

Saorsa II — 2010 Cruise

Part 016

2010-08-28 11:33 ADT (14:33 Z)

Sailing close hauled on a starboard tack making about four knots on a course of south. A nice sou'westerly force 3 to 4 moving us along. Tonight we'll anchor at Richmond Island off Cape Elizabeth, Maine.

Last night, we anchored in the tiny harbour in Damariscove Island. Yes, another beautiful Maine anchorage. This one had a very Hebridean feel to it. No trees and just low bushes clinging to the rock above the high tide line. In modern times, the place had a Life Saving station, but that is now a private residence and most of the island is a nature preserve. The place is only about six miles south of Boothbay Harbour, but has a delightfully remote and rustic air about it.



Illustration 35: Former U.S. Life Saving Station viewed from the Damariscove anchorage

We left Rockland Harbour yesterday morning after a rather pleasant few days there. For the cruising yottie, it is an excellent place to stop, rest, take on victuals, effect repairs, and so forth.

We were blessed in having met Rebekah and Tim W. Earlier. They hosted us to a lovely evening in their home with dinner, wine, great conversation, and an opportunity to do laundry. Before dinner, Tim picked us up in Rockland and took us on a driving tour of the area. The high point (insert punny chuckle) was Mount Battie. From the summit, one has a magnificent view of Penobscot Bay. Simply breathtaking.

Rebekah and Tim exemplify the kindness and generosity we have experienced throughout our visit to Maine. It has been a warming and moving experience for me.

Just now, we're fortunate to have a good weather window for our sail across Bigelow Bight on our way to the Cape Cod Canal. This stretch of coast is treacherous. A high pressure system has moved in from the west and should be here for another three or four days. We've got clear skies, gentle breezes, flat water, and lovely evenings. Beautiful cruising. With luck, we'll transit the Cape Cod Canal before the weather turns nasty again.

2010-08-29 16:16 ADT (20:16 Z)

I decided to stay anchored here in Seal Cove another day. The forecast had a Small Craft Advisory for hazardous seas. I'm not sure why, but my guess is that the sou'easterly swell from hurricane Danielle combined with a nor'west wind could set up some nasty conditions.

So, a bit of a boat chore day. I put a little extra tension on the aft lower shrouds. They seemed a bit slack the last couple of times we were hard on the wind. As well, I installed some of the engine room sound proofing I bought in Rockland. Always a little difficult to know for certain, but the engine noise seem markedly reduced.

Then, I furled sails and put on sail covers. They were a bit untidy after the rather hasty stow they received yesterday.

Finally, I rewarded myself with a cold Murphy's stout from the fridge followed by a cooling swim in the 18°C water. Then, a quick fresh water rinse in the shower and I felt great!

Now, I sit 'neath a cloudless sky in the warm sunshine while a very gentle breeze caresses my skin. Such a lovely way to spend a Sunday afternoon.

Tomorrow, on the move again. We must transit the Cape Cod Canal this coming Friday or Saturday in order to catch the tide at a reasonable time. Next stop is Portsmouth, New Hampshire¹, and then Salem, Massachusetts. I plan to spend at least a day in Salem exploring the town.

Yesterday was a fine day of sailing. After leaving Damariscove, we motored about an hour or so until we were south of Seguin Island. Then, sensing a bit of wind, I shut down the engine and hoist all plain sail. We were hard on the wind and sailing well making better than four knots. Our destination was to windward to the sou'west and the best course we could manage was south. After a couple of hours or so, we tacked the boat and headed for Cape Elizabeth about twenty miles distant. The wind freshened and soon my sweet Mistress was romping along at hull speed, the wind vane self-steering keeping Her hard on the wind.

After a bit, the wind freshened and a reef was needed, followed soon after by a second reef. With Her full working headsail and double reefed main She drove to windward flinging up spray as Her bow burst

¹ As it turned out, I didn't go into Portsmouth. Instead, I put in to York Harbour and spent the night on a town mooring. It was a good spot. Well sheltered and with good facilities nearby. The only difficult part was the rather narrow entrance and strong current in the entrance.

through the building waves.

What a glorious feeling! The double reefed main taught and flat balancing the headsail as it drove us ahead. The helm balanced perfectly with just a touch of weather helm. The wind vane correcting silently and smoothly for the wind and wave yielding a wake as straight as an arrow. Balance and harmony. Beautiful!

After a bit, I disengaged the self-steering just so I could commune with Her. Closing my eyes, I listened attentively as She spoke with me. Together as one amidst the Atlantic's wind and water.

The helm gentle in my hand, needing but the slightest adjustment. Oh, but my Mistress sings a delicious song of the sea.

2010-08-31 10:53 EDT (14:53 Z)

What an odd feeling. To be here well offshore looking over an empty expanse of ocean and then to notice a wee face looking back at me. A pair of alluring limpid eyes filled with curiosity gazing up at me from the water close alongside. My sweet Selchie, if only.

Close hauled on a starboard tack in a gentle west sou'west force 3 making south by west. Sailing along gently and gracefully across a smooth ocean rising to the long easterly swell rolling in from offshore. The wind vane steers us silently and efficiently.

Sailing south across Bigelow Bight towards Cape Ann. This afternoon, I'll round the Cape and then head west to Salem's harbour.

2010-09-03 13:57 EDT (17:57 Z)

Silence hangs over the mooring field now with a heaviness that feels ominous. Looking about, I can see not a single soul. The vessels lie quietly to their moorings. Some prepared for the worst with sails, dodgers, and all extra windage removed. Others sit unchanged and unattended.

The wind has gone sou'east and freshened. It's now a steady 3 with gusts of force 4. A couple of minutes ago, a light patter of rain began. Just a sprinkle for now. The sky is blanketed with cloud. Still thinly in spots with a bit of sun peeking through. The rest thick, heavy, and low.

Halyards rattle against masts as the wind tugs at them. The barometer has begun its descent. It's down six millibar from this time yesterday.

2010-09-03 18:56 EDT (22:56 Z)

Thick fog now. The air is cold and damp. Most of the harbour is hidden by the wet shroud. Visibility is less than half a cable.

It rained off and on the past few hours. Just light showers, nothing more. Stopped for now, so I sit in the cockpit munching some cheddar and crackers. Just in time for another shower to force me below again into the dim saloon.

The crew is asleep on the starboard settee. We've become quite distant and never converse. I suspect we are both eager for the day she will step ashore.

I've just taken a look at the forecast issued a couple of hours ago. Seems Salem will be spared the worst and

we will receive only tropical storm conditions. My remarkably good luck has kept us safe this time.

For all that, I feel quite calm in the face of the coming storm. There is no worry or nervousness in me about it. Simple a steady resolve to do whatever is needed. My Mistress is secure and well moored. I have contingency plans in my head for everything I can imagine. Her systems and equipment are well maintained and in good order. Yes, we could be overwhelmed by events. If so, we will face them together, as we have before, whatever the outcome.

The marina launch just came by to let me know they are are lifting the launch out of the water for the night. There will be no ride ashore for the rest of the night. He wanted to make sure were were secure. Excellent service!

If one believes the forecast, soon, the storm.²



Illustration 36: The full rigged ship "Friendship" dwarfs yachts in the mooring field as she leaves Salem Harbour

² The arrival of Hurricane Earl at Salem proved to be a non-event. That evening we experienced a bit of wind and a spattering of rain, but nothing like the tropical storm conditions that had been forecast.

2010-09-06 09:24 EDT (13:24 Z)

Sailing south by east with Boston abeam. Starboard tack on a close reach in a nice sou-westerly force 3 making a little over three knots.

A good morning, so far. Up at 06:00 and made coffee, removed sail covers, started engine, dropped mooring, and motoring out of Salem Harbour by 06:40. After motoring past Marblehead and getting some sea room, hoist the main and No. 3 jib, then shut down the engine. Everything squared away and then made of pot of porridge for breakfast.

Crew still in her berth seems to have little interest in sailing or the cruise. Quite sad. She hasn't gotten out of her berth for the past 36 hours save to use the head or make coffee for herself.

Anyhow, this is a simply grand day. A clear sky with a (mostly) steady breeze. The boat is sailing very comfortably with the wind vane keeping course. We're crossing Massachusetts Bay on the way to the Cape Cod Canal.

My rather protracted stay in Salem was made all the more delightful by Don and Mimi G. who played host yesterday and took me on a driving tour of the towns of Cape Ann. We visited Manchester and Gloucester to name but two.



Illustration 37: Typical scene in Cape Ann area.

We had a very pleasant lunch at a nice spot overlooking Gloucester Harbour. A lovely surprise, the menu included “Dark and Stormy”.



Illustration 38: Your Captain about to enjoy a Dark&Stormy

This is a lovely part of the world and I'm pleased that I had an opportunity to see it and visit by boat. I remain convinced that the **best** way to see this area is by boat. The culture and all aspects of life are so aligned with the sea that one simply must be on a boat to be part of it.

I'm conscious of the advancing season. The evenings and mornings are a bit cooler, the day light hours grow short as the equinox approaches. I won't be home in time for apple picking. Very sad about that.

2010-09-06 15:18 EDT (19:18 Z)

A lovely sunny afternoon on the water, but a bit tedious just now. The wind faded just before noon so I started the engine. As forecast, the wind has come up again, but now from the south and not very strong. I'm motoring straight to windward at about five knots, but even so I won't be at the Cape Cod Canal until just before sunset. Makes for a long day.

2010-09-07 13:47 EDT (17:47 Z)

We finished the passage to Sandwich at the entrance to the Cape Cod Canal without a problem, but it was a long day. Elapsed time was a few minutes more than twelve hours.

Just as I shut down the autopilot, took the helm, and lined up to enter the canal, the Coast Guard issued a call for assistance for a disabled small vessel in Cape Cod Bay. After checking the chart, I found we were over ten miles away from the disabled craft and unable to assist.

Earlier today, I was up early again and did a few chores before we got underway. After coffee, a quick walk to the shower, then a longer walk to the grocery store. After storing victuals, I watered ship and we motored to the fuel dock where I bunkered 60 litres of diesel. Then off and into the canal to catch the westward flowing ebb.

The tidal current in the canal is not to be taken lightly. It was about five knots for most of the passage. The sou-westerly wind was funnelling up the canal against us blowing a solid force 5 gusting 6. This made for a rather unpleasant chop with the wind against current situation.

I decided to anchor in Onset Harbour today rather than proceed into Buzzard's Bay. The forecast for the next 36 hours is a bit nasty, so we will ride it out here in a free anchorage.

Now, I sit in the cockpit, shaded by the dodger, with the wind gusting beneath an almost cloudless sky. When going shopping, I splurged on some limes. I think a Dark&Stormy would be good.

2010-09-07 14:48 EDT (18:48 Z)

Decisions!?!?

On close examination, the first lime of the three purchased this morning proved to be excellent. Rolled under my palm on the galley counter, the scent was delicious. Wielding the sharp knife, sectioning, the wonderful, anti-scorbutic juices flowed freely.

What to do?

Will this be the start of a Dark&Stormy... or... a Gin&Tonic. Oh, the weighty burden of decision.

On the other hand, why choose?

Gin&Tonic now, Dark&Stormy later.

Delicious!

2010-09-08 15:01 EDT (19:01 Z)

A lazy day at anchor in Onset Harbour. I awoke this morning about 07:00 and, as usual, made coffee, checked the forecast. After a bit of deliberation, I elected to sample the delights of Onset Village.

Undeterred by a forecast of showers and thunderstorms, I readied the dinghy for a run ashore. Outboard motor off the stern rail and on the dinghy's transom, oars in their place, extra fuel, rucksack, life jacket, and away.

The cruising guide was right, the "Pier View Diner" does a good unhealthy breakfast. Corned beef hash, eggs, fried potatoes, toast, and coffee. Yum!

A walk through the village, visit the small grocery store, discover 1 litre bottles of Gosling's Ginger Beer. Then back to my little floating home.

Run the generator a little to charge the batteries: do a little work on the computer, make lunch (SPAM sandwich and Dark&Stormy), read a little, think a lot, wait for the rain and thunderstorms to pass. Check the charts and cruising guide, plan out the next few days of sailing. Sit in the sun and scribble these few words. Watch the gulls and terns dive for food. Just another lazy day at anchor.

2010-09-10 17:47 EDT (21:47 Z)

My, what a day. Not at all like I had planned, but that's cruising in a small boat.

Last night, the cooling water circulating pump for the refrigeration system stopped running. (yes, again)

So, a few phone calls to some folk in New Bedford and a replacement was located. Up anchor and motor the short distance to the harbour. A couple of miles from the harbour entrance, I hear the Coast Guard announce that the gates to the hurricane barrier are closed until 11:00. Turn around and make sail for Point Judith, Rhode Island, as originally planned. Then, give the old pump a good smack and hear it return to life.

Anyhow... last night we anchored in a nice little spot called Padanaram. On the maps, it's called South Dartmouth. Nice, but like a lot of spots here, the harbour is filled with moorings leaving almost no room for visitors to anchor.

Today, we sailed to Point Judith. This Harbour of Refuge is just a stop over on the way to Mystic. Looks OK, with a nice sand beach. It's immediately north of Block Island. I've now sailed the length of Buzzard's Bay and into Rhode Island Sound. Kind of wish there had been more time to explore, but the season grows short.

Today's sail felt very much like an "early Autumn" sail back home. The air had a bit of the autumn edge to it and the wind a bit of substance. The sky was filled with big fluffy clouds. Not the soft gentle summery kind. Instead, the winter is coming sort.

Nonetheless, had a grand sail today. Hard on the wind, No. 3 jib and double reef main making between five and six knots for the entire thirty miles. I turned off the auto-pilot and took the helm in my hand so I could be as one with my Mistress as She drove through the water. Waves burst asunder and spray flying high as Her bow hammered forward. Wonderful delicious feeling of unbridled joy as She frolicked with the wind and waves. I never tire of it.

2020-09-10 18:16 EDT (22:16 Z)

A yacht sailed by yesterday, big sort, maybe 60 feet or so. I thought her ensign looked a bit odd. Quick look through the binoculars.

“Ohmigawd”, says I, “she's wearing a White Ensign”.

As she overtook us, my Mistress dipped Her ensign in respectful salute.

End of Part 016.