**Carrigaholt, Ireland to Funchal, Madeira**

On the 17th July 1993 I departed from Carrigaholt from the mouth of the Shannon at 0700.H with not a soul on the pier. A few days earlier I had left Limerick Docks and waved farewell to a small gathering of family and a few friends. The boat had been returned ok (though less the charts) the previous September via the West Indies and Azores, on a moving voyage. This time I kept a very low profile and said I was taking a cruise down to Madeira which I had already passed twice and only say its western light flashing one night, no big deal.

Money was tight as I could not tap sponsors again but I made sure I had a current Nautical Almanac for use with the sextant. I had one tried and trusted friend who got what food I needed through a supermarket friend of his and that was a great help. Five ounce bottles of Kerry Spring water were donated and another friend of his who worked for that company which was a handy reserve in case of any problems with my water tanks. Very little had to be done to “Loon” before departure except anti fouling. A G.P.S. which had now outdated the Sat-Nav would have been more than useful If I had the cash, in fact the only charts I had aboard was one of the North Atlantic & South Atlantic which showed the Madeira Islands as small dots. As they are volcanic Islands I said there would be deep water around them and no need for a chart of Funchal.

My 6 man self-inflating life raft I had left at home in the garage as it had taken up too much room in the aft cabin on the previous attempt. One might wonder at this and indeed many did as I saw it my greatest dangers were being run down by a ship or falling overboard and I very nearly was run down as you will read after. A radio officer friend of mine had told me of seeing part of a yachts mast hooked around the anchor of his ship when they docked and none of the crew had been aware of a collision, what use would a life-raft have been in those situations. “Fastnet ’79” the book which describes the Fastnet race when gale force winds caused the loss of 15 lives when the fleet of 303 boats crewed by 2.700 men and women was hit midway to the Fastnet rock from its departure point of Cowes by a gale as bad as any in the twentieth century. Most of the loss of life in this race was attributed to crews abandoning their boats for life rafts, these life rafts if not upturned by the ferocious conditions also caused many deaths and hypothermia. In fact 19 of the yachts were abandoned and later recovered, which proves that in most cases except fire and being holed it is better to stay with the boat, anyway I had not got an E.P.I.R.B.

So I was once again sailing like the Old Timers with sextant, log and compass.

**Day-2.**

Gave us a north-westerly which increased to F6.7 which with only a working jib steadied her and gave good headway in shitty conditions.

**Day-3.**

Wind veered northerly and decreased to F.5 so I poled 2 w/jibs in rough conditions. First ship sighted heading north. The movement of wind and water or gyre as it is called is clockwise in the North Atlantic, I have never left the Shannon and this was my fourth departure without picking up a north westerly within days to carry us southwards.

**Day-4.**

The finest day one could ask for, with seas down and S. I cooked a good dinner of bacon, cabbage and spuds. My stomach has got used to the rolling and my morale is high. The Sat-Nav gave me my first position at 48’50’N, 11’30’W on auto locate and after cleared its memory. The following day I had a good breakfast of porridge and bacon and eggs with coffee. Met another ship on day 6 which gave me a positon and promised to relay it and a message to Ireland. The barometer had now climbed to 1032MB and stayed high with mostly N’ to N’E and the odd N’W.N direction. Another sat nav fix on day-10. N. 42’.50’w 12’15’ which put us on the same latitude as Cap Fivisterrre.

**Day-15.**

The noise of a light plane puts us between Lisbon and the Azores Archipelago, can’t see it due to a mist, had heard these light planes on the other voyages when heading south.

**Day-18.**

I changed course from 220’M to 180’M as I had picked up Madeira on my R.D.F or Transistor. The following day I saw Porto Santo is in hazy conditions 75’F cabin temp which was the hottest so far. Towards evening I could discern Madeira Islands so now we were on visual. The wind was out of the N’ F.2’3 and later in the day F.3’4 which brought us abeam of Porto Santo Islands to port that evening, when approximately 20.N>M to the E end of Madeira Islands I dropped sails as I did not want to make an entry by night and also remember I had not chart of the Island. What I did have and was most useful was Reeds Nautical Almanac which gave the light sequence s for the Islands and also a small chartlet of the Islands and Funchal Port showing the location of the Marina there. Naturally I only dozed that night as a landfall is always exciting. With the approach of the coast and its dangers I hoisted a w/jib to the light of the Milky Way at 01.30.H of Day-21, making slow speed to the N’wind of F.3. In spite of it being a volcanic Island there are many hazards continuing out from this part of the Island which has a five lighthouse on the extreme end of many rocks. By now I had my green, white and gold Mizzen Staysail flying along with the working jib and we were clipping along. After rounding the end of the Island we lost the wind in the lee of the land so down sails and on engine for the twelve mile run to Funchal. The greens of the Islands and its many white houses with red tiled roofs kept me occupied as did its air-strip which seems to be extended over a ravine or the coast I could not be sure as I was a mile off but it was a busy place with much air traffic. When I could see the masts where the Marina should be the engine overheated and there I was becalmed in sight of my haven and boy was it hot as we slow waltzed on sky mirrored swells.

On the VHF Radio I could hear a lady speaking on channel 16 in English to the odd boat from the Marina office but I failed to make contact with either her or many boats that passed. A trawler passed close enough for me to wave a rope indicating I wanted a tow, no go. After a few hours a light breeze allowed me to point under mains light genoa to the mariner which I tied up in at a vacant berth at 1430.H where I was promptly told a big dark skinned man to tie outside the many yachts which were 6x7 deep off the pier which I did by shoving off with the 10’ boathook I carry and grabbing the nearest yacht to tie alongside. A Finnish boat whose crew spoke good English and directed me to Customs & Immigration which was next door to the Marina Office. The Marina floating jetties which were not numerous were all occupied by local boats the visiting boats been rafted together off the pier. For the full length of the pier were many yachts of all sizes and from many nations. The pier walls festooned with technicolour names and dates of visiting boats of all nations some of them very artistic. Funchal has excellent supermarkets which I visited and bought fresh food and lovely fruit and veg of which there was an amazing variety. Later I provisioned in its huge open air and enclosed market place where fish was plentiful. George at the Marina Office arranged for a mechanic to come and look at my engine which I was sure needed a new impellor in the water pump whit it did.

The temperature shore was 80’f which I found pleasant and dressed in a tee-shirt and shorts I walked the wide streets of Funchal and viewed many lovely buildings and shops. Cruise ships tie up in the Harbour as do Merchant ships at the Port docks bringing many tourists to this lovely island which has a marvellous climate. I would imagine many retired people from Europe settle in the sun and its pollution free air. Mosquitos were in evidence from sunset through the night and after been caught the first night the fine mesh netting over the hatches cured this problem. The summit of Madeira by night with the many lights climbing up to near Pico elevation 1,860 meters was very beautiful and appeared as a gigantic Xmas tree. By day it was also very pretty to look up at the many terraced houses and villas mostly white and with red tiled roofs glistening in the sun against the lavish foliage of the many greens. The promenade and seafront either by day or night which the marina was situated on was a busy scene with its many cafes with outdoor tables and umbrellas, restaurants, bars and chippers and ice cream shops. It was a nice place to relax and prepare in before the run down to Cape Town which I spent two weeks doing. Apart from engine repairs I only needed to top up with fresh food and the few odd tins. Time flies by giving me little opportunity to visit the mountains or the many little fishing villages of which I am sure would have been very peaceful and pretty away from the noise and crowds of Funchal. Midway through my stay the Finnish boat left leaving me tied next to a South African boat which had come up from the Canaries the sole crew member was a young café tonner who was now having a few weeks holiday caretaking for the owner. The one item which was not available and which I required was a chart of Cape town Harbour and the Cap of Good Hope area, however as I had sailed out of Cape town previously (Madeira-Cape Town), I did not think it worthwhile to await charts from the Portuguese mainland.