

Ed and Genie Webb on WANDERING DREAM



2000-2004, Lymington to Lymington. Trade winds route via Panama Canal and Cape of Good Hope.

43,000 nautical miles, 1,497 days, 497 nights at sea, 30 countries, 4 oceans

We made the decision to 'sell up and sail' in January of 1999 and began what would be an 18 month project to untie the dock lines. It took 6 months of trawling around brokers and visiting all manner of craft, to find 'Wandering Dream', a Rival 38 built in 1978 and, at the time, moored in Mallorca. Two dinghy sailors with just a handful of nights at sea between us, we flew to Mallorca with a battery powered handheld GPS, bought a life raft and set off for England. How little we knew! Luckily, Ed's Dad, Richard, was kind enough to join us in Gibraltar for the Biscay crossing.

There followed a frantic year of boat preparation, house clearing, Yachtmaster evening classes and SSB radio courses, whilst both in jobs involving a lot of travel.

We finally sailed out past the Needles on August 7th, 2000. Our stated goal was a year's Atlantic circuit, but we might turn left in the Caribbean if it was going well. It didn't take long to realise we were loving it.

Things were basic aboard. We had 400 litres of fresh water, 180 litres of diesel, a small diesel generator, towing generator, and an SSB radio and VHF for communication. We had a standard sloop rig to which we added an old sigma 33 spinnaker. An Aries windvane steered us most of the way. We rarely motored on passages which were longer than a handful of days and relied on catching rainwater to top up the tanks when away from ports for long periods.

The first few months were a steep learning curve in pretty much every department, as we sailed back across the Biscay and then cruised down the Spanish and Portuguese coasts. At Cascais, it was time to

leave mainland Europe and we set sail for Porto Santo, near Madeira, the first of many wonderful Islands we were lucky enough to explore. Our blog read:

“Our arrival at Porto Santo was spectacular. It amazed us (and I'm sure it will amaze some of you more!) that after 3 1/2 days of blasting down Atlantic swells – with wind vane steering meaning we were only ever "approximately" on course – there, through the growing dusk should appear this tiny Island in the middle of nowhere. It appeared with cloud necklaces around sharply rising peaks, silhouetted against a purpled sky as the sun set - and suddenly we believed in sea monsters, buried treasure and mermaids.”

It remained a real highlight throughout our voyage, to see a new Island, Country or Continent coming over the horizon.

We had some wonderful ‘trading’ experiences along the way. In the more remote islands, this would often consist of exchanging old T-shirts, empty jam jars or a bag of rice, for cassava, bananas, or mango, all discussed through smiles and hand gestures often with locals in a dug- out canoe.

In the Marquesas, French Polynesia, a gentleman approached us as we walked from the beach and signalled that he would like us to get into the back of his truck. We hopped in and bounced up the hill to his house, where he produced some nylon string and pointed at his goat. It became clear that he needed some splicing done to stop the cheeky goat escaping into his veggie patch, and he thought a ‘yachty’ could help. After a happy hour sat on a log ‘chatting’ and splicing, we left with armfuls of mango, bananas and pamplemousse.

There were some more eventful moments.

Aside from bad weather one of our biggest concerns in some sea areas was piracy. Early one morning, 400 miles off the coast of Ecuador on the way to Galapagos, we were approached at speed by an open boat with four men inside. Gen was sent below to hide in a cupboard and get on the next SSB net to raise the alarm whilst Ed tried to look frightening instead of frightened. The four men were waving their arms wildly and shouting as they approached. Ed then realised that they were trying to stop us running straight over their long lines. Our course was changed, four smiling faces pulled up alongside, and Gen reappeared with mars bars and coke for all. Happily, this was to be our only pirate attack.

We had many incredible close up encounters with wildlife, none more so than one night anchored at Palmerston, Cook Islands:

“As Ed was 'checking the anchor' there was a large ‘woosh’ and he found himself immediately covered from head to toe in humpback whale ‘breath’. The exclamations had Gen running upstairs thinking we were on the reef or something, only to find Ed giggling and pointing at the new 'island' next to the boat.”

Along with the wonderful memories, the most enduring part of our adventure is the many friendships we made with fellow sailors from all over the world. We still refer to each other by our boat names!

Four years to the day since we had left the Solent, we wrote

“At 0515 on Saturday 7th August, and on a glorious reach into the Channel, England appeared over the horizon...”

This was a double excitement - for one it marked the first time that WD had seen these "green and pleasant lands" since leaving 4 years ago - and secondly that in an effort to gain some sort of official yachty qualification Ed had covered up the GPS with a piece of paper and had been celestial body shooting & dead reckoning our position all the way from the Azores. In fact the loom from Bishops Rock lighthouse(FI(2) 15s44m24M) the previous evening had been a very welcome sight, as it indicated that the distant grey line we could now see just above the horizon was indeed England and that we needn't practice our Welsh, French or Irish anymore!

We rolled out the big ensign and blasted 'Jerusalem' on the cockpit speakers as the sun rose.

Vanuatu



Madagascan ship building:



Chagos: BIOT, Indian Ocean



Entertaining in Gau, Fiji

Provisioning



Not all play...



Daily SSB radio nets at sea



Landfall. This time, after 49 days and 5,600 nautical miles since leaving Cape Town, the lush green cliffs of Northern Tobago, Caribbean