



## MANCHESTER CRUISING ASSOCIATION

**Round Britain in the Footsteps of *Shep*  
Derek and Jean Lumb: 11 January 2007**

The Lumb's Tale had a certain realistic quality right from the start: the dream was thrust upon them and they weren't quite ready or able to live it right away. Derek retired unexpectedly in 2003, Jean was doing other things and there were family commitments so that weren't ready for serious sailing until 2005. Mind you, it gave them time to find a sturdy boat: *Whispered Secrets*, a 37' Westerly Typhoon. And time to plan a clockwise circumnavigation of Britain from north Wales.

The planning was important because they were constrained by Meg's bladder which could only hold out for 12 hours: she needed to be regularly ashore to answer nature's calls. So the longest passage could be around 60M. Meg, you'll be relieved to know, is a dog and her irresistible functions and a policeman's boot feature later on ( I'll tell you when to look away). So they were taking a Border Collie with them and Jean was taking, too, the remnants of a phobia for sailing and water.

From Conwy to the Isle of Man, Bangor (NI) and Ghia (which is a place in Scotland and not just a slightly upmarket trim of Ford Fiesta). Puilldobran, Tobermory, Isle Oronsay, Loch Inver and around an invisible Cape Wrath (it was foggy) to anchor at Ard Neackie. Then they struck out for Stromness with a reasonable forecast (without this the Pentland Firth comes and takes you by the throat) that deteriorated to F6 with F7 gusts. Meg(look away now) promptly defecated (and it wasn't desiccated defecation) all over the cabin. The weather seemed less to worry about now – although it was just as bad – as being pooped took on a new meaning. They made it to Stromness.

The Orkneys sound a bit bleak to me. The high points seemed to be a carving of monks carrying a coffin, a woodhenge and a church with a dungeon. But they liked it and Meg was no doubt grateful for freedom to do whatever she wanted to when she wanted to for a few days. Then it was off across the scary Pentland Firth. It's all in the timing. Get it spot on (plus or minus about 15 minutes) and you're fine; otherwise you meet waves the size of houses. Even if they're only maisonettes, it's put me off. They didn't build the Caledonian Canal for fun; I'm going that way. But the Lumbs made it safely to Wick and then on to Whitehills, Peterhead, Stonehaven (to sit at the one spot in the whole harbour that doesn't dry out), Arbroath, Eyemouth, Holy Island Newcastle(they liked the new bridge), Whitby and Spurn Head (where they anchored behind the Head).

Then on for a long leg to Wells-next-the-Sea on the north coast of Norfolk where they dried out a little wonkily against a large yacht, to Lowestoft, the river Blyth, the Or and to London via Queenborough. It was hereabouts that they were boarded by the river police in a security sweep. Meg the dog had

fallen in and taken in a good gulp of noxious river water just before this and developed a touch of gastric instability which led to her (look away now) spraying the policeman's boot with ....well let's call it nature's leather restorer in brown. While some lawmen (e.g Clint Eastwood) would have taken it badly, this one seemed to think it nearly charming, even cute; his own dog had done something similar recently. Dog owners worry me sometimes.

So London for their most expensive night at £33 in St Catherine's Dock before on round the south coast. The Solent and then Weymouth where the engine failed to start as they passed Handfast Point and again as they tried to get through the bridge to the marina. The problem had an unusual cause: a pinhole in a cooling line was squirting neat seawater onto an electrical connection. To Dartmouth, Salcombe, the Yealm ( a favourite spot), Fowey, the Helford River and then round to the Scillies. Onward to anchor at St Ives then to Padstow, Milford Haven, Solva and, with impending bad weather, home.

They had covered 2030M and sailed 55% of the time nclocking up 205 engine hours. The 88 nights had cost them £1200. Thirty had been in marinas, 18 on pontoons, 19 against harbour walls, 11 on moorings and 10 at anchor.

Jean has more or less cracked her phobia. They both thought it a great experience. And Meg, what does she think? Well, as they say, the camel driver has his thoughts but they may not be shared by the camel. Perhaps she at least now feels, after holding back for so long, relieved.

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