours

John was up surprisingly early and motored past the Shipmans with his Australian flag, looking slightly ragged by now, proudly flying from the crosstrees. I left an hour later, backwards and videoed for posterity.

Another baking hot day with no wind. Soon passed John as he tried to tack out of Hanse Bugt. Saw more porpoises and a Viking Long Boat whose crew jumped over the side to try to cool off. The route past the islands of Tasinge and Thuro is very pretty. There were a large number of beautiful yachts out to play, especially around Svendborg. Stopped the engine once clear of the channel north of Thuro, but little wind saw me make 3 miles in 2 hours, did catch up on my sleep though.

Dagelokke is a very small harbour on the West side of Langeland. Went for my first swim in the Baltic, still very hot even at 18:00. Massive thunderstorm in the night, I hoped John had found shelter.

12th August Depart Dagelokke 10:45 Arrive Vejro 18:00 34 Nm logged in 7¼ hours

Raised John on the radio at 09:30, he was 5 miles North of me. Waited for the rain to ease before leaving. Rained on and off all day, had expected to find John at Vejro Island as per our radio conversation but there was no sign of him. Vejro is a wildlife sanctuary with nothing more than a lighthouse, bar/restaurant/shop and basic facilities. Went for a long walk.

13th August Depart Vejro 07:45 Arrive Rodvig 18:00 52 Nm logged in 10¼ hours

F5 NW in the morning, raised Sheer Stress on leaving the harbour, he had gone to the island of Fejo. Hoped to pick him up as I went past. Interesting passage past Vordingborg under a very large bridge before crossing to the northerly channel past the islands of Falster and Mon. Tried to tack past Kalvehave but the channel is very narrow and I ran aground quite badly emptying the shelves on the port side as I went over. Fortunately the strong wind enabled me to spin her off. The narrow channel continued for another 5 miles, like leaving Walton Backwaters at LW, but more wiggly.

Fast sail across Hanse Bucht, 5-6 knots under jib only. The main harbour at Rodvig was full so I moored in the fishing harbour alongside a wall. Good facilities, local shops and restaurants and a marine engine museum. Went on board another British boat for beer.

The next day there was still no sign of John, thought I had better wait before pressing on for Copenhagen. Saw a sea otter on my early morning walk along the cliffs. I went to the Museum which had Stuart Turners, Seagulls and Marstals on display. Raised John midday and gave him Lat & Long of Rodvig which wasn't on his small scale chart. Swam in the afternoon, got stung by a jellyfish and was confronted by an elderly naked couple wading towards me after I surfaced from a duck dive. I don't know which was worse.



John arrived 18:00 very tired, pointed out the wasp on my thigh just before it stung me three times, at least the jelly fish had stung the other leg.

15th August Depart Rodvig 07:20 Arrive Copenhagen 15:15 35 Nm logged in 8 hours

N F2/3 meant I was close hauled in order to clear Stevns. Motored last 4 hours as it was a dead noser. Very surreal, when entering the City, to be putting fenders out whilst large open tourist boats with miked guides are going past you. Moored in Christianshavn, a canal off the main channel.

Walked to the tourist office by the Tivoli Gardens, 2 miles away, badly swollen leg from the wasp sting quite painful, but at least the jellyfish sting had gone down. John had arrived when I got back. Delicious pizza on Imothes surrounded by architecture reminiscent of Amsterdam.



The next day John and I walked to Nyhavn; another canal full of larger ships and surrounded by cafes, then past the Royal Palaces to the Little Mermaid; a famous statue of which John had been extolling the virtues for the entire trip. Circled back to the Tivoli Gardens where I caught a bus to the airport to pick up Christine, who would be crewing for me for a week. She also brought an emergency supply of tea bags.

The three of us went to the Tivoli Gardens for dinner. They are the equivalent of the Kursaal in its heyday, a blend of gardens, lakes, funfair and restaurants. Lovely meal meant we didn't go on any of the rides.

17th August Depart Copenhagen 14:25 Arrive Malmo 19:45 17 Nm logged in 3¼ hours

Walked to the English Church in Churchill Gardens as we had seen a Garden Fete advertised. On the way we passed the Statue of the Merman and Seven Sons which is underwater in the canal, spent a lot of time peering at it. The Fete was excellent, I bought 5 books, including a compilation of Rudyard Kipling's poetry, (John read 'If' out loud), and John bought some chutney. Had tea and cakes. We then visited the Danish Resistance Museum, which was fascinating, before returning to the boats.

Light NW winds saw us motoring under the new Oresund bridge that, in conjunction with a tunnel, joins Denmark to Sweden. Realised that I hadn't got a Swedish courtesy flag, so quickly stitched one up out of a tea towel and some yellow rope, much to Christine's amusement.



Limhamn Marina has berths for 700 boats so we found one OK. Just in time for last serving of food in the clubhouse washed down with plenty of beer. John arrived at midnight, good thing we stayed up.

18th August Depart Malmo 14:40 Arrive Skanor 17:00 12 Nm logged in 2¼ hours

In the morning Christine and I took the bus into Malmo, while John recuperated in the Marina. There was a massive festival going on with a marathon, stalls selling food

from around the world and a number of stages. Bought luminous green cake and liquorice. The marina at Limhavn was so large that yachts were able to sail right into their berths, very impressive.

Easy sail under jib to Skanor. Lost out to an aggressive German boat for the last pile mooring, so we chucked out the kedge and berthed bows on to a wall. Bought some fresh fish and barbecued it for dinner.

19th August Depart Skanor 07:40 Arrive Hesnaes 17:00 47 Nm logged in 9¼ hours

Wind picked up ESE 4/5, caught up with John when he had to make running repairs to his gooseneck. John went into Hesnaes first only to come out 10 minutes later saying that he had lost 3 ropes as the piles were too far apart. We went in and moored against a wall, tried to persuade John to come back via the radio, but to no avail. The houses in this part of Denmark uniquely have thatched roofs and walls, very picturesque. On returning from a walk along the cliffs we were hailed by an English woman who had lived with her Danish husband in Hesnaes for 7 years and had never seen a British boat in the harbour before. I suspect the reason is that Hesnaes is not in the Pilot Book.

20th August Depart Hesnae 08:30 Arrive Rodby 16:40 43 Nm logged in 8 hours

Lovely reach down the coast past cliffs and wooded hills, on turning West at the bottom of Falster found ourselves on a dead run which greatly reduced our speed. The solution was to fly the spinnaker for 4 hours.

Still no contact, other than a crackle, from John, but at least we knew he had made it through the night. Moored in the fishing harbour in Rodby, superb new visitors pontoons. Had dinner in a lovely little restaurant nestled in the dunes overlooking the sea, excellent food and a Rod Stewart sound track which we suspect may have been put on for our benefit. Received a text from John saying he would meet us in Kiel.

21st August Depart Rodby 06:40 Arrive BKYC 16:15 47 Nm logged in 9½ hours

Bit more spinnaker work on the way to Kiel, somehow ended up on a broad reach with spinnaker, main and genoa drawing. Radio contact with Sheer Stress: John was waiting for us at the British Kiel Yacht Club. Sailed into Kiel roads past the U boat museum, to BKYC where John was waiting to take our lines.

The BKYC provides adventure training for the British Forces. They have a fleet of Najad yachts, some Cornish crabbers and Flamingo.

Dinner onboard Imothes before drinks in the BKYC bar.

22nd August Depart BKYC 10:45 Arrive Rendsburg 16:40 20 Nm logged in 6 hours

I handed an RSA burgee to the Rear Commandant Sailing while he was doing his morning rounds on the pontoons. He explained the history of Flamingo, which was one of a fleet of yachts used by the German Elite before they were acquired by the British at the end of the war.



Christine caught a taxi to Kiel, the start of a long journey home.

Visited the duty free before entering the canal, worth it for the experience let alone the cheap booze. John tied up against an American yacht he had befriended in the BKYC, air conditioning and cold beer, he jokingly asked if they could tow him to Cuxhaven. Very hot in the canal, good dinner in the harbour restaurant in Rendsburg.

23rd August Depart Rendsburg 07:30 24th August Arrive Norderney 11:15 121 Nm logged in 27¼ hours



Another hot day, did my washing. We arrived at the Brunsbittel locks at high water, ideal for a passage down the Elbe, we decided to continue our journey home. There were 20-30 boats in the lock who streamed out with the considerable tide. When I was just past Cuxhaven, John radioed to suggest we put in as the weather had turned squally. I agreed, but when I turned to go back discovered that I had over 6 knots of tide against me. Told John I was continuing on.

The wind eased and after 21:00 I lost the tide. Decided to anchor until it turned again in my favour. Dropped my hook in 30 feet on the South side of a North cardinal buoy. Imothes rolled heavily due to the wash from large ships only ¼ mile away. Back under way 03:30 with a fair tide. Missed my tide window for the Norderney offing buoy, but gained 2½ knots when I turned up the channel to the West of the island.

Cycled into town and bought presents of jam and an alcoholic drink made from 'Sanddorn' which is a plant unique to the Friesian Islands. John arrived 21:00, got last service in the marina restaurant.

25th August Depart Norderney 13:45 26th August Arrive Vlieland 15:50 116 Nm logged in 26 hours

John left mid morning to take advantage of the wind, I waited until the afternoon to take advantage of the tide. I stupidly followed another yacht down a channel that I thought would be short cut to the sea, they turned back to leave me looking at a line of withies stretching into the distance. To cut long story short I wasted 2½ hours of fair tide before turning back and following the main channel during which time I bumped and ran aground very heavily on a falling tide, lucky to get off.

Very little wind forced me to motor most of the way to Terschilling.

Despite using the engine, I arrived too late to make it through the Schuitengat, so headed for Oost Vlieland instead. Very crowded in the harbour, rafted four out, but neighbours very friendly. Holiday town with plenty of interesting shops and places to eat. Climbed the mast before dinner as a bolt had fallen out of the crosstrees.

27th August Depart Vlieland 11:20 Arrive Den Helder 17:50 34 Nm logged in 6½ hours

I had originally intended to make for Ijmuiden, but gale warnings made me decide to head for Den Helder and avoid another night at sea in potentially strong winds. Quick sail N-NW F4/5, usual friendly welcome in Den Helder.

28th August Depart Den Helder 10:45 29th August Arrive Paglesham 21:45 (BST) 175 Nm logged in 38 hours

Little wind on the way back across the North Sea dictated a great deal of motor sailing. The multitude of ships during the night cleared in the morning allowing a couple of hours sleep under the protection of the radar detector. Called by Sheer Stress 10 miles off Clacton, he was a mile away having left Ijmuiden early Wednesday morning. Missed the tide into the Crouch, but punched it to get back to the mooring for the night. Slept well.

The next morning I awoke to the familiar sight of Hallowe'en astern. John had come up with the morning tide. I took his dinghy out to him before going home to sleep in a bed for the first time in 6 weeks.

