

Saorsa II — 2010 Cruise

Part 012

2010-07-13 10:38 ADT (13:38 Z)

Anchored off Malagash Point near Tatamagouche Bay. With such place names, how could one not stop and drop the hook in such a beautiful spot.

Last night, I fell asleep to the sonorous sounds of the seals. One need only hear it to understand the old myths and beliefs that the Selchies embody the spirits of sailors lost at sea.

We sailed and mostly motored here yesterday in very little wind. After leaving Summerside, we managed to sail almost to the Confederation Bridge, but then the wind faded and we ended up motoring beneath the bridge and on.



Illustration 27: Confederation Bridge stretches out towards Prince Edward Island

The bridge is quite a sight and very difficult to capture with a photo. As grand an achievement as it is, for me it had no effect like the shivers that came from the natural grandeur of Rocher Percé.

Summerside is a lovely wee town and has a good marina. From a cruising sailor's perspective, it is very good indeed. Good diesel available at the dock, a propane tank filling station only a five minute walk away, liquor store, grocery store, and Tim Horton's also within a five minute walk of the dock. As well, the local yotties were remarkably skilled and very helpful.

Monday night (the night before we left Summerside), we attended "*Ceilidh at the Collège*". An even hosted by "*The College of Piping and Celtic Performing Arts of Canada*". The Ceilidh is held weekly during the summer and gives students an opportunity to showcase their considerable talents.

The College is about a 15 minute walk from the marina docks.

It was the first performance for the season and proved to be a charming evening. Performances by Pipers, Drummers, Highland Dancers, Step Dancers, A Fiddler, and a Singer were all delightful. The younger students were particularly engaging as they flew through their performances with an obvious joy.

One of the Pipers, an instructor at the College, brought forth stirring runes that quickened the pulse of all present and were enough to strike fear into the Sassenach heart.

We are now in Nova Scotia and Summerside is a pleasant memory. It was our only stop in Canada's smallest province, but thoroughly charming. I would happily return.



Illustration 28: Piper at the Ceilidh

2010-07-16 20:19 ADT (23:19 Z)

At the Hector Quay Marina in Pictou, Nova Scotia. We arrived early afternoon yesterday after a pleasant sail around Caribou Point from where we had anchored in Caribou Harbour.

Caribou Harbour proved to be an awkward anchorage with very limited depth and some odd currents to play us about. After our initial anchoring, we were forced to raise anchor and re-set a couple of hours later. As well, our anchor alarm sounded a little after mid-night as we swung to the current. All in, not very pleasant.

Pictou has proven to be a lovely little town. Last night, we had a sumptuous dinner ashore at Mrs. MacGregor's Tea Room. My prime rib was excellent and greatly enhanced by a musical duo playing some sweet jazz.

After dinner, we walked a short distance to a free outdoor concert by one of the local pipe bands. A thoroughly nice evening.

Tomorrow, we're up early to catch the tide and sail to Ballantyne's Cove on St. George's Bay. That will position us for Canso Strait and then on to the Bras d'Or Lakes.

2010-07-17 08:46 ADT (11:46 Z)

Underway steering East Nor'east with a sou'west force 4 pushing us along. Working headsail is set and wind vane is engaged. Pictou has vanished in the light grey haze astern. We're rolling gently as a light sou'westerly swell comes down on our starboard quarter.

We got a somewhat early start today so as to catch some of the ebb on our way to Ballantyne's Cove. We've been sailing along making good speed for the past hour, but the wind is starting to fade. Just wait and see what happens.

Been in an odd frame of mind these past few days and feeling confused. I stare blankly at the wheel as it moves dutifully in response to the wind vane. Right now, there is nothing inside to write. Why bother?

2010-07-17 10:51 ADT (13:51 Z)

Motoring. Again.

Burning diesel fuel and accumulating hours on the engine.

The forecast called for sou'west 10 to 15 knots of wind (a light Force 4). A perfect wind for our heading so we set out. And now we are in a flat calm.

Motoring. Again.

2010-07-17 20:22 ADT (23:22 Z)

Ballantyne's Cove, Cape George, Nova Scotia.

A delicious evening. Calm, clear, half moon just risen, reflections undisturbed in the harbour, hushed voices carry across the water, sun just below the hill still casting a glow overall.

I sit alone. Content. At peace.

The air grows cooler after the last of the afternoon. The Gin&Tonic helps.

We've just been invited to linger another day. A concert tomorrow evening. Will we stay? But, of course. Odd, how priorities change. We are a day away from Canso Strait and Port Hawkesbury. Our schedule originally was to be there a few days ago. Now, it matters not at all.

In an existential moment, I glance at the end of a mooring warp beside me. It is whipped with three whippings, all done by my hands. My gaze lifts and I raise my eyes to my Mistress. Every line, knot, whipping, splice, I have done with my hands. Every fastener, nut, bolt, screw, piece of hardware, I have fastened. And for all that, I am Hers as much as She is mine. I do not own Her so much as She owns me.

For Her, I have wept, spent my coin, laboured mightily, and spilled my blood. We are truly one; our fates linked. Were She to founder, it would be meet that I clip my tether to Her so that we may make the last voyage together; so that we may be coupled in death as in life. I could not bear the humiliation of returning to shore, alone, without my vessel.

Half moon tonight, neap tides.

Why three whippings? On every line?

If one is a pragmatist, it is done so that the line will be preserved should one of the whippings be lost through chafe or other damage.

A Christian will say it is to remember and respect the Holy Trinity.

A Naval Historian will reflect on Nelson's three great victories, Copenhagen, Nile, Trafalgar.

A good manager will always have three reasons for everything they do and so answer, "All of the above".

Whither Venus? The moon has risen. His companion Venus is not there. Sad moon. I know his feelings.

Another day past. Sunset, Sir! Make it so. And the Ensign is lowered.

Tonight, I write for me. Much of late has been for others. Time to channel me through these words.

I know the end is near and is closer with each day. How near? I wish I knew. Perhaps not.

Enough, for now.

2010-07-18 21:56 ADT (2010-07-19 00:56 Z)

Memories. Delicious memories. From evenings such as this they are created.

After a too hot day, an open air concert in the cool of the evening on the front porch of the Ballantyne's Cove Bluefin Tuna Interpretive Centre. A fund raising concert in support of this charming community, its local walking trails, its harbour, and other facilities. The 10th annual concert was attended by at least three generations (I suspect four) from the community.

Fiddler, step dancers, guitar ensemble, vocalists, all young and old local talent gave marvellous performances. Of note, fourteen year old Seamus McLeod accompanied himself with his guitar while he sang with a truly gifted voice. My God, that lad can sing. I have no doubt we will hear of young Seamus in future.



Illustration 29: View across the harbour of the Fund Raising concert at Ballantyne's Cove

An altogether delightful event.

2010-07-19 09:44 ADT (12:44 Z)

The sun shines down from a clear sky and transforms the sea before us to a carpet of sparkling jewels. We steer East sou'east across St. George's Bay toward Canso Strait after leaving Ballantyne's Cove about an hour ago. Under working heads'l on a broad reach starboard tack we're making a little over four knots with the wind vane at the helm. Warm sun and a cooling westerly Force 3, perhaps a light 4.

To port, as I look out, is the shore of Cape Breton; to starboard is mainland Nova Scotia.

My mood improves markedly when we leave harbour, and even more so when we have wind to sail. Today, the sea, sky, and wind are gentle with us. My Mistress and I bask in it, thankful for this.

I wear my Grohmann yachtsman's knife now whenever on deck. I purchased it almost twenty years ago by mail order in response to a fund raising drive in support of the *Bluenose II*. Other than honing its edge and dressing the leather of its sheath, it has remained boxed waiting until last week for a special occasion. Now, I have sailed into the harbour at Pictou where the knife was made; now, I may wear it, respectfully.

The frustrations of yesterday slip away astern as my Mistress moves gracefully across the sea. All is in harmony and I feel content once more.

End of Part 012.