

Northampton Off-Shore Cruising Association



October 2023 Newsletter

Just two days to our laying up dinner, Tuesday 3rd October

Organised by Eb Brown we will meet at Roade House 7pm for 7:30 in Roade, 16 High Street, NN7 2NW.

Ali & Neil - Canaries Sailing Summer 2023!

Thanks to Neil for this article and apologies from the editor for not including last month.

We set off at stupid o'clock on a fine summer's morning (i.e. in the dark with a bit of drizzle) for East Midlands airport to meet our two crew mates. Ethan and Jeanette from Shustoke Sailing Club in the Midlands were waiting at the gate. We were delighted to see that they only had one head each and were both lovely people (we had only previously met online just like proper teenagers!)

After an uneventful flight to Tenerife it was a matter of minutes in the taxi from the airport and we were enjoying lunch in a café overlooking Marina San Miguel at Golf del Sur, while waiting for our yacht to be ready at 4pm. The food had just arrived at 1.30pm when the phone rang to say the boat was ready. We met up with Isabel from Four Seasons Yachting who did a slick handover of "Gael", a remarkably spacious Sun Odyssey 439. Later we met with Jim, the principal of CanarySail with whom we had made the original booking and collected a few missing bits and bobs, full set of charts for Western Canaries, chart plotter, handheld radio, passage planning sheets, etc.

Being the first time Neil had been let loose in the Canaries as skipper, we decided to shadow another yacht in a loose flotilla arrangement and next morning headed west to San Sebastian de La Gomera. There was a brisk breeze for the first 10 miles that promptly died on the SW corner of Tenerife when we hit the wind shadow of Mt Teide, the volcano that at 3715m is the highest point in Spain, so on came the engine (boo,

hiss).

It was not too long however before we could see white water on the horizon, announcing our imminent entry to the Wind Acceleration Zone. This a fascinating phenomena where the wind and sea state moves from flat calm to 35 knots/1-2m waves in the space of less than 100 metres. It is also the main reason to go sailing in the Canaries, along with the sub-tropical temperatures. Basically, the NE trade winds created by the Azores high hit the Canaries at around 15 knots and are accelerated in the relatively narrow channels between the islands by a further 15-20 knots giving a pretty reliable 35 knots or more. It is wise (nay, absolutely essential) to be prepared for WAZ entry, reef #3 on the main, postage stamp sized genoa, clipped on, hatch closed and everything secure below, then sit back and enjoy the ride!!

You get fairly wet, but t-shirt and shorts is the best as its warm and you dry off again quickly (Neil always forgets this and takes full waterproofs and boots each time to the Canaries, which then stay in the locker for the duration!). It requires pretty close concentration to deal with the conditions, typically 30 minutes is enough before rotating the helm. When you find yourself rounding up in the gusts or bearing away on rogue waves then you know its time to handover to a fresh helm.

Arrival in San Sebastian de La Gomera is quite a thrill at the end of the day with car ferries, high speed ferries, deep sea fishing boats, other yachts all jostling for position outside the harbour while you try to get lines and fenders sorted while not inadvertently straying back into the WAZ. There's a small boat channel into the marina, where it seems the main aim is for everyone to try to overtake everyone else. Just to add an additional challenge to entering the port, we discovered that the main VHF would

make the first call as usual but then failed to transmit thereafter, leaving the communication in limbo. It took us some time to realise this; we initially assumed the reason that Port Control wouldn't talk to us was some sort of Sunday afternoon mañana problem. Swapping over to the handheld resolved matters.

So our first night ashore after a long day, only to find the whole island was more or less without electricity due to a fire at the power station. No power = no pump, so no water available. No power = no cooking, so no restaurants open. No power = no chip and PIN, so cash only! After much fruitless hunting up back streets we did finally find a restaurant, but asked no questions about how they washed their hands, how the loos worked, how they washed the pots, pans & dishes or whether we were all going to get struck down with dysentery later. We survived to tell the tale!

The power situation persisted next morning (and for several days thereafter) and we did wonder why the many wind turbines on the top of the hills were not running. Upon enquiry, it seems that all the wind generated power on La Gomera is sent by cable to Tenerife, a fact not lost on the local residents who had some strong views on the subject, many of which seemed to come down to it all being the Mayor's fault.

San Sebastian is the final departure point for Columbus before he set off for the New World and there are several mosaics and statues to the great man. We stopped for the obligatory photo. Our partner yacht in the two-boat flotilla decided to head off on 60 mile plus passages to La Palma and El Hierro, but we split and went around La Gomera to the west side and Valle Gran Rey, named after the last native Canarian King who made a final stand against the Spanish invaders back in the day. It's a delightful spot with beautiful sunsets across the Atlantic and an uninterrupted view

across to the Americas. Neil made a few suggestions about next stop Panama anyone, but the crew seemed mutinous, so he dropped it.

For several days we fell into a routine of going out into WAZ to scream around for a few hours, then into a bay for lunch on board, a swim and some sunbathing, then more WAZ in the afternoon and a sheltered harbour overnight.

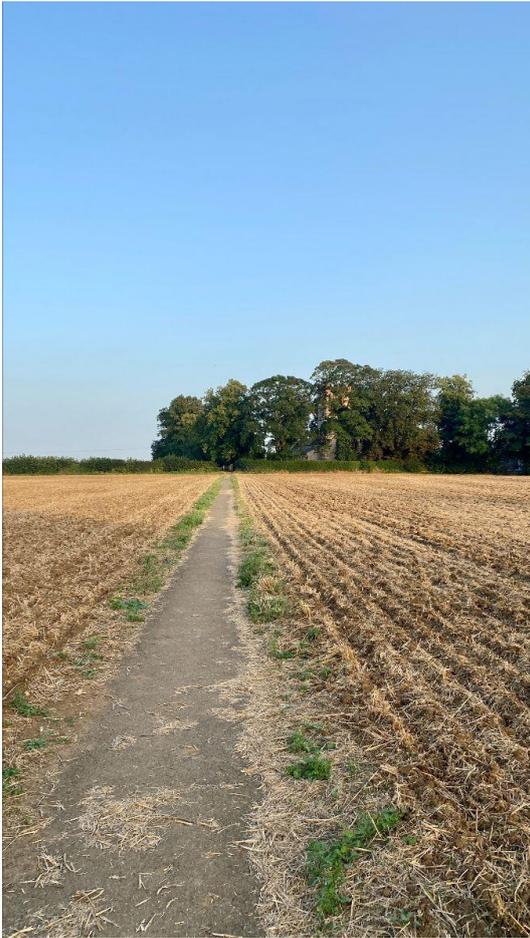
And so our week continued. No dolphins riding the bow this time, but we saw pilot whales at a distance on several occasions, we had some terrific sailing, registered max 42 knots of wind and SOG of 8.5 knots, 30 degrees each day, great food and we spent no more than 20 Euros each on evening meal and drinks each night.

What's not to like? Will Neil be going back there? Do fish swim?





A few photos below from our warm and sunny September evening Walking Treasure Hunt attended by 14 members, thanks to Eb Brown for organising.



Your Future NOSCA Event

Note: there are longterm road closures near the Bowls Club, specifically Sandy Lane, click on this [link](#) for details before setting off to the club!

November 7th – Guest speaker 'Ken Bryan', Quest for North West Passage and the Franklin Expedition of 1845.

Bowls Club Harpole, NN7 4DF 7:30pm for 8pm

December 5th - AGM and Seasonal quiz.

Harpole Bowls Club Northampton, NN7 4DF 7:30pm for 8pm

Upcoming in first quarter of 2024 - Sailing in the Canaries, The Jodrell Bank Story and 200th anniversary of the RNLI.

We want to hear from you!

Please contact NOSCA for all membership enquires or if you wish to attend any of NOSCA's monthly events. New members welcomed throughout the year!

Articles, snippets and photo are always most welcome for inclusion in the monthly newsletter, send to the newsletter editor at newsletter@nosca.co.uk

Lastly from the editor

I've been afloat on the Nene! My brother and I had a cracking couple of hours paddling our canoes near Northampton in September, here's a few photos.

I can also highly recommend the Black Country Living Museum in Dudley which

I visited with my cousin who was visiting us from Australia.

Harry Bryant





Enough anchor chain out? I think so!

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