**Madeira to Cape Town**

In a flat calm I motored out to sea at noon one Sunday I was still becalmed that night within sight of what I call the Xmas Tree Island of Madeira. Earlier that day a whale tried to mate with “Loon”. I never saw it but the turmoil it left in the water around the boat was enough to rock us in the rolling, glassy swells. It must have played around us for five minutes before disappearing and though I had seen many whales and had come to like them and considered them harmless but this guy took the biscuit and I was glad when he took off. I have only seen the flukes of a whale once as he prepared to sound or dive. Usually they porpoise along spouting through their blowholes showing the backs only and if you are downwind when they spout you can often get a fishy aroma. Dolphins are frequent visitors and are also nice to watch, surfing down the slope of waves and like a group of any kind there always seems to be a show-off who will give an aerial display. Birds were constantly around us except maybe in calms so I really was never lonely. If I came out in the morning and a bird was flying nearby I would often say “Good morning old boy” and “How are you, Great, Great”. Yes I was happy out there clouds when you have no land mass are very beautiful and also give accurate indications of weather to come. Sunsets more than sunrises are the most beautiful I have found and together with clouds portray many very beautiful pictures.

(N.B. All degrees of heat in Fahrenheit and sow cabin temperature only).

**Monday. 23.8.93. Day 2.**

I am still thinking about the whale yesterday. On other voyages the first one to be seen is always worrying and then you get used to them. 1530h I just passed a turtle approximately 24’ wide and of a colour that would remind you of a copper beech tree in the fall, swimming where? I got my first sat/nav fix. I am sailing to a gentle north-west breeze in moderate swells. Two white sails coming up from the south, maybe from the Canaries.

**Day 3.**

The wind died during the night, could barely see a few lights and the glow of Madeira 60nm away as I dropped the sails. I have most of the jobs done now after leaving port. I repacked the fruit, tightened hose clip on bilge pump, secured the boat hook and founders-warps, anchor, etc. I had filled 2x5 gallon plastic drums with fresh water which I have lashed in the cockpit and I draw from these while it last. Approximately 6,000nm lies ahead to Cape-Town and I am taking no chances with a water shortage, even though I have 46 gallons in my two bilge keels, which I find helps to keep it sweet as it is cooler there. I also have plenty of bottled water as a reserve. Slow progress, 70nm for 48 hours but the fine conditions are giving me a chance to settle into and adjust to the ocean again. I had a good wash and feel hungry. The sun is beginning to show itself, as we had overcast skies until now. The temperature 72’F. I only wear shorts by day unless I have to spend more than 15 minutes on deck as the sun is very hot and temperatures I give are cabin temperatures. You can feel the heat the minute you go out. Today I had to put on a pants and then a shirt when I went out with temperature of 65’. Plenty of rubbish on the ocean today. I saw a fish dart out from under us and nibble at a piece of it and dart back so they feel the sun also and use us as an umbrella. Got a breeze in the afternoon, slowly inching our way South.

**Day 4.**

By 1130. I had changed sails 4 times with winds fickle in direction. Ship on west horizon going north. I am having the last of the white bread in a sandwich with lettuce and mayonnaise. I had brought 2 white and 4 brown loaves as the brown especially rye if you get it lasts well. After that it is Rye King and Rye Vita which I found lasts forever and is also nourishing, I christened them slates. I have always felt healthy and strong at sea, without taking any sort of vitamin pills. An odd apple was the only fruit I ate even though I always carried oranges and lemons, I seldom ate them. Tomatoes I like and they hold well wrapped in newspapers. Vac packed cheese is a long laster as is vac packed bacon. Eggs which I never treated last well except in hot conditions. Ribena is nice and contains vitamin C and I often drink it with a slice of lemon in it. Booze never worried me though I always carried a few bottles and I seldom drank at sea. Onions last well and are good for one. A nice breeze at last. Ocean is full of whitecaps and a blue you only see out here. It is really something. The wind is on our tail from the north and is cooling the cabin and we are 120nm from Funchal and half way to the Canaries where we leave Palma Islands to port. The first shower since the 3rd day out of the Shannon. I threw off jocks and had a shower in it and was it cold, I gave myself a good towelling and feel like a new man. Another ship going north, too soon to ask for a message home and I know my position.

**Friday. Day 5.**

I had a hellish busy day on deck yesterday as the wind very variable in direction, but overnight it held its direction for the first time since leaving Funchal. So hopefully it has done its business and got off the pot and we are in the N.E. Trades. The wind of past few days either, east or north-east or east south-east or east north-east. Yesterday cooler even at 70’ with the sun, It must have been the east wind. We passed the Canaries last evening at 2100.h, 80nm off Palma Islands to port. The first 100nm per day since leaving Funchal. 870nm now to the Cape Verdes. I opened my first pack of long life milk last night and what a treat. Much nicer than powdered milk I had bought a bunch of green bananas at the market in Funchal with the other fruit and went to eat one and it was ripe and soft which they all were so after eating a few I dumped them as I did not want a bowel or stomach problem. I could have had a few daily earlier on but then I am not a fruit man. I had 2 boiled eggs for tea with bread. Lunch was tomato, beetroot and salami and at 1600h I had a cheese sandwich.

**Day 7.**

Good morning everybody at 0845.h. the wind held true from the east during the night again. I awoke at 045.h and all well after turning in at 2200h. I am getting a break from sail changing these past few days and nights. I repacked the fruit and dumped 4 lemons from Irish lot. It was time after 7 weeks.

**Day 8.**

I was adjusting Nellie (Self Steering) and saw a trail of white below our wake and about 5’ in length. I got the boathook and found it to be a large sheet of heavy plastic which I could not free from the propeller. I twisted the boathook wrapping the plastic around it and eventually tied a rope as low as possible to the surface of the water and let it through a fairlead onto the winch. Still no joy and I was afraid the head of the boathook would break off so I released the rope from the winch and gave the boathook a few tugs and hard and away came this large sheet of transparent thick plastic. I was lucky there, as the propeller spins freely when we do over 3knots and I imagine the winch must have unravelled most of it before I tugged it free. I had hit 2 small logs on the way to Madeira the size of pit props, you hear the thump and hot out and see them drifting astern. The north Atlantic is the most polluted Ocean I have sailed on. Of all the meals I enjoy breakfast the most and today I had 2 scrambled eggs with cheese, tomato and onion chopped.

**Monday Day 9. 30.8.’93.**

I found my first flying fish on deck when going aft to adjust Nell before breakfast about 8’ long with 4’ long transparent wings that lie straight alongside its body. A nice fresh breakfast I must wash my eyes they feel sticky I have not washed since the rain shower 5 days ago. Lunch of a hard-boiled egg which I boiled with my breakfast egg and then put into the tea pot to harden it and chopped cabbage, tomato, onion and mayonnaise. It’s amazing how we take things for granted, that self-steering is only magic and I have only touched the wheel entering and leaving Funchal since I left the Shannon. Another flying fish on deck, unusual by day. The wind swung to the north-east for the first time in ages and we have bird life again after an absence of days. Are we now in the north-east trades? If I don’t get a fix on sat/nav will have to haul out the sextant as I have not got a position for some time. I hate sitting in the sun for ½ to ¾ of an hour putting the sun on horizon at local noon with the salt sweat running into my eyes.

**Day 11. 01.08.93.**

I woke at 0510.h to sails flapping I had awakened earlier at 0300h with sails giving odd flap so I had to drop them due more to the state of the sea than lack of wind. I have found from experience that sails get damaged more and flapping around in night winds than in strong ones especially so where the piston hanks are on the foresails. We were creaming it yesterday and last night. Another month gone would like to sight a ship and get a message of life and progress back to home, as I approach the Cape Verdes Islands it would be nice to be sure of my position. I have 3 stations on my R.D.F. (Transistor) from the direction of the Cape Verdes broadcasting in the Portuguese language. 0630h back to the bunk it’s not easy to get up in the middle of the night you feel like saying “Oh shit, fuck the sails, fuck the heading” but you get up and now it is lovely to go back and the seas are down which I thought would take some time to do so.

**Day 12.**

I awoke at 1020h to more flying fish on deck God provides the sun of past few days filtered by hazy skies but I imagine it is more burning on skin. The wind is north-east at noon. I have a new name for sat/nav “Shithead” hurtling along now.

**Day 13.**

I took a sextant sight yesterday which corresponds with today’s so no hassle in the castle. There are plenty of flying fish on deck now and many dolphins doing escort duty. Flying fish don’t fly I notice they glide.

**Day 14.**

We are past the Cape Verdes and I suspect we are entering the Doldrums area. I did a very thorough job of the engine maintenance, oil, water, fan belt, batteries, hoses etc. as we will need it soon. The ocean tonight is as flat as you seldom see it and like glass. Sweat was dripping on to my glasses as I worked on the engine today. The Trades just stopped dead. Another day of flat sea and I can leave the teapot on the table. I must think about what will perish in the food line. Fruit, the apples, oranges, lemons and limes will be ok and I used the last grapefruit yesterday from Ireland in a fruit drink. I must eat more oranges. Onions ok. It’s a pity about the sat/nav which I got serviced before leaving Ireland. One fix second day out of Madeira but now we have passed The Cape Verdes there is no panic. Today sees the first southerly swell coming up from the south Atlantic as we draw nearer to the Equator. We also have large showers showing on the horizon which from my previous experience in these waters can bring winds of ferocious strength, so I watch them like a hawk. They come fast and got fast, the sky darkens and wham, one off the starboard bow shifts, and comes abeam and we get rain as it approaches and also white horses but it moves away and is now off our bow. Later many larger thunder clouds with sun and you can feel it like a hot oven on your skin. Clouds very scare after a while and temperature nor 85’, highest so far.

**Day 15.**

I spoke to a large tanker heading north-west across our bows. A nice man but no chat business-like and good English. He promised to send message and wished me a good trip, a Greek or Latino? I only seem to eat properly now at night too day by day the wind dies dramatically around sunset these past evenings then comes up again for a few hours and eases leaving us rolling in swells. It seems to be up again now at 0230.h and a full clear moon has the Ocean dancing in it’s light. We continue in these conditions with little wind at night but plenty of sheet lightening making slow but steady progress with the help of the engine which I run mostly before or after sunrise and sunset both of which are at the same times of half eight so we have a long night. We have no problem with cabin lighting as the solar panels even without the engine are charging the batteries good. A little bird the size of a linnet clings to the mizzen topping lift one morning and I go into the cabin so as not to frighten it but have not seen it since. I used the last of the Madeira cabbage which I chop into salads also the last of Galtee cheese from Ireland which lasted well.

**Day 19.**

Every little nook and cranny is showing red from sand dust carried on the wind from the Sahara Desert, your hands are red after handling ropes. A wind called the Marmaton brings it. I must dig out a clean tablecloth. 2045h and sunset with a breeze barley filling the sails will it die or shall we get an evening breeze. I am going to read for a while. A beautiful time of the day and a superb evening, so peaceful, no wonder I love it out here. The odd shear-water or glider as I call them for they seldom flap their wings, dip in and out of the swells as they skim the Ocean for what? I have yet to see them feeding. Later I was to see the Albatross doing the same and never once saw it eat. We are now 300nm off the African Coasts of Senegal, Guinea and Sierra Leone. We have a red ½ moon on its back tonight is it a sign of wind? Or was it just feeling frisky and cocking its arse up to the world?

**Day 22.**

A conglomeration of swells are juggling on the Ocean today doing a dance for the setting sun after waltzing all day. Tremendous energy in the ocean full of life and vitality each telling its tale of over.

A lovely bird the size and colour of a golden plover but fatter landed on a safety line at the stern. Black spotted golden back with a white front and med sized bill with a slight turn down. Good luck to you my little friends you a welcome.

Today I am being “Loons” tank water and it seems funny to me after so many days drawing water from the 5gallon drums. I finished cabbage yesterday also and I will be on peanut butter from sometime today.

Bird when hunched has a pigeon chest and longish tail. Not so nervous now when I got out its back and wings are the colour of a hen pheasant. A beautiful sight as it preens itself in the sun it has a golden eye with a black pupil.

Another guest arrived unannounced later in the afternoon dark yellow the same size as a starling with a sharp beak and a cute head. We also have the swallows flying around the boat. Do they imagine me to be the birdman of Alcatraz?

I came into the cabin after being on deck and found who sitting on the table? Mike as I call him the Canary bird I had seen it earlier on the top of the main mast.

Today I put an egg in a pan of salt water and it floated, so checked another which sank so I boiled it later I broke the floater into a bowl and it being ok I fried it, amazing.

No wonder people were sent away on cruise liners for their health and to relax them. It certainly is for me anyway as I feel well both mentally and physically and I would recommend it to anyone who likes boats and the sea who has a spark of adventure in them.

Sometimes I get careless on deck and take chances, familiarity? I seldom if ever use a safety harness and will have to be more careful as my greatest danger as I see it is falling overboard. The second is being run down by a ship.

The following morning Charlie as I christened my golden bird was missing. The last I saw of it was at dusk on the push-pit facing aft. Poor little blighter did we want to topple in when it was all up? Must say he left his mark.

I awoke at 0430h to Halliards frapping a pitch black night. I had my cords and shirt on to hoist sails and it started to rain heavily so I said fuck this is a squall which I didn’t think came at night. So I closed the hatches and went back to the bunk. In fact it rained all night with little wind so I did the right think. It is not always easy to know what to do, one sure thing never a dull moment.

Today is our 40th Wedding Anniversary.

**Day 35.**

The real Doldrums have now enveloped us in its grip of 90’ heat, glare, fickle winds, calms and squalls with torrential rain. Prior to this we were receiving it and miss north-east winds as the trades slowly petered out

I have been asked how much sleep do I get at night. Mainly if the wind is steady in direction and strength I often sleep all night unless I need to empty my bladder. When I check the compass and if the weather is dodgy I also check the barometer. Weather symptoms in the evening of clouds and sun and even bird life foretell weather along with the barometer for at least 12hours ahead. I have generally awakened to a change of wind as it produces a different wave action. The noise of a shower hitting the cabin-top also awakens me even though I am not a light sleeper.

In breezy or fresh conditions one wakes frequently and when it is really bad in strong winds when you are lying ahull one sleeps little as it is like being on the inside of a drum that a child might be hammering one.

So as you can see there is always something to see and do out here. Scanning the horizon is only one of them every time I come out of the cabin watching big waves coming up astern when running.

I have discovered a nice way to eat fruit I chop an apple into a salad and add a few sultanas which makes it both tasty and chewy.

**Day 23.**

A ship crossed our stern last night. I called it 5 times and no reply, pity. How many have passed at night and how near?

I have discovered why eggs float which are not bad I had a boiled one today which floated and when I topped it I only topped an air pocket.

**Day 45. 05.10.93.**

I crossed the Equator my 3rd time doing so and celebrated it with a gin and tonic. The sun has gone south of the Equator since 23 Sept so it is well into spring now in the south Atlantic, the swells from the south increasing, bad weather below?

Two eggs left today. I don’t think I could have taken more in Funchal. They were ok but not as good as the Irish ones or perhaps it was the heat, I will miss them as I like eggs.

Peanut butter is ok but can’t compare it to creamery butter which I love and is the only fat I have ever eaten in my life.

I’m lucky I did not choke yesterday I was eating a barley sugar sweet and as I looked up at the mizzen sail it popped down my throat. No hassle except for a lump in my chest until it melted.

I noticed we have barnacles on self-steering rudder and I checked the hull and we have more there, so much for anti-fouling paint, which I applied in Limerick and we have a long haul to Cape Town.

I was watching something white on the distant water when I saw spray shooting up form a whales blowhole could barely see a back and fin an the for the first time ever I saw the tail flukes of a whale rising from the surface prior to its sounding. It must have been late for a date somewhere as it was going like a train.

I have a swallow hopping in and out of the cabin which landed earlier and it is very tame.

Was another pastime and I never got bored doing it. “Loon” is like a duck as he lifts her arse and lets the waves glide under her belly, sometimes having a bubble bath as she forms on a breaking crest. If the sun is out this can be most beautiful and is indescribable due to the many colours of the water when in turmoil.

One is always learning. When I lost the “Iniscealtra” in ’89 it was in September and I was at the same latitude as Cape-Town. This time I am timing the seasons properly as they are reversed in the Southern Hemisphere.

I am thinking of what I will have for tea but what? Oh Jesus I am thinking of a cottage loaf for toasting and a pound of sliced ham or butter and black puddings, rashers and chips. Instead I have a tin of tuna with a chopped onion in it.

Buried the swallow at sea, sad I went for the gin bottle and there it was laid out in the liquor cabinet. No better place to go, poor little fellow, so tiny and brave and so skilful in the air. Always look on the bright side of life. My head must look funny with hair hanging over my ears and neck as I only cut it at the top to give protection against the sun, another swallow on deck.

One of my two medium sized gas bottles has so far lasted 73 days and I am wondering how much longer it will last. I have them held down in a cock-pit locker with a plywood top shaped around them. But then I used little of it in the heat I met. Having my last cigarette should have brought more funnily enough when you haven’t them it doesn’t trouble you.

I saw a pod of killer whales crossing my wake today so sleek and shiny and healthy looking as they porpoised away. Will not have much food left when we reach Cape-Town as I noticed the lockers were not showing a lot of tins so I checked the Funchal food list and discovered that when I totted up all the various varieties of tins that I had made a mistake of 50plus. I always allow at least one tin a day for the estimated number of days at sea so now I would have to be careful and husband what I have. Ever since I have always double checked the food list when totting up. Thinking of doughnuts today with cream and jam or anything unlike the wholemeal rye king biscuits with a soft tasty bite to it.

I found Mike the canary coloured bird as I was pulling out a new book. I gave him a funeral to starboard in the biggest cemetery I know of as dolphins played and paid the respects.

There I little difference in the wind strength in these south-east trades from the nor-east ones but I find it easier to handle sails as the wind is forward of the MPST and even though we are well heeled we are not rolling also I have no problem dealing with poles on fore-sails, so we continue mainly under a one reefed main and a working jib.

The south-east trades are a lot less variable in direction and I have little to do in the way of boat handling for the 1,200nm that they will carry us. Maybe they are not influenced by land masses and Islands.

A few years late I found that the north-east trades cross the Caribbean Sea continue for a few hundred miles into the Pacific Ocean after crossing Central America at Panama.

Today sees the last of the drinking water I got by handing buckets under the goose-necks of the mizzen and mainsails in the monsoon like showers that we got while in the Doldrums.

I used to allow the rain to wash the salt from the sails first and then hang the buckets which filled up in no time. When I funnelled it into my 5gallon plastic drums it made really nice tea. I also got a nice wash in these downpours which I found invigorating as the water was cold, no doubt coming down from a great height and after a good towelling one felt like a new man for a while until the sun appeared again.

The strong west going Equatorial current is pushing us at up to 45nmb per day as we diagonally head down the south-Atlantic for our position some 200nm off the coast of Brazil. The nearer we get to Brazil, this current curves down the Brazilian way and assists us as we head south-west so I estimate we are on a daily average of 80-100nm per day, which is satisfying. As the stock of food is declining daily and my consumption now that we are in a more temperate climate has increased. I even have porridge now daily which I am fond of. I am also using the long life milk more often as the expiry date ends in 10 days time and I don’t want to have to dump it. It is lovely in porridge. In future I will be more careful of expiry dates when buying.

No “Queensberry Rules” out here and we often get a thump form a cresting wave below the waterline as we heel to windward. In fact it is difficult to arise from the lee bunk. It is like a centrifugal force but I time the wave motion which helps.

I miss the cigarettes now and then but I have sweets which are great.

I was rooting through a bunk locker and I found an Irish pack of Galtee Cheese in mint condition as it is packed in tinfoil. So much for my stock control, normally I tick off items as I pull them out.

**Day 62. 22-10-93.**

We lost our steady south-east trade winds that had pushed us for 1,800nm and we are now lying ahull to a north-west gale which is giving very heavy showers these showers flatten the sea some-what so I don’t complain.

I will be lucky to have any grub left when we arrive in Cape-Town, stock declining fast. I find I am using sugar again in my tea now that we have left the dead heat and humidity behind in the Doldrums, 76’ today. I wear a tee-shirt now in the evenings and leave it on even when I sleep.

Once in the trades I had the genoa up for 3 days, the mizzen for 10 and the main for 11.

I think the 2 weeks break in Madeira helped me somewhat to prepare for the Equatorial heat.

No sextant sight today, no rush, as we are many miles from rocks, no ships and no cigarettes.

Examining and being examined and my first Albatross with its concorde bill. What brings you up here my amigo, a beautiful glider.

From now on I will be kept busy changing sails as we approach the Horse Latitudes before we pick up the Westerlies which roam unhindered below the Southern Capes. A big change from the steady heading of the Trades which gave us maximum speed with little sail changing.

Thinking back to Kilrush in July which only seems like a few weeks ago, soon if not already you will be planning for Xmas in the Flower Shop, you won’t feel it now about ten weeks.

I wonder where I will be having the turkey this year. A lot of what I eat seems to be a lot lately. Having my last ½ grapefruit now with sugar and a few sultanas.

The problem and temptation down here is not to get greedy and head for Cape-Town too soon or one might get hung up in the South Atlantic high pressure system, so I figure to keep going south until we reach more steady westerlies.

The following morning I hoisted a strong working jib and the mizzen to a fresh southerly, by that evening we were becalmed.

I got a time signal G.M.T. from Radio Espania Nationale last evening. I had switched on the transistor to see if I could get a Brazilian station, I presume it was the Canaries, amazing.

No wonder they call the washing powder Surf in the brilliant sun of yesterday the wave crests were the whitest I have yet seen.

We are well heeled again under a one reefed main and working jib to an extension of the south-east trades. A short steep swell is pulling up from the south with lumps from the south-east between them and I have to wait until we are on a wave crest to scan the horizon. 72’ today as we leave the Equator behind, tee-shirt and pyjama legs and even light socks this evening and they feel snug and comfortable.

Sometimes I think back to past scenes of my youth and later the teenage years and then marriage, children etc, something triggers these thoughts I suppose.

Yesterday was the roughest day of the trip since 2nd day and night after leaving Ireland, with vicious squalls.

We are into a different weather pattern. Skies and showers are typical of Ireland.

A lonely part of the Ocean, no birds, ships, flotsam, jetsam, mermaids nothing, but I feel healthy and strong.

One good thing about life at sea, you are your own boss. It’s great to have no one to tell you do this or do that only the wind and seas dictate out here. Only once have I found it completely dark at night, most nights one can read the compass by either the moon or stars.

My biggest worry now as we approach the two Islands of Martin Vaz and Da Trinidad which lie some 600nm off Vittoria in Brazil is how far east of them I shall stand- off them. Too far and I am afraid I will run into the high pressure system, too near and I could be in trouble, so I decide on a safe bet of 100m so much for my faith with my sextant sights.

If I trusted my navigation more or had a G.P.S. or if my sat/nav was working it would be nice to sail between them as 25nm separates them. “If my Aunt had balls” as a friend of mine says “she would be my uncle.”

Funny to think Ireland will shortly be into winter as I sail south now into Spring/Summer.

**Day 65.**

Just as I was nodding off last night the boom started to slat. I had started to get up when the wind returned. It must have been a shower passing. Then sometime during the night I woke to torrential rain, so I imagine we are entering or are in the Horse Latitudes which were named and the old sailors when on-route to Australia and running short of water they had to jettison horses.

Today’s temperature is 71’ and I am back to porridge again and my bare feet feel chilly, the south-wind here coming up from the Antarctic is not unlike the cold Polar air at home.

So I spend these days preparing for the rough conditions I expect to meet when I turn south-east for Cape-Town. Another chain hawse-hole is plugged and greased, all the rigging checked, sealed a leaking port-hole, check on shackle wiring.

I am thinking my tame robin will miss me this winter. Spending a lot of time on the boat in Mount-Shannon which is o the first lake going up the Shannon where I prepared, it used to hop into the cabin and stand cheekily on the table as I ate.

My daily sextant sights tally with each other and I am more confident now of my position. I should really use it more often but I find that I only do so when necessary. Just one of those mental blocks most of us have. I know friends who would rather navigate than sail, but I don’t mind it now.

Another 2-300m should see us well into the Westerlies. Many Brazilian radio stations now and especially at night, but I have no Portuguese.

Today I brushed barnacles from the self-steering rudder which was a mistake as the anti-fouling also came off which I thought would be hard.

I saw my first bit of rubbish for ages, the size of a head of cabbage but yellow in colour and the texture of a pot-scourer. Amazing what interests one out here.

I changed the gas bottle so we will be ok until Cape-Town. I hung out over the top-sides and discovered many barnacles on the starboard bilge and bilge keel. Funnily enough the port side is reasonable clean. Barnacles are 11/2-2’ long and not unlike worms and they must be slowing us down to hell. Anti- fouling paint 100days old.

I have eventually figured out that being on the port tack for nearly 3 weeks immersed the starboard bilge giving the barnacles a better chance there.

In the light sleeping bag again now at night and it feels cosy after so many days under a sheet. 69’ this morning.

Still working our way steadily south with winds from mainly north and east.

According to today’s plot we are below 23’south or below the latitude of Rio de Janeiro.

Plenty of rain now for the past few days but the sun always appears. Temperature slowly decreasing 63’ this morning and I find that I am not pulling the curtains to keep the sun out anymore. In fact I need it to dry out the cabin after the last two days got wet twice yesterday but it was rainwater which will dry.

**Day 68.**

The first westerly wind today and a welcome change. I put my head out to scan and got my head and face washed by salt water, ah well, what else do you expect.

Expecting steady westerlies any day now as I am well south even past the Variables Latitude.

**Day 69. 29-10-93.**

Barometer 1029mb, temperature 61’ but wind still southerly and it has me baffled now for 30h and tomorrow sees another month gone, hard to believe.

**Day 78.**

We are out of the variables or Horse Latitudes for the past week with mainly north-west winds which allow us to pole out either w/jib or genoa. On Wednesday we had f6-7 and I ran under the strong working jib.

God but I should be healthy, no butter or bread, now fat powdered milk, fruit, fish, beans and peas etc. No fags or booze and early to bed and early to rise.

I am wondering if we picked up the barnacles in Funchal. But then if the antifouling paint was any good I shouldn’t have. I scraped a few from the starboard waterline today and I can see the bilge keel dark with the “Bastards” they must be really slowing us.

30 days now or a month and still no ship. Sunset last evening was clear and bronze and I got a start as the moon was rising and the very same colour.

I estimate 10 helpings of porridge, 12 jars of peanut butter, 11 of jam, 10 packs rye vita, a few instant mashed spuds. I still have to check tinned food in bunk lockers. I also have a pack of complan and 2 packs of powdered milk, so no panic situation yet. Being without fags I am eating more. Apples long gone but I have 8 oranges and some lemons and limes, Madeira onions still juicy.

Today sees us 300m north-west of Tristan da Cuhna a small island 38’s -12’w so we are doing ok, 1,800 to Cape-Town.

Two albatross today along with many other sea birds.

We are on 35’s and it is unlikely that we will see shipping until we near the African coast.

Lately it is not easy to scan the horizon as we have both rain and strong winds. I can scan from the inside of cabin both forward and sides but not aft. I was looking through bow porthole just now and the deck was covered with white water. I slid back the main hatch and a wave ¼ filled the cockpit.

I was on deck in oilers to adjust Nell and decided to do some maintenance and I discovered clevis pin in main forestay had no split ring in it. It just shows you the importance of frequent checking when you are constantly sailing in heavy weather.

**Day 81.**

I was on deck twice last night as one of poled working jibs backed twice as we rolled down wind with much yawing. I am blaming the many barnacles on the hull for her failure to hold a course.

The second time I came back I got into two sleeping bags and I wasn’t too warm. Today is perfect with a nice westerly wind and sun so I took advantage of it to get a lot of work done including a sextant sight.

Large swells from south-west with lesser ones from west not making life easy but it is a beautiful morning and we are en-route to Cape-Town with a fair wind. A good day to spot shipping

**Day 90.**

Yesterday we were lying ahull to a gale from the north-west and today 15-11-93 the sat/nav gives us a position at last. So I am both happy and reassured that my sextant sights are ok. 35’- 26.s, 14’-53w.

Shortly afterwards I speak to an L.P.G. ship on a parallel heading bound for Saudi Arabia. His position is spot on with mine which is very satisfying.

He is to ask the Captain re: my message home. I also asked him for a compass check which confirms with mine. 48 days since I last spoke to a ship and I am over the moon. A nice helpful and kind man.

I was reading and the boat rocked so much I thought another ship had passed near to us but when I went out nothing, opposing swells maybe.

Someone once asked me if I ever say anything supernatural in my voyaging, I said that “I am more afraid of the living than the dead”.

I can now get the B.B.C. World station on my ships radio at night.

Putting pyjama legs under the track suit pants daily now as temperature is often 50’ when there is south in the wind.

The food stock was taken today and I have rationed myself to 1/12 tin’s per day along with 9 rye vita biscuits or slates as I call them so let us hope we do a better daily speed than the past few days. The barnacles on the hull are slowing us down to hell.

I saw my first pair of Cape Pigeons along with plenty of other bird life.

I fell on my back when on foredeck hoisting a poled jib. I came down on the anchor. Luckily my back is ok but I have a nice sore bruise on the back of my thigh. I will be more careful in future as there wasn’t a hell of a juggle of large waves after the gale.

I have not used the safety harness yet on this trip and I am now thinking of doing so as you use both hands hoisting a sail.

I had fresh greens with my dinner today. Upon checking the onions I found one of them had sprouted lovely green shoots which were like scallions.

The longest gale so far 19h of 15. Are we in what is called the notorious N-S divide that is between the top of the Southern Ocean and the base of the South Atlantic.

No doubt that when the sun appears the ocean is wild and beautiful. The wind is just aft of beam and we are riding pretty large swells and waves that are breaking it’s not easy moving around the cabin.

I would not say no to a gentle wind for a change. The motion I can stand but the noise is tiring with the wind whining in the rigging etc.

I opened a tin of powdered milk which I bought in Madeira and I had it on porridge, lovely it must be full cream.

The biggest flock of Cape Pigeons so far 20 of them. The ocean is full of bird life lately. Still no sign of a mermaid though I cut my hair again.

The second nice day now with sun after nights with dew on the decks. Yesterday s.w.f5 and today n.w. f4. Genoa and working jib poled, 60’. Porridge day tomorrow I have it every third day now.

**Day 95.**

This morning is porridge morning and it was so lovely with the full cream milk. Another dew on the deck last night. Today is the third day since I have touched a halliard or a sheet. The ocean is as calm as you can get I down here. Still trying for South African or Cape-Town stations on the radio. Barometer 1030mb. Wind steady from north-west.

**Day 97.**

26 tins of food left today. The sky is a brilliant blue. Day 4 now of smooth sailing but a few mares tails starting to appear. Barometer 1022mb wind now south by east F5 and cool.

I have lentils and pearl barley steeping since yesterday for soup with a ½ tin of tomatoes left since yesterday I will add a half tin of chunky tuna.

Albatross birds with us constantly now. I say “Good morning” and “How are you” “Great thank you” must be 500 Cape Pigeons wheeling around the boat today. 1930h I just had a big meal for this time of the day and especially since I had a good dinner. I opened a tin of celery and I had it with the other half of the tuna. “Fuck the rations” I am starving and also celebrating crossing the Prime Meridian and the good progress. Full rig of genoa, main and mizzen. Poled jibs would have been up for 6 days this morning at 0900h.

I will have to get used to being heeled again after 6 days of rolling as we now are reaching.

I decide to have a good hot dinner as we saved days lately. Spuds, beans, sardines and soup (hot-cup) I had it all ready and mug of soup spilt on to the sleeping bag. “Shit”.

The B.B.C. World service very clear now.

Day 100. I must do another food inventory. The last two days are slow going. I have a nagging doubt as to whether grub will see me to Cape-Town, without further rationing. I estimate 800m left now.

I had two rye vita this morning one with mayonnaise and the other with peanut butter.

I will manage with remaining food for 14 more days if I watch it. So unless we are delayed I will be ok.

The barometer is low at 1012mb but we have main and genoa up to a south-east F5.

The following day we had a near gale after the moon rose and orange colour. South-east wind I find is very gusty.

**Day 102.**

23 days to Xmas would you believe and 700m to Cape-Town I got another sat/nav fix which tallies with my sextants sights.

Amazing with sat/nav after getting a fix, I looked at it again and it was computing and gave me a second fix. Maybe what was wrong with it has sorted itself out.

**Day 103.**

The barometer up again to 1036mb and south-east wind filling full rig, but cold on deck. We are on 38s and Cape-Town is on 84’s so I don’t mind if this south-east wind is pushing us to the north, plenty of African stations at night now but no English speaking ones.

I switched on the sat/nav and got another fix “Jesus” it makes life so easy.

**Day 105.**

A glassy swelled Southern Ocean as I am becalmed since last evening. It is a great change and there is a feeling of peach and restfulness but I am edgy to be on the move now that I am nearing land also food is a nagging worry. This beautiful morning reminds me of Lough Derg on a fine morning any tame robin.

A pot of tea is on the cabin table for the first time in ages and I think of the good things in life to enjoy when I make a landfall. Food, cig’s, walking and talking. Knowing that you know I am ok a game of pool, having a laugh, seeing trees and flowers and hearing birds sing again.

A breeze from the north at noon and I hoist light genoa, mizzen staysail and mizzen and I can hear the bow-wave.

The wind steadily increased as barometer dropped and by the following evening we have another gale. Sunset is one of the wildest and most dirty looking I have seen this trip and the rigging is playing a lively tune.

A hectic night I hit the bunk at 200h and tried to sleep. The wind increased and at times I was sorry that I had left the jib up. I got up at 2230h and struck the jib. I made cocoa and read until I got tired and fell asleep. I woke at 0500h and got into oilers but when I went out and felt the strength of the wind and saw the state of the sea, that was that. I pumped the bilge and back to my warm sleeping bag.

I looked out again at 0730h huge waves with crests. The wind now westerly by evening we were under way again to twin poled working jibs one of which split before midnight.

**Day 107.**

Cape-Town now 500m distant as I got another sat/nav fix. I am now 70m S of my waypoint which is 90m south-west of Cape-Town as I expect to meet south-east winds as I approach the Cape of Good Hope or the Cape of Storms.

First decent w’ wind and they are supposed to predominate in these latitudes.

I was dazzled today with white foam like snow from a big breaker that foamed around us in the sun. I got a few on board as she yawed and for the first time ever got a crest over the stern.

I am hoping for a good night’s rest after last night and today. I slept well until a gybe got me out at 0030h and 0130h and 0230h, when I wheel steered until 0500h when I dropped one jib.

At 1000h the wind eased to F5-6 and I poled jibs again. It is the cross seas and I foul growth on hull which is the main cause of our gybing.

I am earning the miles but it is worth it as we fly eastwards. Not easy setting twins today with rolling.

On one tin a day now.

I am constantly watching now and bringing her back on course with wheel after gybing so I decide to sleep in oilers.1400h another sat fix 434h now.

Six tins now remaining 2 sardines, 2 tomatoes, 1spinach and 1 pea’s. Five days of rye-vita at 6 per day. I have enough powdered milk for that time also. Plenty of tea, coffee, cocoa and 8 sugar lumps plus an unopened pack of complan, some jam, peanut butter, mayonnaise and hot-cup soup. If that isn’t cutting it fine.

I just had to dash out after a break of 13/4h, pitch black with a fine mist. The wind seems to have increased or else it was a gust as it seems to have eased now. 2000h I just looked out and a few stars showing. Maybe it will clear, 2030h another gybe and raining so I dropped jibs and lay ahull.

**Day 110.**

We got a southerly wind which gradually swung to the south-east which was gusty but not as bad as previous 3 days and nights. I have 4 tin’s of food left with scrapings from honey, jam, mayonnaise and peanut butter. I also have powdered milk, instant soup and complan which would see me ok for 4-5 days and one onion. 280m today I think of food a lot.

One of my mainsail battens is gone and another needs stitching. Other than that I have only landfall wants to attend to such as anchor and warps, fenders etc. I have the Irish Flag out and ready, I have clean clothes which I have in a plastic bag.

Four days now since my last sat/nav fix and little chance of a noon sight so far so I keep to an easterly heading to avoid being swept north of Cape-Town in the southerly winds which I now expect to be steady and also the southerly Benguela current which brings cold water from the Antarctic regions.

Today I look at my right thumb knuckle which I took the skin off yesterday while winching the sails. It is the worst injury I have received to date, that and falling on the anchor. Others were only muscular from being thrown around and minor scratches.

The South African I met in Madeira told me there would be much shipping as I neared the Cape so I will be watchful from her on.

I was hoisting the mizzen during the afternoon and it was nearly up whether she rolled or not I don’t know but I lost my balance with my two arms over my head and I hauled on the halliard thinking if it was tight I would save myself, but no I fell on my back onto the winch and I think I have either cracked or broken two ribs, so I am only doing what work is essential.

I am getting some sun now temperature 70’, barometer 1028mb.

**Day 112.**

I had genoa and full main up this morning but now at 150oh I had to drop the mizzen and reef main and hoist a working jib, but I got a noon sight. I have to be extra careful with my ribs which are very painful and I found it tough going. It was not easy sleeping last night either and I had to sleep on my back. Getting up from the bunk is very difficult.

Is it my imagination or has the Ocean a greener look to it today.

My sextant sight puts me 60m south of and 60m behind my D.R. position from last sat/nav position of 3 days ago.

I don’t know which to believe and I think the barnacles which are very thick now make it very difficult to judge speed and are slowing us down to hell.

Spending a lot of time looking at chart and navigation today but I know from the transistor radio my heading so I am not too worried, still it is always nice to be sure of one’s position when approaching land.

**Day 113.**

We have a strong south-east wind since 1500h yesterday and sea motion is different as the seas are shorter and seem to have flattened the long swells we were used to.

We are now close reaching in this steady in direction wind, which has the ocean wild with whitecaps.

I had an English speaking station on the transistor last night but I failed to find out where the broadcast was from, though it gave news and weather for Pretoria and Johannesburg.

I am trailing a spoon bait today without success, should have been doing it long before this but was afraid that if I did not know the type of fish and ate it that it could be harmful.

Anyway hunger is always the best sauce as today I have left one tin of spinach and one of chopped tomatoes and I am on 3 rye vita per day for past 2 days. Today we are 150m from Cape Town.

My ribs are very stiff and sore in the morning but improve as the day wears on.

There is a whine in the rigging I must go up and take genoa from the deck and stow it also storm jib which are lashed on deck. I estimate this south-east wind at F6 and as we are now broad reaching we are on maximum speed.

The bow looks bare now without sails hanked to forestay and bowsed. The wind eased slightly with sundown at 1810h but still plenty of it. The sky showing many, many mares tails now for the past few hours.

The sun which we had all day showed very sparky and bronze as it went down and I think we shall have no lack of wind for our landfall.

Very difficult moving around all day with this short wave action from the east to south-east.

The B.B.C. world service which is very clear tonight said that sports fixtures in the U.K. have been disrupted due to snow and rain. So conditions here could be one hell of a lot worse.

**Day 114. 13-12-’93. (Monday).**

I had ½ a tin of spinach left since yesterday for lunch with one r/vita and a cup of coffee. I have been on one r/vita for breakfast since I cut them down to 3 per day. I don’t find it all that bad so far knowing that I am near to a landfall which I expect to make tomorrow and I presume we are now in the south-east trades good and proper since last Friday.

I hoisted a genoa at midday and my ribs acted up giving much pain as I imagine with leeway and the 2kn current my chart shows we are being carried north. Later as wind eases I let out the reef I had in the mainsail and Jesus the pain in my ribs. Two hours later I had to shorten sail again. Anyway it gave me a chance to replace two piston hank on the working jib so at least some good came out of it.

I am going around like an old man and must have damaged my ribs which were beginning to heal after three days.

Sat/nav showing antenna fails constantly now.

Back to a whine in the rigging again and when I forget my ribs and get a dart of pain I am like a cripple but I soldier on.

Five days now since last sat/nav fix and two days since last sextant sight. It is always an anxious time for me as I approach land and especially after so many days at sea also this current helps to make it that bit more difficult.

These south-east trades originate in this area and are no different than when I met them north of the Equator so at least I expect to carry wind to the land.

We are approaching the shipping lanes that round the Cape and I am keeping a half hourly scan of the horizon.

1800H. an unexpected treat at sundown and I have nine inch flying fish on the pan. God provides better than two tins of sardines and it was a treat.

**Day 115. 14-12-’93. (Tuesday).**

0130h. I just finished a cocoa after my alarm clock rang at 0100h. I set on each hour and I see the lights of a ship dipping off my port quarter horizon. An exciting time.

Last evening I could see a glow in the sky to the north-east which I assumed was the glow of Cape-Town and is barely visible now as it is misting.

It was drizzling later when a ship came from my stern horizon and passed me to starboard where I could see his lights dipping.

Cape-Town port radio was now loud and clear calling two ships. Later I saw two white mast lights and very shortly afterwards it was near me and off my port-side and going fast I could see his port-hole lights, the lot.

It replied to my second call and gave me a positon and I said to this gentleman of the sea “Thank you my friend, you have made life very easy for me” which indeed he did.

After plotting on my chart I found that I was exactly where I wanted to be. I can’t believe it my navigation is improving.

We are 60m south-west of Cape-Town and 40m south-west of the Cape and 20m south so it on latitude so I decide to make for Gordons Bay which will save me rounding the Cape against headwinds when I leave for Oz.

I continue to set the alarm clock but find I am too excited to sleep and my ribs are not easy to sleep with anyway.

With daylight I eased the sheets and adjusted “Nell” to broad-reach us to land.

My breakfast of a pot of tea and one r/vita was with the last of the peanut butter and one of the last 3 remaining lumps of sugar and a spoon of honey.

Last night’s drizzle has cleared and the sky to the south-west is clear but slow to come our way.

The south-east trades are now fresh and I would like to have the second reef in the mainsail but I dare not chance it with my ribs.

Anyway we are broad reaching which does not put too great a strain on either sails or rigging.

At 0600h I weave my way through 14 fishing boats and I have a large ship heading south-east off my stern horizon.

It sure is a busy part of the ocean and I am as excited as hell and don’t feel like eating.

Making excellent progress would love a doss now but I can’t afford to.

It is not every day you are off the Cape of Good Hope and I can sleep later.

Thank God for his goodness, it was touch and go with food. Land was visible at 100h a jagged skyline of mountains. That evening I tied up at Gordons Bay Yacht Club after motoring against gale force head wind squalls coming down from the mountains behind it.

The club was closed on Monday’s and I had to climb around an overhanging razor wire fence to get to shops and a restaurant 15minutes walk away where I had my first fresh food, a mixed grill and two glasses of milk in nearly 4months. I also bought cigarettes and groceries.

Upon asking about the Club I was introduced to a nice guy playing pool who was a member and who drove me back.

The following morning I met Bertie. From that first evening of my arrival until my departure I only met the friendliest of people.