

Saorsa II — 2010 Cruise

Part 014

2010-08-06 13:32 ADT (16:32 Z)

My goodness. So much to write about the past few days.

At the moment, we're anchored in a tiny wee cove shown on the chart and known locally as "Rogue's Roost". The cruising guide goes so far as to suggest it is the prettiest anchorage in Nova Scotia. I'm not qualified to comment on that claim, but it is one beautiful scenic spot as well as a superb anchorage.

The past few days we were in Halifax. We were able to sail a bit on the way there, but mostly ran the engine. Another uneventful passage but very emotional for me. I was taking my wee boat, my Mistress, my ship into Halifax harbour. Arguably, the finest natural deep water harbour in the world.

Sixty-five to seventy years ago, this place was well known to my father and uncles. They all shipped out of Halifax on convoys that kept Britain alive in her darkest hour. As well, they played their part in and went on to win the longest battle of World War II, the Battle of the Atlantic.

And now, I come to this place arriving in the manner that best befits it and those memories. Sadly, as it turns out, this place like most of Canada has lost touch with its history. It is just another industrial port with a small naval presence at HMC dockyard.

We docked at Armdale Yacht Club up in the northwest arm of the harbour. A nice enough spot, but not good value for the dockage charge.

We took a day off and played tourist in this still interesting town.

I visited the Citadel and the waterfront. After purchasing a fine pair of crystal whisky glasses at Nova Scotia Crystal, I spent the afternoon in the Marine Museum of the Atlantic. Splendid place which includes Canada's last surviving corvette, HMCS Sackville.

Alone on Sackville's mess deck, silent tears rolled down my cheeks for the young sailors as I quietly thanked them for their profound sense of duty.

We left Halifax yesterday for the short run to this anchorage. As we passed the outer bouy of the harbour, we sailed into a bank of fog and felt the air temperature drop rapidly. Soon, we were alone in a light grey world about 100 yards in diameter. A cold silent world with only the moaning of the wind in the rigging and the rumble of the bow wave to remind us of what we were about. The sun vanished. All became wet with the cold penetrating fog. Droplets falling from lines, rails, and even my beard. Every two minutes our fog horn blared out its warning to others, one five second blast follow by a pair of one second blasts. A sailing vessel underway limited in her ability to manoeuvre.

Then, the mournful wail of the whistle bouy I sought came to my ears. The moaning sound distinctive and piercing through the fog. Where from? Starboard bow? Yes, perhaps. Eyes straining with hand on the helm. Where is it? Suddenly, fifty yards off, the apparition. A red and white fairway bouy as expected. Identity "HS" confirmed. The mark, our compass, and our GPS all consistent corroborate one another.

Then, it is gone. Vanished in the fog astern as quickly as it appeared. Course to the next bouy set and we

carry on.

The wind fades, we lower sails and start the engine. We motor sail now under our full main. The fog horn pattern changes to a five second blast every two minutes, a power vessel underway.

We never see the next bouy, a red sea bouy the size of a small car. But, we hear its bell through the fog as it passes down our starboard side. We carry on.

With some trepidation, I turn the boat to approach the coast. Granite. Hard, and unforgiving.

We should see a small red spar bouy. Yes, there, to starboard. And to port the rocks of Betty Island at less than half a cable distance.

Carefully, we thread our way between fog shrouded islands and rocks. I con the boat from the chart, the plotter, and direct the crew at the helm from the companionway. A little to port, now starboard. Is the bouy visible?

Several tense minutes and we emerge into a small basin, long and narrow in shape. Ohmigawd! There are two other yachts here already. No matter. I take the helm and crew drops the anchor in response to my "let go".

Again, safely in.



Illustration 31: The foggy anchorage at Rogue's Roost

2010-08-07 20:15 ADT (23:15 Z)

After a grand sail today, we picked up a vacant mooring in Chester, Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia. I would prefer to anchor, but this harbour is filled with moorings leaving no room at all to anchor.

Right now, there isn't a cloud in the sky, the air is clean, and the sun is just approaching the horizon. We're in quite a nice spot although very heavily populated with boats of all types and much traffic to and fro. A change from the remote anchorage of last night.

We motored out of rogue's Roost this morning easily avoiding the rocks which were shrouded in fog when we entered. A rather sobering sight to see the waves breaking against and over rocks we passed unseen.

The forecast was good and this time we were not disappointed. The barometer rose all day as the skies cleared and the westerly wind freshened. My Mistress beat to windward in fine style and again She was soon down to Her minimum sail plan of double reefed main and No. 3 jib. Throughout the day, the wind vane steered the boat through wind and wave. Peter's wonderful gadget is a marvel.

With carefully plotted tacks, we beat our way past Tancook Island and into Mahone Bay. Then, a final tack and we were sailing north up the bay to Chester.

After much searching for a spot to anchor, I decided to grab a vacant mooring.

Again, safely in, after a grand sail on a beautiful day.

2010-08-08 19:47 ADT (22:47 Z)

Anchored in Mahone Harbour after motoring here earlier today from Chester. A blustery southerly blowing a solid Force 6 turned what should have been an easy motor 'round the corner into a bit of a slog. No matter, I saw some lovely scenery and grew to appreciate the beauty of Mahone Bay even more. Dotted with islands, lovely beaches, and delightful sailing it's truly a mariner's playground.

After anchoring in the outer edge of the mooring field, I took a run ashore in the dinghy. Nice little town offering all that a sailor seeks. Well, perhaps not "all", but most everything. I highly recommend a pint of Propeller Bitter and Fish&Chips at "The Mug and Anchor".

Again, the sun gets lower in the sky as my salt stained Mistress lies peacefully to Her cable. She is comfortable here; at home in this place of rocks, sky, and sea. It feels easy to be here with Her.

Over the next week or so, I will guide Her sou'west to Shelburne Harbour. Then comes the challenge of rounding Cape Sable and thence across Fundy to Southwest Harbour in Maine. I read and re-read the Sailing Directions. Again, again, and again I read them. On every reading, I lose count of the number of times the phrase "extreme caution" appears.

Rocks, tidal currents, whirlpools, tide rips, fog, and changeable weather all combine to make that next step a hazardous one. I am reminded of the quote,

"A sailor is never without fear, he simply learns to live with it".

It seems almost everyone here knows the language of the sea. I wandered into a pottery and candle shop in Chester earlier today. In chatting with the elderly lady proprietor I mentioned arriving by sail boat. Immediately, she demonstrated an understanding of rig, sail plan, and pilotage that would befit an

accomplished sailor. Her conversation was both unassuming and unpretentious. Of course, everyone knows such things. She then gave me some guidance on local wind and weather patterns which has already proven to be very accurate.

Again, here in Mahone Harbour, the lovely grey haired woman who served me in the bakery mentioned she had circumnavigated the globe some years earlier on a sailboat whilst visiting 41 countries on the way. But, of course.

2010-08-11 18:44 ADT (21:44 Z)

After a couple of very nice days in Lunenburg, I'm now anchored in a simply beautiful spot. A hundred yards away is a gorgeous white sand beach. To seaward are a handful of tree covered islands. Tonight there is a gently sou'easterly breeze and the remnants of the ocean swell are lapping gently onto the beach.

This is but one of a multitude of magnificent anchorages here. The entire coast is dotted with them.

My visit to Lunenburg was nice, but all too brief. It's a lovely town with many things to do and see. The fisheries museum alone would take an entire day to explore properly. I really think I would like to pay a return visit to this town,

The sailing here has been great. A little challenging, but enormous fun and very rewarding. It's a rock studded coast with a multitude of little channels, passages, islands, coves, and bays. All just perfect for exploring in a sailboat. I wish I could stay.

Last night in Lunenburg Harbour there was something of a dinghy race. A rather eclectic collection of small craft participated. Everything from a "Fireball" class dinghy to a grand banks dory. All present appeared to be having great fun.

Today was a grand sail from Lunenburg Harbour to here, the anchorage outside Port Mouton. Only a little over forty miles, but lovely.

The nor'east wind filled in as forecast then faded about mid-day. After motoring about an hour, a lovely southerly breeze came up and with all plain sail set, my sweet Mistress frolicked along through the Atlantic swells. We sailed almost to the anchorage, then motored the last few miles before dropping anchor off an idyllic picture postcard beach.

The forecast for tomorrow is for "Light wind". So, probably a run on the engine along the coast to Shelburne. I'm told it's a good port to take on victuals, water, fuel, and so forth before the next passage.

2010-08-13 08:57 ADT (11:57 Z)

Gorgeous morning. Simple gorgeous. Not a cloud in the sky. A little cool before dawn, but the sun is up and is bright and warm on my shoulders and face. There's not a breath of wind though. So today the engine will get a bit of a work out.

Last night, after making dinner, eating, and washing up, I quickly hung the anchor lamp, (burned my finger on the lamp's chimney, one shouldn't rush these things) and then rowed in the dinghy the short distance to the beach. A pristine beach of fine white sand with some grass making a barrier just above the tide line and a forest beyond that. A gently pensive walk in the soft sand, the sun going down, a bit of a hush over the landscape. All that was missing was the cheap rum in a Tiki Bar <insert wicked evil grin

here>.

I would be happy to stay here another day, but tomorrow is Saturday and the boat needs provisions. For today, a dull chug the 45 miles to Shelburne.



Illustration 32: Just me and my shadow on the beach at Port Mouton

2010-08-13 11:25 ADT (14:25 Z)

Motoring now a few miles off the southwest shore of Nova Scotia. Other than the lack of wind for sailing, it's a supremely lovely day. There's a little bit of a southerly swell rolling in on us, the engine is running smoothly with a healthy exhaust note and a clear colourless exhaust. My Mistress moves placidly through the calm Atlantic waters. On a day such as this the ocean seems benign, almost friendly, and it's a little difficult to imagine the outrageous destructive forces it can wield to take ships to the bottom and sailors to a watery grave.

But, today, the ocean is calm, and I am thankful to be here on so lovely a day.

In Lunenburg, I purchased a short length of rope from which to make a new painter for the dinghy. It's a synthetic line known by the Danish maker's name, Roblon. The material has the feel and appearance of natural hemp cordage but is low stretch, very strong, chafe resistant, does not rot, and even floats. Good

rope! It is used extensively on board *Bluenose II*.

Anyhow, one end is whipped (yes, three whippings) and a soft eye spliced in the other. I put it into service this morning as the dinghy painter. So far, all looks good. A nice gentle day of towing like this should settle it in nicely.

I sit here and examine the old painter, running my hands over the line, the splice, the whippings. I've retired it, but it is still serviceable with lots of useful life remaining. I understand.

The eye splice I fashioned those several years ago is still secure and strong. On this trip alone, it has towed the dinghy over 2,000 miles and many hundreds more in previous years. The three whippings on the end still fine and tight. The line shows a bit of wear in spots and is getting a bit long-jawed. Old, but still sound.

East Cardinal bouy, "UEF", on the starboard bow, and now abeam. Time to alter course for Shelburne.

End of Part 014.