

Saorsa II — 2010 Cruise

Part 015

2010-08-15 11:26 ADT (14:26 Z)

Awake at 05:00, coffee in the predawn gloom, then clear lower decks and hands to stations for leaving harbour. Away from the dock at 06:00 and moving fast as we race the tide to Cape Sable.

We should have departed a couple of hours earlier, but we needed daylight in order to leave the harbour and clear the approaches safely. Today, sunrise was at 06:05, so an earlier departure wasn't possible.

I've been pushing the engine hard and we've now rounded Cape Sable, its light flashing every five seconds to warn us from this dangerous place. We passed through the tide rips safely and are now headed nor'west to pass between Seal and Mud islands. The channel between the two is named "*The Hospital*" on the chart. Mariner's humour? Or, Cartographers???



Illustration 33: The SV Acorn rounding Cape Sable

The tide tables show we will be dealing with a four knot favourable current as we transit the channel. Then, on to Maine.

This place called Cape Sable is creepy. The tide rips swirl even though we are passing at nearly slack water. They jostle my Mistress in a most unseemly manner. Fog comes and goes without warning. To starboard, waves break over half submerged rocks and shoals. It will be a good place to have left behind.

2010-08-15 12:54 ADT (15:54 Z)

We've rounded Cape Sable and are just north of Seal Island. Course altered and we're on our way to Southwest Harbour, Mount Desert Island, Maine.

So far today, we've put fifty miles under the keel, about 100 more to go.

We're still on the edge of the tide rips here. They jostle and swirl. The fog appears and disappears sometimes in the space of a few minutes. Right now, I sit in bright sunshine; a few minutes ago, all was shrouded in thick fog. One can watch patches of fog materialise and then vanish. This truly is a scary place for mariners.

2010-08-15 18:47 EDT (22:47 Z)

Leaving Canadian shore astern and entering the Gulf of Maine.

We've covered more than 100 nautical miles now and have about sixty more ahead of us. I timed the tides right and my Mistress rode the tidal current and headed for U.S. waters like a projectile from a slingshot. For the first six hours, our speed over ground averaged eight knots.

Now, we deal with the adverse current of the ebb. But, away from the rocks, shoals, and narrow passages of the coast, it has a small effect and slows our progress only a knot or so.

Our American companions, whom we met a couple of days ago, are keeping pace with us about three miles off our starboard beam. This is a return home for them and their yacht "*Acorn*", which is moored in Southwest Harbour. She's a beauty. A Hinckley Bermuda 40 yawl in pristine condition. As immaculate as the proverbial conception.

Her owner and skipper, Rob B. seems a good fellow and fine yachtsman. He's been very helpful in pointing out a few good anchorages in Maine. I sense something of a kindred spirit.

We're making good progress motor sailing under a full main. A little breeze has filled in out of the sou'west and I have been able to reduce engine revs with almost no slowing of the boat. Should reduce the fuel consumption a wee bit.

The sun is getting lower in the sky as this day draws to a close. I'm off watch at 20:30 and back on at midnight for three hours until 03:00. God, I hate the middle watch.

Looking up, I scan the horizon. Empty, save for *Acorn's* masts a few miles away. Nothing else in sight in all directions. The sun is getting lower and the air is cooler now. Tonight will be chilly under a cloudless sky.

2010-08-18 09:50 EDT (13:50 Z)

After arriving at Southwest Harbour on the morning of the 16th, we docked at the Hinckley service dock and were cleared by U.S. Customs and Border Protection. Their representative, Officer S. out of Bangor, was a model of courtesy and service while discharging his duties. He explained to me the difference between the cruising decal I had purchased, and the cruising permit / licence which I didn't have. A few hours after he left and I had lowered "Q", he came along down the dock with a freshly issued cruising licence for the boat.

The passage here from Shelburne was quite uneventful with the exception that we made remarkably good time. So much so that we slowed down as we approached the Maine coast to ensure we had daylight to enter harbour. This was a good thing; as Rob had predicted we encountered a plethora, multitude, and over abundance of lobster pot bouys. I've never seen so many bouys in one place in my life. Even the harbour channel was littered with them.

We followed *Acorn* into harbour while weaving between lobster pots and docked at Hinckley's. This is Rob's home port and he kindly arranged for us to use the Hinckley dock while we waited for clearance from U.S. Customs and Boarder Protection. After clearing customs, we took up a Hinckley mooring just off their dock.

This is a delightful town full of Down East Maine kindness, generosity, and hospitality.

For those interested in boats and the sea, this is close to paradise. Everything is here from hard working lobster boats to very well kept cruising yachts. Clearly, Southwest Harbour is a centre of down east yachting.

Later today, we will catch the tide and head up Somes Sound. This is a small but genuine fjord that almost cuts Mount Dester Island in half. In the next week or so, we'll head west and south from anchorage to anchorage to explore the coast of this beautiful place.

2010-08-18 17:44 EDT (21:44 Z)

A very short sail today north from Southwest Harbour up Somes Sound to Somes Harbour. Only about six or seven miles, but we sailed gently along with a working headsail before a southerly wind that funnelled up the sound.

After anchoring (15 feet of water on 10 fathoms of chain), we had a quick run ashore to visit the book store that was mentioned in all three cruising guides on board. On arrival, we found the building dark, empty, firmly closed, and a "For Rent" sign in the window. Heavy sigh as I turned around and trudged back along the road.

This is a pretty spot but a rather crowded anchorage. As I look up just now, two more boats are arriving and looking for a spot. Add to that the harbour is crowded with moorings and all together a bit much. There must be 40 or 50 boats here! A far cry from Rogue's Roost where we thought two other boats was a crowd or Tangier where we were the only boat in the anchorage.

Tomorrow, we'll catch the ebb tide out of here and sail south to Frenchboro. It's claimed to be a pretty spot with a really good down east home cooking type restaurant.

For now, the anchorage is very peaceful. Time soon to hoist the anchor lamp.

I'm conscious of being nearer to the end of the cruise. In some ways, I'm delighted with that as I do miss home. But there's also a poignancy that grows from that awareness. So far, it's been an incredible journey. I'm ready for the next chapter.

2010-08-19 07:23 EDT (11:23 Z)

Morning. Flat calm in the anchorage. Scarcely a ripple to be seen on the water. The morning sun warming my face as I scribble. Not a cloud in the sky.

The anchorage. Crowded with boats. Their number now doubled by the near perfect reflection of their form on the water.

A brigantine off to port. A solid looking motor sailer astern. Modern sloops interspersed with elegant power yachts. Each beautiful in their own way.

The basin ringed with trees punctuated by half hidden cottages and homes, mostly white clapboard. As genuine a "*Down East Maine*" setting as one might find.

Throughout this journey I've been amazed and rewarded by each of the regions I've touched. All of them different, one from another, and all with an alluring appeal uniquely their own. But, all similar in the friendliness of the people.

Wonderful world.

2010-08-20 17:41 EDT (21:41 Z)

Anchored now, but we sailed today. Oh, how we sailed. My Mistress drove through the water like a train going down grade. All plain sail set as we beat to windward amongst the islands, rocks, and shoals of down east Maine.

I awoke this morning to a fog (no, not in my head) that blanketed Lunt Harbour. As I sat in the cockpit with my morning coffee, Rebekah and Tim on the boat on the next mooring came over to join me. I had met them ashore the day previous. Such a delightfully charming young couple with a pair of lovely children. I immediately sensed a strong set of shared values and had invited them aboard. They live near Rockland. With luck, we will visit with them there a few days hence.

The fog lifted in response to a warming sun and the north wind. We dropped the mooring and got underway. We cleared the harbour approach bouy and hoist sail. Soon, my Mistress, was romping along at five or six knots. She revelled in this day, driving through the water; harnessing the power of the wind with the sails Andy had created. Trimmed to perfection, telltales streaming perfectly in response to the smooth uninterrupted laminar flow of air across the surface of the foil. What simple unadulterated joy for Her to be let loose this way under a clear cloudless sky.

What a perfect symmetry of challenge and pleasure. Precision pilotage amongst rocks and shoals combined with sensual pleasure of wind, wave, and sailing vessel underway.

Halyards so taught they sound a "*G*" below middle "*C*" when flicked with a finger. Sheets so taught that a Lewmar 3-speed 44 winch makes them creak with the strain. A tension measured in thousands of pounds. All working in a perfect harmony of perpetual motion. The delicious motion of the sea.

Then, finally, reluctantly, the sails are lowered and we motor to a good spot in the anchorage.

An anchorage defined by two islands. McGlathery Island to the east and Round Island to the west. A lovely spot preserved in a wild state for future generations.

Now, my Mistress rests. She is comfortable here lying to Her cable. The wind moans in Her rigging, but Her ground tackle is secure and She, too, is secure.

She rests now following a rollicking good sail in beautiful surroundings.

2010-08-21 16:04 EDT (20:04 Z)

A grand sail today, Brief, but sweet and delicious. Under all plain sail we tracked through the water close hauled to a steady sou-west force 5. The water raced down the lee side as my Mistress surged through the water, cleaving it clean and smooth.

We motored out of our anchorage last night at McGlathery, through Merchant Row on our way to Isle au Haut Bay. As we approached the bay, some down east Windjammers appeared beating their way westward. What a glorious sight, a gaff schooner under full press.



Illustration 34: The Down East Main Windjammer "Heritage" beats to windward

After watching the schooners pass, we raised sail and had our brief but luscious sail across the bay. On approaching Vinalhaven Island, we hove to and let one of the schooners pass before us. Then we dropped the headsail and sailed to Vinalhaven under our main before starting the engine and motoring into Seal Bay. A half hour of threading between rocks and we were anchored in yet another beautiful Main anchorage.

Islands covered in spruce trees and fringed with rocky outcrops. Simple timeless beauty.

2010-08-22 18:22 EDT (22:22 Z)

I've calmed down a bit now, but this morning I was thoroughly pissed off and grumpy. The really new water pump I had installed at Ville de Québec was leaking and spewing sea water into the locker. This is the pump that circulates raw cooling water to the refrigerator's compressor unit and thence overboard. The original pump installed some years ago failed and I purchased this replacement in Québec.

The pump's failure forced a change of plans for today. Those who know me will appreciate how well I respond to a forced change of plan with cool equanimity (listen for guffaws of laughter). Anyhow, rather than going to remote and picturesque Pulpit Harbour, we have come directly to Rockland with its superb chandlery and hardware stores.

As it turned out, I was able to cannibalise parts from the old pump and get everything working again without further problems or purchases. But, I'm still rather annoyed at an expensive pump that would fail after less than three months service.

Cruising! Fixing your boat in exotic locations!

Anyhow, we're anchored here in Rockland Harbour, Maine. Nice place. A bit industrial but a quick run ashore earlier evidenced a number of good looking shops and restaurants as well as an exceptionally well stocked chandlery, Hamilton Marine.

We will be here a day or two as the forecast for the next few days is not good. Heavy winds and rain. Best to sit tight in a good harbour for now.

End of Part 015.