

Sailing SY Isabell from Stockholm to Leiden, The Netherlands and back during the COVID-19 summer of 2020

By Johannes Knulst

The summer of 2020 brought many nautical miles of sailing fun. I took a leave of absence from work for a couple of months to be able to sail down to The Netherlands and back to Stockholm this year. The plan was made and basically decided upon before Covid-19 restrictions became a reality in March 2020. I had already read and collected a lot of information about the standing mast route in The Netherlands. Seemed like so much fun. Due to the Covid-19 restrictions some parts of the plan had to be changed, but the trip went well despite these changes. It was mostly difficult or impossible to have a visiting crew aboard. Luckily, I can sail Isabell by myself, with the aid of windvane steering and autopilot. And in The Netherlands, I could have 2 visiting crew with me.

Here is my story!

Staande mast route through The Netherlands

February 24, 2020



Browsing the Internet, I found some great information about the routes through The Netherlands by sailboat with the mast still standing up (max height for passing is 38 m above water level). In English it can be found here: [BLUE HEELER HR 39](https://blueheelerhr39.com/other-bits/the-netherlands-staande-mastroute/) ¹. Highly recommended.

For information about bridges, sluices and opening times you can check on [VAREN DOE JE SAMEN](https://www.varendoejesamen.nl/storage/app/media/downloads/EN_staande-mast-route.pdf) ² (in English). It is highly recommended to get the Dutch Staande Mast Atlas, a set of waterway charts with a lot of useful information. But the atlas is difficult to buy outside The Netherlands.

This route takes you through the waterways from the very northeast to the southwest of the country. The vessel depth allowed in the main channels is a maximum of 2.5 m. Some sections of the route are covered sailing in

convoy. The canals through Amsterdam are only navigated night-time due to the bridges only opening after 02.00 local time. This night-time passage added a precious flavor to the whole trip.

¹ <https://blueheelerhr39.com/other-bits/the-netherlands-staande-mastroute/>

² https://www.varendoejesamen.nl/storage/app/media/downloads/EN_staande-mast-route.pdf

The whole route is divided into a northern section through the provinces of Groningen and Friesland, down to the large inland lake IJsselmeer. The southern section covers Amsterdam, from the IJsselmeer, down to the delta of the big rivers including the Scheldt River, bordering Belgium, near the North Sea coast.

The fun of planning and preparations

March 23, 2020

The sailing season of 2020 is coming in sight. Preparations of the boat have commenced. Plans for the summer have started to take form. Even though the COVID-19 virus is setting some sort of “maybe” mode on the 2020 sailing seasons possibilities, it is always fun to go through the possibilities ahead. From behind my desk, I have looked at possible routes to sail down south. Amazing, today you can virtually go through any sailing trades and from behind your computer learn the layout of sluices, bridges, shallows, and other obstacles that may come in your way. By looking at the sailing video blogs of others, who have previously made the journey, you can plan how to take an obstacle or how not to do things.

Thinking about the early explorers and their very basic means of navigation, today things seem quite simple. With AIS, plotters, radar, pilot charts, great weather forecasts and so on, you are a fool if things go wrong because of unpreparedness. Still, I am one of those safe sailors that never take things for granted. Always be prepared for the worst, and things will often be easier than you anticipated. The other way around is much less fun once things go sour.

The first challenge of planning is to find the right sources of information. It is not always possible to prepare for everything. But looking through the lenses of other sailors is fun and gives a reasonable impression of what is waiting. Here, the floor is scattered with charts, books, and equipment that needs fixing or general maintenance. In short, I am having fun preparing.

Why this Dutch flag?

March 31, 2020

A common question asked is why S/V Isabell is under the flag of The Netherlands, while the boat is registered in Sweden.

The simple answer is that the captain and owner is a citizen of that particular, little country in Western Europe. Although having been a resident in Sweden since 1986, I never changed my country of origin. Isabell is built and registered in Sweden. With a Swedish MMSI and registration, the international rule of thumb is that the operator is responsible to follow the rules and regulations as they are stated by the Swedish law. That is an advantage for me, as I am also in possession of a Swedish naval education and various nautical authorizations. But, being a non-Swedish national, I may not fly the Swedish flag on my boat.

Nevertheless, besides being a wee bit less proud of the evil history of Dutch colonial behavior, that little nation has a long tradition of seafaring and naval engineering that has set the stage for global boating as we know it today. Many nautical terms are directly copied from the Dutch language. And best of all, the proud folks of Zeeland were among the first to circumnavigate the World. Zeeland, today, is still a region with close ties to water and all that the knowledge of water systems encompasses. I was born in Zeeland, from a family with a Zeeland tradition that goes back to the 15th Century. So, besides flying the Dutch flag, Isabell usually shows the flag of Zeeland under the port spreader. But Sweden is my home, enjoyed very much the same.

COVID-19 and sailing Schengen this summer

April 21, 2020

A short update on the summer sailing plans. As the sailing season for our part of the World is soon to begin, I have been checking the international regulations on pleasure crafts entering national waters and seaports. Now it seems that it is possible to sail from Sweden to **Finland and some of the Baltic states**. The authorities will check health conditions aboard when a vessel enters national waters from abroad.

Denmark is not allowing foreign pleasure boats entering Danish ports, as they only allow those who have urgent business in Denmark. Pleasure crafts entering are seen upon as non-urgent visits and thus forbidden.

Germany is closed for all travelers from abroad, even from other Schengen countries.

The Netherlands is closed for foreign visiting yachts.

Norway is closed for foreign visiting yachts.

Look at Noonsite for recent updates on the situation at this page:

[COVID-19 SPECIAL PROCEDURES FOR FOREIGN PLEASURE CRAFT SAILORS](#)

It is not looking promising. Let's hope things will get better soon.

2020 sailing season has arrived

April 30, 2020

Isabell went back in the water on Thursday April 23, and the following weekend I sailed her out of Lake Malaren and to the saltwater berth at Bullandö Marina. Through the sluices at Hammarby lies the only bridge that I cannot pass without it opening, Danviksbron, was closed, and unmanned. During the summer season it generally is manned and opens by request or at regular hourly intervals. Not! This time I came so early, that it did not open. I had to call the Traffic Service Center at Stockholm Port Authority and request permission for it to open. You can imagine that it took a while. But they were very friendly and sent out a bridge operator on his bike to open the bridge for me. Luckily, I had a lot of practical issues to fix with onboard, so time went by fast enough. At last, the bridge opened, and I was out in the Baltic Sea. Great!

As I was tied up to the dock at the bridge, an elderly man seemed to show a lot of interest in Isabell. He came over and explained that he had seen Isabell before and wondered where she went. He was another Monsun owner, get this, with a berth at the same marina as Isabell. So funny, the world is full of Monsun owners, and occasionally you get to meet them. Now I know there are at least three Monsuns in the same harbor.

Easy living at the helm

May 13, 2020

So many times, the question arises about how many things you need to enjoy your boating trip. I would say, the major thing to worry about is the seaworthiness of your vessel. All other stuff is a bonus if you can afford it.

Think of the forces of wind and waves, and make sure your rigging will stand up, no matter what. Reflect over the possibility of not being seen by other vessels. What can you do to improve visibility? Is your boat leaking when it rains, then it might leak worse when at sea, and water is flushing your deck? Fix that.

For all the other stuff, you can possibly do without it and enjoy the ride. The fancier stuff you invest in, the more things can and will at some point break down. Some people cannot think without the comfort of a 36-inch flatscreen TV, freezer, aircon, microwave, and so on. OK, but is it not just being at sea that is fantastic?

From all the fancy stuff that is available on Isabell, the most enjoyed are according to the list below:

- Windvane self-steering
- Compass and good charts
- AIS B-transponder
- Big freshwater tank
- Crispy sails
- Windscreen, sprayhood and sun top
- Coffee

About in that order of importance and esteem. All the other stuff is mostly extra luxury. So, if you cannot afford to have the comfort of a general luxury apartment on your boat, do not worry about it. Just shove off and go sailing. Make sure your boat stays afloat and in the deep enough parts of the mighty blue.

Isabell's 40th Anniversary

May 17, 2020

Today for exactly forty years ago, May 17, 1980, the first owners of Monsun number 791, then called Amalia, picked her up from the Hallberg Rassy shipyard at Orust, and sailed her home, across Göta Älv and across lakes Vänern and Vättern to Stockholm.

They kept her for 15 years and took good care of both boat and engine.

Time for celebration! Cheers my friends!

COVID-19 restrictions slowly lifted in European waters

May 27, 2020

Today, May 27th, the COVID-19 restrictions in the form of total closedown of all European ports and marinas for leisure boats, are slowly changing. Now it is only a month before this summer's long distance sailing endeavor will begin. The Netherlands and Germany are opening for passing vessels, through the main routes. Although berthing options are still severely restricted, and vessels need to be totally autonomous regarding water and food intake and black water collection, this eases my mind about this summer's options.

Denmark is still closed for all foreign vessels. Both Denmark and Finland are now worried about visitors from Sweden, because of the many more deaths due to the virus in Sweden, compared to the rest of the northern European countries. Politics! I am guessing that they will have to lift a little on the current policies, the financial interests of both countries in boat tourism from Swedish visitors is huge.

Well, well, I just continue to prepare boat and myself for the big adventure. Looking forward to meeting with the special challenges that this virus adds to the already existing ones on a boat trip to other places in other countries. Keeping my fingers crossed!

Decided to sail to The Netherlands this summer

June 4, 2020

Yes, I am going to sail to The Netherlands this summer. The original plan has to be adjusted to better fit the circumstances around locked down Denmark. But it is decided to go for it.

It will be a bit of a challenge to go, and still stick to the most important government recommendations, stay clear of as many people as possible. In Germany some of the ports and harbors are open for transit boating. In The Netherlands ports and harbors are open to national boaters. The facilities are still closed for a while more, but I do not need those. Everything I need is aboard Isabell. Stow as much food and water, and fuel as possible, and GO!



Now I have a few weeks left to prepare. Charts are bought. Food lists, shopping lists and spare parts lists to go over. Carry everything on board. Decide for things at home to function while I am away, and then wait for the right weather to help me get down there. I will keep you posted.

Counting down and travel fever onset

June 15, 2020

Where am I now? LAT/LONG position today 59.31°N 018.17°E

The middle of June, summer has arrived, and the day to untie from the dock is closing in. There are still some things to organize and fix before that can happen. But the excitement of doing this is growing for each day. I know there will come one day, when all must-do's can be left behind and it is a go. Just do it. During the trip there are enough things to plan, organize and adjust to keep me busy for the rest of the summer, so no worries.

I am still hoping that some friends and family can join me on parts of the trip. In The Netherlands it is specified that no more than three people may be aboard a yacht at the same time, if they are not members of the same household... My household counts one person, so that rule will be binding. Unless it is changed by the Dutch government.



UNTYING THE LINES
MAY BE SCARY, BUT
ONCE DONE, LIFE AT
SEA STARTS AND THE
CHALLENGE IS ON.

Finally changing from SeaClear II to Open CPN for navigation

June 16, 2020

For many years I have used the freeware computer program SeaClear for navigational purposes. It works well for seamless chart plotting and showing AIS-targets. Nowadays, many sailors use a freeware called open captain, in short Open CPN. It has many added features and has been designed for seamless plotter navigation in combination with currents, tides, wind and other weather data presentation. I have not felt the need to change from the ok SeaClear program to this new Open CPN, but when sailing long distance, the new one has advantages. Not in the least available vector charts for a major part of the world. SeaClear only works with raster charts, electronic copies of paper charts. So, I installed Open CPN on the onboard computer, and on the computer at home. Now I need to get used to this new tool. Run some simulations and download the necessary resources (charts, GRIB-files, current and tidal files). I still have SeaClear as a backup but think it will not be used any longer. We'll see if I guessed right.

NOTE 2022: No, I did go back to using SeaClear after this trip. Still prefer the simplicity of the screen layout of this software over that in Open CPN.

Last day at work and soon ready to go sailing

June 17, 2020

Today was my last day at work. Felt sort of sad, even though I have been working from my home office since March 12. Interesting day this was. The departmental secretary had announced my absence from today. Which caused the IT-department to close my accounts already a day early. This resulted in me being locked out from the workplace (both electronically and physically). At least I concluded that security is tight. Not in my advantage this time...

Anyhow, after a bit of commotion and half a day later it was fixed, and I could close my errands and leave it. Now I can dedicate my time to packing and loading at the docks. I will miss work, my fantastic colleagues, but am so excited about this summer. Time will pass fast. We will meet again in September, I am sure. Now, let me get ready to sail.

Untied the lines and on my way

June 24, 2020

Finally, all the to-do things are done, and I am on my way. Isabell is loaded with food and water for a long trip. The sailing is slow, the weather fantastic, and not too many people are out sailing in the Stockholm Archipelago.

Today, I saw three seagulls sitting on the water. Suddenly, a seal came up out of the deep, and took one of the gulls. The water colored red with blood and the seal disappeared. Two gulls left that did not seem to realize what just happened. I did not know seals eat birds.

Otherwise, life is slow, and easy. Tropical heat and sunshine. It feels good to be out here. I will try and keep you posted on progress.

Tropical heat and light winds

June 26, 2020

Where am I now: 58.536°N 017.58°E. Bedarön, Nynäshamn.

Today gave a few hours of reasonable wind and I made some progress. It is very warm and sunny. Temperature in the boat is between 25 and 30°C. Not much boat traffic out today. Tomorrow is my first day on the open sea. Wind is blowing from the east, which will be good. Everything else on board is in good shape. Yesterday my daughter Ronja came out to give me a bon voyage present. She had a t-shirt and a polo shirt printed with the name of the boat and the captain. What a great present. Thank you, Ronja!!! I wore the shirt yesterday.

Beautiful first open sea sailing

June 28, 2020

From Nynäshamn to Loftahammar (86 nautical miles)

Where am I now? Position 57°48.9'N 016°46.6'E Loftahammar

Yesterday was a chance taking with the wind, but it went well with the choices I made. I had investigated different weather sites, and they all had a different opinion about where the wind would blow. I was hoping for the easterly wind report, which coincided most with the overall weather pattern in the Baltic region. Yes, after motoring out of Bedarön anchorage with an icy smooth sea in front of me, the wind picked up from the east. And I hoisted the sails and was on my way south. Went in a straight course around 200° from Landsort to the northern tip of the island Öland. Most of the way wind holds steady at 8 to 10 knots, which means the wind vane steering is in control of the boat. The sea is empty. Nothing in the way, but open water. It is a smooth ride. Between midnight and 2 am the wind dies down to below 5 knots, first I try to motorsail with the autopilot steering, but it does not hold course, due to the irregular wave pattern of the sea. I hand steer a full hour and start looking for the nearest coastal anchorage site. I reach it at 4 am. The sun is back up, so you could say I dropped anchor at sunrise. Hah!

Today, Sunday the 28th, the wind is low and coming from the south. I take a tour of this beautiful Loftahammar archipelago. Quite different from the scenery in Stockholm area. Be on my way again tomorrow. Until then.

10 KNOTS WIND AND THE SAILOMAT WIND VANE STEERING ISABELL ACROSS THE EMPTY SEA



Westerly wind from the south

June 30, 2020

Sailing from Loftahammar to Figeholm, Kalmarsund

Where am I now? Position 57°27.9'N 016°36,6'E Yttre Vattengatan, Figeholm

Yesterday, the weather reports were the same from different sources. And they were wrong. No westerly wind where I was, anyhow. Mostly southerly wind. Still, the morning clouds evaporated, and it became a warm and sunny sail. Beating against the wind actually has its advantages when the wind is less strong. Gives some extra force. But the way to travel gets longer. I changed my destination along the way, and in the late evening ended up in the small archipelago around the town of Figeholm. In between the town of Oskarshamn and the Simpevarp nuclear power plant. The nature is nice, low red granite stony islands with sparse, low vegetation. Many birds, and not much else. Desolate. Quite different from the intense pleasure boat traffic in the Stockholm area. I saw another Monsun late last night, coming in from the sea with the nav lights on, heading for the town. And I have totally seen three other boats pass by. That makes four altogether.

Now, about the nearest future. A low-pressure area is approaching from the west/southwest. The few days ahead are going to be very windy. It is good that I am under the leeward coast, which means lower wind speeds. But it is possible that I have to find some safe harbor to sit it out for a few days. Today, it is raining. Then it is a treat to have good clothing, and a roof to sit under in the boat. Maybe I get to Kalmar today, maybe not. Doesn't matter. I have food and water and a safe boat to seek shelter in. No worries.

Afternoon update:

No, the depression is here. I moved to a more protected anchorage, took an hour and was

only a little further south. It is very windy from the southwest. The worst passes tomorrow. I guess I am going to have time to read. Probably sail again on Friday.



TODAY'S SAFE ANCHORAGE AT EKÖN,
FIGEHOLM ARCHIPELAGO

Anchoring practice

July 1, 2020

Holy crap today was windy. I already anticipated some wind and found a great hideout in a little cove behind some rocky islands. Unsure about the depth of the cove I didn't go in too far. Since Isabell was swinging back and forth, I let out the stern

anchor as well. That helped for the swinging but put us broadside to the wind. Bad idea. Since the local bottom was loose gunk, the main anchor started dragging. I started worrying, since the place is filled with underwater stones. After a cup of coffee and some thinking, I started the engine, cut loose the stern anchor cable, and hauled in the bow anchor until it hung about two meters deep in front of the boat. Then slowly motored into the shallow area, where the best shelter was for the wind. To my surprise it was more than two meters deep all the way in. I would have felt stones by the anchor hitting them before the boat got to them. But it was safe. After the excitement of this morning, it was much more peaceful (in my mind and around me). The anchor that I left behind is tied to a buoy that I threw overboard. I'm going to have to pick it up tomorrow morning. Make note to self. Don't bother to put out more than one anchor. It will just cause trouble. The rest of the day was spent looking over the rigging, self-steering, engine, and such. The sun came out at times, and I had constant company of a gull that sits perched on a rock about ten meters behind the boat. Let's hope for decent weather tomorrow. Then the gull can have the place to herself again.

Safe harbor for shelter at Degerhamn

July 4, 2020

Where am I now? Position 56°21.1'N 016°24.5'E, Degerhamn Öland

Finally, time to write a little update. I have been busy. After retrieving the stuck anchor at Figeholms Ekön I sailed down to Kalmar. The city was unusually empty, including the guest harbor. Normally the harbor is filled with visiting boats from Germany, Netherlands, Denmark and the Baltic States. Now, almost empty. Two German sailboats and some Swedish yachts. Anyhow, I did my shopping and bunkered up with diesel oil, water and emptied the trash. Another Monsun was in the harbor but seemed to be without a crew. Yesterday morning I cast off and started sailing south from Kalmar. First bit went fine, but the further I progressed, the choppiest the sea became. At last, I made no progress at all, and decided to turn back and wait for the wind and waves to calm down. Anchored at Björkenäs,

northeast of the Öland bridge, and rested, cooked and ate dinner. In the evening it had become much less windy, so I took up the anchor and headed south once again. Passed Kalmar for a third time today and this time the wind had moved to the west, not straight from the south anymore. Good, so I sailed on into the night and made good progress. After dark, I was hoping the wind would stabilize. But instead, it became more unstable, gusts with very hard wind. The wind vane steering was steering fine, but the waves came from all sides and several times hit me hard. I could not see the waves, so no way to know when to duck... After a while I came very near the harbor entrance to Degerhamn, a small industrial town with a few hundred inhabitants. But it has a big cement factory that regularly ships out produce by freighter ship. There was a guest harbor and the big industrial port. Since it was dark, I did not find the guest harbor, but the industrial port was lit up and well-marked with navigational lights. Always an interesting experience to follow the light pattern on buoys and rely on the truth of it. After a while I managed to tuck in behind a huge concrete quay, sheltered from the wind. Tied up for storm and turned in to rest. In the morning, when I could see around me, I realized it was lucky I did not find the guest harbor. It was widely exposed to the stormy winds and waves rolling in from the southwest. The gusting stormy wind blowing in foam and sea spray from the Kalmarsund. I guess this will be my safe harbor the coming weekend. Unless somebody comes and tells me to leave. I cannot leave the boat since there is a fence all around me. But since I must quarantine myself that is actually fine. Yet, I haven't seen a person anywhere around. The factory is closed for the weekend of course. The weather reports are not good. Stormy at least until Monday, maybe even Tuesday. We'll see when I can start sailing again.



A VIEW FROM MY
WINDOW THIS
MORNING AT THE
CEMENT FACTORY



ISABELL BEHIND THE BIG
CONCRETE WALL IN THE
SAFE HARBOR AT
DEGERHAMN

Slowing down to the rhythm of nature

July 6, 2020

Hello again! I am still in hiding. The sea outside my window is foaming and the wind is roaring in my rigging. At first, I was very impatient and was willing to take the risks for just being on my way. But the longer the wind keeps howling, the more I realize that I am on my way, even though not moving. I'm just going to have to adapt to the circumstances. I have plenty of time, no need to take on a steaming sea. The weather will sooner or later turn better. In the meantime, I get ideas about improvement of my home, Isabell. I study sea charts and plan alternative routes. Depends on the weather which one I will sail. I read, cook, and clean. Just like you do at home. Have only talked to one person since last Friday. Quarantine days are ticking. Hah, so that once I get to another country, they can't hold it against me that I came from the corona ridden city of Stockholm. I'm ok, and on my way, sort of. Next sailing day is possibly on Wednesday. I'll have a look at the sea later.

Every third day sailing

July 11, 2020

Hello again, it's time for an update. Where am I now? Position 55°23.4'N 014°3.7'E
Kåseberga harbor, Scania.

It is lucky to have plenty of time on these long-distance sailing trips. The weather has been a challenge all the way. I did finally get to leave my hideout in Degerhamn on Wednesday the

8th. Got up early that morning, at 04.30 and got out of there around 05.40. The sailing was good, low winds (12-16 knots) and sunshine. I got all the way down to the most southeastern island of Sweden, Utklippan, where I stayed for the night. It started raining while I had my dinner that evening. The island is a treat for bird watchers with many different species of birds to see. Ten years ago, when I resided in the Karlskrona archipelago, this was my favorite place to sail to. There and back home took about four hours of sailing then.

The next morning the wind was gone. Completely no wind and heavy dark clouds, but the forecast said a good northerly wind would grow in the afternoon. I started motoring, the autopilot was steering a straight course southwest down to the coast of Scania and town of Simrishamn, 242° all the way down. In the afternoon, sure enough the northerly wind picked up. At the same time visibility was low and it occasionally rained. Sailed with a 6-7 knot average speed over ground (fast for Isabell) and only saw a few other vessels on the radar. Already, at 15.30 in the afternoon I was outside Simrishamn. I therefore decided I could continue south with this great northerly wind. I came around the bend of the Scanian coast at Sandhammaren around 19.00 hours local time. It cleared up a bit in the evening, but while I could see the harbor of Kåseberga (with only 6 nautical miles to go), the 25 knots wind turned to the west, straight in my face. Took down the sails, clutched the leeward coastline as close as I dared to take the shallows, and it took me two hours of tough motoring against the wind. Got into the harbor after 21.00 and had to wiggle myself in between all the boats that were already moored there in the small circular harbor. Tired, but happy with the days progress I found myself at peace with the situation. The wind continued to pick up from the west and has been very strong even today, Saturday.

Today I was visiting the sites in this wonderful area. Staying until Monday, when the wind is supposed to slow down below 20 knots, and I will be able to sail west. This is at least not a locked down place, such as it was in Degerhamn. There are a lot of things to see and do. And there is a fish-market in the harbor. Guess what I just ate? Hmmm. I am content.

And the good news is, after 16 days at sea, I am half the distance to Delfzijl, my target harbor in The Netherlands. Yeah! But then again, I have only been sailing (making progress) half the time.



LEAVING UTKLIPPAN EARLY
ON FRIDAY MORNING IN THE
ABSENCE OF WIND

Colder weather the further south I get

July 12, 2020

A short update from the harbor of Kåseberga. Today it was rainy, and I am starting to wonder if I should fire up the heater in the boat. It is cold. When I left Stockholm two weeks ago, it was between 28 and 30°C. The further south I get, the cooler it has become. Today hit the bottom record so far, 12°C this morning, 14°C now and very damp in the middle of summer. But the weather reports say it will get better soon. I did not start the heater.

Yesterday, I spent biking and hiking through a beautiful nature reserve, Sandhammarens nature reserve. Today, I walked a few miles (6 km) om Skåneleden, a walking path (trail) that crosses from coast to coast in Scania. It was windy, but with beautiful views of the surrounding landscape. As I left the trail to eat my lunch, I stumbled across a dead sheep. I took a walk down to the nearest farm that I could see and announced my find. The farmer that I spoke to said he would call his neighbor who owned the sheep. And I continued my hike.

Tomorrow I will have a short sail to the city of Ystad. There I will do my last-minute shopping in Sweden before I sail across to Germany. It seems a bit unfair that there are plenty of Danish yachts in the Swedish harbors. Nonetheless, Swedish yachts are banned from the Danish harbors altogether. For me it means that I must sail right past some of those cozy Danish harbors. I am not welcome there now.

Dwarf amongst the giants in Ystad

July 13, 2020

Where am I now? Present position 55°25.6'N 013°48.8'E at Ystad guest harbor

I had a bumpy sail from yesterday's location to Ystad, following the southern coast of Scania. Only 12 nautical miles, but it took a few hours. The wind has calmed quite a bit, but since the past few days have been very windy, the waves were more than 2 meters high. Now, in the evening they have also disappeared. It was such a pleasure to feel how Isabell followed over the wave crests. I have since I arrived looked over the boat, went visiting in the old town, and shopping the last food items needed before I leave Sweden. Tomorrow is the big day. I will sail down to the eastern coast of Denmark and follow it to get to the German island of Fehmarn. I cannot go ashore in Denmark, so it will be a while I am at sea. Denmark is still closed for foreign boats from certain areas. From here to Fehmarn is more than a hundred nautical miles. I reckon it will take more than 30 hours of sailing.

Note 2022: It actually took 36 hours to sail the distance of 126 nautical miles between Ystad and Burgertiefhaven on Fehmarn.

Here in the guest harbor of Ystad I see a lot of Danish boats, some Germans and the rest are Swedish yachts, most of those seem to come from Gothenburg. It is easy to find Isabell in the forest of masts. Isabell has the shortest mast sticking up and is one of the smallest boats in the harbor. Most other boats are giants. I feel like the little dwarf between a hoard of giants.

The town is much alike other southern towns, a few shopping streets, some busy squares, and a few churches. The church tower near the harbor has bells that play a little music now and then. That is charming.

As I said, I have seen enough of Sweden for a while. Ready to leave. See you on the other side.

So long Baltic Sea, I will be back

July 17, 2020

Where am I now? Rendsburg, Germany

So much has happened since I left Sweden. I had a tough sail through Danish territory. As I approached the cliffs of Mon, I was stopped by the Danish coast guard. I told them my destination and sailing plan. The reply was "Fehmarn is a long sail from here." They informed me about the area being unsafe for night sailing due to the construction of a huge wind power farm and because the pilons still were unlit. They said they would follow me through the area and direct me to safer water. They escorted me for a couple of hours, and we held radio contact all the time. They were quite nice and gave me some good advice. As I was leaving them behind, they wished me a good trip. And I was all by myself again.

It started raining and the shipping around me became intense after dark. The radar alarm kept setting off. Did not get much sleep that night. When it became light it became less traffic and stopped raining. I could rest some then, while Isabell sailed on with the wind vane steering down to Gedser. Got around the Getser reef early in the morning. As I crossed the shipping lanes between Denmark and Germany it was easy. Not much traffic here. At lunch time the wind died altogether. So down with the sails, started the engine and the autopilot took the helm. Many hours of motoring due west across a mirror-smooth sea. I reached Fehmarn later in the afternoon and found a berth in the modern and nice marina at Burgertiefersee.

Crossed under the bridge the next morning with the wind picking up from the northwest. Up went the sails and I had six hours of good wind going due west toward Kiel. At two in the afternoon the sea went smooth as a mirror, and I motored six more hours. Sunny, warm, and relaxed. Got to Kiel in the evening and looked around for a guest harbor. First, I tried the harbor in the Kieler bight, but it was on the wrong side of the canal and had too many seagulls resting and fouling down boats and docksides. I motored across the mouth of the canal to the little harbor hidden behind the huge naval base on the Holtenau shoreline. Then my sister called, and we met at the mouth of the sluices at Holtenau to sit outside their camper van and have a bar BQ. Went to sleep a few hours on Isabell and then motored to the waiting area for the canal sluices. Slept some more, paid the canal fees and my sister

came aboard to accompany me on the first section through the canal down to Rendsburg. It was sunny and warm. Not much ship traffic. Sluicing went smoothly and we motored along with a friendly German couple who gave lots of great advice. In Rendsburg I docked in the guest harbor near the town, and we walked to a campsite where my brother-in-law already set up camp and started the grill. It was nice in the sun with good food, the company and a cold beer. Now I am alone again, back in the boat. Tomorrow I will continue the canal to Brunsbittel, 35 NM to there. Now I need some sleep. Goodnight.

Motor-sailor Isabell

July 19, 2020

Now I have reached the end of the canal between the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, which is the start of this canal for many who come from the south and heading north. They start counting kilometers from here, at Brunsbittel. On this trip the wind was low and the weather fantastic. Warm, sunny. Traffic on the canal varied between the moments I felt I had it to myself, and sometimes freight ships and yachts came from both sides at once. Then the canal suddenly felt small and too thin.

The whole passage is 98 kilometers of motoring. And there was not a single tank station along the way. I was uncertain about how much fuel I had, and it was stressful to worry about the consequences of a fuel deficiency. Ahhgh! But I got here. Then in this huge harbor there is only one gas station for yachts. And it is closed most of the time. So, upon my late arrival last night I took my spare gas can and biked to the nearest gas station in town. Now I feel better. Don't want to run out when there is no wind.

Now I am waiting for the sluices to wake up on a Sunday morning. Not much happening here. Patience. See you on the other side.

Germany on a Sunday

July 19, 2020

Where am I now? Position 53°52.3'N 08°42.18'E. Cuxhaven guest harbor

I got up at 4.30 am and was ready to go. It is a Sunday in Germany. No sluicing before 8 am. Sure enough, I got out of the canal at eight. All by myself in the big lock. Then out on the Elbe, shipping highway to Hamburg. A lot of shipping. But I got to Cuxhaven quickly. Bunkered diesel and found out that I had 70 liter left in the tank. All of yesterday's worries were unnecessary...

It is a challenge to sail in tidal waters. I have a lot to learn. Here is another monsun in port and the owner recognized me from the website. Always great to meet Monsun sailors, hello Mermaid. On the way here I saw several seals swim by. They looked at me from very close to the boat. Other than that, I am a bit tired. I will continue to Delfzijl tomorrow. Cheers.

Hello and goodbye North Sea

July 22, 2020

Where am I now? Guest harbor of Norderney in the Waddenzee.

Yesterday I sailed away from Cuxhaven with the turning of the tide, at 4.30 am. It was just becoming light and the wind low from the northwest, direction I was going to. A lot of big ships going every direction. With the outgoing tidal current I made my way fast out of the Elbe, averaging 8 knots. Then I came around the infamous bend, meeting the North Sea. The sea went nuts, waves steep as walls, coming from everywhere. Currents ripping the boat out of course violently. I was warned for this place. But it still scared me. This was a true test for Isabell's capacity. She handled well, despite the shaky pilot at the helm. It was hell. Same thing as I sailed past the mouth of the Weser and Jade rivers, but less intense currents. On the North Sea small boats must follow a small strip of water near the Waddenzee islands, the inshore traffic zone. I kept coming into very shallow water, since I was tacking against the wind. There the waves break violently. It was a battle with waves, wind, and the sea bottom. Twice I took down the sails, before squalls hit me. I saw them coming. Sea spray whipping across the boat sent tears to my eyes, of course not because I was sad or happy, but because of the salt. When I got to Norderney in the evening, everything on the boat had a white salty crust.

Now I am in the Waddenzee, great. Tomorrow I will sail the flats at high tide. From here to Delfzijl is a route with two dry areas at low tide. So timing is the key to making it across or fall dry in the Memmert flats. I am doing the calculations from the tidal table now. And I will be looking for boats to follow across. Until then I am visiting the island sightseeing.

Sailing the Waddenzee

July 23, 2020

Where am I now? Position 53°19.8'N 006°55.9'E guest harbor Neptunes in the sea harbor of Delfzijl, The Netherlands

Today I have sailed across the shallows of the Waddenzee between Norderney and Delfzijl. Made a record speed and it was a great experience. The waves are small as there is only a few feet of water to sail in. In the morning I raced out on the high tide current. In the afternoon I picked up the ingoing current of two knots and hardy southwesterly breeze to help me along. Saw several seals and passed right by some trawling fishing boats. First, I was lucky to follow the island ferry boat as my guide, later I caught up with another sailing boat of which the crew seemed to know the way past the shallows. It worked!

Now I am here, the seaside port harbor is deep and roomy. It sits very close to the old town of Delfzijl. You must go under a medieval city gate in the sea wall, and you are in the center.

Now the canals are next. Tomorrow morning, I will go through the seaport sluice, and I am on my way. Until then, I need a rest.

Convoy motoring through the canals

July 25, 2020

Yesterday I sluiced into the Eems canal at Delfzijl. We were three sailboats and one big motor yacht. After sluicing, we kept each other company on the way. Max speed we may go is slow, to minimize erosion of the canal sides. And there is a load of bridges to open, for us to pass through. Pretty cool, when we keep the ordained speed, the bridges opened each time we are just in front of them. It went very smoothly, until we came to the bridges in the highway around Groningen. Those only open after 18.30 on weekdays. We all waited, and waited, and waited some more. I had moored on the outside of a German Hallberg-Rassy 352, Jahne. Got to talk with the couple, and they were so nice. They just started their holiday. They were going to do a little sightseeing here and there. They had done this route before, and I got a lot of practical tips. As the bridges finally opened, we could not get into the city by boat, because the other bridges only open between 9:30 am and 18:00 pm. The Germans showed me into a tiny little guest harbor. It was a good place. They were in the same harbor, only two other boats between us. In the evening they invited me over and we sat and chatted for quite a while.

Then, this morning, we got out in time for the westbound convoy of masted boats, starting at 9:30. The other boats from yesterday were there, as well as five other yachts. In a long line we puttered along slowly. Sometimes, the distance between the bridges was too short for us to fit. But everyone took it slowly and carefully. No more than a continuous adrenaline rush. The same man operated a bunch of bridges. After he had closed the one behind us, he hopped on his Vespa moped and rushed to the next, to open it. And so on. After so many bridges I lost count.

Well out of the city, the surrounding areas were mostly the typical Dutch pastures. The smell of cow dung hung heavy in most places. But then there were windmills, fishing gear, horses, many birds, and much more to enjoy. The further we got along; the fewer boats were left in the convoy. After passing the town of Zoutkamp, we were only two boats going further. The other boat I lost on the Lauwermeer which is a very shallow lake. The last few bridges and one more sluice I was all by myself again. And I came as far as the old town of Dokkum. Tired, a bit hungry, but very pleased with the whole experience. In spite of the occasional rain showers it became a fun day. Tomorrow I am going sightseeing in Dokkum. Goodnight.

Dokkum and Leeuwarden in one day

July 26, 2020

Last night it rained a lot. Great! Washed away all the North Sea salt and other grime off the boat. Isabell is all white and shiny again. This morning I took a long bike ride along the fantastic bicycle paths in this country. Biked all around Dokkum and along the canal that I came on, the Ee, and it was a nice trip that recalled many childhood memories. Since it was a Sunday, similar to Germany, everything is closed. So, in the afternoon, when the boat convoy passed by, I followed along and continued to the big city of Leeuwarden. It is fun to keep

meeting the same boats in the convoy or moored along the route. We are all heading the same way.

When I got to Leeuwarden, all the berthing places were occupied. Tons of tourists in town. I kept moving further until 19:00 hours, when the bridges are closed for the day. I sneaked into a small side water in the local business park. I scraped bottom of what looks like a decent ditch. Dropped anchor, which did not take much chain. I am basically sitting in the mud anyhow, so I will probably still be here in the morning. The surrounding area is green and relatively quiet. Continue when the bridges are manned tomorrow. Good evening!

Large convoy swiftly puttered along to Lemmer to come to a halt completely

July 28, 2020

Sure enough, I got up the anchor at 09:00 am and motored to the next bridge to conquer. There were already lots of boats waiting for the opening. As we waited, more boats gathered up. By the time the convoy got moving we were at least 20 sailboats and about 10 huge motor yachts. Several of the sailboats were the traditional Dutch flat-bottomed beauties. And we moved along fine from bridge to bridge. Before I knew, we were in the last town before coming out on the large inland lake IJsselmeer. I found a harbor spot and went shopping in the town Lemmer. Also had my first damage report of the year 2020. Turning into the berthing place I did not see the stern-pole to which the rear of the boat is to be tied up. In tidal water these poles are very tall. But not here. They are only about a meter above water level. Bam! Struck it with the bow anchor. The pole got a huge dent and my anchor roller got bent out of shape. Shit happens occasionally. Anyway, the town is very nice. Busy with tourists. It rained during the night. In the morning I biked around the place.

In the afternoon I got ready to go sailing on the lake and after slowly making my way through town, more bridges to open and a nice old sluice to be lifted with, I got out on the lake.

And yet I am still in Lemmer. After plowing the choppy waves with a 25 to 30 knots wind coming straight at me, I decided to turn back. My theory is that the province of Friesland has paid the weather gods to prevent tourists from leaving. You can get here, easily. But not leave. Of course, another theory could be that I deserve more headwind, since I have not turned around yet, to sail homeward bound.

Now I am in another harbor, along the beach-walking boulevard of the town. Just in front of the local casino. Lots of people walk by and have positive comments about Isabell. They know Hallberg Rassy here. Some even notice the "Nacka, Sweden" on the back of the boat and then seem to be impressed. Fun to sit inside and listen to the comments. It is still raining now and then. So, I stay at home. Tomorrow is another day of sightseeing then. I will keep you posted on my non-progress.

Got sailing wind and sailed the IJsselmeer

August 2, 2020

Hello again! Now I am sitting in the Sixhaven marina in the center of Amsterdam. Position 52°22.5'N 004°54,2'E

I sailed away from Lemmer on Thursday morning and got a fine sail down to the sluices at Enkhuizen. A few boats are out, but the IJsselmeer is huge and there is plenty of room to navigate. Get the windvane to steer and the sun comes out along the way. Great to finally be sailing with all the sails up. I arrive at the sluices in Enkhuizen just after lunchtime. It is warm (27°C), and the wind dies down after the sluices. I motor-sail down to the little harbor at Wijdenes, where I will be getting some company. I visit the Church of Wijdenes, where my brother-in-law runs a music studio. He is a producer and musician. Isabell is anchored just outside the harbor, since the harbor is very tiny and there are lots of people bathing and celebrating the sun. I take a bike ride through the countryside on Friday, and after that we enjoy a super nice sailing trip on the Markermeer. Reyn and his friend Cloutilde are enjoying the sail as much as I am. They were afraid that I would be tired of sailing by now. No way! It's great.

Then I dropped them off at Wijdenes and continued alone to the town of Hoorn, where I went into the Grashaven, a super nice marina just outside the old town. This town is a must see. Surprise, surprise, the boat spot I was appointed to is right next to two (TWO) other Monsuns. The folks are on their boat, and we have a nice chat. Here we are, Isabell in the company of Thalia (#716) and Pelagos (#706). In this same harbor also Monsun Pandorak 2 has its berth, but she's not in the harbor.

After a good rest and some early morning shopping and sightseeing, my sister Lisette joins me at the dock. She took the train here and will follow along on our sail to Amsterdam. We leave just before lunch, the sun disappears behind a haze and some clouds, but it is still warm.

We sail with a full sail setting and get to Amsterdam way ahead of the schedule I set. I had missed that there are a bridge and sluice to cross before Amsterdam. Luckily, we got the fenders out and some lines just in time for pulling through the well-filled sluices. We got through very smoothly. And then we motored into the center of the city. Crowded as ever, but there is a suitable berth in Sixhaven harbor. It is close to everything, and a good place to sit to wait for the night-time convoy under the bridges of Amsterdam.

My sister and I take the ferry (free of charge) into town and go for dinner somewhere. At the Central Station we are picked up by the local police in a picked bus. Actually, is my brother-in-law who works for the Amsterdam police force. He takes us on a private tour through the city center, driving across tram tracks, diagonally over the Dam square and Rembrandt plein. Lots of people around, since this week was supposed to be Pride Festival week. Although the festival is cancelled, the people are here anyways. We get dropped off at the Zeedijk and eat out on the Oude Zeedijk. Then my sister takes the train home. I take the ferry back to Isabell. What a wonderful day it has been.

Today one of my other sisters will come aboard and follow along to Leiden. Her partner, the policeman will join us through the Amsterdam canals, since he has been a water policeman here in Amsterdam, and he knows the routine. I am going to do some shopping and rest a bit until this evening's event. The night-time sail through the Amsterdam canals. Cheers!

Night convoy through Amsterdam city center going south

August 4, 2020

We are going to sail the staande mast route during the night. Announcement of our intent to join the convoy was necessary but not possible. Our Sixhaven neighbors decided to join us on the same route. We get ready and leave the dock at 22:30 hours. It's a full moon. Clear skies and still warm. On the way to the convoy starting point in the old Westerkanaal sluice we picked up Armin, who had been working until 22:00, at Amsterdam CS. Seven other sailboats are waiting for the event. My sister Corine and Armin sit and eat crackers and cheese while I take a nap. At midnight we are notified that the first bridge will open at 01:35. After sleeping a bit more we get on our way. Bridge after bridge show us the green light and we're moving forward swiftly. The lights on the water surface and the boats around are beautiful. At 03:15 we reach lake de Nieuwe meer and are out of the city center. After another fifteen minutes we come to the bridges across the main highway and railroad tracks. They are not opening until 05:00 a.m. We go to sleep with the radio on to listen when we are to get ready for the bridges. At five minutes to five o'clock we get the green light again, as a message on the VHF. Armin and I take turns driving the boat until we get to a lake, the Westeinderplassen. We drop anchor in 0.5 m water, leeward of a park-like patch of land, and go to sleep. It is very damp.

After we wake up at 10 a.m., we eat breakfast and get going to the city of Leiden. It's raining and we are pretty much by ourselves as we putter along. The bridges open quickly and efficiently. We're in Leiden before short. The electronic signs at the bridge into the city center tell us the harbors are full. We find a small marina at Waardeiland, just outside the center. Here we leave Isabell and go into town. It's been great with the company.

Last southbound leg of this tour

August 5, 2020

Today is the last day of sailing South. I will have to start my way home in a couple of days. From Leiden, where I will be joined by my cousin Renate, we are boating to my former hometown Voorschoten. Here is the turning point in the trip, and lots of people to visit. The weather is fantastic, and Leiden has turned into a rather charming city. Well worth a visit.

This evening my position is 52°07.4'N 004°27.8'E yacht harbor Vlietopper Leidschendam, The Netherlands.

Since Cuxhaven the engine has run 50 hours. The sails have been up 38 hours since then. I have fulfilled one of my dreams and sailed 970 nautical miles to get here. And concluded that 1) this place is damn far from my home in Sweden, 2) I have to sail the same distance home, 3) I am still enjoying myself, 4) and in a few days it is time to sail home.

Right now, the temperature in the boat is 32°C, outside still 25°C. As we got our appointed berth in this harbor, they forgot about the necessary depth to hold a sailboat with deep keel. The first place I got was nice, just missing half a meter of water depth. The second place was almost deep enough. Only missing maybe 10 cm of depth. But with full throttle and two strong men pulling lines from shore I got into the place... The way out of the mud will probably be accompanied by some violence as well. We'll see in a few days. Goodnight!

Tropical heat in my former hometown

August 8, 2020

Sitting in the shadow I am sweating bullets. Still in the harbor of Vlietopper boating club, near the town of Voorschoten. Actually, the town is just across the canal that separates the recreational area of the Vlietlanden from the town. Voorschoten is the birthplace of my mother. I lived here while trying to grow up. Since my mom comes from a large farmer family, I have a load of cousins and nieces (34 I believe) from my mother's side. Many of them still live around here, so it has been cozying and hectic with all the visitors that come to say hello. In between, I have cooked dinner for my mom and myself every day and I visit her for short periods. A lot has changed since I actually lived here, which is about 40 years ago. But some things are still the same. Especially a lot of the people I once knew, but the strange thing is that they have all become so old...

The weather has basically come to a halt, hardly any wind, and a whole week of tropical heat. Between 32 and 38°C, even during the nighttime temperatures are unusually high. For me that is fine, since I will not have to continue further south to find summer weather. It makes it easier to start sailing north and east again, homeward bound. That is going to happen tomorrow. I will take the standing mast route up to the seaport sluices of IJmuiden, and from there sail the North Sea to get to the Elbe, and the Nord Ostsee Kanal (Kiel canal).

Let's hope I can get out of the harbor tomorrow, without using too much violence. As you may remember, I am stuck in a thick muddy bottom slurry in the harbor. In the boat everything is in good shape. The refrigerator is drawing a load of electrical power, and to minimize losses of cold I have packed it in blankets and pillows.

Haarlem, North Sea kanaal and back on the North Sea

August 11, 2020

The past few days have been hot. Inside the boat it is above comfortable temperatures. Outside the sun is ruthless. Coming from Leiden I again passed the Kaag lake and decided to hang out there on Sunday. Did some sailing, filled up the diesel tank and anchored in a windy place. It was so warm that I went swimming in the lake. The next morning, I continued my canal tour, basically alone. I have understood the reason why. Lots of problems with the bridges. The heat has expanded the decks of the bridges to the extent that they are not closing after being opened. They sprinkled water on them everywhere. Waiting times were long for a few bridges. But I got to Haarlem and moored in the middle of the old town. Beautiful. Then, today I continued along the river Spaarne to the North Sea Canal, much like

the Kiel canal. It took me out to the North Sea at IJmuiden. Now I am in the Seaport Marina and have prepared for the sea voyage. Early tomorrow I am heading out to sea and sailing north. Wind is blowing from the east, so that is good. Will see how far I get.

Rolling along the North Sea coast

August 14, 2020

It is going well. Still warm and sunny, and the sea is not too rough. Wind is blowing from the east or northeast. Since there is so little wind, that is in my advantage, although the engine has to help at times. I covered IJmuiden to Borkum (140 nautical miles) in 29 hours. Night sailing made possible by enough wind to steer with the vane. A few other sailboats that kept out of the way, as did the numerous fishing trawlers. Getting to Borkum was a shock. Earlier I visited Norderley, where it was so nice. This place, Borkum, is the ugliest place I have visited so far. Large concrete buildings, and totally unplanned. The harbor is a hole in the shoreline. There is a cosier private harbor just west of the seaport, but it is shallow, and dries out at low tide. I met some more nice boat neighbors and that made it more pleasant to be there. This morning it rained and thundered a few hours, but before lunch it cleared. I set off with high tide and had the positive current with me the whole time. It turned out a great sailing day. Got to Norderney a few hours earlier than expected. I got the bike out and filled a spare can with diesel at a nearby gas station. Just to be safe. So, I am in Norderney again. No touring this time. I catch the tidal wave early tomorrow and sail to the Elbe at Cuxhaven. Grateful for it going well.

Back in the Elbe after surfing the tide

August 16, 2020

Where am I now? VC Cuxhaven marina

Yesterday was another beautiful sailing day. Sunny and warm, relatively steady wind from the northeast. It took me a good 13 hours to sail the 70 nautical miles from Norderney to Cuxhaven. Quite a few boats were on the passage. Not too many big ships while doing the river arm crossings. The Jade entrance had most traffic, just past Wangeroog island. Timed the tide right and kept on my preferred schedule. Coming up the Elbe from the fearful German Bight (bend) the current helped me along, clocking a 9 to 10 knots speed over ground. Still, it takes four hours to here.

Once you see the harbor entrance, prepare for a sideways motion and steer into the starboard wall. The current may make you miss the entrance. It is a bit like whitewater rafting. Fun to see yourself ripping past the buoys.

Once I got into port it was dark and I found a spot to press into. So this German neighbor tells me to move, because I am pressing on his boat. I tell him to stuff it. You don't argue with a person filled to the brim with adrenaline from surfing the Elbe. My other German neighbors, a kind elderly couple, offered him to borrow some thinner fenders. He had mega

fat fenders out. He would not change HIS boat or setting. So I just let it go. Went to sleep. All in all, progress is good.

Got through the Kiel Canal and the last sluice

August 18, 2020

Where am I now? At the waiting area next to the Holtenau sluices.

Yesterday I got into the Canal at Brunsbüttel after a long wait for the Alte schlusse. From there I was basically the only sailboat going to the Baltic. All other smaller boats went toward the Elbe. Some huge ships passed by, but most of the time I had the Canal to myself. It was hot both yesterday and today. The sunroof and extra sheet saved my life. I spent the night in the short canal at Giselau locks. Woke up to the hammering and sawing of the jetty repairs. Then I realized it was a Monday. Workday for some people.

Today I went out through the huge sluice at Holtenau all by myself. Made me feel kinda selfish. What excellent service, free of charge this time.

Now the wind is going to blow from the southwest. Still little wind tomorrow, but in my sails. Great! I am sailing home.

Back in Swedish waters

August 21, 2020

Where am I now? Ystad guest harbor on the Swedish southcoast.

Left Kiel on Tuesday morning. Very little wind, but from the right direction this time. As I am coasting along with all the sails up, I am hailed by the German military police on the VHF. They are having a military operation in the bight between Kiel and Fehmarn. So I am going to have to go a big circle around the area, marked as military training site on the charts. As I am making my way around, I see several big naval vessels in the exercise area. They are dropping depth charges, training submarine defence, and it sounds like thunder in the distance. A grey and muggy day of sailing, past the Danish Sea border and back into the Fehmarn sound. A few other boats keep me company. Have the radar on to find the buoy markers that I am supposed to keep on my starboard side. Works well. I get to Fehmarn bridge and check in at the same harbor where I was on the way south. The Burger See marina, all new and big, at Burgertiefe. Biked into the town of Burg and did some shopping. Bought a new chartbook of the Danish waters. Thought that would be smartest, since I had sailed into a dangerous area on the way south. This time going north I could keep clear of the new wind park they are building out there.

On the early morning of Wednesday, I motor-sailed toward Denmark. Hardly any wind, sunny and still warm. Coming near the Danish coast several coast guard vessels are tracking me close by. I talked to one of the crews and asked if I could go into the Gedser harbor for the night. They needed to have a registration code and personbevis (proof of residence from the Swedish authorities) to go into the harbor. That, of course, I did not have. I bravely sailed on and anchored in the bight between the islands of Moen and Falster. A bit of a rolling

experience, which meant that sleeping was not comfortable, but ok. In the early morning, when I pulled the anchor, the coast guard was there again, following me out. I am sure they had been monitoring me all the time.

Today there was wind, first rather nice, and I could get a good bearing on the Swedish coast, all the sails up. After a few hours the wind picked up, and waves started to built up as well. I put a reef in the main and continued. Fast, it went. This is the first time someone set off the DSC alarm on my VHF radio. I got scared witless, until I understood what it was. A DSC emergency call. Listening to the Swedish and Danish rescue operators I understood that a Danish vessel was sinking somewhere in Danish waters. It was not close to where I was, so I listened and just sailed on. They were 6 people that had to be rescued. Good to know that rescue is close by when you are in deep trouble.

I had to stay very close to the main route for the high-speed ferries, and several of them passed very close by. Hailed one of the TT-line vessels since it came straight at me from behind. But they had seen me and would pass on my port side. They were close enough so I could see folks on the bridge. Waved at them! On it went, the wind picked up even more, but I could maintain my course straight to the harbor of Smygehuk on the south coast of Sweden. Got there swiftly, with very little sail up. The last five miles I hand-steered into port. There was a place to tie up in the otherwise deserted harbor.

It rained during the night and temperatures dropped to near 20 degrees C. In the morning I took it easy and looked around the place. Then, with drizzle and a very smooth and grey sea, I motor-sailed to the town of Ystad. Coming out of the harbor the sea looked all yellow. First, I thought it was silt from the harsh wind yesterday. But no, it was a very heavy growth of cyanobacterial algae. It continued all along the coast, sailing here was like plowing through pea soup. The sea was empty. Halfway it started to rain again and visibility was very low. Lights went on, as well as the radar. I found the port of Ystad without too much of an effort. Here, there was plenty of space. Almost deserted in this big marina. I am going to leave Isabell here until Monday. This weekend a near gale wind is going to pass through the area. I decided to leave it for now and take the train to visit friends and my son and his family in Malmö during the weekend. On Monday, if the weather allows it, I will continue my journey north. It is still rainy and grey. Nice to sit in the harbor and have a dry warm boat around me. It occurred to me how quickly the sea can alter appearance. From smooth and peaceful to wild and treacherous. Respect! It gave me a sense of security to feel that Isabell can handle the high waves and wind. And I got to practice heavy-weather techniques.

Depression train causes daily weather changes

August 26, 2020

Where am I now? In Möcklösund, Karlskrona archipelago.

From Ystad to Simrishamn I had decent sailing weather, winds changing due to heavy cloud formations over the sea southeast from where I was. Well in port at Simrishamn it rained heavily. The harbor was empty, and according to the people at the harbor office it has been a season with very few visiting boats. I bought some diesel and went shopping in town. The

next day I sailed and motored across the Hanöbukten (Bay of Hanö) and had set course on the island of Utklippan. At a quarter past four in the afternoon the Utklippan lighthouse was visible. First part of the journey I had sailing wind, then the wind died, and I motored a few hours. Afternoon, the wind gradually returned from the west. The sea waves came in from the northwest and made it necessary to hand steer a lot of the time. As the wind picked up in the afternoon, the windvane kept course. Most of the time the sun was shining, and it felt warm. All alone on this part of the sea. I spotted three cargo ships on the entire journey. Then, as I got closer to Utklippan, the wind picked up to 11 meter per second and the waves grew more than 2 m high. As I finally got to Utklippan, breaking waves and the wind straight into the harbor entrance made me pass it by. I set for rounding Utlängan on the mainland side of Blekinge and steered for the entrance to the inside route from Långören to Karlskrona. Well behind land, the sea became calm and I raced against the clock to find an anchorage before darkness fell. I anchored in a nice spot in leeward of land and went to sleep.

At 5 am I woke up, because the wind had changed direction and the anchor was dragging. Isabell hit bottom near the rocky shore. I got into foul weather gear, got the anchor up, which was fouled with sea weeds, hence the dragging. It had just become light enough to navigate these shallows visibly. I knew the area well from before since I lived in this area for a few years a while ago. So, I went for the safe inside inlet of Norrviken, where Kryssarklubben has a blue buoy. It is where I stayed today. Rains a lot and every time it rains the wind picks up from nothing to terrible, to die down to nothing afterward again. Now I am cleaning ship and resting a bit. The weather is going to be wet and changing winds for the coming week. I will just have to take it as it comes and try to get myself to the north. I am glad nothing more serious happened when the anchor started dragging this morning. The parts of the coast are very shallow and stony. But with a beautiful, natural scenery.

Following the Swedish east coast to get home

August 29, 2020

Where am I now? At 57°N outside the Södra Cell paper mill perimeter at Påskallavik, hiding for the passing bad weather.

It seems that following the eastern coast will be my best option to stay out of the northern wind zone for the coming few days. I have made some progress through the Kalmarsund, while the weather has changed frequently. Using the wind blowing around the centers of heavy rainfall over the mainland, it has at times been possible to sail with the main reefed and keeping close to the wind. Got to test my heavy weather gear, it rained a lot. The coming few days are going to be drier, according to the weather forecasts.

It is empty on the sea. I am basically passing through the Kalmarsund all by myself it seems. Of course, both the lousy weather and that the holiday season is over may have to do with this. Anyway, it will get more crowded once I get to the Stockholm archipelago. That will hopefully be in a few days. Only about 150 more nautical miles until I get home.

Today, as I motored into the hiding place here at Bokön, two eagles circled right above my head. I got so excited and distracted that I almost sailed onto a marker buoy. Fantastic to see these magnificent birds so close. Otherwise, I have spotted a few hundred cormorants, that seem to be everywhere, and one seal.

The east coast of Sweden between showers

August 31, 2020

Where am I now? I have reached 58°02.9'N 016°46.8'E Kvädö southern depth. Hiding out for the N wind and drying all the wet stuff.

Early yesterday morning I sailed out on the northern part of the Kalmarsund. Since it had been very windy on the Baltic Sea the past few days, a heavy long wave pattern was still running. But the weather was fair and I could sail a few hours with all the sails up. In the vicinity of Oskarshamn the wind died down to almost nothing (4-5 knots) and the heavy sea made going a bit uneasy. So I decided to follow the inside passage through the skerry coastal landscape. It has several beautiful spots, and as usual the water was empty. I hand-navigated most of the way, but progress was good. Saw a few sailboats near Västervik and passed two naval vessels going out to sea. Another two sailboats and a motor yacht in the vicinity of Loftahammar. That's it. After Loftahammar it started to drizzle, and after a while came the heavy rain, buckets of it. I threw the anchor at a small cove near Kårö and ate, rested a bit and waited for the rain to get past me. Since the following days promised high northerly winds, I decided to use all of the daylight hours to motor northbound. That was a bit of a mistake. I did not get further than where I am now. Near the entrance to the town of Valdemarsvik. And it rained a whole lot more. So in this downpour and closing of darkness I found an anchorage that looked good on the charts, but visibility was too low to see for real. Early this morning I could actually see the surroundings, and I happened to pick a good spot. It gives good enough cover for the hard northerly wind and has a beautiful natural setting.

So today I took the day off and while the sun is shining, I dry out all the wet stuff. Time to download some more pictures to the computer and update my status. The wind situation is not in my advantage the coming days. Only about 120 miles to go, but it will take some time, if I want to enjoy the ride. Luckily, I am still on vacation. Best to enjoy the scenery along this ancient (from the Viking era and onwards) sea-farers route through the skerries. The route is well marked and easy to follow, although at times very exposed to the open sea (wind and the sea waves).

Reached my home port Bullandö Marina

September 8, 2020

In the afternoon of Saturday, September 5th, I reached the berth in my home port. The strong winds from the SW the past few days have helped me sail home in only three days from my anchorage at Arkösund, where I ended up on Thursday. From there it was about a hundred miles home. I took the short route across open sea, directly to Landsort, and the SXK blue buoy at Läckar, north of the Öja island. 42 nautical miles in a day's worth of sailing.

The next day was rocky, as the sea swell rolled in along with me, into the Mysingen archipelago inlet. Another day with 42 miles of sailing, passed Dalarö early, and sailed until darkness fell. Got to Munkön. From there it was only a little jump home. As I came past Stavnäs, and into the bight that leads under the Djurö bridge, a lot of boats appeared on the water. After all the solitude this was quite a shock. It so happened that this was the day the Annual Nordic Boat Regatta was held. Funny, it was like falling back into the mid-summer business of the canals in The Netherlands. But I got into port without too many troubles. And this marks the end of this summer's adventure. I am going to miss living on the boat. After 74 days of living on the boat, and moving about 1860 nautical miles during those days, life will be a bit different at home on land.

Concluded that this little boat has been a fine home, and I am so happy that everything on board worked as it was supposed to do. Only the normal wear and tear, and of course the little damage on the anchor roller from the collision in the harbor at Lemmer.