



MANCHESTER CRUISING ASSOCIATION

Cruising the Peloponnese

Bob Sheffield, Northern Yacht Surveyors: 9 November 2006

The Peloponnese is a large island off the coast of Greece. *You* may have known this, but I wasn't sure. And it's only just an island because of the Corinth Canal, the waterway that got Bob invited back after he gave a talk about yacht surveying last year. It was during that talk that he let slip that he had cruised the Peloponnese and had passed through the Corinth Canal.

The circumnavigation of the island was made first in a Rival 38 and then this year in his new Bavaria 34. It was interesting to hear from a yacht surveyor that this was horses for courses: the Rival is a phenomenal and tough cruiser but is not necessarily the best choice for the Med where space and airiness are essentials.

The trip started with a sweeping run down the Corinth Straits with a stiff breeze behind and 7 to 9 knots from just a part-furled genoa. Then they met the Corinth Canal: 3 1/2 miles of steep-sided crumbling engineering that needs constant maintenance. Stifflingly hot, they struggled and failed to keep up with the freighter ahead of them. An engineering marvel anyway, it has a couple of bridges that don't rise to let ships pass under but sink to let them go over. As Bob said, one just appeared out of nowhere behind them. There was a price to pay for all this magic: the passage of 3 1/2 miles and around 30 minutes cost them £93.

We were taken on our clockwise tour to a dozen or so places (my spelling of their names might be unconventional) and Bob had some pretty good photos of them:

Aigina An island at the south east end of the canal. Nice enough but you won't believe the price of fish: Bob paid £40 for one. Of course, if it fed a crew of ten that wouldn't be too bad but I got the impression it didn't. After all it was just Bob and his wife. And Bob doesn't even like fish.

Poros Watch out for the hydrofoil. They seem to go out of their way to assert their right of way.

Hydra Bob had this as his favourite, most delightful, place anywhere with its total lack of motor vehicles. But it's a bunfight to get into the harbour. He claimed it had the best restaurant in Greece just around the corner but he didn't tell us what it was called. You can understand that. Who wants to go in there and find it full of MCA members downing their pints of Boddys?

Lim Gerake This sounded pretty good but my pen ran out and I had to creep around in the dark and borrow one from another member. So you'll have to check out Lim Gerake yourself.

Moremvesia Another charming spot where water was more expensive than fuel. You could sense members' foreheads crinkling as they wondered if this was before or after derogation.

Porto Kagio This looked one of those idyllic spots where you anchored off a charming little town crammed with nice tavernas. And it actually was. The anchorage, for just a couple of boats, is famous for being difficult to set your anchor: it took Bob ten goes. But, once you're there, you stay so they sat out three days of gales in security and, with the cliffs protecting them from the wind, some comfort. They feasted off fish when someone from the neighbouring yacht offered them half a barracuda. This fish had become confused in the night and jumped into the dinghy by mistake. While this is something most of us will have experienced ourselves at some point or another it was a little shocking to find macho fish doing it. Especially fish that really shouldn't be swarming around the Eastern Med in the first place. It's probably global warming.

Koroni This looked another enviable place and it was where we were introduced to the Bavaria 34.

Kalamarta Famous for its olives it has a massive marina with high sea walls that keep out the breeze as well as the waves. So it's hot and airless but it does have a riveting attraction for railway enthusiasts in the dozens of old steam trains just lying around.

Methoni This has a Venetian lighthouse and port and did look quite charming. You can anchor off the beach safely in good holding and with shelter from the prevailing NW wind.

Pyros Bob didn't give this a big tick. The marina is a long way from the town.

Kyparissia This place sounded good in the book but the book (Rod Heikell I think) anticipated the building of a breakwater. Without it, it's an uncomfortable night in other than settled weather.

Katakolon This is the port for Olympia and Bob took us on a quick tour of the museum and the sights. It is, of course, the site of the original Olympics and the spot where they light the torch for each of the modern games. Apparently the athletes ran backwards and forwards rather than round and round as they do today. And of course they did it stark naked, it being some while before stretch Lycra was perfected.

And soon enough we were at **Killini** and our tour at a close. After questions (with the Treasurer showing a brief but nonetheless unhealthy interest in the derelict trains) we left the memory of the sun for a cold night in Talbot Road and to ponder on the price of fish and canals.

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