

Torben Sell
30 October 2022

From Granton to Lübeck

Via Gothenburg

This logbook aims to give an accurate description of the first half of my summer sail as much as it aims to entertain the reader, and thus comprises both dry facts, such as distances and weather conditions, and more anecdotal comments. With this being said, let me take you back a few months to when the trip planning started.

Preparation - June

As for most trips, good preparation is key, which for me meant finding a crew that was experienced enough to keep a watch by themselves and crazy enough to spend a few days on the North Sea with me. Luckily, the RFYC Crew Finder proved to be just the right portal to meet such a person! About a week before I had to leave Edinburgh for a work trip, Alex Gunnarsson messaged me on there to ask if I would be interested in taking him sailing sometime. I still wonder what his first reaction was when he saw my reply ‘Sure, how about sailing to Denmark in three weeks?’, but you can imagine my surprise and joy when he was up for it. We met for a coffee and found out that we not only studied at the same university but also somehow managed to never cross paths despite sailing in the same yacht club. After he met Ingrid, he was all on fire to go, and after I came back from my work trip all that was left to do was to decide on a route and to write a shopping list. Luckily the pre-departure weekend coincided with my parents visiting such that transporting dozens of cans and kilos of rice, pasta, cereals, and, most importantly, coffee to Ingrid was quickly done (neither Alex nor I have a car and cycling with all that food would have taken longer than crossing to Gothenburg.) When I took my parents sailing, my dad luckily found the main reason for my engine troubles at the beginning of the season: the kill cord was a bit rusty and was thus stuck in its tubing rather than completely releasing, such that the engine never got the full amount of fuel. Had I known this earlier, it would’ve saved me a lot of trouble, but it also meant I learned how to do all mooring and anchoring maneuvers blindly under sails, which would

come in handy later during the trip. For the moment, a bit of WD-40 fixed the issue, and Ingrid was in the best condition to set sail.

Leg 1 - Granton to Gothenburg, 12.7. - 16.7.

Monday evening I took my wee dingy over to Ingrid and was to enjoy the Monday evening bagpiping practice which was also to welcome me back to Edinburgh five weeks later!



Leaving Granton

The first passage with Alex ought to be a 510 mile¹ sail directly to Gothenburg, and we estimated roughly 5 days for the trip (based on a so far fairly accurate estimate of being able to cover 100 miles/day².) Having left Granton at 1414 BST, Ingrid smoothly goose-winged down the Forth with a westerly Force 4 (F4) and the tide behind us, such that we passed many cute puffins and the Isle of May at 2100. Around that time, the wind picked up to a F5 and with the sheltering coast disappearing behind the horizon, the wave heights increased to 1.5 - 2 meters.

With the night approaching the wind increased yet more to a solid F6 and we got into the agreed watch system, with each of us sailing two hours or, if one felt very

awake, three hours before waking the sleeping sailor. The first night also had us hand-steering for most of it: with fairly steep waves directly from the stern we were worried about crash-gybing despite a preventer being rigged, and the auto helm Steve was given a last night of sleep.

Wednesday passed fairly uneventful, with a bit of a lull in the evening, such that we switched the engine on and motored for a few hours, allowing us to charge both Ingrid's and our batteries for a while. Later in the night Ingrid's Navtex showed a near-gale (Force 7) warning for the sea area South Utsire³, which we expected to pass before we got there.



Ingrid happily sailing

Ingrid's logbook for Thursday is more exciting: four entries are worth sharing! Firstly, at 0706 we passed five ships that were laying cables or pipelines, which is noteworthy since Alex and I had a bet going about how many ships we would see on the open sea part of the passage - my bet was 10, Alex went for an optimistic 15, and suddenly the total count went up to 11...

With the exact end of the 'open sea' not being well defined, we ended up agreeing that we saw a total of 12.5 ships over three days, and treated ourselves to a wee dram to celebrate our joint first place. Secondly, at 1414,



Crew equally happy



Sharing a can of Tennent's

exactly 48 hours after leaving Granton, a wave that broke under Ingrid's stern caused a serious spillage of soup, such that Alex and I ended up sharing the remaining portion and afterwards snacking a large pack of crisps, a pack of cookies, and sharing a can of beer. At 1810 we had a delicious dinner that was *so* good that the entry 'dinner (yummy cans), watch change, A going up, T to bed' was noted in the logbook. The highlight of the day was the

entry made at 2043: 'Dolphins playing with Ingrid' - a school of dolphins swam around us for a good 30 minutes and made sure that we stayed on our 081° course to Skagen.

Friday was another eventful day, and the reason is obvious once one looks at the weather forecast that we got on Friday morning at 0600:

Outer Skaggerak - N6 incr. to 7, rain, sea state: moderate to rough⁴

Fisher - NW6 incr. to 7, rain, sea state: moderate to rough.

A quick look on the chart confirmed that we were to sail into this, regardless of whether or not we changed course. We thus decided to at least avoid the rough seas as much as we could by sailing as close to the Norwegian coast as we could (without sailing into any traffic separation schemes of which there are numerous off the Norwegian coast.) At 2010 we put

the third reef in, at 2045 we took the main down completely, with a well-reefed jib now being our sole mean of propulsion, and our average speed was still 6 knots; a few times our speed increased to over 10 knots when Ingrid surfed down some waves. At 2112 the wind blew from the NW with F7 and the sea state kept getting rougher. The highest waves we encountered were around 3.5 meters and one of those got us heeling at around 60° in the middle of the night, but Ingrid safely sailed on towards Skagen, and both Alex and I were excitedly watching the near gale blowing around us.



Our sail size in the near gale

Saturday started with some excitement: at 0046 we had to start the engine to avoid a fishing vessel that was trawling in front of us, which in itself is nothing too exciting, but it meant motor sailing parallel to waves of around 3 meters height, and I can proudly say that Ingrid never sailed around a fishing vessel this quickly! At 0340 the wind dropped to a F5 such that we pulled up the main with a 3rd reef, and after a few more hours, we rounded the lighthouse of Skagen at 1147. Once we were in the Kattegat, the wind decided to take a wee break and we floated around for a while, before deciding that a dinner and a pint on shore and a proper night's sleep tempted us more than another night on sea. We thus turned the engine on and moored up in Gothenburg at 2050 (2150 local time.) The



Enjoying the beers we were gifted on arrival, perfectly timed with the sunset in Gothenburg

rest of the evening is a bit of a blur - our pontoon neighbour welcomed us with some beers after hearing that we sailed straight from Edinburgh, and the local sailing club had excellent Swedish food and properly poured pints... A few of those later (admittedly, I think it was only one), we sank into our berths and slept for fourteen hours, which was a well-deserved sleep after completing a 529 miles North Sea crossing in four days and six hours!

Leg 2 - Gothenburg to Lübeck, 18.7. - 22.7.

After refuelling Ingrid's water and diesel tanks, it was time for a crew change. Alex left after lunch to visit his family in Gothenburg for a few days, and Lara Hildebrandt joined me for the next passage. It was supposed to be a rather relaxing one, with two and a half days planned for the 260 mile passage. After the rather choppy crossing from Granton and having looked at the weather forecast, we expected a rather pleasant onward journey. Alas, we were fools.

When leaving Gothenburg on Monday the 18th we were greeted by the Kattegat with a solid F5 blowing from the SSW, which meant that we had to beat into the wind and into steep 1.5 m waves. If that wasn't grim enough, a current flowing north along the Swedish coast slowed us down by another 1.5 knots. When I looked at the chart after around eight hours, we had merely covered a depressing twelve miles over ground. In the evening the VHF got very busy: 'Russian submarine and Russian warship, this is Ferry Stena Frega, please divert your course in order to avoid collision' - 'Привет (...)' - a few exchanges in Russian between the submarine and the warship, and a friendly greeting by the Danish navy vessel which accompanied them in safe distance followed. Lara and I joked that we may have to call them next to make sure they are avoiding us, but were a bit surprised and slightly uncomfortable when the submarine and warship passed us about a mile in front of Ingrid's bow... Luckily the wind was a bit more favourable by then, and a fun night of sailing lay ahead (mainly for the skipper as the crew needed a wee rest after the initial queasiness from the choppy beginning of the passage, which allowed me to practise my single-handed passage sailing skills that would come in handy on my sail back to Granton.)



Fishing vessel on the left, Russian warship and submarine on the right; all in front of a sunset in the Kattegat

The wind on Tuesday morning was delightful, with a F4 blowing from the West onto the beam, allowing us to cover a good distance before the wind dropped. At 0925, we turned on the engine and steamed South. Since the weather forecast predicted the wind to not pick up anytime soon and since we were

making great progress under engine, we decided at 1725 that a swim and a nice dinner were well deserved. We turned off the engine, and for the first time I took my lifejacket off while out on sea! After a delicious dinner, we turned the engine back on and started motoring further South. After a few minutes, we noticed a weird burnt smell and suddenly saw smoke coming out of the engine compartment! We *very* quickly turned off the engine and I had a quick look on the charts to reassure myself that we were well out of any major shipping lanes. Once we were sure that there was no risk of fire and everything was safe, we firstly hoisted sails to steer towards some shallow water a few miles away (averaging 2 knots, it took us a few hours to get there), and secondly inspected the engine and tried to locate the cause of the smoke. I will spare the reader all the details of the inspection; long story short: we didn't manage to fix it.

With the little wind we had, we reached the shallow coastal water at 0210 and dropped anchor. Both Lara and I were very tired, and decided to sleep until 10 the next morning before making a plan on how to proceed. Wednesday morning, the wind picked up a tiny bit, and we had to choose between essentially three options.

- A) Call the Danish version of the RNLI and ask for a tow to the nearest harbour.
- B) Sail to a nearby harbour.
- C) Proceed as planned without a working engine.



Sunny Sailing Day



Trying to fix the engine

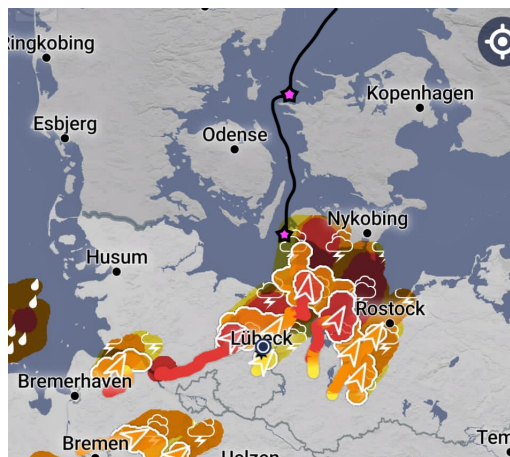
Option A was very quickly decided against - we were confident enough to sail into a harbour if that was required. Considering our time constraints, the remaining distance, the weather forecast, and our motivation and adventurousness, we decided to go with the third option - after all Ingrid is a *sailing* yacht! We recovered our anchor at 1240 and had to beat against the wind and the prevailing currents⁵ once

more, but had a lovely sunny day to enjoy! At 2025 we were about 10 miles from the Storebælt bridge across the Great Belt when the wind, as predicted, died. But, unlike predicted, it didn't pick up at 11 pm, neither at midnight.

Drifting slowly but surely towards the main shipping route through the Great Belt and seeing dozens of freight ships passing by closer and closer, it was only a few "gusts" of 5 knots that allowed us to keep our distance. As we were so close to the shipping lanes and as I expected the wind to pick up anytime, I decided to let Lara sleep and wait for the wind. Just that it didn't pick up. Not at 2 am, not at 3, not at 4, not at 5, only at 0554 the logbook entry reads 'NW F2-3'. It is difficult to describe how mad I went that night at times, but a lovely sunrise had us finally sailing below the Storebælt bridge, and spirits on board were rising again. Once more the forecasts proved to be unreliable - at 09:31 the wind completely died. We were floating around without any means of propulsion and it was at this time when Lara and I were getting a bit grumpy and moody. To lift the mood, we got the Whisky⁶ out and Ingrid and I shared a wee dram with Neptune. This seemed to have worked, as we spotted an unusual view at the horizon a short while after. A dark line of something came closer and closer across the water, that looked like a mirror in front of it and somewhat wild behind it. I decided to put a reef in, which, given that the wind was currently blowing with a F1, seemed a bit weird, but when the front hit us and we suddenly sailed in a good F4, I was happy that we did. From then



Sunrise under the Storebælt bridge



Thunder warnings. Northern star was our anchorage, Southern one our position when receiving it

onwards, the winds would be on our side. Thursday afternoon at 1322 we had a great time sailing, with a F4 from the SW we made good progress towards Germany. Around 6 pm, I received a text message from a friend warning us of Thunderstorms coming our way from Fehmarn. Fifteen minutes later, a thunderstorm warning with gale-force gusts and heavy rain was also issued via the coastal radio station, and Lara and I decided to drop anchor once more, this time at the Southernmost tip of Lolland. The thunder cells were passing exactly



Ingrid leaving Großenbrode

river Trave for a mile before I gave up. My friends Mary and Patrick had welcomed me at the river entrance and were happy to tow me to the Stettiner Yachtclub in Lübeck, where I would be moored for the next two weeks. At 1530, Ingrid was safely moored up. Needless to say, a shower pint and an early night restored my energies after having sailed 355.6 miles⁷ across the Baltic Sea⁸.

A big THANK YOU to Alex and Lara for being such amazing first mates, and to Ingrid for taking us safely all the way from Granton to Lübeck!

across our route, so we waited 2.5 hours until 2100 when the path was clear of danger. The last night on the passage began, and was refreshingly uneventful.

A lovely breeze got us reaching across the Fehmarnbelt and under the Fehmarnsund bridge in the early morning hours, and at 0605 I dropped Lara off in Großenbrode, the first port on German mainland. She had to work in the evening (our main time constraint, neither of us had thought that we would need more than four days instead of two and a half), so I was to sail the remaining 20 miles by myself. With a decent amount of coffee, I made it safely to Travemünde and tacked my way up the



Arriving in Travemünde

¹All miles are nautical miles - I only state this for my non-sailing pals who may be reading this.

²The attentive reader will have noticed that this calculation was off by a fair bit on both legs - alas, the joys of sailing!

³Here's a sketch of the different shipping forecast regions, the Outer and Inner Skaggerak are east of Fisher, screenshot from the Metoffice:



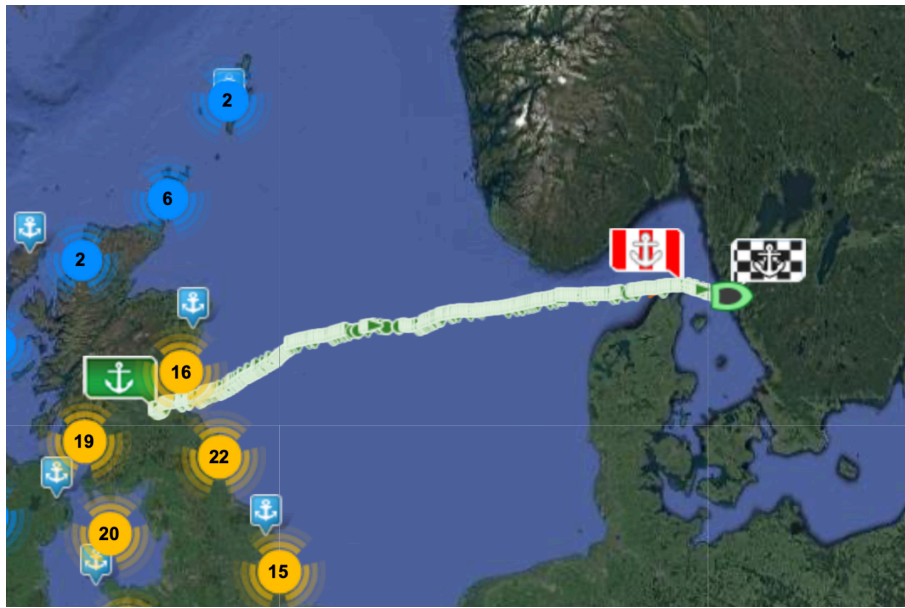
⁴The Metoffice defines a moderate (rough) sea state as waves of 1.25 - 2.5 m (2.5 - 4 m.)

⁵Pro passage planning tip: consult the local pilot charts early enough so you are not surprised when you have a current of 1-1.5 knots against you for 200 miles.

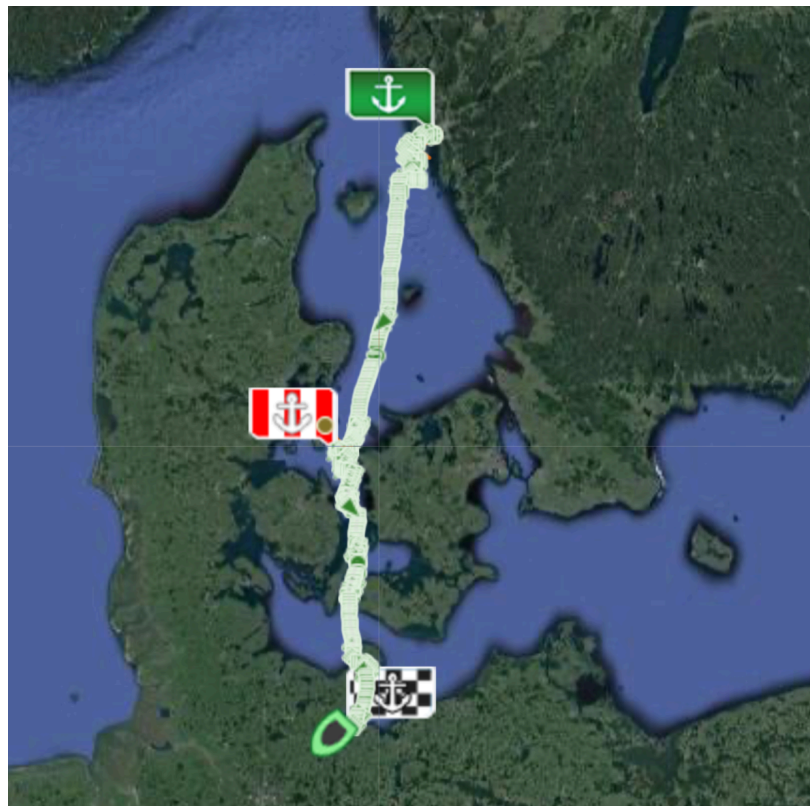
⁶I had fortunately brought three different bottles to appease any taste.

⁷Currents and a good amount of beating against the wind are to blame for the extra 100 miles.

⁸See the last page of this log for an overview of the passage and a link to my RYA SafeTrx trip.



Leg 1, screenshot from my RYA SafeTrx trip (thanks to David Penny for recommending the app!), full details can be found here:
<https://safetrx.rya.org.uk/sharetrip.html?id=WE4ZOABZGLDQ&token=d7p2sqe1499gdpasafpf3e7bo>



Leg 2, screenshot from my RYA SafeTrx trip, full details:
<https://safetrx.rya.org.uk/sharetrip.html?id=YYJ0O1QXA3UF&token=t8mo7msfc3q8mecpcdc8emtksqf>