



VAGB
NEWSLETTER
42



Vega Association of Great Britain

Sept 2006

Webpage - www.albinvega.co.uk

Letter from the Technical Guy

Hello Fellow Vega sailors and friends,

Instead of Secretary's Notes I am afraid you will have to do with Steve's Notes. As most of you know Diana has had a tough 6 months with the passing of her dear husband, John. Our thoughts all are with Diana at this time.

Many things have happened in the last six months, I will try and itemise them.

The IFR 2006 was a great success in Eckenforde (Germany) where many Vegas congregated for the Bi-Annual Regatta. IFR stands for International Friendship Regatta and, believe me, it certainly lived up to its' name! Nearly 70 Vegas attended the event for food, drink, friendship and racing. Denmark's Fleming Kaiser again won the Cruising Cup for the third time! His Vega was so fast he caught most of the Racing Class that started 10 minutes before the Cruising Class start. To see a Vega sailed so perfectly was a joy to watch (from afar, I was way behind crewing for the German Chairman Clemens Henkes in his Vega).

The Solent Rally was another great success. Again it started at Haslar Marina on the Friday evening. Much boaty chatting, supping of beer and other beverages were the order of the night. I am sure starting the Rally here is always a good start to proceedings. The following day was Race Day with both Estimated Time and VODA Racing taking place with a combined start. All 12 Vegas entered both races as there was enough wind for everyone. After some very fine, tight racing Martin Duffus just managed to squeeze ahead of Sualocin and take line honours. The Estimated Race was won convincingly by Sualocin by finishing just 2 mins behind their estimated time. What a great race, great wind and fantastic organising (thanks to Brian Pilcher). The 12.8 mile route was finished in 2 hrs 48 mins with plenty of close-hauled sailing. The BBQ at Fareham Club again proved to be the social highlight with the club providing great facilities and very cheap beer! Many, many thanks to Brain Pilcher, Martin Duffus and the Fareham Sailing Club. Long may this event continue.

The Laying-Up Supper will again be held at Banstead Downs Golf Club. 14th October 19:00 for 19:30 start. Please send your replies to Diana Webb asap.

Again I am asking for Newsletter help. I am happy to edit and prepare the Newsletter but if anyone would like to print, collate and post some of the Newsletters for each edition then any help would be appreciated. All expenses will be paid by VAGB. You will also get your own *****@albinveg.com email address. You must be computer literate and own a laser printer.

Cheers Steve Birch V 1703 " Southern Comfort "

John Kinsella
V1447 Breakaway
Lough Dergo
Ireland

David Coutts
V1020 Avanti
Largs
Scotland

David Bolton
V????
Victoria BC
Canada

Chris White
V1494 Tim
Hamburg
Germany

Jason Allen
V621 Langtan
Brighton
Sussex

Alistair Hodgson
V1769
Whispering Enchantress
Devon

John Keith
V3040 Fleur II
Rhu
Scotland

Malcolm Ellis
V1805 Morwen
Hamble
Solent

Guy Lees
V1733 Sula
Edinburgh
Scotland

Marcin Palacz
V1958 Lotto
Gdansk
Poland

John Booth
V1718 Vagrant
Anglesey
Wales

John Cooper
V3222 Allegro
Helford River
Cornwall

Patrcik McDonald
V2691 Cochina
California
U.S.A.

New Members 2006

Steve,

It was good to meet you at the AGM last week. At your call for more articles for the news letter, I think that I mentioned an article that my father wrote for the Vega Association back in 1980. Here it is:

It might be old and out of date but makes for some interesting reading in the days prior to clever electronics. I do not suppose that there may other Vega owners who had their boats back in 1980 so hopefully nobody will remember it should you wish to publish it. Feel free to edit it as you wish.

Out of interest – I am the youngest son referred to - then aged 21. We had no radio and an old RDF to find our way and I still use the same autohelm when motoring! Needless to say I have not ventured back to Ijmuiden since due to bad memories. My father died last summer aged 80 and I had taken the boat over from him 10 years previously when he reached 70. After this trip he always knew that he was safe in Egavega no matter what the weather and she did indeed see him “safely to an earthly burrow”.

Regards Nick Russell Vega “Ega Vega” V1632

EGA VEGA (No. 1632) Summer Cruise 1980

You printed a piece as from the East Coast in the last spring issue. I offered more about inside Holland this year and you took me up on it. I cannot give you what I had anticipated for the reasons which appear hereunder. I wrote then – plainly too facetiously – “To say one had sailed into Amsterdam had an important ring about it and to return via Den Helder and Texel seems even at this moment to be rather intrepid”.

I have since had occasion to digest those words with some discomfort.

I set out from Aldeburgh to justify them at 0500 hours on the 20th August with my eldest son (father of two and no previous offshore experience). Youngest son – for the foredeck work – and a friend of his, strong, but of limited experience. My middle son who was with us last year had been despatched to Hong Kong. I returned to Aldeburgh a few hours later because it was not nice six miles out.

Later that day I made all possible meteorological enquiries. The ever helpful RAF station at Honnington agreed that they had been over-optimistic the previous day, that I had been right to come back but that once a nasty front had been gone through, expected at about 0400 or 0500 hours the next day, the Westerly gale would moderate significantly. Accordingly we set off again, anchoring overnight on the 20th/21st August near the mouth but in a position so as best to be able to accept the expected front with equanimity. It left us in no doubt as to its arrival more or less on time. Everything howled and screeched and it poured with rain and further sleep was impossible. Its force was so alarming that I decided to remain at anchor until the 0625 forecast confirmed Honnington’s advice. It did and a clearing sky with a set fair expression encouraged a start at 0800 hours. It was

still windy – 5 to 6 – so we agreed to let the jenny pull us over and as we left the protection of the shore we met an uncomfortable sea. As forecast the wind gradually fell away. By 1400 hours it was down to 4 and by 1630 it was 2 to 3. We had raised the main but the boom just banged about and we handed it within the half hour and through boredom applied the autohelm and began to talk about the possibilities of the easiest crossing of our experience – third time lucky! But it was the lull before the storm. The 1750 forecast told us that the gales were imminent in our area – Humber/Thames/Dover. We substituted the jenny for the working jib and started the engine because the log told us we were doing seven knots which was a nonsense and obviously it needed an injection of some sort.

That the BBC was right was not in doubt by 2100 hours, by which time we had taken off the working jib and were on the storm jib, my youngest son having had a fright whilst doing the change. Although he was strapped on, he was washed over board during the change as we disappeared down a wave. Luckily he was holding on and was immediately flipped back on deck again by the next wave. He returned to the cockpit very shaken and very wet. I do not know the theoretical hull speed of a Vega; it felt as if we were exceeding it by at least twice but the in-hull log could not be depended upon and the towing variety was again stupidly left behind. It was of course wet for those on watch but it was not however too uncomfortable or worrying. The washboards had long been in and so below it was dry and possible to sleep. We picked up the Goree light at 0345 hours and established that we were well south of our Rhum line laid on Scheveningen off which we had hoped we might arrive at about high water so that the ebb would take us up to IJmuiden. Of course we were early and of course as we approached the Dutch shore so the waves built up and of course as they did so we were more than ever conscious of the lee shore and the need to keep our distance from it. But it was not until 0500 hours when we turned broadside to the sea to progress up to coast that we felt the full impact of the storm. Yes – our windspeed instrument registered Force 10 albeit momentarily.

Not having previously experienced such conditions I had not realised that even in full daylight the visibility was restricted to the next wave and that the horizontal spume often obliterated even that notwithstanding the alarming narrowness of the wave intervals when the North Sea kicks up. What to do about it was the problem. There was not the slightest chance of seeing a buoy – north of Europort they are sparse anyway – nor picking an identifying mark on a distant and unfamiliar coast in the split second that one is on top of the breaking crest of a mast high wave. Moreover the Aptel (RDF) was of no value in such conditions because, apart from the fear of it getting soaked and thereby becoming useless later, there was no way in which it was possible to get the compass card to settle long enough to take a reading. Log keeping also became impossible with the continuing drenching and the violent movement and it seemed folly to open the hatches as the cabin would have become soaked. Our PVC/Canvas Cuddy had caved in some hours earlier with the constant pressure of the waves landing on it. Insofar as it was possible to read the coastline we seemed to be making some northward progress. Eventually the passage of time alone seemed to imply that we must be approaching our destination and the glimpses had indicated the existence of moles on the starboard buoy. We therefore decided to go in closer and hope for a better look. As we did so it became clear that there was indeed a harbour available to us but which was it – Scheveningen or IJmuiden? Surely we had passed the former so it must be latter. We began to run straight for it but identification still eluded us: The photographs in the North Sea Harbours and Pilotage could not be

reconciled. Suddenly as we were approaching the entrance I realised it was Scheveningen. A decision had to be taken and quickly. Should we go in for safety or turn away and continue our passage to IJmuiden? I do not doubt that the right and seamanlike decision was to go in and take advantage of its protection. In the little time available to me I took the wrong one and turned to port presenting ourselves with the task of clawing off a lee shore with only a storm jib to do it. My reasoning, if such it can be described, was fired by the sight of a boat of similar size, slipping out and heading North. Surely this meant she had some local and favourable forecast not available to us? It also meant that the ebb was with us and if we did not take advantage of it now we might not be able to do so for several days. In addition my wife, who remembering previous crossings, had this time opted for the packet, would be awaiting us in Amsterdam, whether with or without understanding of the conditions we were experiencing I know not.

The decision, right or wrong, caused some depression with the knowledge that IJmuiden was still some 25 miles away and there was no sign of relief from the current torture. Fortunately the Dutch coast runs East of North and with the wind still westerly we managed in spite of the huge waves to move away from the shore. The ebb undoubtedly helped but anxiety remained as we approached IJmuiden. With the momentum gained going down the back of the first wave being negated by the halting process of climbing the next, the passage had taken longer than anticipated. The ebb would shortly be spent and without it we should not make it. Moreover there was an offing buoy to weather. We did it with the help of the engine at full blast notwithstanding an overheating problem which had plagued us all summer. We turned with relief for the centre of the jaws formed by the moles – large enough for a couple of Cunarders to enter abreast. But suddenly the entrance appeared very narrow and easily missable with the following waves throwing us off course and bringing fears of broaching. The strain on the rudder was immense. It required four strong arms to keep the tiller straight. With sanctuary achieved by about 1600 hrs the relief from tension was so great as to be almost sick – making something which hitherto Sturgeron had miraculously prevented.

The Nordzee Kanel is without beauty, notwithstanding the welcome we felt for it, and is not without its frustrations. We missed the opening of the rail bridge by a few minutes and had to wait an hour with nowhere to tie up. In the process of trying to create order out of chaos both above and below we got the spinnaker sheet fouled in the propeller. All of this, with the perversity of human nature, provoked an unwarranted degree of irritation in face of what had previously been endured. We eventually tied up in the Sixhaven Marina, Amsterdam at about 1900 hrs. Our ETA had been midday from which time kind friends on behalf of an anxious wife had been making enquiries with less and less comforting results. “The conditions at sea were terrible” they were told; “What was a small boat like that without a telephone doing in such conditions” : “There had been distress calls but no reports from lifeboats etc.”. However, our arrival had been signalled without our knowledge and we received a welcoming part on board almost before we had been able to get out of our sodden clothes.

The weather remained lousy and we therefore stayed in Amsterdam longer than planned finding some stimulus which helped us to forget bruised rib cages and generally recover, from the Rijksmuseum and the Museum dedicated to Van Gogh whose earlier years showed that he was as

great a draftsman as he was later a post-impressionist painter. The canals however, need sun to show off their attractions. The younger members of the crew had their eyes opened by exploration – unrecounted in detail – of the red light district which is actually marked in red on the town map.

The wind moved into the Northeast after two days bringing with it the sun and we sped for the IJsselmeer having a refreshing and pleasant sail to Hoorn, very pretty, for one night. On the way to Enkhuisen for the next night, we sailed through a host of botters who were obviously and most elegantly enjoying some Regatta. We hoped for a spinnaker run back to Markum, a picture postcard of a harbour which was the backdrop for scenes in the film “A Puppet on a Chain” but we were not to get it. The wind died and mist descended requiring motorised passage by compass course.

The next day the wind reappeared in the West hindering our passage back to Amsterdam to such an extent that we decided to go on to Ijmuiden. We expected to find facilities in the outer Herring Harbour but there were none of any kind. We tied onto a trawler whose owner, depressed by the Common Market fisheries policy, was using it as a home. His English was excellent and he topped us up with water and diesel from his own supply. It was an ugly situation made worse by unremitting rain. A return passage from Den Helder has been long ruled out and no-one felt any relish for a renewed encounter with the North Sea.

The forecast both on the night of the 28th August and the morning of the 29th was South-westerly 4 to 5 veering westerly and moderating. It was obviously manageable and we set off at 0800 well breakfasted. Our Rhum line was Outer Gabbard which has a radio beacon. All went well to start with and we made good progress with main and genoa in lightish but misty air. But by midday, and the 1355 forecast confirmed it, the wind had risen and we were in the 5 to 6 range with working jib and doublereefed main. The forecast had repeated that the wind would veer westerly and moderate. However the 0015 forecast told us that gales were imminent in our area. We could hardly believe that it was happening to us again. We got the working jib off in favour of the storm jib only to experience the jib sheet bowline untying itself, necessitating my younger son making another fearful and drenching trip to the foredeck.

From that time the wind and seas built up and we beat into force 8 and 9. We were on our ear and could not reduce sail and yet make headway. The waves swamped us continually and eventually the sprayhood was stove in. Small leaks appeared with the crashing and one wondered how the hull could withstand splitting down its seam and the rigging hold. Inevitably the cabin got moister and some diesel appeared in the bilges; some joinery was later required but mercifully everything aloft held together. We picked up the Outer Gabbard light nearing dawn. Directly astride our path and into the eye of the wind lay the Shipwash bank and in the seas we had nothing was going to make me cross it.

How to avoid it? The ride was ebbing (running up the coast) but with storm jib and fully reefed main our drift was great. We had been on the port tack all the way over. If we turned to go round the Shipwash to the south and therefore on to the starboard tack we should only be pushed back into the North Sea and perhaps have difficulty in getting back against the flood. If we kept on the port

tack we might get too far north. The only course seemed to be to carry on as we were going but to tack when it seemed sensible so as to arrive in the vicinity of the Shipwash Light Vessel as near low water as possible. I went off watch and four hours later came up to find such tacking as had been done had only served to bring us back to the Outer Gabbard! We then set the best course we could make on the port tack – 340 which was on line with Lowestoft and with the remains of the ebb would take us several degrees north of it. We also ran the engine to try and reduce the drift. Eventually and gradually, but oh so gradually we were carried down on the flood so that when the coast became visible through the grey mist and spray we were heading for Sizewell Power Station. Eventually the same tack brought us in line with Orfordness Lighthouse. As we approached the coast so our suffering was reduced and we tacked in the lee of Orfordness in the knowledge that we could make our entrance to the Alde around 1430 just before high water.

In the November issue of Yachting Monthly the Editor wrote – and I quote with his kind permission:-

“There are times when Orford Haven bar hisses like a nest of snakes and it is not a safe place, with its strong transverse current and a single shore mark used in conjunction with the buoy to seaward a stern. It is very shoal; the sea heaves and topples. Then the narrow river mouth between its towering shingle banks suddenly sucks you into a fast-flowing clam. The place fascinates me. It turns a modest weekend cruise into an ever-changing adventure. That bar pricks my confidence, makes me feel as if my scalp didn’t fit and thereby does me all the good in the world”

On this occasion the entrance held no fears for us only heart-felt relief at seeing an old friend again. We had been lucky; most of the shipping we saw was anchored and the local paper later told us that several casualties had occurred on the 29th and 30th August.

It is absurd to preach to the converted and although on both passages I should have liked an even longer keel under me, it has to be said the Egavega and her many sisters are superb little crafts. I experienced much anxiety that I would do something wrong or that some shroud might break but never feared that she would let us down. It is not surprising that Vegas are to be found the world over. Apart from Europe where they abound I myself have seen one in St. John’s, Antigua, that had just crossed the Atlantic, another in San Francisco Bay and another in Larnica and my second son sent me a photograph of one he saw in Honolulu on his way to Hong Kong where there are other. It is a great sadness their line is to be discontinued because many will not know what they are missing. For my part I am confident Egavega will see me safely to an earthly burrow.

CYRIL RUSSELL Vega “Ega Vega” V1632

Genoa Track Fixings

Hi Steve

Having now fitted the replacement bolts for the Genoa track I will recount what happened.

During fitting out a friend observed that the starboard Genoa track was lifting around two screws just aft of the mid point. When I tried to tighten them, the top and the bottom were unconnected, they had simply rotted through. Naturally I decided to remove all forty 5mm bolts (20 each side) and the two 6mm dome headed bolts at the forward end. The two 6mm bolts came out intact, but rather corroded. Only about 4 or 5 of the 5mm bolts came out intact the rest were either rotten or broke immediately I tried to undo them. The cause was simple; the bolts were brass which had de-zincing after 35 years service!

Getting the top half of the bolts out was relatively simple, I simply lifted the track slowly to avoid bending it and the bolts came out. Driving out the bottom half took considerable force (four pound lump hammer and redundant long 5mm bolt recommended!) as they appeared to be held in with old mastic. Finally the holes need to be cleared with a 5.5 drill to give good clearance for the replacement bolts.

I replaced the bolts with A4 grade stainless steel bolts with a good coating of mastic. A fiddle, especially the galley lockers and of course the cockpit lockers.

I strongly recommend that anyone whose boat has non stainless steel bolts should replace them urgently. Apart from the Genoa track these bolts are also hull deck joints bolts at that part of the hull.

Cheers Peter Heath Vega "Sitka"

New Members Jan - July 2005

Andy Stewart
V 1436 "Pippa Longstock"
Arbroath
Scotland

George Perides
V 2860 "Asterion "
Ionian
Greece

Prof. Peter Laybourn
V 1358 "Lioncel 2"
Arisaig
Scotland

Roger Metherell
V 1786 "Vengara "
Plymouth
S.W. Coast

Dominique Rommel
V 1122 "Lady Vega"
Scalloway
Shetland

Christopher Rees
V "Fariante"
Marines de Cogolin
France

Philip Hatton
V 1056 "Bugaloo "
Wexford
Ireland

Clive Bridges
V "Nemone"
Killyleagh
N.Ireland

Lawrence McBride
V 881 "Lindi"
Glasgow
Scotland

Bob ‘n Lesley Back afloat

Well, we're afloat once more and it's beginning to get fun. Arrived in Rome almost a month ago and for most of the time (over two weeks) it was cold, windy and regularly wet - we've relaunched the boat to better weather when we were back in Wales!

It finally eased off and the forecasts promised a settled week's weather beginning 21st April, so we hoisted sail and sailed (slowly - there was not much wind at all now) south to Anzio (Nothing like the film; not a soldier to be seen) and on to San Felice Circeo (Circe's Island) where sadly I wasn't taken to bed for a year by an attractive sorceress, whilst my crew were provided with the finest meats and wine by her handmaidens; or perhaps handymen would've been more appropriate anyway.

From there we went off-shore to the Pontine Islands, which were spectacular, but heralded the rain's return, so we scuttled back eastward into the Bay of Naples - we're in Napoli at the moment and it is without doubt the most manic city (excluding Asia) that I've ever seen - I just love it, though Les isn't too keen on the kamikazee scooters.

Assuming the weather stays fine (we'll log on to windguru next) we intend drifting down to the south of the bay tomorrow, from where we'll visit Pompeii & Vesuvius, then it's out to the Isle of Capri which sounds like hammering the bank account.

So far all is going well, though we (Lesley!) managed to block the boat's toilet pump. It's the first and I truly hope last, time that I ever have to do that repair job - definitely one to be subcontracted if it happens again.

Bob and Lesley Carlisle Vega “Spring Fever” V1776

Lioncel II's Voyage North

In 1976 Arthur, my friend, colleague and former landlord, had his Vega 'Belemnite' transported from Southampton to McGruer's yard opposite Rhu, on the Gareloch. Together with another friend we sailed through the Kyles to the Crinan Canal and thence up the West Coast to Portree. I was entranced by the experience and resolved to get a craft of my own to explore more of the area. Not being particularly flush at the time, I decided to build my own boat, and the next year began constructing a 22 ft. cruiser, the hull of plywood sheathed in glass and epoxy, designed by another friend, Jim Ditchfield. Seven years later, with interruptions from marriage and fatherhood, I launched 'Lioncel' at Troon, and spent 20 enjoyable years sailing her in the Clyde and among the Hebrides. She was a fast boat for her size, sailed well, steered beautifully, and took me and my crew (often Arthur) many thousands of miles in all conditions. However, the accommodation was, as estate agents say, compact; the headroom was 4ft 6in., and everything was somewhat on the small side. When I retired a couple of years ago, I thought that we needed rather more comfort than Lioncel

could provide, and with mixed feelings I decided to look for a more spacious craft. Sailing with Arthur in Belemnite, in the Channel and then in Scotland, had convinced me of the good qualities of Vegas, opinions reinforced about ten years ago when we were invited for drinks aboard a Vega in Campbeltown – it seemed as spacious as an ocean liner. Finally I went down South last February, saw two Vegas, at Poole and Wareham, and agreed to buy ‘Candida’, laid up on a mooring at Redclyffe Yacht Club. She was surveyed at a nearby yard and needed several minor repairs, so Arthur and I motored her to Poole to rig her and do some necessary jobs, and then sailed her to Southampton and a berth at Kemp’s. I stayed on and off for the next two months with Arthur and his wife while he and I got the boat shipshape. I had meanwhile re-registered the yacht as ‘Lioncel II’.

There was a fair amount to do. The standing rigging was all new, and fitted, more or less, although the mast, set down properly on its step, had a slight tilt forward. The old mainsail that was supplied was a dreadful fit, however, since, even with the forward tilt of the mast lifting the foot of the sail, the boom drooped so much that it fouled the sprayhood. I lashed the boom end to a convenient eye in the sail, lifting it about 6 inches, and noted that really a new main was needed, cut to a decent shape. Arthur rigged lines for the slab reefing, which we used on occasion, although I intend to use the existing through-the-mast roller reefing in future. We were unfamiliar with the furling genoa, having always changed headsails in Belemnite and Lioncel; the Rotostay system had to be rebuilt before we rigged the boat in Poole, but fortunately we were able to take it to Gosport and get it done on the spot by the very helpful Rotostay staff. I had furnished myself with a set of charts of the south coast that had been bequeathed to me by my father-in-law, who sailed the Atlantic single-handed over 40 years ago; some odd Admiralty yachting editions 2 or 3 years out of date of the Scillies, St George’s Channel and the Irish Sea that I had found almost complete for £1 each and had corrected using the internet corrections; and my own aging set of Scottish West Coast charts.

We spent a day sailing down Southampton Water to try and iron out some of the snags, and then, a week later, I returned to Southampton with another venerable friend, George, as crew, to start the first part of the voyage, to Falmouth. After waiting for the tide and adding the new name to the stern we cast off in a light SW wind to motor down the Itchen and then sail with main and reefed genoa down Southampton Water at 6kt. We tacked down to Hurst Castle with a strong tide and poor visibility, swept through the narrows, and took the North channel close-hauled, then tacked across Christchurch Bay in fog, making our course by GPS. Off Poole Rocks the wind lightened, and we motored on to Studland Bay, anchoring for the night and consuming curry. Alas, that was possibly the best day’s sailing of the trip – we suffered light headwinds nearly all the rest of the way, and did a lot of motoring, with the excellent Beta performing impeccably. After Studland we motor-sailed to Weymouth, where we were held up a day because of strong winds and my reluctance to round Portland Bill in those conditions, and then had a night at Fishcombe Cove, Brixham and another at Salcombe before passing the Eddystone light en route to Falmouth, where we entered in fog and during a regatta and motored up to Falmouth marina. Because of other commitments I had to leave Lioncel II there for 5 weeks until the voyage could continue.

At the beginning of July I took a 1st class ticket to Falmouth from Glasgow, only marginally more expensive than 2nd class, with the added attraction of free refreshments. Arthur and I met at the

marina, and the next morning after waiting for the tide to rise to let us cross the sill, we motored up river to Channals Cove, in rainy and squally weather, to anchor and wait for better conditions. The next day the wind speed over the cabin roof was measured as F6, so, well-reefed, we streaked down to the North Bank buoy and tacked back to the anchorage almost as rapidly. Feeling more confident in the boat we set sail early the following morning for the Scillies. We rounded the Manacles buoy and sailed on past the Lizard, where the overfalls were very rough. As always at the start of a rough voyage I was seasick and took not much interest in proceedings until we approached the islands, having passed S. of the Wolf Rock about 3 miles. We steered for Spanish Ledges buoy and turned into Porth Cressa where we anchored after a 13 1/2 hour trip.

The next day we spent the morning ashore in Hugh Town, buying seasickness pills and waiting for a rising tide to allow us to cross the shallows south of Tresco and leave the Scillies from New Grimsby. Following a GPS plot we successfully made the transit and cleared the islands at about 5p.m. to start on the longest leg of our voyage north, heading for Milford Haven. We sailed south and east of the Seven Stones reef, leaving the lightship close to starboard, and then set a course for Milford, sometimes sailing close-hauled but often motoring in light NE winds through that night and the next day. We were accompanied from time to time by dolphins, and were passed by a brilliantly-lit cruise liner and a few other big ships during the night. The coast of Lundy Is. was clearly visible on the horizon far to the east, and during the next evening we sighted the flame of the Texaco refinery at Milford. We picked up the green light of the Middle Channel marker, and then many other lights, and eventually anchored in Castlebeach Bay at 2.15 a.m., having run 140 miles.

Next morning we slept late, eventually going ashore and making our way to Dale, where we lunched in the pub and stretched our legs along the lanes and paths until evening. After so much motoring we needed to fill up with diesel, so the following day we motored up river to the fuel pontoon at Neyland, but alas, trade had been brisk the previous day, and the tanks were dry. We turned downstream to Milford Haven, where we would have to wait for the tide to lock in to the harbour – there the diesel pump had failed, so we were reduced to buying road diesel and carrying it a considerable distance around the harbour to where Lioncel II was waiting outside. After our toil in the hot sun, the showers at the marina were very welcome.

The day was well advanced before we sailed from Castlebeach with the objective of a night in Skomer south anchorage. On the way, puffins dived at our approach, waving their large feet in the air as they did so. At the anchorage itself, the air was full of puffins, hurtling about in all directions between the cliffs and making a great deal of noise. After making and consuming a curry, we fitted new sidelights, the old ones having corroded and failed because of their exposed position; the wiring had to be renewed as well. In the morning we rose early, motored off W. round Skomer and headed for the S. Bishop, abeam at 9 a.m. At 9 p.m. we passed Bardsey Is. lighthouse, after which the sea got very lumpy. The tide turned against us at 4 a.m when we were off South Stack, and it was another 2 1/4 hours before we tied up in Holyhead marina, where we turned in for a few hours before refuelling and visiting the town, which seemed to be rather run-down and stuck in a time-warp of 50 years earlier. The marina is very new, however, and still under construction, tucked in at the root of the long pier built by the railway company.

Next morning, and not for the first time, I missed the manoevrability in reverse of my old Lioncel, with her rotatable outboard and the excellent steering of her skeg-mounted rudder, as we laboriously warped Lioncel II round and out of her berth before setting off for the Isle of Man. We headed for Langdon Ridge W. buoy and then sailed to Calf Sound, which we motored through, anchoring in Port Erin. The swell set us rolling throughout the night, until at 4 a.m. we had had enough and having had a light breakfast, set off without more delay, motor-sailing to Loch Ryan, anchoring rather far into the Wig. An early start next morning found a fair wind off Ballantrae which held until we were off Troon, where we turned into the harbour and moored in the marina where Lioncel had been launched 21 years before: a very familiar spot.

Two weeks later my wife and I took Lioncel II through the Crinan Canal to the West Coast. Near to the Cock of Arran, in an otherwise unremarkable trip, I saw ahead what at first I thought was a seal's head, but as it didn't seem to move, I decided might just be driftwood. As we were about to leave it close to starboard, however, there was a tremendous thrashing as a large tail rose into the air and with a flourish disappeared, leaving quite a considerable hole in the sea. A small whale, we later concluded, somnolently drifting before we disturbed it. Later, visibility worsened and we helped our navigation with a GPS course to Ardrishaig, where we locked into the basin at 7 p.m. It was very quiet there, and we slept well. The next morning we were up early to start the transit of the canal at 8.30, which we made in excellent company with Laljie RCC, a Sparkman and Stevens 34, whose owners had recently ended 25 years of cruising in a Vega. We locked out of the canal at 5p.m., and as the tide was against us passing through the Dorus Mor, sailed across to Loch Craignish, where we found a berth at Ardfern, and took the bus to Oban and on to Glasgow.

A week later, we drove back to Ardfern, backed out of an inside pontoon berth successfully, much to my surprise, and set off for our final destination, Arisaig, which is to be Lioncel II's home berth. We cleared the Dorus Mor, quite exciting as the tide was running strongly and there were plenty of whirlpools, and sailed and motored up familiar territory, the Sound of Luing, the Firth of Lorne and the Sound of Mull, where the scenery is magnificent (except that visibility was poor, not helped by light rain). Just past Green Island, Ardtornish Bay was deserted, and we dropped anchor off the old boathouse at 7.50 p.m. It is an open bay facing south, with the great cliffs of Morvern looming over it and the ancient castle of Ardtornish on the promontory behind the small light, but the south-westerlies seem somehow to miss the bay and it usually gives good shelter. I find it so much more attractive than the enclosed Loch Aline next door.

Visibility was poor with some light drizzle next morning, as we motored NW up the Sound in a calm. As we approached Grey Is., where the Sound changes direction, the cloud came right down, but nearing Tobermory a fresh breeze cleared the mist and we picked up a mooring in Tobermory Bay just after noon. Going ashore we found that Tobermory, busy in the morning and over lunchtime, seems to go to sleep in the afternoon, so that the teashops were all closed at 4, and the Western Isles Hotel (little changed from its 1945 appearance in the film "I Know Where I'm Going") didn't serve tea at all. Up above the harbour we found an Arts Centre in an old school which obliged us. The next morning we sailed at 8 on another calm cloudy day with poor visibility, motoring in a quiet sea past a scarcely visible (but silent) Ardnamurchan light, getting into Loch Nan Uamh and taking a mooring at Arisaig after lunch. We tidied up the boat, enjoyed an evening walk, and early the next

morning took train, bus and taxi back to Ardfern to collect the car, buy a goose at a local farm shop, and return to Glasgow.

Lioncel II had performed splendidly over a journey of about 850 nautical miles, sailing well even with her ill-fitting mainsail, and motoring for many hours against the wind without any problems, except that the alternator drive belt seemed to wear excessively, depositing ground rubber over the front of the engine. She is very comfortable below, and in good condition for her 32 years. The lack of a built-in chart table is a nuisance, although I cannot see any simple solution that will not detract from some other comfort. Charts kept under the port bunk seem to survive well, and are quite handy. I need to make a foldable table erected over one bunk – the dining table gets too much in the way while sailing. There are 30 fathoms of 8mm anchor chain stowed in the locker high in the bow – it seems a less-than-ideal position for it, and I might experiment by stowing it further aft and below the waterline. We experienced no strong winds while sailing north: the only time the wind rose above 4 we stayed in Weymouth harbour or sailed about at Falmouth. But since then Arthur and I have circumnavigated Skye, in sometimes poor weather, without feeling unduly anxious. Although I regret parting with her predecessor, every bit of which I measured and shaped myself, I am very happy with my new ship.

Peter J.R. Laybourn, Rome, December 2005

Vega Mainsheet Traveller

Having been reminded about a tweak we made to Spring Fever, I've recently been looking at various photos of Vegas on the net and now wonder if it's perhaps been an original idea?

Spring Fever was purchased with what I presume is the 'standard' traveller set-up insofar as there was/is a grooved bronze track, within which the bottom mainsheet eye slides and this is held in place with two further sliding bronze blocks each with a knurled locking screw. It held the mainsheet in place OK, but was a pain to adjust up or down the track; not least because our locking screws were worn, seized up regularly and usually needed pliers to release them. Is yours the same?

What it really needed was one of the pretty stainless steel carriage affairs with cars whizzing up and down on fancy nylon bearings and the whole lot controlled and adjusted with some pretty coloured lines and jammers just like on our friend Robs Sadler. The problems with this idea were: -

1. Because of the cars and stop-blocks, the effective 'travel' is reduced by 2-3" at either end.
2. All those which we saw seemed to be too wide for the Vega and whilst we could plant another piece of timber onto the bar across the cockpit to carry them, we'd have to stop it short of the recesses behind the locker lids which would reduce the effective travel still further.
3. Most importantly – they were bloody expensive!

Having pondered the problem some more I bought two small shackles, two small 'standard' blocks,

two small blocks with an integral V shaped jammer (I think they're for the mainsheet of an optimist dinghy or similar (they were certainly only about £5 each) two 6mm eye bolts, a can of Teflon spray and two lengths of 6mm cordage – I even got a red one and a green one to show off. Where after: -

1. Install one eye-bolt 1" astern and 2" beyond each outer end of the existing track with a backing plate inside the locker.
2. Install one jammer block 1" forward and 2" beyond each outer end of the existing track with a backing plate inside the locker – jammer V at the forward side and opening inboard. Use nyloc nuts and don't secure too tightly or the block won't spin freely.
3. Using the two shackles connect a standard block at either side of the existing bottom eye of the mainsheet.
4. Put a stopper knot in one end of each of the cords, thread them through the eye-bolts, next through the blocks now fitted at the base of the mainsheet, then back around the track-end blocks and secure in the jammer grooves.
5. Loosen the screws of the original sliding stop blocks, move them to the outer ends of the track and re-tighten the screws to keep them there.
6. Thoroughly clean out the slot in the bronze traveller and apply a squirt of Teflon lubricant.
7. Look pleased with yourself for a few moments; then if you've been daft enough to follow the suggestion about using colour coded control lines; un-thread them and reinstall the correct way around.

The end result will look rather frail, but after two seasons including more than a few heavy days; nothing has ever broken. I actually now consider that not being overly strong is possibly an advantage; because if the wind-strength is ever such that a block breaks, it will send the mainsheet to leeward, which in that situation is where I want it to go!

Does it work as well as the fancy ball-bearing tracks? Of course not; but provided you re-lubricate the track two or three times a season it's pretty good and it's a huge improvement on the standard installation particularly with regard to the speed that you can drop it down to leeward on a squally day.

More importantly even if none of the bits are already available for free in your lockers, the whole shooting-match will cost you less than £20 from the next boat jumble and can be installed in about an hour.

Bob Carlisle Vega "Spring Fever"

Galvanic Question

Hi All,

I have a quick question for the electrical experts on this list. I'm installing some basic AC system with a battery charger and I'd like some advice about stopping galvanic corrosion..I'm going to connect the AC earth to the DC ground, as I've been convinced that this is the safest thing to do, so I've been told I'll need to install a 'zinc saver' diode to stop my prop falling off.

What is everyone's experience of this? Also, most of the information I've seen seems to suggest that the diodes should be installed between the boat connection and the main switch. However, it would be much easier for me to put the zinc saver in the wire between the AC earth and the DC ground. Now the appliances and the charger are on the AC earth side of the diodes, rather than on the DC ground side. As long as the battery charger is galvanically isolated, would this be a problem?

Tom Rutter

An Answer

I am an electrician, Way back in the day when I bought my first cruising boat it had wiring issues. When the marine electrician came onboard I was immediately given the lecture after he saw grounding. He and everyone electrically oriented I have worked with since absolutely isolate the AC/DC systems. The only time they connect is through a battery charger connected between the AC and the DC batteries and even that is marine grade with 100% isolation, NEVER use a car type battery charger on your boat unless the battery is totally disconnected from the electrical system.

In the following years I also took the courses and became certified to wire boats AC and DC. I have seen soooo much happen over the years, fires, damage and cases of props totally disappearing and pitted shafts in a 2-3 month period. I have seen it all, tried it all and heard it all in the last 20 years.

Here are the reasons (condensed) All outlets are 3 pin, the small blade of a plug (black wire) is hot, the larger blade (white) is neutral, power leaves the small one, runs appliance, and returns to the large one. If the appliance is metal cased the case is usually grounded with the round pin (green or bare copper wire) Now when the power re-enters the outlet after passing through your appliance it is riding the neutral wire back to shore. What most dont know is neutral and ground are electrically connected on most boats and on the hard, and neutral is connected to ground on many phone poles so that the power looking to return to ground can do so down the copper wires leading down the pole.

To make it easier picture this, The guy at the end of the dock runs his air cond, the power runs through it, then back to neutral in his outlet, chances are his neutral and ground are connected together in his boat. That power now heads back up the dock looking to go "home" or to ground to complete the circuit. It is riding on the neutral wire and the ground wire since they are joined in many boats. Electricity always takes the shortest route.

Now 1/2 way up the dock here's Tom's boat, His AC ground (common with the guy at the end) is connected with his DC ground, which is his engine, shaft, zinc's etc so it's FAR shorter to jump over to your boat and ground via your prop etc than to go all the way back up the dock, so it uses you every time. It leaves the dock plug, runs to your deck plug then straight to your breaker panel, from your ground/neutral bus bar it follows your DC ground to your engine, then travels through the transmission to your shaft. At this point power passes through the transmission bearings to get to the output shaft and if severe enough can burn and pit them. Now once in the shaft it leaves the boat and jumps from your shaft/wheel into the water, which is electricity's favorite home.

Now a diode turns AC into DC but does NOTHING to slow down the flow of current so it still flows. If you turn the diode so that it only flows from the engine/dc towards the AC panel to leave the boat there is no point, you already have the worlds best ground, a prop with a zinc and that is the shortest route to ground. Electrons will not opt to travel the long path (AC system) to get back to the beach so there's no point. If you ran a bare copper wire to the beach from your engine it would still leave via the shaft/wheel because thats the shortest path to ground.

I hope this didn't complicate it too bad, to demonstrate to people I used to take a zinc with a wire and a clip and clip it to their AC panel ground, then hang it over the side, the following weekend the zinc was history and the end of the wire was also. Yes they had neutral and ground back up the dock, but the zinc was closer. You can also take a voltmeter and touch it between the AC ground and DC ground and watch it move the second you plug in your boat even if everything is turned off in the boat, your the new common ground for the dock., current will always flow diode or not, and when current flows your zinc goes with it.

If anyone has electrical questions AC or DC, needs help with wiring things (radios, radar, pumps etc) feel free, I am also a certified marine mechanic

Claude

Eckernforde 2006

(The Chairman's Voyage)

In the past I have described my various visits to Vega International Friendship rallies in some detail but this year I thought I would just describe the highs and lows of the trip and cut the boring bits between. I have attached the table of ports visited, distances, hours etc for the anoraks amongst you. The Greatmoor Sailing Club is situated at an old brick clay pit in the middle of Buckinghamshire. It is only seven miles from my home and I am a member, so I decided to recruit a crew from my fellow members. Tony Blair and Tony Green joined me for the outward trip and John Phillips and Rick Atkins were the homeward bound crew. All had dinghy sailing experience and the two Tonys and John had considerable experience on larger boats of various types. It turned out that Tony Blair is in the process of restoring/ maintaining three different yachts and is a member of Fareham SC where several Vegas are based.

After the usual months of planning and fretting about the trip we set sail on Tuesday 4th July on the evening tide after loading a veritable mountain of supplies. We had a pleasant sail to Queenborough where we sorted ourselves and the boat out and stored as much as we could away. We decided the only way to reduce bulk was to munch our way through our stores as quickly as possible. Wednesday saw us up bright and early and we set off on the trip in earnest. We set our watches, two hours stand-by, two hours on watch, two hours off and kept to these for the rest of the journey. After a fairly uneventful passage we arrived at the Kiel Canal on Tuesday 11th July and motored as far as the Gisela Canal entrance before tying up for the night. When we left in the morning it was

misty in our siding but we didn't realise how limited visibility was until we were on the main canal. After a worrying half hour of motoring along hugging the starboard bank while a considerable convoy of ocean going ships passed us the mist began to break up and the sun emerged. We should have stayed in our siding until we could see where we going but were anxious to make progress. By 13.00 we were in the locks paying the extremely reasonable lock fees (12 euros). Then we were in the Baltic or rather Kiele Forde. As we turned the corner toward Eckernforde the wind came aft of the beam and we hoisted the spinnaker for the last three hours of the trip.

Steve Birch had already arrived on a Danish boat and rang me to see where we were, he was able to direct us to the right marina and we were soon alongside. John Phillips had flown in earlier in the day and we had already contacted him to replenish our stores. We were welcomed to the rally by Clemence Henks and his team and after a little confusion guided into our berth for the week. The marina belonged to the local yacht club and was well appointed with all the facilities we could wish for. The Yacht Club organised the races and the social events took place in a large new boat shed on the site. By Thursday Rick Atkins had flown in from the UK and for the rest of the rally we had 5 substantial bodies on board. It says a lot for the crew that we co-existed without problem although I think Tony Green in the cockpit tent had the most commodious accommodation.

Eckernforde is an attractive seaside town and holiday resort and it was only a short walk away. Of the rally itself, there were, apparently, 64 boats attending, although there never appeared to be that many to us. Graham Bulleid and John Neesam in 'Scandi' were the only other British boat but in addition to Steve Birch, Nick Simms and Margery attended. I was surprised that only half the fleet took part in the races which were held in the forde. Perhaps some would-be racers were put off by the torpedo testing range in the middle of the course. The cruising class was again dominated by Kaiser Flemming. He finished over twenty five minutes ahead of the second boat in the first race and half way into the racing fleet which had started earlier. A formidable performance. We finished last or as I prefer to say second British boat home as Scandi managed to do reasonably well on the second day.

The International Friendship part of the rally went really well and the social events went with a swing. The food was excellent and plentiful and we enjoyed an interesting and informative trip to Schleswig. Altogether another successful rally. I thanked our hosts, presented them with a gift on behalf of VAGB and invited them to come to the East Coast of England in 2008 where we will be the hosts.

At the closing ceremony on Tuesday the 18th I was presented with the VODA Flag and after putting the two Tony's ashore for their flights home we sailed for Hoo. As we left the marina area in company with several Dutch boats and 'Scandi' we hoisted the spinnaker and carried it almost to Kiel. That night we spent at Rendsburg and in the morning made the same error as we had on the trip out. We left too early and were enveloped in thick fog but this time we sheltered behind some pile moorings until the fog cleared and we could proceed, this was after 08.00. That evening at 22.36 as we were sailing down the Elbe with the strong ebb tide, all apparently well with the world, we strayed out of the channel and went hard aground. The tide surged around us and the waves and wash gave us a bumpy landing. As the tide receded the sand was scoured away from round the keel and a small pool was created so that we didn't lean over more than 20 degrees. All the same it was

not a comfortable night. The tide running along the edge of the bank was making the sand hiss in a most menacing manner. I checked tides and at first glance we had gone aground about an hour after high-water and the tides were falling for the rest of the week. I visualised being stuck on the bank for a week. After a less than perfect nights sleep we got up just before 04.00 tested the sand with the boathook , found it firm, laid out an anchor and blew up the dinghy in case it was needed. I then rechecked the tidal information, I realised that Macmillan's had given the times in local standard time our situation was not as desperate as I thought. As the sun rose our concerns diminished the boat gently freed itself just after 07.30 and we were on our way once more.

After Spiekerooge we were heading along the Friesian Islands on the Friday evening when the fog descended, visibility was cut to less than a hundred metres. On the VHF we heard that three of the Dutch Vegas were in touch with the German Lifeboat service presumably for help through the fog. Then we established contact with 'Scandi' who was heading into Die Jade estuary.

We decide to head for Borkum and navigated to the harbour approach channel by GPS, by this time it was dark and you had to be within 50 metres of the large channel buoys before you saw the lights. As we got to the harbour approach channel we were suddenly surrounded by other craft. At first we were rather confused but it soon became clear that two lifeboats (the large offshore one and the smaller inshore boat from Borkum were gathering up stray yachts and guiding them into harbour. We joined on the end of the convoy and were soon in the old naval harbour in a snug berth. I have visited Borkum on several occasions but always entered the first marina, thanks to the fog we had a much friendlier reception from the Harbour Master and his staff, the showers and toilets were available all day and the pontoons are newer. The harbour masters office and café in the far corner of the harbour also has internet facilities so getting weather forecasts was easy.

On Saturday evening we left for Hoo, the winds were so light we motored for most of the way and I got concerned over fuel supplies so we headed for Lowestoft refuelled and left after half an hour. As we proceeded south off the Kentish Knock the fog descended once more. This time visibility was down to 0.4 nm. We navigated in toward the Princes Channel with much trepidation. After several worrying hours the fog started to lift and by 04.30 we had reasonable visibility to cross the channel and head for the Medway. At 10.15 on Tuesday 25th July we anchored to await the tide at Hoo and later that day Tony Blair arrived to pick us all up and deliver us safely home to middle England.

Plus points, great crew, good food, boat performed well on passage, rally good,

Downside boat not competitive in Races, but just you wait till 2008

Mike Freeman - Vega 'Jenavive' Sail No.1768

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**Contact Steve Birch for any of the above items:
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Banstead Downs Golf Club
Burdon Lane, Cheam, Surrey

Saturday 14th October 2006

19:00 for 19:30

Please contact:

Diana Webb for confirmations
76 Burdon Lane, Cheam, Surrey, SM2 7BZ

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