

## Emma & Luke McEwen in EAGLEWING



**Departed** Southsea Marina,  
May 2003

**Returned** to RLymYC pontoon,  
August 2007

**Distance sailed** on voyage  
43,000nm

**Route:** Trade Winds via Cape of Good Hope, with an extra lap in the South Pacific from Australia to New Zealand and Tonga.

**About us:** dinghy racers at heart, we met at university team

racing. Emma had the cruising dream, having sailed up the Australian east coast to the Whitsundays. Luke had never spent a night at sea before we set off. But you have to learn somehow... and we had already completed a circumnavigation of the Isle of Wight on a 23' gaff cutter, so how hard can it be? We did Yachtmaster theory evening classes at the local adult education centre, asked Luke's dad how to set an anchor, pored over the wonderful maintenance manuals by Nigel Calder and did most of the boat prep ourselves so we would know how to fix things further from home.

The biggest challenge was finally deciding to go for it, 5 years after leaving university: buy a boat, set a departure date, stop earning money, say goodbye to friends and family and sail away. Or in our case motor away into a Southerly force 6, throw up over the side (what have we let ourselves in for?), then break down in Christchurch Bay in flat calm and fog.



**Yacht:** Tradewind 35 "Eagle Wing", built in Salcombe in 1985. She was designed more for comfort than upwind speed, but she suited the two of us very well and could accommodate two friendly guests in the saloon. We bought her on our wedding day in October 2002 and the honeymoon was to sail her back from the Yealm to Lymington; there were so many gales those first hundred miles took us nine days. Eagle Wing had done an Atlantic circuit so was well kitted out but it still took us until May 2003 to get her and ourselves ready to go.



**Favourite kit on board:** our 8' sailing tender "Feather", twin headsails on the same furler but each with their own poles (for running in the trade winds), Aries wind vane, and a storm flap made of transparent sail window material over the companionway. The Jordan series drogue (for avoidance of pitchpoling in the breaking waves of the Agulhas current, luckily not needed) deserves a mention for giving us peace of mind and hours of fun sewing the dozens of conical parachutes together on our hand-operated sewing machine as we crossed the Indian Ocean.



**Best places** San Blas, Galapagos, Fatu Hiva (Marquesas), Tuamotus, Suvarrow (Cook Islands), Tonga, Fiji, Tanna (Vanuatu), Chagos, Madagascar.

### **Low points**

- Seasickness (both of us) – seemed to wear off after about the first 3 days on each passage. Top tips: prepare boat and meals before setting off, don't leave into big weather, take Stugeron before bedtime and use scopolamine patches if the Stugeron won't stay down.



- Emma's prolapsed disc in the remote Ha'apai islands in Tonga.
- Discovering a 30cm long crack across the top of the keel when we arrived in Sydney. So lucky we found it there, where we had already planned a three month stopover so there was time and materials to rebuild the keel (from the inside, while living in the boat) rather than 1200 miles earlier in New Caledonia with the cyclone season approaching.
- Finding water flooding into the boat, at 2am on a moonless night while motoring through the Doldrums. Emma was woken by a call of "get your lifejacket on NOW, I think we're sinking". It turned out the stern gland had vibrated apart, so just required reassembly by Luke lying on top of the hot engine. But quite scary enough for a few minutes until we found the source of the flood.

## High points

- Snorkelling over brilliant coloured coral with turtles, sharks, manta rays, marlins and humpback whales.



- Tasting poisson cru for the first time (raw fish marinated in fresh coconut cream), made for us by a lovely guy in the Cook Islands.
- Anchoring in a turquoise tropical lagoon in Tonga after a cold and wet 1000nm sail from New



Zealand.

- Catching a mahi-mahi fish which was 5'2" long (two inches shorter than Emma), fortunately just before making landfall in New Caledonia where there were plenty of friends to share it with.



- Recreating Lymington's Setley Cup model yacht race in the uninhabited Chagos archipelago, with boats made only from flotsam and natural materials found on the beach.





- Crossing our outbound path at Iles des Saintes (south of Guadeloupe in the Caribbean) and randomly hearing on the VHF two of the boats we had been cruising with an ocean ago, anchored in the bay we were heading for. A great celebration!

## Philosophy

There are lots of ways to cruise on a yacht, but whatever boat you sail there is limited capacity on board for fuel, water, electricity, crew stamina and enthusiasm for boat work. Our philosophy, partly through necessity on a smallish boat and budget, was minimum consumption and hence minimum requirement for storage, generation and maintenance.



Bread baked in a “Swedish oven” pan on the hob tastes better and cooks faster than bread baked in the oven, using much less gas. Likewise rain water collected from the bimini tastes better than the water-maker output. We rowed or sailed our tender instead of using the outboard, used wind vane steering instead of the electrical autopilot, lifted the anchor with a manual windlass, anchored and left under sail rather than starting the engine

unless there were other boats anchored too close for safety.

We spent our money on an efficient water-cooled fridge, a big solar panel and an LED masthead light. Those things avoided the need to run the engine for an hour every day and all the fuel, noise and oil changes that entails. Freedom from fuel docks and marinas is a wonderful thing especially if your boat doesn't steer in reverse – a lesson we learned the hard way after several crashes.

We would recommend the minimalist approach to anyone, even with a much bigger boat.

