

2009 cruising log for Serafina of Maldon

17/04/09

Well here we are back in Greece and the weather is beautiful.

The trip out went very well with an easy drive down to Gatwick in the middle of the night and an easy check in and an on-time flight to Athens.

On the plane we found ourselves sitting next to a chap (John) who we soon engaged in conversation and it turned out that he also was returning to his boat and by chance it was in the boatyard right next door to where Serafina was laid up. This meant that we were able to share a taxi in Athens to the bus station and had someone to chat to on the 7 hour bus trip! The taxi driver did us proud in Athens, rushing us across the city and ignoring a 'No Entry' sign to the bus station (he did have to pause to let a police car out first!!) and delivering us right to the back of the bus we were hoping to catch. We popped over to the office to buy tickets and got the very last three for this trip and were delighted to find ourselves on our way a good 4 hours ahead of the original plan.

John turned out to be a very seasoned yachtsman and has owned his boat for just over 30 years during which he has covered an astonishing amount of miles including 4 Atlantic crossings, almost all of which he has done single handed. This summer he is sailing the boat alone, back to his home on the Isle of Wight, which is no mean feat for a 70+ year old.

The bus trip was a long 7 hours but not at all unpleasant, with a 20 minute stop near the spectacular Rion bridge, spanning the gulf of Patras/Corinth. Not too sure how they interpret the EU rulings on driver's hours, but this was all done with just the one cheerful driver, who as we approached our final destination also seemed very happy to drop passengers off at all sorts of remote places, frequently off the main road!

A taxi from the bus station in Preveza meant that we arrived at the boatyard just as the light was fading but had enough time to take a look over Serafina and see that all was well with her before checking into a room in the marina building for the night.

Thursday dawned bright and sunny and we got straight down to the chores involved in recommissioning a boat at the start of a new season. The weather seems set fair for the next few days which is a real bonus and should allow us to get everything done (including 2 coats of antifouling paint on the bottom) before we are craned back into the water on 21st April.

This weekend is the Greek Easter and so were braced for everything being closed, but fortunately they seem more relaxed about such things than back in 1980 when we were working out here. The little taverna next to the boatyard is staying open apart from Sunday and even the chandlery is open on Saturday.

At night we are treated to the most amazing 'frog chorus' with literally thousands of very loud frogs bellowing out their mating calls. (Pips Curtis would be delighted I'm sure!)

Tuesday 21st April

After 4 days of blazing sun and soaring temperatures it had to all go sour today! We woke to heavy rain and a steadily rising wind.

The hoist and crew arrived pretty much on time and all went well until they found that the weight of Serafina had caused the legs of the hoist to bow inwards slightly, just enough to stop it driving out over the dock into which we were to be lowered! Some adjustments were made and all then proceeded smoothly. We then had the small issue

of manoeuvring in the marina to reverse into the space they wanted us to go. This is exciting enough here with a wicked cross current that swirls through and under the pontoons, but right now the wind was beginning to scream and it all got a little tense. However it went well in the end and we settled into the slot and were soon joined by a Swan 47 (Ayesha) alongside us.

The weather eased later on and we got a load more of the jobs done before John (Aureal) and Steve (unknown motorboat!) joined us for drinks. We then all made our way down to the taverna which is now getting very busy, as more and more crews arrive to start their sailing seasons.

Tuesday night saw a big storm pass over and we were treated to all manner of wind strengths and thunder, lightning and of course rain and more rain.

Wednesday 22nd April dawned cloudy and wet but happily just as the van drew up with our sails, the rain stopped and the sun came out again. Sarah got a lift with our next door neighbours in their hire car, to Preveza town where she sorted out the paperwork with the Port Police (a real joy as ever) and did some provisioning. We then 'bent' the sails on which is always an interesting activity and all the more so as this was the first time we had put our roller furling main back on. There were a few false starts but we got there in the end! Sarah also went up the mast to check all the rigging etc.

The weather was supposed to be dreadful again today, but actually has turned out to be lovely and sunny with just a light breeze. It is a slightly unusual experience sitting out on deck in the late afternoon in T-shirts and shorts with a stunning backdrop of snow capped mountains.

Plan to sail up to Paxos tomorrow although there is a warning of gale force 7 winds, but they would be going our way so hopefully should be a good sail.

Successful Launch

39:12.1N 20:11.2E

Thursday 23rd April

Woke up to a gentle breeze from the South East and the big winds that had been a feature of the previous few days forecasts, had passed south of us, so we set out around 9.00am and had a great first day's sailing with a steady 15 knots of wind driving us on up to Paxos Island. The sea still had a big swell running from the previous storm so we did roll quite a bit but we covered the 30 miles in good time and secured a space on the quay in the 'New Port' in Gaios, between an Australian yacht and a British Swan 47. We are just about the only boats here!

Paxos does not open for the summer until around 5th May so the whole place is very much still in winter mode. Most of the shops and tavernas are closed but the pay-off is that the island is looking beautifully green with an abundance of spring flowers and foliage everywhere.

Friday 24th April

Exchanged phone calls with Theo who we needed to see about his new website, but he like everyone else is frantically busy getting things ready for May. His solution was to invite us up to the house he has just finished building, for dinner, and so after a quick drink in the town square, he drove us out there and we joined his family for a lovely meal and evening which ended when he ran us back to Serafina around 1.00am! The house is fantastic with wonderful stonework and features throughout. It appears to have cost an absolute fortune despite him doing so much of the work himself. The day itself passed rather slowly as the weather was less than pleasant and we had a fair amount of

rain and a cold wind. Got plenty of jobs done on board (all yachts seem to have a maintenance list that never gets any shorter...) which was useful as we probably will not get much time over the next week or so as we are about to set off for Turkey by way of the Corinth Canal.

Paxos in the Springtime

Saturday 25th April

Bright sunny day, hooray! The owner of the boat next door to us is celebrating his 60th birthday today and his wife certainly managed a new level of surprise party, by arriving off the ferry from Corfu along with 11 of his friends all of whom have flown out from the UK for the weekend. She has even persuaded one of the restaurants to open especially to stage the dinner tonight!

Sarah spent some time today doing a watercolour of Gaios Town which is good to see as she did very little art last summer. Pan came to see us in the afternoon and we had a good long chat about everything before he had to rush off to deal with some beehives (full of bees) he is moving by car this evening. No sooner had he left than his brother Spiros, turned up with his family to see us and discuss a few issues about the website we have done for their resort at Mongonissi. Finally we were joined by Theo who had brought along some of the information I had requested the night before and then suddenly it was time to say goodbye and it may be some time before we get an opportunity to return here to see them all again.

Tomorrow we set sail southwards for Lefkas with a forecast for light winds, but another round of very windy weather is forecast for Monday.

38:56.9N 20:45.7E

Sunday 26th April

Slightly grey and dull start to the day which made us reluctant starters, but we got away from Gaios at 9.00am and headed south for Lefkas Island.

The wind was non-existent (4 knots) on the nose and the sea was a glassy calm so we motored gently along, passing a few yachts and avoiding a couple of big ferries along the way. We arrived at the northern entrance to the Lefkas canal just in time for the 2.00pm bridge opening. The entrance to the canal is fraught with danger combining an unmarked heavily silted sandbar to starboard, with an submerged Venetian road which is only partially buoyed to port!

Last year this was very shallow and we have met several boats that got into quite a lot of trouble here. However they have been dredging over the winter and we passed the large crane and drag gear as we approached and saw the huge pile of sand they have dredged up so far. The catch is that there is no way of knowing where exactly they dredged the sand up from, so you still have to watch the forward looking sonar with eagle eyes! The bridge opened for us (10 minutes late, but who cares) and we made our way to Lefkas Town. The quay that we used last time we were here, leased by Joe Charlton was full of boats which was a surprise and given that the forecast was for a force 8 gale, we elected to go into the marina for a night.

Had our usual wander around the marina looking at boats and came across Ayesha (Swan 48) who we had been moored alongside in Cleopatra Marina (Preveza). They invited us board for a drink (or two) which rounded off the day very nicely.

Nidri and Lefkas Town

38:41.3N 20:42.5E

Monday 27th April

Woke up to a fairly brisk breeze and rain, but no sign of a gale.

We had decided to make a day of it here anyway as we had things to buy in town and at the chandlers etc. However by lunchtime the grib (internet weather) files showed that the big winds were passing to the west of the island so we decided to avoid paying for another night at this expensive marina and paid up and pushed off in the mid afternoon heading south for Nidri Town.

As we left Lefkas the wind began to rise and as we cleared the southern entrance to the canal we had a steady 20 knots bang on the nose. So we raised sail and had a wonderful beat all the way down to Nidri where we dropped the sails and motored past all the assembled flotilla yachts preparing for the new season and dropped anchor in the huge open spaces on Vliho Bay.

Astakos

38:32.0N 21:04.9E

Tuesday 28th April

Another grey start with no wind at all! Got under way around 9.00am and motored down the Meganissi Channel where we met 20 knots of wind pretty much bang on the nose!

Raised the sails and started what promised to be a cracking beat all the way to Asakos which was 25 miles away on the mainland, but as is the way of these things, the wind dropped away and we ended up motoring. We did meet more wind just as we pointed up into the big bay with Astakos at the head, but again this was just a funnelling effect and we arrived off the town quay in a flat calm.

A little unsure from the pilot book where we might be able to moor as they warned of various underwater obstructions, but fortunately there was only one other visiting yacht (Swedish) and they were moored alongside the quay. So we nosed in forwards to take a look at the underwater section of the quay wall with our forward looking sonar and picked a spot and dropped anchor and backed up without incident.

Astakos is principally sustained by fishing and agriculture, with some tourist trade from Greeks who holiday here but right now there are no Greeks on holiday! Along the waterfront there is a raised ramp which is the landing point for a hydrofoil service, but when we arrived this was being used by small tug-like boats that were bringing containers of fish over from the extensive fish farms on the nearby Dragonera Islands and loading them onto lorries. Astakos means 'Lobster' in Greek, but there is precious little sign that this might be a local speciality!

So the only visitors in town today were the four Swedes, the two of us and three middle aged Italian couples (in matching black kit) who arrived on large motorbikes and who spent the day strolling along the front, drinking coffee and admiring Serafina!

Messolonghi – Gulf of Patras

38:21.7N 21:25.0E

Wednesday 29th April

Last night we were kept awake for a good while by torrential rain, but thankfully the morning dawned clear and bright with a clear blue sky.

Had 35 miles to cover today and were mindful that the Swedes who were moored next to us, had been beaten back by fierce winds and tide when they had tried to sail into the Gulf of Patras on Monday, so we made an early start.

Very uneventful trip with barely a breath of wind all the way and so arrived at the entrance to the narrow buoyed channel that leads up to the lagoon and marina belonging to the town of Messolonghi (various spellings!)

As soon as we get to a wifi point we will upload the photos we took here as they tell the story slightly better, but the area is a series of huge lagoons and is the largest area of wetlands in Greece and therefore home to a huge array of birds and wildlife as well as fishing and fan mussel farming.

The banks of the channel leading here are lined with shanty style fisherman's huts on stilts (pelades) giving it an air of SE Asia, although many of these have now been upgraded to holiday homes.

The 'marina' is fairly non-existent and seems to be part of a large EC funded development of the waterfront which has stalled as there are plenty of pontoons and quays, but everything else is run down or derelict. However, we were greeted by a very cheerful chap who ushered us into a very good mooring and welcomed us to the town and the new marina. It transpired that he is part of a group (Dutch and Greek) who have taken over the development of the marina and he was at pains to explain all the plans and charges! He proudly showed us the new billboard sign that was being erected as we spoke, welcoming visitors to the marina. Mooring was free so we were not about to complain, but there are no facilities at all here and the concrete wasteland gives way to scrubland, currently patrolled by a pack of 5 noisy feral dogs!

Messolonghi does also have an historic claim to fame and in 1937 was declared a 'Sacred Town' for its part in the War of Independence. Its role in that war is also entwined with the part played by Lord Byron who came here in 1823 to help organise the Greek troops and raise International support for the cause. He unfortunately died of a fever in 1844 and the town which continued to defy a Turkish army of 30,000 held out for a further year before it fell. 10,000 of the population choose to flee just before the town fell and all but 1600 were killed. The remaining townspeople fired the town's gunpowder reserves and munitions as the Turks came in and thousands of men women and children all died. The Garden of Heroes celebrates their heroism and as for Lord Byron, his actions led to the desired international support. He became a Greek national hero and although his body was returned to England his heart is buried here beneath his statue in the Garden of Heroes.

(Sarah) I walked into the town which is apparently set out on a grid, subsequently scrambled by the Greeks, so not as straightforward as you might presume. It's a very large Greek town, lots of streets with closed shops (pre-opening time?), very noisy bars filled with students - definitely not a tourist trap. Everywhere is decorated with Greek flags for Labour Day on Friday including some very beautiful churches.

I had set off with the intention of finding the Garden of Heroes with the statue of Byron - by all accounts unmissable due to the brown tourist signs of which I saw no sign! Eventually I stumbled upon it: a well set out public garden (but fairly overgrown - I have a theory that perhaps the Greeks don't bother with weeding, waiting for the summer sun

to do its worst?) with many marble statues to all sorts of fighters, and the women and children who were slaughtered.

So then headed west towards more lagoon, which got progressively more smelly, but with some interesting wading birds. This is a migration wetland for many birds including the Dalmation Pelican - but we haven't seen any yet!

Trizonia Island and the Gulf of Corinth

38:22.1N 22:4.5E

Left Messolonghi around 8.15am under grey skies and very little wind. Uneventful motor through the Gulf of Patras, past the city of Patras (second largest city in Greece) and headed for the spectacular Rion-Andirron suspension bridge which is the longest cable stayed bridge in the world! No sea traffic here at all, but still had to call up the bridge traffic control for permission to transit under it.

Once we were through, the wind picked up dramatically from the west and suddenly we had 20 to 25 knots behind us. This was the cue for us to test our downwind 'Simbo' rig of twin downwind sails run up the twin grooves of the forestay in place of the genoa. Took a little while to sort out the twin whisker poles and guys etc. but the result was spectacular and Serafina fairly flew down the Gulf of Corinth to the island of Trizonia which lies close to the northern shore of the gulf and is the only inhabited island in the Gulf (38 persons apparently).

This tiny island and its village have a fair sized, elderly but unfinished marina nestling in a bay with good protection from the prevailing North West winds, which was handy because the wind kept blowing at 20+ knots all afternoon and evening!

There is no charge to moor up here and it has become, not surprisingly a refuge for the long term 'live aboards' from all over the world who are seeking long term winter and even all year round moorings. It also seems to have attracted more than its fair share of catamarans, presumably for the same economic reasons as well as a large sunken yacht. Anyway despite this, we were able to find a good alongside berth in the lee of a concrete quay and patted ourselves on the back for a good day all round....

Had a stroll round the village which is delightful but has virtually no facilities but it does have a small shop/taverna which seems to open on request! You can order bread here, which is delivered by boat the next morning.

The pilot book talked of laundry facilities but this turned out to be a false promise, however, we did get collared by an English (well Yorkshire!) couple who live aboard a 55' boat here, who were keen to tell us everything we needed (and a lot we did not need) to know. They were not short of opinions and so we had to go back to Serafina after a cup of their coffee to sort out fact from fiction.

Photos will be posted as soon as we can get wi-Fi at www.rhbell.com

Itea – Rain and a gale

38:25.8N 22:25.2E

Friday 1st May (Labour Day)

Not too sad to leave Trizonia as it is not quite as idyllic as one would have hoped. The air of dereliction and abandonment as well as some miserable 'live aboard' residents spoils the tone of what should be a charming and pretty location.

As we cast off the nearest German boat owner appeared and gave us the local weather forecast of force 5 to 6 winds from the West and he seemed to doubt the wisdom of our departure. Certainly some of these boats probably only leave when the forecast is for a flat calm!

As we left, the wind swiftly picked up from a gentle 15 knots to a more lively 25 knots, but again this was behind us and so with just a single headsail set we were soon making good progress towards Itea. Then the rain started and before long it was hard to know we were not back in the North Sea with driving rain and cold wind and gradually increasing wave sizes.

All went well until the point where we turned northwards and the wind came more onto our port beam. Sarah (who sensibly was below avoiding the rain and driving duties - its actually called planning the next bit!) decided to make some welcome coffee but placed the full cafetiere on the galley worktop at the very moment that the wind upped its game and rose suddenly to 35 knots plus. This has resulted in some ad hoc carpet cleaning!

As we approached Itea, the wind quietened down and the sun came out and in celebration 5 dolphins suddenly appeared and cavorted close to us. We made our way then into the large concrete marina that was mostly empty and tied up alongside the outer mole with just 5 other yachts already here. Two very helpful Germans took our lines and proved to be sources of useful information about everything here. (Mainly because they have been stuck here for 5 days because of the weather.)

This then was the cue for the weather to start up again and 30 plus knots of wind and bursts of rain then sunshine was the order of the rest of the day, however things were enlivened by a youth sailing organisation who were determined to launch and sail their Optimist dinghies in the marina despite the weather. The 35 knot plus gusts of wind and the rain did delay things until after lunchtime, but in the next lull they launched 15 boats and the boys and girls roared up and down the marina past the moored yachts. All the yacht owners were all on deck, fearful in case the youngsters could not cope with the wind strength and came heading for our boats, but these kids were all highly competent and not only gave a dazzling display of their skills, but then the whole fleet plus two support boats sailed out of the marina entrance and into the Gulf of Corinth. The wind rose to 38 knots but still they carried on and then spent the next 2 and half hours sailing miles out into the gulf before returning exhausted and very wet.

Plan to catch the bus tomorrow morning up to Delphi for a bit proper culture!

Consulting the Oracle at Delphi

Sat 2nd May

Caught a bus up to Delphi which meant a fun ride up the side of Mount Parnassos and included seeing the very unusual sight of an open water course (canal) in a concrete trough running along the side of the mountain about halfway up!

No need to fill you in with the history of Delphi I'm sure and whilst we took the regulation dozens of photos we have only posted 2 on the website (phew!)

An impressive amphitheatre remains, as well as the best preserved athletics stadium (BC!) in all of Greece alone made this a worthwhile trip and the museum housing all the finds was very much better than we had been led to expect. The whole site is perched on the side of the mountain and extends upwards over quite a distance so there is a lot of serious uphill walking to do in the fairly unrelenting sun. It is therefore slightly off-putting when trying to take in the history around you when all you can hear is the unremitting sound of overweight tourists wheezing and gasping for breath!

We got back to Serafina to meet the local Port Policeman who had appeared and was keen that we should report to his office between 5pm and 6pm bringing all our ships papers. This was quite a surprise as he has not been seen for weeks by all accounts!

Plan to set off to Corinth Marina close to the entrance to the Corinth Canal early tomorrow, which could be a longish day as very little wind is forecast at the moment and the trip is around 40 miles.

Corinth Yacht Harbour

37:56.4N 22:56.1E

Sunday 3rd May

Had to assume that Greece won something last night as all the bars erupted at 10.30pm with lots of excitement and celebration. This led to car horns and gunfire, (keen on their firearms out here to celebrate things nowadays!) which went on until the small hours, to which was added cars and motorbikes showing off.

Got off, heading for Corinth around 7.30am about 30 minutes behind two other yachts. The wind was very light, but soon got up to a respectable 15 – 20 knots but then it was almost bang on the nose which meant motor sailing for a good part of the day. Finally when the wind came round a bit, we managed a brisk sail before the wind dropped away completely as we approached Corinth.

The pilot book is very over optimistic about Corinth Yacht Harbour (apparently enough room "for yachts under 20m".....!) and we would advise anyone following us to consider using Kiato instead. The depths on the approach to Corinth are variable but boats with a 2 metre plus draft need to be careful. Inside the little harbour is pretty lethal with loads of laid lines with buoys, but all set for little speed boats rather than larger yachts and most spots clearly marked as reserved for 'Professional Fishing Boats'. We went alongside an unoccupied Italian yacht which seemed a safe option, but one or two of the yachts that followed us in (we were the first here) managed to get places on the walls, but the depths were very tricky. Not a good option in a blow I suspect.

Sarah phoned the canal control who said that all we needed to do tomorrow was call up on the radio and they would let us through as soon as they could....so we will see what develops in the morning with the other yachts here.

Sarah had an accident this afternoon, when she inadvertently stepped backwards putting a foot through a small open hatchway (followed by a significant part of the rest of her). Lots of bruises, some grazes but a brave face and hopefully no lasting damage.

Corinth Canal - Athens

37:56.1N 23:38.9E

Monday 4th May

Blustery, cold and grey, but we had to get going around 7.00am as we spotted several large ships heading for the canal entrance and that was the clue to rush over and join them for the passage South East to the Aegean Sea.

Not a great day for taking photos of this historic canal, but we managed loads and once again a select few have been posted at www.rhbell.com.

It is very expensive to make this transit and it is a wonder where they spend this money as the state of maintenance of this stunning heritage site is woeful. British Waterways would be appalled if this was one of their 2000 miles of canal for sure! The banks on both sides for the first mile from the western end have eroded very badly and no serious attempt has been made anywhere to stop this deteriorating further. At some stage in the more recent past they have added a few lights along the length of the canal. This consists of single lamps placed roughly every 200 metres and the power is provided to each one by a cable dangling down the rock face from the top of the cutting. Not exactly maintaining the built heritage of this world famous feature!

Emerged into the Aegean Sea right next to an oil refinery and what with the grey skies and the biting cold wind today, it was just like being back in Southampton Water and the River Test! At least the wind got up and we enjoyed a chilly but fast sail for the 30 miles to Piraeus (Zea Marina) which is the sea port for Athens.

Along the way we met an extraordinary craft which turned out to be not unlike the sort of boat they use to row across the Atlantic, but this one was powered by pedals and had three very cheerful Dutchmen on board, one of whom seemed to be photographing us almost as enthusiastically as we were photographing them! We were also challenged by a Greek warship who called us up on the radio, presumably because we were passing through a submarine exercise area, but apart from checking who were, they merely acknowledged that we had a good radio signal! (Now, it is entirely possible that something here was lost in translation, but they steamed off anyway, leaving us to continue our journey.....)

We then passed through an anchorage off Piraeus Harbour with no less than 38 ships at anchor, crossed a traffic separation scheme and finally approached Zea Marina which is in an old port that once housed the Athenian War Fleet. Had to hang around at the entrance for an hour and a half as they were busy trying moor a large motor yacht that clearly had engine problems, but we finally were led in by charming and apologetic mariners and ushered into a nice berth close to the marina office. Sarah energetically washed the decks, followed by a big shop at a large Carrefors (height of luxury!).

Seems a great spot from which to spend a few days visiting Athens doing the tourist bit.

Ormos Thorikon - Lavrion

37:44.1N 24:03.6E

Tuesday 5th May

Forecast was for rain over Athens, but we decided to do our tour anyway which worked out well as the rain never materialised and we had a lovely day!

Caught a bus from outside the marina to the Metro station on the main quay in Piraeus. Then took the metro into the centre of Athens, but not without some excitement as

Sarah became the target for a fairly inept pick-pocketing team, but fortunately we rumbled them before too late, but only just!

The aim today was to follow a planned walk that Sarah found in the Lonely Planet guide, and this started with watching the changing of the Presidential Guard at the Parliament buildings which was frankly hilarious and the photos at www.rhbell.com barely do the event justice! Enjoyed the stroll around the city, with the imposing Acropolis always high above us, but there were certainly moments when we lost the trail, but always seemed to pick it up again eventually....

Made our way back by metro and bus to the marina and discovered that the gremlins had returned to the generator, so penned an email off to Mastervolt in Holland asking for some more support.

Wednesday 6th May

This was Sarah's 'art' day in Athens and she took herself off on the trip back to the city centre with rather a lack of success. Sarah writes: The Frissiras Museum (purely figerative art - just perfect for me) had an inventive sign "temporarily suspended operation while it considered relocation" since last July! So back towards the Parliament Buildings to go to the National Art Gallery where I discovered that the National Park had been shut (we'd walked through it yesterday) with hordes of police and riot police with sheilds and batons in evidence. In front of the buildings was a coralled protest of hundreds of Cretans dressed in black with shepherd's sticks, situated between me and the museum; so I crossed two police lines hoping this would not annoy either party as I seemed to be the only one stupid enough to do so. Eventually reached the gallery which was a great disappointment: 3 floors given over to a Greek artist of the photo-realist persuasion (specialist picture of which there were 4: Peacock with painted tail to the edge of the frame, and real feathers stuck on to complete the sweep of the tail overhang) which presumably replaced those known artists (Picasso, Utrillo etc) they professed to have. And 2 floors of "attributed to, by the school of, in the style of...." and some lovely Ionian School pictures. So admitted defeat and returned to Serafina in the rain!

Mastervolt's Greek agent was in touch with us and promised an engineer would be with us tomorrow around midday which seemed pretty impressive and it has to be said that they were unfailingly polite and helpful in making the arrangements.

Had a stroll around the marina viewing all the Gin Palaces, some of which were quite impressive, as well as a few beautiful but huge yachts. Anyone looking to visit Athens by boat could do a lot worse than try to come here (Zea Marina) as it is very well run, clean and comparatively cheap. It is run by the same group that own Gouvia and Lefkas Marinas in the Ionian, but actually cheaper!

Thursday 7th May

Mastervolt's engineer (Adonis) duly arrived around an hour late, but was hugely apologetic blaming the Athens traffic and swiftly fitted a new oil pressure switch, which hopefully will have done the trick, although none of us are too sure that this is really where the fault lies! He and his assistant were very entertaining, polite and knowledgable and it turns out that he is also a Yanmar and Volvo authorised engineer, so we would heartily recommend him to anyone looking for a reliable engineer in Athens/Pireaus area. (His phone number will be posted on our yachting resources page at www.rhbell.com)

At 6.00pm we entertained Arthur and Barbara (yacht Badger, a Vancouver 27) from Worcester USA, for drinks so we could pick their brains about some good places to visit in Turkey. They were brilliant and we now have a pretty thorough itinery to follow up on! They also very much put us to shame by asking if we had been to see the various

museums dotted around the immediate area about the marina. Whilst we knew that this was the former home of the Athenian war fleet, we had no idea that there was plenty of evidence of this history and the launching ramps for some 300 plus triremes. In our defence it has to be said that the Greeks certainly know how to hide their museums etc. behind (and above) some very unlikely buildings! Impressive couple - took up sailing aged 55 and 65, and after 5 x 1 hour sailing lessons in San Francisco bay, went off and bought their boat and have been sailing now for 10 years!

Friday 8th May

Got off around 8.30am heading for Lavrion Town, but planned to photograph the Acropolis from the bay first as it is such an impressive sight towering above the huge urban sprawl of the city, however we had not reckoned with the Athens smog which enveloped the entire city in a dense impenetrable cloud, making the photograph impossible. Mirror flat sea the whole way to Lavrion, where we first popped into Olympic Marina to take on fuel before continuing round to the town itself. Sadly (perhaps) there were no available spaces on the quay and whilst there were some spaces on other wharves, these were all zealously guarded by charter fleet companies all fitting out their boats for the start of the season. So we motored round the corner to a large bay with an empty anchorage and dropped the hook and had a wonderful afternoon in the first really hot sun of the year. Plan to stay here tonight, even though the idyll is spoilt ever so slightly by the fact that the bay is overshadowed by a large power station!

Karistos – Island of Evia

38:00.7N 24:25.0E

Saturday 9th May

Straightforward crossing to Karistos which is on the southern end of the large island of Evia.

Pilot book and the GPS charts all very much out of date as this little town has clearly done a lot of work to improve its harbour and quays. So much room indeed that we joined the other boats here in mooring alongside which is almost unheard of out here!

Wonderful little town and certainly one of the nicest places we have stayed for a while, with a great selection of tavernas, mini markets, shops and no less than three hardware shops. (real treasure troves....try to picture the ironmonger's shop sketch from the two Ronnies....) Lots of space, no traffic and come to think of it, very few people! Having said that, we were accosted almost immediately by an English couple who live and work in Athens who were on the island for the day looking for somewhere to keep their boat (as yet un-purchased) and we joined them in a cafe for a few coffees and a long chat. They had to get on and we needed some lunch, so we returned to Serafina and were immediately approached by three ladies on holiday from Australia and New Zealand!

Depending on the weather, we will either set off tomorrow for a 70 mile trip to Nisos Psara, a small island in the Eastern Sporades at 6.00am for a long day sail or 6.00pm and travel overnight for a daylight approach.

Footnote about the Corinth Canal:

Thought I should just give a swift history of this impressive feature. The concept was first dreamt up in the 7th century BC, but the whole undertaking was too daunting and so they built a paved slipway across the Isthmus of Corinth and dragged small ships across it on rollers! Alexander the Great and Caligula both considered the idea of a canal, but it was actually Nero who began the digging, wielding the first blow himself with a golden pickaxe and then letting 6000 Jewish prisoners do the hard work. However the

whole thing was brought to a halt by invasions by the Gauls. The canal was finally completed in the 19th century (1883 - 93) by a French engineering company!

It has been cut through solid Limestone (which gives the water a very milky colour), is 6 km long, 23 metres wide and the sides rise a staggering 90 metres vertically up from the water's edge.

Psara – Paradise?

38:32.3N 25:33.8E

Sunday 10th May

What a wonderful day!

Last night we enjoyed a wonderful pizza and salad in a delightful taverna on the sea front and felt that this was one of the nicest towns we had been to in a long while.

Alarm went off at 5.30am so we could make an early start on the 68 miles to Psara. Very impressed by the Greeks who were arriving in cars on the quay (to start fishing) as they were switching off their engines and coasting into the car park so as not to disturb the few yachts tied up!

We slipped our lines and were away at 5.50am and as we motored out into the bay we watched the sun rise over the southern tip of Evia island.

Had to dodge any number of Russian tankers and cargo ships heading to and from the Black Sea as we made our way up and across the Doro Strait, which by all accounts, is a passage that even these huge ships will not undertake if the wind is blowing hard from the north! We were blessed with just 15 knots of wind from the north today and this allowed us to have the most wonderful day's sailing, as Serafina ate up the 68 odd miles of open sea bringing us to the island of Psara about which very little seems to have been written.

The history is tragic as although it has been inhabited since Mycenaean times, it prospered under Ottoman rule only to take the wrong side in the War of Independence and in 1824 an Ottoman fleet landed and butchered 15,000 people and took others as slaves. The island has never recovered from this and today only 400 people live here in just the one settlement around the small harbour. As our guide book says, "very few people ever make it here and intrepid peace seeking travellers will enjoy this pristine speck in the sea well off the beaten track (or any track)."

When we arrived here there was just one other yacht here and an hour later one more joined us. Sarah and I had a stroll around the town and were captivated by its charm and the extraordinary friendliness of the handful of locals sitting out in the Sunday afternoon sun. The place is immaculate and if there are only 400 people here (hard to imagine so many!) there must be a church for every 20 of them. The island is almost completely barren and there are few signs of its former wealth. The one incongruous bit we found on a long winding empty road out of the village, was a helipad complete with landing lights and a small stone building, but the fence and gate showed no signs of recent use!

Mesta or not...

38:13.2N 25:54.7E

Mon 11th May

Not surprisingly we decided to stay in Psara for a full day today. It is just an idyllic spot and the locals could not be more friendly, which is perhaps more than can be said of the crew of two German men that moored alongside us yesterday in a chartered 42ft yacht. They barely acknowledged the help we gave them and were almost unpleasant in their manner! Fortunately they left this morning in a flurry of lines and panic!

Sarah did her very best to double the island's GDP by ordering fish for lunch and was more than a little taken aback by the price!

Certainly a spot we would recommend to anyone heading this way, although what it might be like in the summer, we cannot tell - oh yes and don't order fresh fish!

Tuesday 12th May

Set off at 8.30am for the sail across to the southern end of Khios Island and a village called Limenas, which seems to be a great spot to stay and also to walk up (2 kms) to a village, Mesta, in the hills which is supposed to be well worth seeing.

Lovely sail across to the island, crossing the shipping lanes again but since we were going so well, this presented no problems. However when we motored into the long narrow bay that is the approach to Mesta, we were greeted by a less than inspiring sight!

It would seem that an attempt is being made here to dramatically improve the facilities and so we passed firstly an industrial cement mixing site and then several huge cranes dredging and placing massive concrete blocks into place along the waters edge. Across the bay a jack hammer of epic proportions was drilling into the hillside and so, what with the noise and dust and chaos, we span round and headed back out to sea.

Our new destination was one of the bays along the southern end of the island which are fine as long as the wind is from the north. We were spoilt for choice here and could choose to drop our anchor in any of four completely empty bays. Sarah selected the nicest looking and we had no sooner dropped the anchor than the wind veered round to the South and turned the location into a lee shore (not a good thing!).

But the wind never rose above 10 knots and so we decided to stay for the night anyway and enjoyed a really peaceful and utterly silent night, well apart from a hunting owl. (Scops owl?) I also spent many happy hours casting for fish from the boat in an anchorage where we saw not one fish, not even when tempted by bread - usually it would be propelled along by frantic groups of fish - but here nothing.

Khios - Chaos

38:22.0N 26:08.5E

Wednesday 13th May

Left our lovely bay and planned for a nice sail round to Khios Town, but the wind dropped away and we ended up motoring all the way.

Arrived at Khios harbour and found it both huge and almost completely empty of boats. Despite this, there is some confusion as to where you can moor with any degree of safety from the elements and the depths are rather uncharted as well!

We decided to moor pretty much next to the only other boat on the quay, which is a smallish gin palace and fortunately one of the crew came to our aid by taking our lines

and helping to pass the lazy line to us. We picked up a buoy/lazy line which was not really ideal, but with evidence of so much ground tackle we were reluctant to drop our own anchor for fear of fouling it.

A very busy place this with lots of traffic (when I say lots, it probably is not much, but it seems a lot after the last week!). Actually after a walk along the quay certain things became obvious. There are loads of waterfront bars (not tavernas) and everyone is under the age of 25! There is a university here and clearly the immediate population is all based there in some capacity. This meant a loud and late nightlife and as it happens a strong desire amongst most of the young men to show off their recklessness in riding motorbikes at speed and frequently on one wheel only!

The island has suffered and prospered, as so many around here, from various events. This was another island that was doing very well for itself when it sided against the Ottomans in the War of Independence and so for its pains, in 1842, the Turks razed all the towns on the island and massacred 30,000 inhabitants. They then enslaved a further 48,000 and the echoes of this slaughter reverberated around the world, drawing attention to the plight of the Greeks. Remarkably the island was recovering from this but was dealt a second huge blow in 1881 when a massive earthquake destroyed most of the buildings and killed 4,000.

It is also widely believed but entirely unproven, that Christopher Columbus came for Khios (Chios) and there certainly is some interesting data to support this, but I am not about to expound all that here!

Tried to get a fairly early night, but it certainly did not help that there is an election under way here and lots of vehicles (largely the ones not speeding or showing off) are equipped with loud speakers urging everyone to vote one way or the other! However, all this was nothing compared to what was to follow. We should perhaps have taken more notice of the fact that although this harbour is nearly half a mile long inside, there were only three boats including us, moored on the south quay with the north quay reserved for cargo boats etc. and nothing at all down the west side. The reason it turns out became clearer at 2.00 am when the first big ferry (think 'cross channel' ferries here) came into the harbour at full speed, slowing and turning very late to reverse up to the north quay. The massive displacement of water resulting causes a huge surge in the harbour, followed of course by the effect of the bow wave that the boat was pushing in front of it. Serafina tried first to tear her mooring cleats off the back deck as she strained against the ropes holding her to the quay and then suddenly she was surging back towards the quay wall. The ground tackle that we were tied to was plainly not up to this weight and we immediately dragged it backwards, putting our stern up against the concrete quay. We were up on deck in a flash and with use of engine and fenders etc. we were able to stop any more damage in this instance, but were then unsure of what happens next! Well the next stage is for the same ferry to turn round and leave, which it does by putting full power on as soon as it is facing the entrance and so there is another surge, but fortunately a lesser one. We adjusted all the lines and retired to bed, but now could not really sleep as we were concerned in case another ferry might appear.....which it did just 30 minutes later. Whilst this one was smaller and less of a problem we decided that we could not continue like this and resolved to cast off and lay our own anchor (risking snagging) so we could then lay further off the quay with longer lines and all should be well. (well at least better!)

This manoeuvre was trickier than usual as it meant leaving Sarah on shore with our ropes, whilst I took Serafina out, then laid the anchor, reversing up to the quay so Sarah could then throw me the ropes back to secure us again. Fortunately all the bars and street lights gave us enough light to make this pretty easy and all went well, allowing us to finally return to bed around 3.30am.

Khios Marina

38:23.21N 28:08.36E

Thursday 14th May

We agreed that we could not stay in Khios harbour any longer, so after Sarah did a provisioning run, we set off for the little marina that is just 1 mile up the coast. Now you might ask why we did not go there first and the reason is that the pilot book gives it pretty bad press. It is yet another of the Greek (probably EU money) projects that got started and then abandoned. The marina is all concrete and actually very well built, but beyond putting in the walls and concrete fingers, nothing more has happened in years, so as usual the local fishermen have moved in and laid all sorts of dodgy tackle on the sea bed making it pretty hazardous and restricting yachts to mooring alongside if there is any room. In addition the approach is billed as dangerous with a reef (unmarked of course) just 30 metres off the entrance, so you need to be very careful on the way in, assuming you get over the bar just off the entrance which restricts depth to just 3 metres and we draw 2.2 metres!

In the event this was a breeze and we eased our way into the fairly empty unfinished marina. Plenty of fishing boats and three large rusting Greek island ferries from an earlier age. No problem finding a space alongside the wall and we spent a leisurely afternoon catching up on some sleep!

Tried a spot of fishing in the late afternoon using limpets that Sarah had prised off the nearby rocks, but I had no more success than the local chap on the quay opposite who looked as if he had been at this game rather longer than me.

Much quieter night in prospect although we can hear the horns sounding from the ferries as they leave the main harbour just a mile away and it still makes me feel I should be rushing back on deck.

Day Trippers

Friday 15th May

Got bored waiting for a bus heading to town so eventually we hailed a passing taxi and forked out a whole 3 euro for the trip!

Picked up a hire car in Khios (27 euro for the day) and set off on a cultural tour of the island planned by Sarah with the help of various guide books and a very small map donated by the car hire firm.

First stop was Pyrgi which is one of the renowned mastihohoria villages which were all built in the 14th and 15th centuries as pirate proof strongholds by the Genoese. They are all laid out in a dense rectangular plan, their narrow passages are overarched by earthquake buttresses, with the backs of the outer houses doubling as the perimeter wall. Pyrgi however has a unique feature in that most of the house facades are adorned with xysta which are geometric black and white patterns (see photos). One of the main means of motorised transport in these villages seems to be these wonderful two wheel rotovators, which can have their digging blades removed and a two wheeled trailer put on the back making an extraordinary little truck (see photos) but sadly the biggest regret of the day was the missed opportunity to photo two black clad, elderly ladies driving one of these contraptions across the main road.

From here we drove to Olympi (another mastihohoria) and after a good wander around we had an interesting coffee in about the only taverna before moving on to the nearby spectacular Cave of Sykia, which is a 150 million year old cavern only discovered accidentally in 1985. This has been very carefully handled and the quirky tours down into the 60 metre deep cavern ensure that you do not disturb the spectacular multicoloured stalactites, stalagmites and other extraordinary rock formations.

Next on our route was Mesta which is considered by some guide books to be the most unique experience you can have anywhere in Greece. This is a mediaeval castle town (the finest of the mastihohoria) with its narrow and labyrinthine streets which are billed as car free, but we did meet the odd tiny van and ubiquitous rotovator truck! Mesta is an ingenious example of this mediaeval defensive architecture, with a double set of walls, four gates and an overall pentangle structure. As with all these towns, the rooftops are interconnected (photos) allowing defenders to move around at will. We had lunch in the small square here near the Byzantine church and were very impressed by the behaviour of a large group of Greek school children on a coach tour, who ended up on the table behind us.

There is no doubt that if you are going to visit this part of the world on a holiday, then this about the best time of year. There are virtually no tourists at all and so you get to wander and explore freely, the Greeks are all fresh and enthusiastic still, the flowers are all in bloom and the sun is not yet too hot!

After lunch the trip took on a more dramatic feel as we headed north up the west coast on roads that twisted and turned round hairpin bends as we climbed higher and higher, before plunging down into deep valleys. We encountered almost no other vehicles at all during the next few hours and visited a number of villages and beaches before we reached the dramatic hilltop town of Anavastos (photos) which is a crumbling near-deserted town perched precariously on the very top of a towering crag with a familiar tragic tale in which some 400 townspeople hurled themselves to their deaths off the precipitous cliff rather than face capture and retribution from the Ottomans in 1822. Sarah felt the need for us to walk up to the very top of this deserted former citadel which was not something me and my vertigo enjoyed too much!

Finally we headed for Nea Moni, a 11th century monastery which is billed as one of the finest surviving examples of mid-Byzantine architecture and was founded in 1049. The Byzantine mosaics inside are quite superb whilst the monastery itself is now a World Heritage listed site. Disastrously the Turks also torched these buildings in 1822 and massacred the monks. One of chapels houses a rather macabre cabinet displaying many of the murdered monks skulls! Then further damage occurred in the earthquake of 1881 which brought down the central dome of the monastery damaging many of the mosaics, but restoration of the building is underway and the remaining mosaics are considered the greatest surviving examples of Byzantine art in Greece.

The scenic route home became a little more circuitous than planned when suddenly the road signs ceased to exist and we were left to guess (largely unsuccessfully) our way back into Khios town.

The south of the island is particularly well known for the cultivation of Mastic trees. These trees produce a very special resin (mastic!) which makes a form of chewing gum that has had all sorts of properties attributed to it over the millennia. The trees seem able only to be grown on this island and the mastic is so important to the region that when the Turks slaughtered the population of the island, they allowed 1,800 to live solely to continue the cultivation of the mastic trees.

Lastly, Khios (Chios) also lays claim to being the birthplace of Homer. This may or may

not be true, but according to the testimonies of ancient writers, he certainly lived and taught here.

Mandraki – Oinoussa Island

38:23.2N 26:08.3E

Saturday 16th May

Very relieved to be able to get the hire car back to the agency intact this morning. Driving up in the mountains yesterday was a breeze, but once you get near Khios town things liven up considerably and all normal rules are suspended. Fortunately today being Saturday, things were much quieter on the roads this morning and apart from getting lost and ending up driving down streets that were being used for deliveries only, we got the car back on time. Abandoned the attempt to catch a bus back to the marina when we found that there only appears to be one every two hours or so and took a taxi.

Slipped away from Khios marina around 11.15am for the 10 mile trip over to Mandraki on the island of Oinoussa and motored in a flat calm.

Mandraki harbour is a spacious and well protected site and goodness knows how many boats could get in here, but when we arrived there were just three, one of which was an Oyster 53, 'Sandpiper of London' who took our lines. Later a very large motor yacht came in and the owners then proceeded rather grandly to the Yacht Club to join a large posh party already lunching with the priest. Mandraki has produced some of the richest ship-owning families in Greece, including the wealthiest of them all: Costa Lemos - not bad for an island less than 5 miles long! Very little of interest to see here and apart from the excellent quay there are virtually no facilities of shops or even tavernas.

Sarah marched up to the top of the hill on which the town is built and took quite a few pictures, but only proved further that there is clearly a rule here in Greece that if you spot a good view, locals should string as many cables across it as they can!

A couple more boats joined us during the day but with a forecast for a force 9 gale coming early next week, we will probably head for Lesvos Island which is altogether a better place to be storm bound for a few days.

Mitilini – Lesvos Island

39:05.8N 26:33.5E

Sunday 17th May

Woke up to very wet decks this morning which is a sure sign of a windless day....and today was no exception.

Left Mandraki Town around 8.00am along with three other yachts and after taking care to avoid the reefs off the western side of the island, we set a course for the long and hot 40 mile crossing to Lesvos island and its principle harbour at Mitilini.

Spotted a few dolphin around the halfway mark, but otherwise this was a very hot slog and a clear reminder of what it can be like in the middle of the summer!

The only excitement came near the end when we met our old friend the Hellenic Seaways fast ferry, which had just left Mitilini and was getting up to full speed as it went

past us in the opposite direction at 26 knots and rising. The wake was like no other wake we have ever experienced and went a long way to explaining the problems we had in Khios harbour. The waves (and that is what they were) were huge and vertical and so Serafina bucked in a way that was reminiscent of the North sea in a force 7 gale! A good job all the hatches were closed as the bows buried themselves in successive waves sending a big wall of water down along the deck. Not quite what we were expecting out of a dead flat calm sea. Then for good measure as this vessel also has a huge stern wake you get a repeat performance a minute or so later!

Moored stern-to on the town quay in Mitilini harbour which has all the hallmarks of having a very noisy and late night life as well as being a busy ferry port. Very hot and stuffy (and noisy) so we took a walk in the early evening round to the marina at the southern end of the harbour (the usual part built but now abandoned arrangement) and spoke to a very helpful German couple on a Najad 391 who were adamant that we should move as soon as possible as they had once stayed on the town quay and had not had a moment's respite! The revelry continues until 8.00am when a fresh load of people arrive on the next ferries and so on.... So we walked back and brought Serafina round, getting a great space alongside the quay, just in front of the very nice French couple that we had met last night in Mandraki. The crew from Sandpiper who had also sailed over from Mandraki with us today and who had moored ahead of us on the town quay decided to stay at least for one night, but only because they were using the water and electric which is not available in the marina.

In fairness the port police who were very helpful and accommodating, had earlier suggested that we might not enjoy the town quay and that we should think about moving to the marina anyway. I asked about the cost and got the usual response to say that it made no difference, the cost was the same wherever you stay in these harbours...mostly nothing or perhaps a few euro nominal charge.

Very pleased to have made the move as we now have privacy, quiet and cool breeze! We also are in a good position should the expected wind arrive in the next day or so.

Sarah tells me there is plenty of culture to enjoy here whilst we let the strong winds pass through, but not sure either I, or this log could handle another dose quite so soon!! We shall see.....

Stormy Weather

Monday 18th May

The forecast is for some pretty bad weather due here later today, lasting several days, so we have elected to stay here as we have got a very well protected spot in the unfinished marina.

Very hot though for most of the day and not a breath of wind, however a steady stream of yachts has been arriving from far and wide looking for a safe haven from the storm.

We had a wander around the town which is fairly big but not at all attractive or particularly welcoming. Tracked down the Turkish Baths which are supposed to be a feature here, but they were closed!

Around 6pm the wind gradually started to pickup and the clouds began to darken, at which point we noticed that the freighters on the town quay all started to leave and the bigger fishing boats started coming back in to port. By 7pm an almighty electrical storm had started all around us, but still at a distance, but this developed into a dramatic display in a full 360 degree circle around us. Soon the sky was blazing with multiple streaks of forked lightning dancing horizontally as well as vertically in quite the most spectacular display we have ever witnessed. Then the wind began to rise and with it the

rain arrived. We had decided that with the wind strength that was forecast for tonight (only 25 knots) that we could leave the bimini up to at least keep the rain off, but when the gauge showed 35 knots it was too late to get it down and so we just tied it down as securely as possible! The wind continued to rise to 40 knots and we were very pleased to be in such a secure spot for the night.

Tuesday 19th May

All boats have chosen to stay on for a few days whilst this poor weather passes through and to add to the air of despondency it has rained for most of the day as well (depositing a very interesting yellow dye on the decks - pollen or perhaps something more interesting?).

Took the opportunity to get to know some of our neighbours and so invited Peter and Mary (Kiwi) and Phil and Karen (Aussie) over for drinks. Well actually we said tea (it was 5pm) but they arrived with wine and beer which was a much better idea. Managed to keep off the subject of rugby and the world cup for nearly 3 minutes.....but good time had by all which went on longer than anyone had planned, plus la change! Peter and Mary had had a rather more dramatic arrival here on Lesvos last Sunday as they had caught a piece of very heavy rope round their prop whilst at the south of the island which had stopped their engine stone dead. They had managed to sail part of the way to Mitilini and then the wind had died so they tried pulling the yacht with the dinghy and finally managed to hail a small motor boat that was fishing and persuade him to pull them into the harbour. A bit of wind got up as well so they used the genoa to help them along but then as they made the entrance to the harbour, one of the very large ferries choose to leave and they take no prisoners! Clearly they did not recognise the plight of the yacht and steamed on assuming it would get out of the way and in the end they missed each other by no more than 10 - 15 metres! Finally one of the boats here in the marina who had witnessed this, shot out in a rib and helped them in.

Promenading: A interesting feature of the long marina quay walls here is that many locals use them as their exercise 'walk' route and so each night lots of people can be found walking along to the end of each arm and back again, repeatedly. Someone seems to have spread the suggestion that this exercise will benefit them in some way and so some even brave the current poor weather to make this trip. The thing is that whilst a few make this an actual exercise event by striding out and making an effort, others simple amble along to and fro, chatting and whatever. Four or more return trips mean that this is not a social event but something more purposeful, but the aim does seem a bit vague! Sunday was the busiest of course but then the weather was also a good deal more welcoming.

Security: Something of an issue here as the marina is wide open and there are beggars and gypsies living next to it. However the area is so open and with crews always around it is felt that the threat is perhaps more imagined than real, but just in case we have taken to locking Serafina up with the extra padlock on the washboard in addition to the built in lock. This explains how this afternoon, whilst locking the boat to walk into town, I realised in one of those dreadful few seconds too late moments that I had just snapped the padlock shut, but the key was inside the boat! Not a great situation, but I was confident that we were not going to be the only boat here with bolt croppers on board. The boat immediately in front (from Nassau, Bahamas) has rod rigging, so they were likely to be a sound bet and sure enough their skipper emerged with a very fancy hydraulic unit that cut open the padlock like the proverbial hot knife through butter. No self-respecting thief should be without one of these!

Wed 20th May

Bit of a nothing day really with quite a strong wind blowing all day so we got various

things done on board and spent a bit of time sorting things out on the internet and in town.

In the early evening the wind got up strongly again and about the time it was gusting 35 knots here in the marina (we had white horses inside the marina!) we saw two yachts outside the main harbour heading in for refuge, one (Danish) struggling upwind into the rough seas and the second (Greek registered) running downwind. They both converged on the harbour entrance and the Greek one headed straight into the marina where a number of us emerged into the now driving rain and spray, to take their lines. Just before this, one of the big ferries had to leave and it was impressive watching it pass through the harbour entrance and turn into the storm, fighting to make the turn against the walls of white topped waves and spume.

We decided at this point that our bimini was not going to survive these winds and so planned to get it down in the next lull. As it happens this turned out well, but certainly was an exercise best not attempted in such conditions! We then put up our 'winter' cover/tent and had a very peaceful night.

Art for Art's sake

Thursday 21st May

Most of us (we all seem to use different forecasting services) agree that this should be the final full day of this blow and so we chose to get a taxi and visit the Teriade Museum which houses an impressive collection of 'Grand Livres' and the original artist's proofs for the lithographs that appeared in the books. These include substantial amounts of works by Picasso, Matisse, Chagall, Miro, Giacometti, Henri Laurens (Sarah most impressed by the last two) and Le Corbusier (yes, he was an artist as well as architect). But we have to admit that the guide did indicate rather more in the collectible paintings direction than lithographs....!

In the afternoon Sarah set about planning for the next few weeks cruising in Turkey whilst I started the modification (with at least two phone calls to 'the Robert Forsdike' helpline in Ipswich, thank you Robert) to our engine room ventilation system, which entails putting the fan system onto a thermostat basis rather than just the ignition switch arrangement supplied. (Swedes don't get to deal with these sorts of temperatures too often!)

Wind got up further in the evening again, which is pretty much the opposite of what is supposed to happen out here but hopefully this is the end of it all for a while!

A perfect Day

39:22.0N 26:10.1E

Friday 22nd May

Checked out our Transit Log with the Port Police (they are a bit keen round here) and we got away around 10.15am heading north to a little bay where we planned to stay the night. Along the way we were joined by 2 dolphins who swam with us briefly before rejoining three others a little way off.

We arrived in the bay only to find that it was less a bay than just a beach with little or no protection if the weather kicked up at all, so we decided to press on to Mithymna which turned out to be the best decision we have made for quite a while!

From a good way off you can see the 14th century Byzantine castle at the top of the hill overlooking the town of Molivos (the locals prefer this newer name to the ancient and correct 'Mithymna') and the approach needs care to avoid a lot of outlying rocks, but as we came into the outer harbour we were stunned by the beauty of the place and to make things better we were welcomed by the crews of the 5 yachts that were still here

having been sheltering from the same storm as us all week. Two American boats, one Australian, one from Guernsey and one from the UK. There was one working water point and so Sarah sprang into action washing the decks thoroughly as she had become very depressed at the state of Serafina during the bad weather as the rain had made her filthy and deposited yellow pollen all over her in addition to all the dirt!

We then got to meet the other crews properly and they all had wintered in various parts of Turkey were heading for Istanbul and some for the Black Sea, so they were able to give us any amount of very useful information for our stay in Turkey. However, with regards to this beautiful town they directed us first to go up the hill to see the castle and wander the cobbled street which was just wonderful. The whole town has been carefully preserved, retaining its traditional Ottoman architecture, narrow cobbled lanes, stone houses with hallmark wooden balconies jutting out and brightly painted shutters. It really is quite a magical place, but it is obvious from the number of tavernas especially down by the quay that this is a big tourist trap in the summer and this was confirmed by locals who said that it was packed throughout the season, particularly when the trip boats arrived.

Got back down to the waterfront to find four of the boat crews assembled on the Australian yacht tucked into evening drinks to which we were immediately invited. Lots of useful advice given to us, but as the drink flowed our ability to retain the information deteriorated! Eventually things came to halt as they were all making very early starts in the morning, but it was then discovered that one of the American boats was just touching the bottom and for good measure appeared to have a steel advertising sign that was lying on the sea bed, caught between their rudder and prop! This was removed, with varying degrees of help from us all, but not before causing some chaos in the taverna with the customers sitting at the tables on the waters edge.

We then offered that the boat could be rafted alongside us where the water was deeper, but as we set about doing this, the Port Police arrived and requested that we move Serafina as they had forgotten that a large fishing boat was due in! So we ended up rafted alongside the 50+ foot Swan from Guernsey.

Sarah and I then set off to find the restaurant (Betty's) that came highly recommended by all the crews (and the Lonely Planet Guide no less). Found the restaurant which is a restored Turkish pasha's residence in the town's upper streets and when we introduced ourselves to Betty, she personally ushered us through the busy dining room to the prime table in the place, which is on the glossy red overhanging balcony with a fantastic view over the little harbour. Drink having been taken, I was able to overcome my total fear of anything higher than a chair and we enjoyed a wonderful meal, mostly selected by Betty who is an engaging Greek who has spent most of her life in Australia!

Returned to Serafina to find the crew of the Swan all back from their meal (they had not been around when we had rafted up to them) and we agreed that since they were also leaving early in the morning, we would simply cast off and set out ourselves at whatever time suited them as well.

Ayvalik, Turkey

39:18.8N 26:41.1E

Saturday 23rd May

Another day another country!

Early start today as the other yachts all had big trips ahead of them so 5.30am saw the first of them underway!

We left at 6.30am which was quite soon enough and had a completely windless trip across from Lesvos to Turkey.

The straights between the two are teeming with naval craft, several warships, patrol

boats and coastguard launches. This is because there is currently quite a active trade in smuggling people from Turkey into Greece.

Saw some dolphins, but they seemed very laid back and took no interest in us!

Finally cruised up the long buoyed channel that leads to an inland sea and the town of Ayvalik. We were booked into the Setur Marina here for two nights whilst we get all the paperwork done for entering the country. I have been quite dreading today as we have read so much about the song and dance that is the paper trail of entry forms, visa, transit Log etc. etc.

You have to pay an agent to undertake all this stuff for you if you have a boat the size of Serafina and fortunately the marina here are able to undertake this role (for an exorbitant fee!) and this is a real bonus especially the first time. I was told to be patient and smile a lot and this was certainly helpful advice. Nevertheless we started the process at 11.00am and with various interruptions and side shows we got to the final office, the Harbour Master (you have to visit endless offices of all the different authorities spread around the town in a certain order) after he had gone home at 7.30pm. So we continue tomorrow..... In fairness part of the delay today is that they have introduced a new system which requires them inputting all the information that has already taken 2 hours to write down, into a National Database so that in future it will all be so much quicker. Hope they are using better software suppliers than the UK government.

Really hot today and until mid afternoon there was no breeze so quite stiffling. Just heard that on Monday our friends Steve and Chris on 'Scott Free' will be arriving here so we are making plans to meet up in a bay for the evening.

Bademli Limani – well fairly close

39:00.1N 26:47.3E

Sunday 24th May

Paper chase continued to day, but harbour master not in his office until 5pm so had to wait until then for everything to be finally completed.

Very hot today, so not a great day for sitting in concrete marina but got lots of little jobs done while Sarah continued polishing Serafina's stainless steel to within an inch of its life!

Very entertaining early evening as the local boats that had gone out from the marina for the day, came back in demonstrating a frightening lack of skills or understanding of how to manoeuvre their boats. The mariners here are however well trained and very adept in an inflatable Rhib at shooting around guiding the boats into place and tying the ropes and lazy lines without any interference from the boat owners!!

Monday 25th May

Scott Free (Chris and Steve) arrived this morning to check back into Turkey and get a new Transit Log etc. so we spent a fair part of the day with them while they waited for various people to do the rounds (sound familiar?) The best part is the fact that you have to fly the 'Q' (quarantine) flag on arrival and stay on board until the doctor has been out to see you. This can be 1 hour or 4 hours, so Chris went shopping in the handy supermarket whilst waiting! The doctor only asks you to fill in a form, mainly relating to 'Swine Fever' and that is it.

Crew of Scott Free came for dinner in the evening and it was great to catch up with them

again and they were of course very helpful and knowledgeable about Turkey.

Tuesday 26th May

Left Ayvalik around 9.30am heading south for a bay between two small islands near to the village of Bademli Limani, a distance of around 25 miles. Light and fickle wind all day, but we managed to sail for part of the way albeit gently. The one time we did get up a bit of pace, we were immediately joined by a few dolphins who played with us for a short while, but the wind soon died again and they lost interest.

Sarah spent some time testing the SSB radio by trying to hold a series of conversations with a very patient Steve on Scott Free who were now on their way north towards the Dardenelles, but things did not go too well with them not able to hear her still.

Arrived at the chosen bay which was certainly extremely attractive with wonderful turquoise water and so it was no time at all before Sarah dived in for the first swim of the year. Water fine so I had no option but to have a dip as well, but as ever I took the opportunity to check things under the boat and to my horror saw the shaft anode hanging off! This was the chance (well, a reasonable excuse at best) to use the mini B scuba kit which we carry for just such events, but given that we have never used it before it did take a little while to sort everything out and experiment before I dived down to do the repair. All went well and under the circumstances I decided to remove the anode and not replace it with one of spares for the time being. We are rarely plugged into shore power these days and so its use is fairly limited at best, just 'belt and braces'.

Sarah then had another scheduled radio net with Steve from Scott Free and whatever we had done during the afternoon (lot of reading of the manual and pressing of buttons....) was a total success as Steve reported that he could hear Sarah perfectly, which is the first time ever for our SSB, so great news. Ironically we could not hear him too well because of some cross transmission, so they are going to have one more link up tomorrow, by which time we should be at least 100 miles apart, which might improve things.

Candali – Eastern Bay

38:58.1N 26:56.4E

Wednesday 27th May

Last night turned out to be one of the windiest we have spent at anchor. The wind rose in the late afternoon (from the south - the 'open' end of the bay of course) but by the early evening it had come round to the more usual north, but instead of dying away, it continued to rise until we had 25 knots of wind coming straight down the 'bay'. The catch was that this is not actually a proper bay, but the gap between two islands, with a very shallow sand bar across the gap. This should stop waves and swell from the north, but in this strength of wind the swell sweeps straight across the bar and made for quite a lot of chop. By bedtime the wind had not eased at all, but was varying slightly in direction with each strong gust so we 'sailed' around our anchor a lot more than usual.

Decided that an anchor watch was a bit OTT but did put on the anchor alarm just for peace of mind.

The morning dawned fairly quietly with just a fair breeze, still from the north. Plan was to sail round to Candali which was only 15 miles or so and spend some time exploring the town and a couple of the nearby bays.

Almost as soon as we got under way around 8am, the wind increased again, but from the north east and before long we were headed straight into 25 -30 knots of wind with quite a swell running. Soon reached Candarli where the only real option is to anchor in the bay to the east of the town and take a dinghy ashore. However when we arrived we found that the wind was whistling across this anchorage and the three boats still here from the night before were all swinging quite a lot at their anchors. We decided that the best option was still to stop here, but probably not bother pressing on to visit the other bays later. Dropped the anchor which held immediately (cannot recommend the Rocna anchor strongly enough...it is just wonderful) and chose to sit out the next few hours before launching the dinghy and going ashore after lunch.

Wind never eased at all, but we launched the dinghy anyway and I took Sarah ashore and left her to do some investigating and provisioning, whilst I bought some fuel for the outboard and returned to Serafina.

Wind kept up all day and by the evening was backing and veering at random which had us all swinging around our anchors quite a bit. Recovered the dinghy back on board and settled down for another breezy night.

Eskifoca

38:40.5N 26:44.8E

Thursday 28th May

An almost perfect day in the end!

Another quite windy night led to a breezy start to the day and with 15 to 20 knot gusts blowing already and no access to a forecast, we elected to stay put for another day rather than risk going to Eskifoca, which according to the pilot book is unlikely to have space on the quay and the various anchorages are fairly suspect.

Got some jobs done and noticed around midday that the wind had eased noticeably and so we changed our minds about leaving and raised the anchor. This was not such a quick job after all as the sea bed here is thick mud which took a bit of cleaning off the anchor!

Motored out into the bay where we were met by 20 knots of wind just off the starboard bow, so we quickly raised the sails and were soon flying along at 7 - 8 knots. It was as soon as we got up to 7+ knots that we were joined by a pod of 5 dolphins who played with us for over 20 minutes. These dolphins were remarkable because of their size, as they were much bigger than most we have seen. Anyway, this was the most action we have seen from any dolphins since we were back in the Atlantic, with pairs seeming to swim parallel to the bow, surface for a breath and then dive and turn through 90 degrees to rush just under our bow and sweep out on the far side before repeating this. No leaping out of the water today, but they did seem a bit big for that!

Shortly after they left us (the wind was dropping so we were slowing down) our log showed us completing 6,000 miles since we sailed out of Sweden in July 2007 and there can have been few more enjoyable few hours sailing than the last three.

Approached Eskifoca through a group of very dramatic islands and as predicted there was no space on the town quay although the owner of a large modern trip boat did invite us to moor alongside him. We declined as it was a lee shore situation and not very safe at all, so we motored out of the little natural harbour and into the next bay where we anchored close to a Dutch boat about 100 metres off the beach. Seems a nice spot and since we have now seen a weather forecast we should have a quieter night.

Photos: Sorry that we have not updated these recently, but we have not been able to get Wi-Fi. There are quite a few that will be added soon at <http://www.rhbell.com>

Things that go bump in the night

Friday 29th May

So having just praised our Rocna anchor, last night proved that clumps of weed and soft soil do not provide good holding for an anchor regardless of what you put down!

The spot where we have anchored is just opposite a large commando barracks and so we have been entertained by them going through a lot of their training in our plain view (strictly no photos though) and the hills all around the bay are clearly used by them for training exercises of all sorts including rock climbing and assault tactics etc. Our peaceful evening was slightly interrupted by repeated gunfire which presumably was a night exercise!

The wind kept rising and so when we went to bed, we were sufficiently nervous about the holding here to set an anchor alarm, which turned out to be very wise as just before midnight, there was a loud clunk and then the high pitched sound of the alarm and sure enough one of the gusts had pulled the anchor out of the soft weed and we were being blown out to sea. We raised the anchor and came back to try again but as soon as we put it under load it dragged again and when we recovered it, we found another great clump of weed and mud on it. For the next attempt we crept even closer to the beach into very shallow water and tried again and this time we got lucky and the anchor bit in. Reset the anchor alarm and went back to bed, but certainly did not sleep too well from then on!

Wind died away completely by the morning and instead of the usual call to prayers from the minarets (0515 is the first of the frequent and very substantially amplified chants) we were woken by the commando's marching band who were leading a platoon or two on a parade. I suppose there are only so many tunes you can march to that can be played on a bugle, but this sounded all very familiar.

Ate breakfast whilst watching some poor recruits being put through their paces on aerial walkways and some very strange team activities involving telegraph poles. One group were sent into the sea (still in full uniform) and having linked arms, appeared to be instructed to march backwards into the deeper water whilst an officer videoed them!

Plucked up courage to take the dinghy ashore and leave Serafina (the wind was very light) and had a wander round the town. A great shame that there is no room really for visiting yachts on the town quay as it has a large fleet of huge trawlers and a lot of smaller boats almost permanently moored up, taking up the space. There is however a very large amount of piling being done off the quay opposite the town and they are clearly building some sort of facility, either for visiting boats, or perhaps to house the trawlers.

Oinouissa

38:30.8N 26:13.0E

Saturday 30th May

Took quite a while to get the anchor up today as the chain was covered in a gooey

weedy slime, which took an age to clean off as we raised it. Then at a crucial moment the wonderful spray nozzle fitting (that I found in the UK last winter) on the deck hose came off and sank into the murky depths!

Not a breath of wind today - all day, so we motored all the way to Oinoussa Island and after visiting a number of bays and inlets (sadly many had fish farms anchored in them, which does not add to the ambience!) we went into Mandraki harbour and moored stern too, just in front of some yachts that were alongside the quay.

We were joined later by a bright yellow Swiss owned yacht (Ovni 45) that moored next to us and in the early evening we were serenaded by the owner who was a very accomplished acoustic guitarist.

Exploring the bays and islands on the way in had been interesting as they have not been charted correctly on the electronic chart, so as we edged our way around the submerged rocks, the Chart Plotter had us placed firmly elsewhere on dry land!

Flags:

It's hard not to be impressed by the Turks love for their national flag which you see flying absolutely everywhere. Every fishing boat, regardless of size flies one and not just a scruffy old one! Buildings fly them and many of the places we have visited have unbelievably tall flag staffs flying huge flags that can be seen from miles away. We feel rather ashamed of our small nylon Turkish courtesy flag (bought in Greece) and have hunted for something better, but despite all these flags on show, we have not found anywhere to buy one yet!

An anomaly that confused us was the number of boats flying the American stars and stripes. Strangely most of them seemed to be from Wilmington or Delaware and we have now had it explained to us. It is all part of a tax dodge here in Turkey and the boats are bought in Bulgaria, registered in USA and sold 'luxury tax' free to Turks. One clue was that the home port is often misspelt which seems to amuse real Americans, and the second was that the American flag on the stern is usually very small and the Turkish courtesy flag is large and bright!

Cesme – Silent nights

38:19.2N 26:18.1E

Sunday 31st May

So settled down to a relaxed evening once the German had put away his guitar and his mate had stopped singing/whistling, but a disco started blaring from the Yacht Club above us. But reasonable UK/USA/Oz (well Rob's favourite Kylie track - yup THAT video) tracks, unfortunately this became what can only be described as Greek Techno, amongst the many they massacred was the Stones' "Satisfaction" (no greater crime on Serafina). By 3am they turned to Greek ballads; at 4am a Greek (joined occasionally by one or two of his mates) joined in by bellowing completely different songs to those being played. The DJ then obligingly tried to match the records but the singer insisted on staying a few lines ahead and so this continued until about 5.30 long after the disco finally stopped.

Sadly blessed sleep was interrupted at 8.30 by all the church bells ringing for Sunday (see earlier blog on 17th May for just how many churches there are on this island....!) followed by a megaphoned sung Eucharist. Rob wasn't totally convinced that our friend had actually stopped in the interim.

We had come to this nice, sleepy little village for its good solid quay as thunderstorms

were forecast. In the event not a zephyr, drop of rain or roll of thunder was heard (obviously) - Bitter, moi?!

I should never have let Sarah write her bit so soon after the event! (The more observant amongst you will have also noticed the brief return to Greek waters.)

Got away with a nice 12 knots of northerly blowing us due south to Cesme in Turkey, so we took the opportunity to use the Simbo rig (twin headsails) again and do some fine tuning to this. Wonderful leisurely sail resulted which brought us to our destination almost too quickly!

As we came into the harbour we spotted a sign with the VHF channel to call on and this resulted in the immediate arrival of a marinero (actually not sure what they are called in Turkey) who was wonderfully helpful and directed us into a slot and helped us with the lines. Sarah had some difficulty in concentrating as 'Kurt' (she soon overheard his name being used elsewhere) comes under the very definite heading of eye candy!!

This 'marina' which in truth is the entire harbour is a great spot, or so it seems at the moment. It is very large and almost completely empty, so no need to book ahead. It is also central to the small town with its frequent buses to Izmir and with the fresh breeze blowing today seemed to us to be ideal. The only setback was the call to prayer soon after we arrived from the nearest minaret which has been repeated perhaps more often than we usual. These innocuous looking towers all have astonishingly powerful loud speakers fitted all the way round and can broadcast prayers at very high volume and this one is no different except that the chap appears to be a novice training perhaps as he is considerably less tuneful from all the others but just as deafening. But after last night, it is a mere trifle although they are at it again and it is 10.20pm, so we see what happens overnight....perhaps we are about to find out why this marina is so empty!

The marina is by no means complete and most of the pontoons although in place, have no services installed, but it is in a better state than most Greek ones.

Not many other yachts here, but a fun crowd who have mostly been very impressed with the sight of Sarah diligently washing and polishing Serafina's hull, which she has spent all afternoon doing.

Nergis Koyu

38:10.0N 26:31.1E

Monday 1st June

Chose to stay in Cesme for another day as there is free water and virtually free power and joy of joys, free Wi-Fi. This is all quite strange as the marina is a far from a finished project, another one where completion has stalled due the current financial climate. Very sad for the chap running the nearby chandlery as all the resident yachts have left and gone to one or other of the posh expensive marinas that are not many miles away.

It also has to be said that the nearest minaret does have quite the most powerful load hailers that we have come across in our travels and the first call is just before dawn, around 4.40am!

Fascinating town with bits of everything. It had seemed to have a quiet laid back charm, but as you get closer to the castle you discover clues as to another identity by way of the 'No Problem' English bar/cafe offering your full English breakfasts etc. etc. and then the rows of Gulets (trip boats) and the attendant bars and restaurants. Somewhere

nearby there must be some big hotels to feed all this!

Sarah spent the morning polishing the half of the hull she didn't polish yesterday and then in the afternoon she did a little bit of looking round the town coupled with a shopping run! Blisteringly hot day and although there was a breeze blowing it made little difference.

Various boats left and new ones arrived amongst which there were three British yachts. Lord Strathcarron (in his pretend Admiral's cap - or not perhaps?) moored his Freedom yacht 'Vasco da Gama' two up from us and there was a Farr 50 something and a HR36.

Tuesday 2nd June

Forecast is for strong southerly winds for the next two days, which is a little unfortunate as the lovely bays that we are off to visit are mostly very exposed to the south, however, there were a couple of options that offer protection and so after trying to settle our electricity bill ("pay next time you come here") we sailed off into a fresh south easterly 14 knot wind.

This predictably died away and we ended up motoring most of the way today to Nergis Koyu which is a fabulous little bay offering protection from most directions, crystal clear water and a firm looking sandy bottom. Fingers and toes crossed the holding is better than the last time we had a blow! Sun disappeared around midday as we approached the bay and so we sat all afternoon in hot, humid, overcast conditions, sharing the bay with just two other boats. A French catamaran and a Swedish couple on a small German registered Swedish yacht who we met two days ago in Cesme. They were great fun and were full of their trip last spring, passing through countries they had barely heard of, as they sailed down the Danube on their way from the Baltic to the Black Sea (which they so enjoyed that at the end of the season they are having their boat transported by lorry to where they can do it all again!).

The wind gradually increased during the afternoon, but not only did it get stronger but also very much warmer. By 6pm the Swedish couple had to re-anchor as the Catamaran was looming over them and I decided at this point to swim out and take a look at our anchor which seemed to have dug into the sand pretty well....

Wind continued to rise and the Swedes gave up and recovered their anchor and set off for another nearby bay where they hoped to be able to get a line ashore. Shortly after this the wind died away again! We decided though that we would at least start the night with an anchor watch, not because we were too worried about our anchor holding, but mainly because we were directly downwind of the catamaran and we had seen the diminutive size of their anchor a few days earlier in Mandraki and commented to each other about it then, particularly bearing in mind the very large windage that they presented!

Alacati Bay

38:15.3N 26:23.4E

Wednesday 3rd June

Wind blew hard for most of the night, but both boats stayed rock solid and did not move an inch.

Mid morning we had a visit from the French couple who were after some information about Sigacik, which we were able to supply second hand. They were very pleasant and not withstanding her English being better than my French we muddled through the

conversation. We had seen them buying some fish off a small fishing boat that had come into the bay the night before to shelter from the wind, but they told us that far from buying it, the fishermen had insisted that they have it for free. Mind you the French did confess that although it tasted fine they had never seen anything like it before!

The wind kept up all day and with no other bays being safe with the wind from the south, we chose to stay another night knowing that we had a well dug in anchor. Two German yachts joined us during the course of the day and although we all had a secure location, the big seas outside began to roll around the headland and reflect back across the bay from the far side setting up a very uncomfortable roll across the wind direction which had us all pitching and rolling through the night.

Thursday 4th June

Wind still blowing quite strongly, but forecast to go west and ease later, so we opted to move on and check out some other bays and ultimately head for Alacati bay, where if the weather did not let up, we could probably get into the (expensive) marina for the night.

Sailed out of the bay into the biggest seas we have seen since arriving at this end of the Med and a force 6 wind right on our nose. After half an hour of this, we decided to bear away and head straight for Alacati Bay and see what things were like in there. Had a pretty fast sail in glorious sunshine all the way there and blasted up the bay as far as a large hotel on the west side of the inlet where we dropped the main and continued sailing up the bay under the jib to the head of the bay where we dropped our anchor opposite the entrance to the marina in calm and sheltered waters.

Wind eased off so we agreed to stay the night at anchor again rather than pay the high marina fee. Launched the dinghy and Sarah went ashore to check out the village and the large empty harbour that we could see but which the pilot book showed as a 'development'! She was met by a security guard who had some difficulty working out how she had got into the middle of this sealed private area not realising that she had just stepped up out of a dinghy. The village is no such thing at all, but a major development inspired by the architect Francois Spoerry, creator of Port Grimaud on the Cote d'Azur. It certainly makes a very refreshing change from the usual concrete barracks that such developers usually throw up, but it does not open for another few weeks and so there is nobody living there yet. More importantly for us there are no shops and only one taverna, close to the existing marina. Sarah also came across a Najad 440 and a van bearing the livery of 'Najad Turkey' and assumed that she had found Najad's Turkish agent but no one was around to confirm this.

Entertainment was provided for us by the windsurfers all operating from the very large hotel that we had passed on the way in, but there are clear signs that this summer has not started too well for the local tourist industry as everywhere is still very quiet and barely no tourists are in evidence anywhere.

Wonderful sunny evening with very little wind now although there was a bit of chop, mostly from a lone wakeboarding speedboat!

Bike week 2009 - Cesme

38:19.2N 26:18.0E

Friday 5th June

Not a breath of wind and sea that resembled a mirror meant a dull and hot motor round to Cesme where we are picking up two friends, Mick and Dione who are staying with us

for a week.

Big first today as Sarah decided that it was time she had a go at 'parking' Serafina and given no wind and an almost empty marina with lazy lines and an attentive mariner ('sailors' is what they are called here) it was perfect timing (well, Rob was prepared to struggle through the agony of watching this time!). Of course she did a perfect job and astonishingly the Marina manager rushed out of his office (portacabin) to offer his congratulations. We assume that he has never witnessed a woman driver before!

The highlight of the afternoon was the arrival for 'Bike Week 2009' of the Turkish Chapter of the Hell's Angels (The Hogs) on at least 50 to 60 Harleys along with support vehicles and one enterprising chap even had his bike in the back of his smart pick-up truck (no dust in his eyes!). They went on to entertain us over the weekend as they clearly have a problem with sense of direction and we kept seeing them in groups of 2 or 3 (or sometimes 20) approaching the roundabout by the marina and then shooting off down different roads, only to return and try again, or get out their mobile phones!

Saturday 6th June

Frantic scrubbing and polishing etc. in readiness for our friends arrival. In the event they were delayed at the coach station in Izmir as the bus only had one spare seat and they had to wait an hour for the next one and arrived after a very long day's travelling at 7.30pm. We had an entertaining wait for them by the roadside watching the local traffic (and the odd group of Hell's Angels!) deal with the twin inconveniences of a large roundabout and multiple traffic lights. Highlight was a girl who cycled cheerfully round the roundabout the wrong way, through the red lights and set off down the dual carriageway the wrong way, all the while chatting on her mobile phone. And nobody batted an eyelid!

Went out for a meal in town in the evening which was excellent, but we were obviously a little late for them as the staff hovered around us clearing plates at every opportunity.

Have now just seen our first newspapers for two months and are more than a little surprised at the chaos back at home. All these years we have viewed the governments of countries like Italy with an element of contempt for the way they run things and it turns out that we have very little to be proud of!

New Moon gathers the moths

38:11.0N 26:31.0E

Sunday 7th June.

Slow start, clear blue skies and no wind.

Topped up with supplies as we are going to be away from civilisation for the best part of three days and left Cesme late morning just as a bit of a breeze got up.

Were soon sailing although not particularly quickly, heading south for Nergis Koyn Bay. Gradually the wind died away and eventually we had to give in and motor the final few miles to the bay.

As we rounded the corner to enter into the very protected cove we found it almost full of yachts and motor boats but we reasoned that being Sunday afternoon most of them would soon be upping anchor and returning to Alacati Marina for the end of their day or weekend out. We anchored nearby and all went for a lovely swim in the turquoise blue water. Shortly afterwards the wind got up quickly from the North and this was the signal

for almost all of the yachts to make their way home as we had surmised (I have been told not to make the link between their sudden rush to leave and Dione's loud shriek as she hit the water when diving into the bay to find that it was markedly colder than the pool at her gym back home). Sadly the ideal spot that we had identified as being the place to stay for the night had two yachts anchored in, neither of which showed any sign of leaving and indeed both showed all the hallmarks of being long term cruisers like ourselves so we lifted our anchor and headed into the northern bay nearby which turned out to be a great move and we had the most wonderful spot all to ourselves (and an industrious Turkish fishing boat) for the night.

Sat and ate supper watching the full moon rise over the hills next to us which was the cue for a frenzy of largely futile photography! We were also joined by an extraordinary number of quite colourful moths which was a whole lot better than mosquitos!

Champagne and Tuna

38:11.0N 26:31.0E

Monday 8th June

Hard to get galvanised into action as this bay is close to idyllic. On closer inspection it is clear that the group of houses set back in the trees at the head of the bay are not a small village as we assumed, but another holiday complex, as yet incomplete and totally empty.

After a lazy late breakfast we set about moving on to Gokkover Limani, which was our planned overnight stop for tonight, but our departure was slightly delayed when a huge (and I mean huge) herd of goats was shepherded down the valley along the side of the bay beside where were lying, all clanking their distinctive bells.

Finally got under way, but still no wind to speak of, so we motored all the way with just the one bit of excitement when we hooked a fish close to a headland, only for it to get off the hook just as we got it close to the boat.

Arrived at Gokkover to find the entrance to this fjord like bay flanked offshore by two very large fish farms and a host of attendant buoys and lines. We picked our way carefully through this and entered the long bay and made our way up to the head, where we found a French yacht occupying the sole mooring buoy which meant that we needed to drop an anchor and take a long line ashore to secure ourselves. This was harder than usual as the bay is very deep and the sides are almost sheer, so you have to drop your anchor within feet of the rocks and drop back to a suitable point. We messed around for a while getting all set up for this and just as we were about to drop the anchor, we collectively decided that the very aggressive horseflies that were plaguing us were just too much and aborted the idea and went back toward the entrance where there was a large ship's mooring buoy with a pickup line that we used to sit and enjoy a lunch that Sarah had prepared on the way over. (What a girl)

New plan was to enjoy the afternoon breeze to sail back to where we were last night and as we emerged from the entrance through the fish farms the wind dutifully picked up (bang on our nose) and we started sailing the 12 miles round the headlands. Of course the wind then started to drop away just when we needed it most and we had to start motor sailing.

At this juncture, as is the way of the sea, several things happened pretty much simultaneously. We were close (rather too close perhaps) to the headland which was a lee shore when the fishing rod bent over to indicate another strike. Cue general

excitement as we started to reel in a what turned out to be a tuna, the then wind suddenly picked up and was soon gusting at 25 knots with waves growing all the while. Mick resolutely stuck to the task of steering whilst Sarah and I landed our fish and tacked the yacht to head out to sea again. Sarah sat on the back deck and gutted, topped and tailed our catch and took it below after which I washed down the deck and rinsed the various items involved (quite a lot of blood involved) and we then sailed on to our destination. As we arrived we saw a gaggle of yachts crowded into the south bay, but our prized north bay was completely empty and so we dropped the anchor pretty much where it was last night and after a lovely swim and showers, we settled down to champagne and nibbles whilst Sarah (sainthood beckons) prepared wonderful marinaded, pan fried fresh tuna steaks with couscous and an avocado and tomato salsa.

Dinner was briefly interrupted when a fishing boat who had just been laying his nets around us came over to offer us a freshly caught red snapper but we were able to politely decline.....

Wonderful full moon and a glorious bright starry sky and as we all went to bed, Mick and Dione were overheard discussing selling their house and buying a yacht with immediate effect!

Alacati

38:15.2N 26:23.26E

Tuesday 9th June

Reasonable breeze blowing from the south as we left the serene surroundings of Nergis Koyn, so we were able to raise the sails and enjoy a very easy sail along the coast heading west, then as we approached the entrance to the long inlet that leads to Alacati, the wind veered round to the north west and quickly picked up to 20 + knots which was so enjoyable that we stayed out and spent the next few hours reaching along the coast and back until finally around 4.00pm we headed into the bay and dropped anchor briefly in a shallow cove for a much needed swim, before continuing on up to the head of the bay where we dropped anchor just outside the entrance to Alacati Marina.

Sat back and enjoyed watching the windsurfers and the kite surfers doing their stuff and generally observing the fishermen and life around us as the sun set and the chilled wine flowed!

A real blast

38:19.2N 26:18.1E

Wednesday 10th June

Forecast for 25 to 30 knots of wind today from the north proved to be right and so as it started to rise around 10.00am, we raised our anchor and sails and swept out of the big bay heading for Cesme.

This trip was around 20 miles, but involved sailing west around several headlands and a long bay before turning due north into the teeth of the wind and the large seas that were running between Khios Island (Greece) and Turkey, for a 10 mile leg.

Mick had the helm pretty much the whole way and had a wonderful time as we progressively reefed Serafina down to deal with the strengthening winds and rising seas. Dione's concentrated sun tanning operation was interrupted finally when we started shipping waves, but not before she got soaked by one!

Another wonderful day's sailing finally ended as we slipped out of the rolling seas into the protection of Cesme harbour and moored stern-to a pontoon using a lazy line. The shower block beckoned and after taking advantage of all the facilities and another lunch rustled up by Sarah, Mick and Dione took a stroll around the town, Sarah did a load of food shopping and I may just have had 25 mins asleep (well, in my defence I had hovered the inside of the boat first....) and then later after a few glasses of wine we went out and enjoyed a great (but not inexpensive) evening meal in town.

Dalyankoy

38:21.2N 26:18.7E

11th June

Wind got up in the night and along with banging halyards (French boat two up from us!!) creaking ropes and the ubiquitous minarets we had a fairly disturbed night.

Some debate along the pontoon about the incoming weather as we are now expecting force 8 gales on Saturday/Sunday/Monday. Today it is forecast to blow 25 knots at least from the north again and already it was up to 20 knots. Boats heading south were fine and one or two set off, but those wanting to go north stayed put. To get to Dalyankoy we needed to head north and we decided that we would give it a go as we could always run back if things turned bad.

In the event we had a fantastic sail, beating across to Khios island and then back to the Turkish coast, round the rocks and reefs north of the headland and then an easy run down to the entrance to the harbour at Dalyankoy which is hard to spot until you are very close. Deceptive place as the harbour is actually quite large but has a very narrow entrance and small initial basin, but fortunately we had been tipped off about this and pressed on despite the acute lack of depth under our keel, creeping past moored boats along what seemed like a narrow river. Very helpful chap, who turned out to be the moorings manager hailed us and helped us into a gap and we settled down to lunch followed by a stroll into the town and a swim off the beach.

Loads of smart restaurants along the waterfront, but little else and sadly there are absolutely no customers to be seen anywhere at all.

Chose to eat on board as the restaurant prices here were astronomical and had a very pleasant evening watching the sun set behind the nearby minaret.

New photos at <http://www.rhbell.com>

Back to Cesme

38:19.2N 26:18.1E

Friday 12th June

Decided to make an early start and motor round to a nearby bay for an early morning

swim and found ourselves anchoring next to an Italian boat that we had met up with several times in Cesme.

Had breakfast after which there was a general reluctance to actually go swimming so we upped anchor and set off for Karaada Island which also has a selection of idyllic bays. Arrived in the western most of these around 11.30am and had the whole place to ourselves and so at this point Sarah, Mick and Dione all elected to take the plunge. The wind began to rise and although this was a well protected spot, they all found that they were swimming quite purposefully just to stay in position behind the anchored boat!

Reluctantly we raised the anchor (last time for Mick and Dione) and set out back to Cesme under just the staysail. Typically the 20 knot wind soon faded and we took several hours to ease our way downwind back to the harbour. Certain amount of excitement on board as we came into the harbour when it was seen that the dockmaster today was Kurt (well, Sarah and Dione seemed pleased) and we moored up and prepared ourselves for the gales that are expected over the next few days. Mick and Dione wandered up to the bus station to buy their tickets back to Izmir for tomorrow morning and then after a few quiet evening drinks we went into town for the usual round of debating where to eat and fending off the constant enquiries and offers from all the restaurants. Finally settled on the same one that we had already been to twice earlier in the week and had another great meal followed by a wander up and down the main street and its myriad of shopping opportunities!

Saturday 13th June

Very sad day as we had to wave farewell to Mick and Dione, much to the collective relief of their daughters who have been texting them with concerns over the report in this blog that they were considering selling up and sailing into the sunset!! They left us stuck here in Cesme with a three or four day storm due within hours and the whole district has lost its water supply so we are hanging on to the very meagre remaining supplies on board and are unable to use any of the shore facilities or get any of the laundry washed.

On the up side though there are certainly much worse places to be storm bound and worryingly I think I am getting to almost quite enjoy the minaret calls. Sarah thinks there are less of them this weekend, but it might just be that we are getting used to them now.

Rather an empty day really as we were missing Mick and Dione, knowing that they were probably not enjoying their day too much either as it involved a bus to Izmir and then another bus to the airport followed by all the joys of waiting at a Turkish provincial airport, a four hour flight to the UK and a joyful evening drive down the M6 from Manchester airport to Worcester! Got very little done other than read the papers they brought with them from the previous week. Wind was gusting 30+ knots almost as soon as they left us mid morning and kept blowing all day. Worse due tomorrow.

We had expected more yachts to be taking shelter here, but the sea conditions outside forced most yachts to stay put, although one very windswept charter yacht did come in and executed a very creditable parking manoeuvre, before a fairly shaky crew came ashore.

Rats abandon ship..?

Sunday 14th June

Wind howled all night and the forecast shows no let up for several days and then only a brief lull for around 24 hours. The strange thing is that looking at the weather maps for the Med as a whole shows that only this quite small area is getting any wind at all!

The water supply was restored this morning and this at least meant that we could use the washing machine, but the catch was how to dry the stuff without losing it all in the high winds! In the end Sarah adopted a solution, best described as the human tumble drier whereby she simply stood on deck hanging onto the items such as sheets for 10 minutes at a time which was quite enough for them to spin and twist and dry in the hot wind. The slightly odd Austrian next door has taken a slightly creepy delight in watching this display, but it might have been the bikini....

Yacht came in today with the crew all wearing oilskins which is a first. Actually things are not too bad, but we have a 60+ mile trip to do and it will be directly into the teeth of this wind and the seas that have been building, so we are keen to stay for a while and wait for a suitable break. Would be nice to be tied to something rather more solid than the pontoon we are on as it dips and weaves in the waves making getting on and off quite exciting!

Cesme is very much a resort for Turks and the weekends see a large influx of people living in Izmir coming for a break. The gulleets (trip boats) were very busy yesterday and today, but almost exclusively they were full of Turkish holidaymakers. Had to admire the skills of the gullet captains as they have to moor almost broadside to the wind and waves on the main town quay, which was a real spectacle as some of them roll dreadfully and the gaps they have to get into are very small. This whole exercise was made even more dramatic today as a very large British registered Gin Palace chose to ride out the bad weather by anchoring parallel to the town quay, just about in the spot the gulleets wanted to drop their anchors. Quite a lot of words were exchanged and from where I was watching there were some very near misses, but the crew of the gin palace never wavered from their duties polishing and cleaning the deck/hull/windows etc. whilst all the chaos raged around them.

Photos <http://www.rhbell.com>

Wind and more wind

Monday 15th June

Pretty quiet day really with nothing much happening except the continued wind blasting in from the north.

Back into the routine of doing various jobs on board, exercising the washing machine and taking full advantage of the free Wi-Fi here.

We did wander over to the town quay around 5.00pm to watch the mayhem of the gulleets arriving back, but sadly none had gone out today, so it was all quite dull.

It does now seem that there will be a small window in this weather on Wednesday, so we plan to fuel up tomorrow and get ready for an early start the next morning.

Twiddling thumbs

Tuesday 16th June

So it pays when discussing things with the locals, that you let them finish the sentence as they often leave important bits to the end. We decided to move over to the main quay so we could get a mini tanker to come and refuel us. I asked the mariner if there was water there and he said "yes",

then "Yes, sir there is",

then finally "yes sir, there is no water"!

We finally moved to this new spot early in the afternoon and it will certainly also make leaving tomorrow morning very much easier as there are no lazy lines etc, trailing in the water.

A flotilla (first of the year for us) came in around 7.30pm and with the wind still blowing hard, two of them got into quite a tangle but being over on the far side of the marina we were in no position to help.

Sarah had a final shopping trip taking the opportunity to stock up on fresh fruit and veg in particular as our next stop will be back in Greece where the quality of veg is poor and the price high. We do have a freezer (top loading chest type) but given the sort of cruising we are currently doing, we have converted it temporarily into a drinks chiller, so we have water, wine, beer, gin and tonic all at the correct temperature.

Meat choice is more limited in Turkey and of course there is rarely any pork! The people living aboard their boats in Marmaris last winter evidently broadcast on their radio net whenever, what they called 'Greek chicken', appeared in the supermarket!

On the road again

39:05.8N 26:33.5E

Wednesday 17th June

A day of contrasts as we set out at 5.00am (finally we had a good use for the early morning alarm call from the local minarets!) clad in jeans, T-shirts and fleeces (Sarah also had a jacket on) motoring out of the marina just as dawn was breaking on a windless morning. Within minutes we were out beyond the protection of the headland and facing a fairly rough sea generated by 3 days of hard winds. The wind then rose swiftly to 25 knots bang on the nose again and we pounded our way north towards Oinoussa Island (Greece) which we left to port, passing between it and the Turkish mainland.

Oinoussa Island provided a lee and the seas evened out behind it and at the same time the wind eased a bit. We did expect the open sea (North Aegean) beyond to be very lumpy but to our surprise it was very benign and although we were headed by the winds almost all the way, we were able to make much better time than we had expected.

Arrived in Mitilini (Lesvos Island, Greece) around 2.00pm and got one of the few remaining berths alongside the mole in the unfinished marina. By now the sun was at full strength and with very little wind, we were aware perhaps for the first time this year, that summertime has arrived!

Took a couple of hours off before we set off into town to do some essential shopping and present our boat papers etc. to the Port Police. Seems that most of the boats here also only arrived today having all been sheltering in various places and unusually there are two other British yachts, one Irish, one Australian and one Belgium amongst the usual international suspects!

Expecting another two days of strong winds so we plan to stay here as our next port of call has very poor protection from these northerly blasts.

Slightly embarrassed by our ensign today. The old one has faded badly and has been

repaired several times by Sarah, but we felt that it had reached the end of its useful life, so we replaced it with a new one bought last winter in the UK. Unfortunately, it is not a nice quality cloth one but a rather tacky synthetic one (albeit 'sewn' which Sarah considers to be a good thing) and so we have this brand new ensign flapping behind us and there is something about its material that makes it flap noisily rather than serenely! We are seriously considering putting the old one back up and seeing if we can get a decent one in July when we pop home for a week.

Cycling – Your life in their hands

Thursday 18th June

Today has continued the hot and windy theme, but there is certainly a change ahead and it might be OK for us to leave here tomorrow and head up to Molivos and hope to get a safe berth on the quay there. Always a bit of a gamble as there is not much room there and there may well be boats sheltering still who have not yet left!

The still more exciting news (but whisper it quietly) is that the endless northerlies that blast down through the Dardenelles might be replaced on Sunday and Monday with very rare southerlies which would be brilliant and a great help as we slog our way against the strong current that flows out of the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara, through the narrow Dardenelle straights.

Took the bike into town today and can now add Greece to my list of places not to drive! Actually it has been fun to note the motoring rules and their variations from country to country as viewed from a folding bike. Sicily was in many ways a remarkably safe place as there are no rules and no road markings to confuse you. Fortune favours the brave and eye contact is everything. You know that at any crossroads, regardless of the size of the roads involved that there will be someone coming across who thinks he has more rights than you and so you are cautious (Sarah follows the rule of stick with the old lady dressed in black, no one will run her over). In Greece there are rules, traffic lights, roundabouts and once you accept that the driving skills are poor and the attention span short, you are just going to be careful and not take too many chances. Turkey is wonderful because there the rules appear to be optional. There are traffic lights that normally just flash weakly in orange to warn you that they are there, but their purpose is random. Roundabouts can be taken pretty much as you see fit and red lights certainly are optional for taxis and some other users, but perhaps not all. Dual carriageways should contain one way traffic but that sort of depends on how convenient it is! Parking though is universally chaotic and all these countries happily accept random parking at will. If the space at the side of the road is a bit tight to get your car in, you just park near it, but out in the traffic. Corners, slip roads, roundabouts, you name it, (in fact in Cesme the car park with attendant is on the major traffic lights and reversing cars must also be added into the equation) cars just pull up and no-one much cares. The policing of all this is done by frequent and robust use of the car horn. Once enough cars are hooting, most owners will peek out of the shop or where ever they are to see if it is them at fault, but it is unusual for them to actually interrupt whatever they were doing to move it unless the cacophony reaches a level at which some action is required! This may just be some shouting and gesticulations, possibly some shrugging of the shoulders and in very serious situations, they move their vehicle.

Results Day

39:22.1N 26:10.1E

Friday 19th June

We invited David and Kate from a beautiful Australian boat moored close to us, over for drinks last night and had a really enjoyable evening. Kate is Australian born and David is from Italy and they bought the boat in a rundown condition in Trieste and then shipped it to Australia from where it has been sailed back to Turkey then Greece by way of India and the Red Sea.

This morning, after several readings of the weather forecasts we opted to head up to Molivos, despite the misgivings of some of the other boaters. (One of David's nuggets of useful information last night was the saying, "Indecision is the key to flexibility"!) Bit of excitement first as I had to cycle back through the town to the Port Police to get the ship's papers stamped and discovered the absolute braking distance of a Brompton folding bike when the motorbike I was following in heavy traffic just stopped without any warning at all. Could not swerve with the cars alongside me so quite a testing moment. The other rule I forgot was the obvious sub paragraph in the highway code that makes all cars ignore oncoming traffic that wants to turn across the flow, so they have to wait for a space, unless of course the vehicle wanting to turn across the traffic flow is a scooter with a pretty girl riding it. Suddenly speeding cars stand on their brakes to allow her to potter across and no one notices the small Brompton slithering to a standstill inches from the underside of a 4 x 4. Think I might add an occasional section to this blog entitled 'Brompton Abroad'.

No wind when we finally got off but the sceptics might have been feeling a bit more cocky as the wind rose soon to 25 knots and the sea became quite rough and progress became very slow for a while, but in due course it all settled down and we finally arrived at the delightful town and little harbour of Molivos around 2.30pm. We really love this place, but it is small and quay space is at a premium, so we were more than a little put out to find a huge (but very smart) ketch rigged super yacht taking up the whole of the main quay and a small gaggle of normal yachts (!) moored stern-to on the dodgy quay opposite with the tavernas. Fortunately there was room on the inside of this group for one more, so we dropped our anchor and slowly reversed into the space. Turns out that some of these boats had been moored on the main quay when the super yacht arrived the other day and they were all made to move by the port police, but there is no one actually living on board the big yacht, apart from the basic crew and it is going to just stay there until early July! Money talks....oh and did I mention it has a British flag, well possibly a tax haven one at least? Envy is one of my less redeeming traits.

Results day: Well this is the moment we discover how much flannel Ewan has been giving us about his last three years at university. Of course they had the leavers ball last night and when we could not stand the tension of waiting any longer (we are two hours ahead of you as well), we texted him for an update. He called to say that he did not have the results just yet (2.30pm UK time) and to be honest he had not yet been to bed! Anyway just 30 minutes later he called with the wonderful and quite remarkable news of a 2:1 (Geography at Manchester Uni) which has left us both delighted and very proud of his achievement. Graduation ceremony is in early July and we are flying home for that from Istanbul assuming all goes to plan.

Very hot and still afternoon and evening and we are pretty certain that we are moored with our stern pointing directly at the entrance to the No.1 nightspot in the village, so sleep might not come easy. 35 miles to do tomorrow and a forecast for no wind at all.

Bozcaada

39:50.1N 26:04.5E

Saturday 20th June

Last night Sarah was so thrilled with Ewan's news that she went off to buy some postcards and returned with a new dress!

Molivos is a wonderful spot, but we had forgotten about the fishermen. They are a cheerful bunch, but this isn't quite what you want when they get back into port at 0230 hrs. They then start sorting out the catch, shouting to each other and others on the quay, loading the lorry, which they had difficulty backing up the quay and then the crowning glory was the battering of the octopus catch which involves repeatedly hurling each octopus onto the deck, or quay to tenderise it!

We set off for Bozcaada Island at 0830 hrs with the sun already blazing hot and not a breath of wind. There was a big swell running from the north which was inconvenient rather than uncomfortable, but then as we reached Baba Burun (a high headland on the mainland coast of Turkey, north of Lesbos) the wind rose quickly to 20 knots across the decks and was accompanied by a steep short sea that made progress quite slow for a while. Eventually the seas did ease a bit and we made reasonable time into the headwinds, avoiding the odd ship and finally arrived at Bozcaada Island and slipped into the large bay and moored stern-to the quay under the dominating presence of a huge medieval fortress.

This is a quite remarkable place and a walk round the town revealed a maze of old houses and cobbled streets. It is one of only two Aegean Islands belonging to Turkey and it is surprisingly unspoilt, however its tourist season is focussed firmly on the school holidays and by all accounts is packed between mid-June and mid-September, which is sort of now! But there is pretty much no one here and the ferry which runs every few hours arrives with just a handful of people each time. Clearly the locals are braced for the busy times, though as the place is packed with restaurants all of whom have laid up every table they have and they have a awful lot between them! Certainly hope things pick up for them.

According to Homer, this is where the Greek fleet moored up whilst Odysseus and his men hide inside the wooden horse at Troy, (which is just across the water on the mainland very close to here).

Dardanelles

40:09.1N 26:24.2E

Sunday 21st June

Quite why so many parents chose to send their very noisy children to play on the yacht quay at 10.00pm last night is a mystery, but such is life.

No wind first thing today as forecast, so we got away at 8.00am heading for the entrance to the Dardanelles, which lead up to the Sea of Marmara and Istanbul. There is a strong current that flows from the Black Sea down through the straits and out into the Aegean and we were going to be battling against it today and stopping at the narrowest part (The Hellespont) where it is just 1 mile across.

We were expecting a lot of traffic as the usual flow of ships is pretty impressive but today we had a few cargo ships and one super tanker only travelling with us and in the opposite direction there was almost nothing apart from a remarkable cruise ship with four masts which came down under full sail. Sadly we only saw this last ship as they emerged from the entrance before we had arrived and being hazy and far off the photos are not too clear.

Two dolphins joined us very briefly just as we reached the narrows and by then we had the wonderful benefit of a 15 knot southerly breeze as well so we hoisted the head sail and sailed serenely along making a comfortable 4 knots headway against the flow. In fact we were enjoying it all so much that Sarah just noticed in time that we were sailing straight past the town we wanted to stop at! What also was holding our attention were the huge memorials built by the various nations involved commemorating the fallen at Gallipoli.

We moored up in the tiny 'marina' at Canakkale and went off to get some lunch and book on to a tour of the Gallipoli battlefields and cemeteries which are just across the straits from here for tomorrow. We then went for a stroll around the town and found a navel museum dedicated, not surprisingly, to the defeat of the Allied naval forces in March 1915 when we tried to sail up the Dardanelles and take Istanbul. It was this defeat that precipitated the fateful landings at Gallipoli and it is a little sobering to be the only English in the museum full of Turks, knowing that we were the aggressor in this instance. Very well presented museum and gardens with full explanation of the entire event and the timeline all given in English as well as Turkish.

Canakkale is also the ideal spot for a visit to Troy, which we will not be doing (the marina is a bit expensive for yet another night) but just 100 metres from where we are moored is a very large wooden horse which it transpires is the one made for the film starring Brad Pitt, which was given to Canakkale to display on the quay.

In the evening we went across to Anzac Hotel and sat in their bar and watched the film 'Gallipoli' with Mel Gibson (by way of background for tomorrow) although we have been reading all about it in various guide books and the like.

Town packed in the evening, which is the first time we have really come across crowds all summer.

More photos added today at <http://www.rhbell.com>

Message from above?

Monday 22nd June

Spent the day doing a half day tour of the Anzac battlefields and various cemeteries which was extremely sobering. Around 18 of us (mostly Aussie or Kiwi) with a very good guide spent from 11.30am to 7.30pm visiting various sites with a full explanation as we went along which all helped clarify our previously rather sketchy understanding of this huge military failure (as we see it - significant military victory as the Turks see it). To stand above the trenches and see that at some points the opposing forces were just 8 metres apart is unnerving and the cemeteries with their lines of gravestones listing the young Anzacs showing how many died on any one day is just staggering.

Got back to Serafina around 7.45pm in time for a call from the nearest minaret which ended rather suddenly when the voice of the cleric singing was interrupted when the microphone picked up the unmistakable sound of him receiving a text message on his mobile!

Went out for a quick bite to eat and it is pleasing to see that at least this Turkish resort is very busy with the Turks themselves here on holiday.

50 plus miles to sail tomorrow, so early to bed.

Ships that pass in the day

40:23.8N 27:18.4E

Tuesday 23rd June

This was the sort of day we bought the boat for!

Left Canakkale at 8.00am with a light southerly blowing which gradually picked up to 15 knots and once we rounded the 'S' bend north east of the town, we hoisted our 'Simbo' downwind rig of twin headsails and full main and were able to hold this for the whole of the remaining 20 miles of the Dardanelle Straits, passing two yachts that were struggling to sail goose-winged. Not much shipping today which was handy as it allowed us to creep into the shipping lane whilst trying to keep our sails filled. Fair tide against us, but the wind increased to gusts of 20 knots which was nothing short of perfect!

Once we cleared the northern entrance to the Dardanelles, we came onto a starboard broad reach and although the wind did play a few tricks briefly, we ended up covering the next 30 miles on a wonderful portside broad reach with 15 or so knots of true wind. Saw plenty of ships in the shipping lanes, but only one yacht around 4.00pm heading the other way to us and we could not quite make out its sail insignia etc. This turned out to be a real shame as it was our friends, Chris and Steve, on 'Scott Free' who were heading for Canakkale where they thought we were staying for another night! I will now have to wait even longer before enjoying another of Chris' great cappuccinos (they have a machine on board).

Dropped anchor just outside the little harbour at Karabiga on the southern coast of the Sea of Marmara. Room on the quay but we decided to have a few days at anchor and it seems a nice and well protected spot from the forecast southerlies as well as the usual northerlies.

First thing we really noticed about the sea of Marmara apart from the rather cloudy nature of the water, is the incredible numbers of jellyfish! There are two main types, the brown (Compass jellyfish due to its pattern) and the almost translucent ones with a pretty purple line on its skirt (*Rhizostoma pulmo*) and here in Karabiga we have never seen such a density of the translucent ones, far more than even in the Baltic Sea. The good news is the pilot book says they can "inflict stings although these are not usually severe".....!

Several dolphins came to swim briefly with us again in the Dardanelles and then as we approached Karabiga, we saw a pair of Harbour Porpoises (possibly mother and baby), but these animals are shy and they did not come right up to us.

Uphill all the way

40:31.0N 27:44.8E

Wednesday 24th June

Decided not to stay for the day at Karabiga as it was quite noisy last night (lots of dogs barking!) and the commercial dock was busy loading marble and the pilot warns of coal loading as well, so we chose to take advantage of the forecast 20 knot southerly winds to sail up and around the islands nearby including Marmara Adasi which means 'marble island' after which this sea is named of course!

Naturally our luck ran out today and the wind remained steadfastly in the north east and just a gentle 10 to 18 knots at that. Still we sailed it all anyway and this included a fun close hauled beat up a channel between two islands (Sarah: which I helmed reaching 7.5-8 knots and then relinquishing the helm to Rob with my usual - in fact to the minute, this time - timing, when the wind died completely from 17 knots to 8! Rob not exactly impressed.) before the wind finally gave out around 4.00pm and we made our way into Doganlar Bay, on the Kapidag Peninsula. This is a great little place with high, steeply rising wooded hillsides all around, long sandy beach and a tiny hamlet at the water's edge (with an especially loud minaret of course which greeted us) and it seems to be just a very small resort used by a few Turkish families. Very little protection from strong northerly winds, but we are not expecting them tonight.... The seabed in the bay is very steeply shelving so we found that we had to lay the anchor very close to the beach, which when the wind came round, put us fairly close to the families swimming! Water still teeming with jellyfish, but we now have to assume that they do not sting as none of the adults or children in the water seemed at all bothered by them.

We were joined several times today by dolphins and at one stage had a group 5 that had a very happy time brushing the underside of our bow and swimming along with us. It helped that at the point when we met them, the wind picked up to allow us to sail at 7 knots plus, which seems to be the minimum speed that interests them. Harder than usual to get any decent photos as the water is quite cloudy and so you get little warning as they rush up and break the surface presenting themselves for the picture - may just give up trying to photograph them here and just enjoy watching them play around the bows in future.

Our first Force 9 gale

40:31.1N 27:44.8E

Thursday 25th June

I was sort of wondering what I was going to write about today as we planned a very short trip to a nice looking bay we saw yesterday, but the eagle eyed amongst you will have noticed that the co-ordinates mean that we are anchored tonight very close to where we were last night, but rather a lot happened in between!

We woke up last night to gusts of 20+ knots from the west and a loud clunk and the lurch that is symptomatic of the anchor breaking free, but it turned out to be the anchor resetting itself to the new wind direction. Not too convinced about our position here so close to the beach and other obstructions, so I undertook the first stint of an anchor watch, but within an hour it was clear that the wind was dying away and there was no further problem.

Woke to a flat calm and so had a lazy start as we planned to sail to a bay that was just 9 miles away. Got off around 11.45am and after a quick recce of the next bay along (for our return trip in a few weeks time) we hoisted the sails and I was allowed to helm for the next few hours during which the wind did at one stage reach a heady 5.5 knots but which left us pretty much stationary as we have not got our genoa rigged. We both had swims off the back as things were so quiet, despite the proximity of the jellyfish.

Gradually we crept towards our destination and then around 4.30pm we agreed that we needed to get on with things as the clouds that had suddenly formed above us did not look at all friendly. We dropped the sails and recovered the fishing tackle and started to motor when suddenly the mother of thunderstorms struck almost out of the blue. The wind rose rapidly to 25 knots and the seas quickly built to produce steep, decidedly

unpleasant waves. The gusts then increased and the wind gauge started to register a steady 35 knots at which point things began to get very messy. The waves increased further and our main hope now was a bay under some cliffs on an island ahead of us that was directly upwind offering us a target to head for in order to hopefully get some protection in its lee. The wind increased still further and at this point the lightening started all around us, followed by thunderclaps. The rain when it came was unbelievably heavy and now with the wind registering 40+ knots and the gusts topping out at 50 knots, it was at times more than we could do to keep Serafina on course and several times she slewed round in the wind trying to go broadside to the waves. I was now wearing the lightweight jacket we bought last winter for rain on hot days and I can tell you that it is pretty bloody useless in a force 9 gale at protecting you! The rain lashed like hail and it was all very cold and very painful, but our attention was focussed on trying to make way into the bay ahead of us, but not run into the rocks on two headlands in the process and keeping an eye on a small motor cruiser that we had watched head for the same bay as us, but that had vanished into the rapidly diminishing visibility.

Then as we emerged into the flat waters of the bay under the protection of the cliffs, it started to ease and eventually we gratefully dropped the anchor to wait things out and take stock of the situation. The motor cruiser (an elderly British craft) had also anchored nearby and they were busy recovering their dinghy which had turned upside down (they were towing it) as they had run for shelter. The rain stopped and the wind dropped down and I got changed into dry clothes and had a cup of cocoa. Hard to believe I could be so cold in June in Turkey! We then saw a lone individual walking along the cliff tops, which is unlikely at the best of times as this is an uninhabited island, but through the binoculars we could see that he was dressed in a wetsuit and was carrying huge flippers and was barefoot. There are no paths and he was just walking in a fairly determined fashion across the rough terrain, high above us. We assume that he had either lost his boat in the storm or had been trapped at the far end of the island whilst diving, either way he showed no interest in us anchored in the bay and so we watched him struggling on heading away from us, before we resolved that we could not stay the night here as it was not a safe place to be as it was open on three sides to the open sea and upped anchor and returned to the bay where we had stayed last night.

Made good time downwind and were pleased to find that the big swell was not too bad in here, so on the third attempt we got the anchor to dig in and settled down to hopefully a quiet night after a stiff drink (or two?). Planned trip today was 9 miles, actual mileage today was 27 miles and we never quite made it to our destination either.

Ever the one to spot an upside, Sarah was thrilled to discover that the incredible lashing that we took from the rain at up to 50 knots has cleaned Serafina beautifully, a thorough pressure wash leaving everything gleaming. The only known casualty so far was the nearly brand new Turkish courtesy flag which clearly did not enjoy the high winds and has been shredded!

Normal service resumed

40:35.1N 27:33.5E

Friday 26th June

New voice on the minarets broadcast at 4.50am but the good news was that he was very brief.

Heading for Port Marmara on Marmara island this morning and although it is not very far

at all, Sarah did not like the look of the clouds or this morning's weather forecast both of which indicated more thunderstorms. So after a relaxed breakfast, we pulled up the anchor and headed north west again.

Marmara Adasi means literally 'Marble Island' and that is exactly what it is, well most of it. The northern half of the island is composed of white marble and southern half is slate and granite. The marble here is prized for its flawless white quality, unblemished by grey or haematite brown impurities which makes it perfect for statues, columns and sarcophagi and so it has been quarried here since ancient times by the Greeks, Romans, Byzantines and Ottomans. It is still quarried to this day and the spin-off is that 'waste' marble blocks are used everywhere instead of concrete or rocks. Hence part of the sea defences at Port Marmara are huge blocks of marble and marble is the stone of choice for paths, walls and pretty much everything you can think of!

Port Marmara is just a rather grand name given to the very small fishing harbour here. There is room for just a handful of visiting boats and it is typical of almost everywhere we have been in the northern region of Turkey, that there are so few yachts around. As it happens we were moored next to an English boat that had just come down the Danube and was re-visiting the area after a gap of 20 years and they were also surprised so far to have seen so few other boats at all.

Marmara is a charming little town, which is striving to reinvent itself as a tourist resort for Turks, but on the evidence so far, there are very few tourists yet. Certainly being English, we are the novelty act in this region and it always surprises them when we tell them where we come from, despite the fact we are conversing in English - they expect us to be German (all conversation, not in Turkish, is otherwise held in English). Quite a lot of clearing up going on after the storm we were caught in yesterday. Beaches have all been covered in seaweed and according to the yacht that had just arrived here before the storm hit, it was very exciting even in the little harbour. What we had not appreciated is that the sea water here in the Sea of Marmara is not very salty at all. Haven't tried tasting it just yet nor have we swum in it properly but we are assured that it is nothing like as buoyant as the Med.

We went out last night and had a wonderful meal in a lovely position overlooking the sea and the islands across the way. Afterwards, Sarah had to ask the owner about the yoghurt which was beautifully creamy (as it is in Greece, but not Turkey) and once he and his staff had had a good laugh, he sent one of his staff to take us to a nearby shop where a short discussion resulted in some of the 'perfect' yoghurt being produced almost literally from under the counter! Sarah bought some of course and hopefully we now have the key to finding this better make.

When returned to Serafina we found another British yacht had just arrived in the tiny harbour and was looking to moor up, so they were helped into the space next to us. This is a Jeanneau 49 (Dave and Linda) who we have already met before, firstly in Bozcaada and then in Canakkale.

Charmless Cinarcik

40:38.9N 29:07.8E

Saturday 27th June

Stayed in Marmara for another day as we liked the place so much and frankly the next step is a big trip and we fancied a day off first!

Had a wander around the town and inspected the beaches to the west which

bore the brunt of the storm and strolled out to the eastern end where the smarter houses are. Came across a large sports hall and outside, opposite a children's park was an adults outdoor park with an assortment of steel exercise equipment. (See photos at www.rhbell.com)

Today's entertainment came courtesy of the 'Atakoy Marina (Istanbul) 2009 Marmara Rally'. This turned out to be a rally of boats based at Atakoy Marina on their annual jaunt around the Sea of Marmara. All very organised with printed t-shirts and most of boats displaying a rally pennant and special individual rally numbers. The entertaining bit was that they seemed a little unsure about the art of mooring stern to the quay which is odd as that is all they do out here. Anyway, lots of fun was had laying anchors over each other's anchors and of course the mandatory shouting, waving of arms and shrugging of shoulders. One particular chap had several failed attempts before he looked to be getting it right at last, however at this point he felt the need to leave the helm, walk to the back of his boat and shout and wave his arms at which point the anchor took hold and the boat swung wildly off course and stopped dead. He eventually returned to the helm and tried to recover the situation and eventually got to the quay where they helped tie his lines. He then strode ashore and for the next few hours played the role of beach commander, issuing instructions endlessly to all the new arriving boats who of course had not witnessed his ineptitude! In addition his young son dressed identically, joined in making everyone re-tie their ropes in a different (but not always better) way.

Very hot and still today and looks like it might be a long hot day tomorrow when we have to do 70 miles.

Sunday 28th June

Slipped out of Marmara around 5.00am just as the sun was coming up, with very little wind and quite a bit of cloud cover. Today's forecast is for 2 -4 and cloudy, but no mention of thunderstorms.

So what do they know anyway? We had to motor all the way with no wind and certainly plenty of cloud, and hundreds of dozy flies - the bottom of the cockpit became testament to our accurate slaps! As we got within 10 miles or so of our destination (Cinarcik) a large black thundercloud formed over the headland ahead and beside us. [Interestingly, Istanbul Turk Radio issued a revised forecast only an hour earlier with the new warning of thunderstorms!] We tried to outwit this monster but had the additional hazard of two large cargo vessels converging on us as well. Ended up heading well offshore and watched the lightning forks blitzing the town and hillsides whilst every so often most of it would disappear in a rain storm. We however, remained just beyond the edge of the rain etc. and eventually made the entrance of Cinarcik harbour.

This place is not quite as billed! It is a very run down public quay which offers some protection from prevailing winds, but the catch when we arrived was that it is full of private motor boats that occupy almost the entire quay, which goes some way to explaining why we were the only visiting boat! Two boat owners however were very helpful and advised us to use our anchor and back up to the space at the end of the quay, where they took our lines. All very well, but we do not have much protection here from any wind from the north east. The thunderstorm had now moved to the hills around where we were and we spent an anxious hour or so wondering what might happen next, however all the rowing boats, pedalos and dinghies that were milling around out in the sea seemed blissfully unaware of any impending problems and we began to wonder if we were just a little too nervous. That is when the first big gust arrived and pushed us back onto the quay and caused a considerable amount of panic and alarm in the bay. It was very brief, but did enough to bring all the boats scurrying in.

Not our favourite spot it has to be said and we may revise the plan that had us staying two nights here!

Istanbul

40:52.2N 29:14.2E

Monday 29th June

Not too sorry to have left Cinarcik although in fairness the locals were very pleasant, but the location on the end of the breakwater was very vulnerable to any blow. (Interestingly the position shown on the Google Earth map is frequently inaccurate, particularly in this case and as yet I am not too sure which system is wrong!)

I forgot to mention one very strange incident yesterday, when we were close to the big thunderstorm suddenly some 30 or more storks flew overhead and flew straight for the heart of the storm. No idea what this was all about or whether it was just a coincidence? Anyone help on this?

This morning we headed off to the Prince's Islands which lie just off the coast very close to Istanbul and are a popular weekend destination for Stamboulites. We dropped the hook in Cam Limani, a bay on Heybeliada Island and had lunch and a siesta of sorts. The catch was that there is a daytime resort on one of the beaches and it was blasting out Techno Music at very high volume which kind of destroyed the natural ambiance of the place.

Around 3.00pm we left and headed for Pendik, through a huge anchorage of empty tankers and cargo ships possibly as many as 100 all waiting for orders we assume, for the marina berth we had reserved. This was all quite interesting because this marina (actual name is 'Marinturk') is absolutely brand spanking new and so there is no information about it at all other than a couple of mentions on private blogs on the internet! We were given details and a phone number by some Americans we met three or four weeks ago and they just had contact details for the new manager who they knew from when he worked elsewhere.

We were guided into our berth and helped to tie up very courteously, but slightly haphazardly by the staff and with yet another thunderstorm circling overhead, I was heard to express that happiness is being fixed to a safe mooring! The storm circled us all the rest of the afternoon and finally dumped some rain around 10.00pm.

Turns out that this marina is not just new, but still unfinished and the staff are still learning the ropes so to speak. Toilet and shower block should open tomorrow for the first time and the office is in a portacabin whilst the far end of the marina is a massive building site. There are loads of pontoons but only a very few are in use, plus a very special one, the like of which we have never seen before! Wide walkway with a very classy canopy all the way down. Moored to either side of this are an array of super yachts which gives the place a very superior air.

Not long after we arrived, a helicopter landed on the roof of the main buildings under construction and a group of VIPs undertook a tour. This turned out to be the owner of the whole project, who surprisingly did not feel the need to come and chat with us.

Another bonus of this location (which we were not aware of until a couple of weeks ago) is that having booked our flights back next week for Ewan's graduation with Easyjet, we

have discovered that airport that they use is just a few miles from here and nowhere near the main airport over on the European side of the Bosphorus. The slight downside is that we are directly under the flightpath!

We are surrounded by minarets (what is a suitable collective noun for minarets?) which all demonstrated their independence from each other late this afternoon by sounding off at different times and early this evening one of the resident yachts came into the slot next to us and they all rushed off home leaving loads of banging halyards! We plan to conduct a commando raid under cover of darkness to tie them all down but do not want to upset anyone here just yet.

Pendik Marina, Istanbul

Tuesday 30th June

Very dull day as we spent most of it doing various jobs and cleaning/polishing!

Wednesday 1st July.

I stayed on board getting various long term jobs done whilst Sarah made the first trip into the centre of Istanbul with a view to a bit of retail therapy and the odd art museum.

For anyone looking to sail to Istanbul, Pendik Marina is clearly going to be a very good port of call, especially if you have visitors flying in or you intend flying out, using Istanbul - Sabiha Gökçen airport. The shops and development all around us is going to be very upmarket and doubtless the price will soon move up to reflect this. Frustratingly for us, the place is still under construction and the key bit unfinished is the toilet and shower block! Well it is finished, but is awaiting inspection by some authority prior to opening so we can see how wonderful they are, but cannot actually use them.

The other set back to coming here is the journey into Istanbul itself. To get to the main attractions (more about them later) you need to take a dolmus to Kadikoy (more about that as well!), then a ferry to Eminonu on the European side. Nothing too complicated, but you do need both a sense of adventure and a sense of humour to make the trip!

[Sarah] My trip in started well in that I got to Kadikoy, where I was pretty much ejected from the dolmus in a sea of traffic, close to the ferry. We then caught the ferry to Eminonu on the European side of Istanbul, south of the Golden Horn - all of this taking about 1 and 3/4 hours which was a longer than I expected, so nerve-wracking. I then walked up to the Sultanahmet area, being accosted by an enthusiastic carpet-seller who took umbrage at a polite 'no' and threw a stone at my shoulder as walked on! This was followed by a far slicker and enticing hard sell, being lead off for watermelon to a carpet shop where I was almost inveigled into buying a beautiful kilim (price started at £2030 and came down to £500!). After resisting this, the Grand Bazaar was a doddle! Fascinating, covered interconnecting alleyways, up the side of the hill and - like all shopping in Turkey - different areas sell one type of goods: leather, gold or silver, antiques, clothes, fabric etc etc.

I then set off on a tram across the bridge over the Golden Horn towards the quite wonderful Modern Art Museum (Ataturk was very active in encouraging the arts and this appears to have been one of his babies). Then back on the tram to catch the funicular up the hill from Karankoy in search of a jewellery shop billed in the Lonely Planet as selling "inspired originals ... combining scraps of ethnic eastern jewellery". Devastatingly, design has moved on (Rob only too delighted) - and if I had known, perhaps I would have paid more attention at the Grand Bazaar!

The return trip was not so successful: ferry to Kadikoy but accidentally got out at the stop before (which didn't feature on the inward trip); found the dolmus and minibus station which turned out to be the bus park, but one of the drivers very obliging drove me to the station where I felt beholden to stay on the minibus which are cheaper (but it turns out cheaper equals considerably longer journey in time and distance - ie at least twice the original journey, and we are talking of a saving of 50%, or 2.5 lira – a pound!) eventually being deposited in an unknown area of Pendik at 7.15pm.

But all in all a very successful day - Istanbul is like nowhere else I have ever been to, it really is quite wonderful in every sense of the word.

Istanbul and a Dolmus ride

Thursday 2nd July

Today was our official sightseeing day and fresh from her travels yesterday, Sarah was altogether more confident about today's plans.

First up we took a local dolmus to the ferry port.

Now I need to explain to those of you unlucky enough to have not experienced an Istanbul dolmus ride what it is all about.

Everywhere in Turkey has dolmus' which are quite simply a small minibus run as a shared taxi, which sets off once all the seats are full. They run a fixed route but with no set stops. You can flag one down anywhere (they display the start and finish points of their route in the windscreen) and shout when you want to get off (they stop immediately without any concern for traffic or location)! There is a fare, but either the driver or fellow passengers will tell you what it is. Our trip in today was with a very talented driver who quickly showed us how he could drink coffee from a plastic cup, hand out change for fares, conduct a conversation on a mobile and weave at speed through fast moving traffic all at the same time. We were sat on the twin bench seat just behind the driver which is as good a spot as any, but it means that you become the conductor as everyone getting on then has to pass their fare and their planned destination via you to the driver (who has already driven off and is busy chatting and speeding and weaving) and then pass their change back again on the move. The horn has little discernable effect as it is used at every opportunity to indicate anything from 'speed up' to 'slow down', 'you are in my way', 'I'm here' 'do you want to catch this dolmus' and 'do I care'. It quickly became clear to our driver that we had no useable Turkish and so all conversations with us were conducted through willing third parties. This was one of the sources of excitement all round as the driver was happiest when looking directly at whoever he was talking to. All was OK until the chap in the front seat got out and the conversation was now aimed at a girl in the back seat, though thankfully he conducted this by looking in the mirror, which at least meant that his head was facing forward! A lad then got into the front seat and for a short while he managed to ignore the driver's conversation, but as the speed built up and we all began to get nervous, the lad foolishly put on his seat belt which our driver took as a challenge. You do have to admit that a trip taking just a little under an hour that combines transport with an adrenaline rush for just £2 a head is very good value.

We arrived shaken and more than a little stirred at the ferry port, where we took the trip across the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn (get out your maps...) to Eminonu then a tram up to visit Topkapi Palace first. The palace is wonderful and visiting the Harem there is also an absolute must – with the added benefit that there is an extra charge which reduces the crowds. The whole concept of the Harem has been badly misrepresented over here and the truth is that here at the Topkapi Palace far from being

a palace of sensual delights, it may have been more of a nerve-shredding chamber of horrors for the harem girls. We then visited 'The Cisterns' which are quite astonishing and not at all what you might expect. A huge underground reservoir built in 537 AD and subsequently forgotten about before being rediscovered by a Frenchman in 1545 who noticed that local people were getting their water by lowering buckets through holes in their basements! It was restored fully in 1987, before which access was only by boat. (James Bond in 'From Russia with love' rows through it.) After lunch we visited the Sultanahmet Mosque (Blue Mosque) and finished up with a stroll through the Spice market before catching a ferry back to Kadikoy.

This is where the fun began again as we discovered that there were no buses. Actually there were no cars either and we realised with some concern that there were huge steel barricades all along the far side of the street, with squads of riot police all kitted out in full gear and several armoured water cannons (tanks) roamed the streets whilst others remained at the ready, up side streets. The roads were blocked by police trucks and beyond this were armoured buses full of more police. Just as in Athens, Sarah seemed to have found herself on the wrong side of the police lines at a major demonstration! We tried to find out what this was all about but there seemed to be little known by anyone. We opted to get clear of this before anything kicked off as the Turkish riot police are not likely to be too concerned that we were English tourists if we were in the wrong spot at the wrong time. We made our way towards where we thought the road to Pendik might be and visited some offices which belonged to an English teaching company and got further advice from them as to which way to head. Finally as we cleared the last of the police road blocks, we found a gaggle of dolmus double parked, picking up people so we went over and asked for one heading to Pendik. To our great surprise the vehicle we were directed towards was driven by our driver from this morning who recognised us and welcomed us onto his dolmus. It quickly filled up and we were off on our way home, or so we thought..... We handed our fare to the driver at a set of red lights (we at least tried to keep things safe) and as we sped off weaving through the traffic with him chatting to a passenger of course, he handed us half of it back and got passengers to explain that we were not exactly heading for Pendik, but Boscati where we should be able to get another dolmus to Pendik! Cue lots of laughter all round. Anyway, bless him, on arrival at Boscati, he dropped the last passengers off, picked up a few people who were standing nearby and off we went again. The good news was that Boscati was actually on the direct route to Pendik anyway, so nothing was lost and we got him to drop us off right by the marina entrance.

And we plan to go into the city again....

Hang Dog Day?

Friday 3rd July

After all that excitement we had a day in Pendik, although Sarah could not resist another dolmus ride so she took a trip to West Marine, which is a large American chandlery store around halfway into the city from here. All went well; although she was impressed by the team discussion involving all the passengers who debated where best one of the passengers could find his destination address - and he was not allowed off (driver controlled door) until he had heard everyone's suggestion; and on the return trip there was the driver who reversed up the one-way, three-lane highway in Friday night rush-hour traffic to pick up an old lady!

Saturday and Sunday 4th & 5th July

The running entertainment over the weekend has been the boats leaving and returning to the marina.

As mentioned before, this is a new marina and there is very much an air of new 'boaters', new money and new staff. There is no culture of marina use and what might in the UK be termed social behaviour! Lovely people, but in the absence of any speed limit, all boats from the smallest inflatable upwards, apply full power as soon as the string is untied, causing an almost constant wave action throughout all the moorings, day and night. Music is 'broadcast' by many boats rather than played, but the greatest fun is the remarkable lack of skills on display and the apparent lack of interest in all proceedings by the almost all the women.

The key to everything is the staff in their fast inflatable boat, who direct boats to their slots and then recover the lazy line for them. Nothing too remarkable here, but it is at this point that we watch in awe as firstly the staff have to bring the line to the bow of the boat, climb on board, lead the yachts mooring line through a ring on the lazy line and then stay to tie off the ropes and handle them as the boat backs into its slot. The marina inflatable now has to be used as a tug and it pushes the bow or stern round as required until the boat is in line with the mooring at which point the owner puts it into reverse and storms the quay. On arrival, the owner and crew largely stand around whilst the marina staff now handle the stern ropes and everything is made safe. In fairness some owners are more involved than this, but not much! Fortunately on Sunday when they mostly came back in, the wind was non-existent, because the prevailing wind is at a right angle to the moorings so (according to our next door neighbour) the mooring process can be pretty chaotic and destructive.

Sunday morning also was 'Dog Poo Day'. There is one particular small dog that the owner allows to roam along the pontoon and this morning there was a significant pile of poo near our stern. The owner seemed to feign indifference and we were unsure about whether to set off an international diplomatic incident, when the problem was solved presumably by someone else complaining as suddenly swarms of staff, including security guards, appeared and the pontoon was thoroughly scrubbed and hosed down helped by the husband of the dog's owner!

The Black Sea

Monday 6th July

We took a boat trip up the Bosphorus which was a great day out. The trip itself was just an hour and a half up to the Black Sea where we stopped and went ashore for a long lazy lunch (hounded at every turn by restaurants vying for our business) and then an hour and a half back. But by the time you add in the excitements of a dolmus ride into town, a couple of ferries and a mini bus trip home, it all turns into a long day!

The mini bus ride was of special interest as these are actually small coaches but obey all the rules of a dolmus. Drive like hell, pick up and drop anyone anywhere, and keep one hand firmly on the horn. To help the driver along, the one we were in today had an alarm on the dashboard which sounded off and lit up a large red lamp every time he needed to change gear!

Tuesday 7th July

Flew back to UK where we are attending Ewan's graduation at Manchester University on Thursday.

We are back on board Serafina on Sunday 12th July and so this log will recommence then!

Back on Board

Monday 13th July

Flew back to Istanbul yesterday after a very hectic 5 days back in the UK, including the main purpose which was to attend Ewan's graduation in Manchester which all went very well. (Photo at www.rhbell.com)

We also took the opportunity to sort out a few of the electrical problems that had arisen lately and so firstly we would like to thank IMP Ltd who are agents for Lopo Lights (LED navigation lights) for swiftly sending us two new units to replace the two that failed following the storm a few weeks ago. Clearly there were installation issues, but Lopo have a 5 year guarantee and could not have been more helpful and prompt in their response.

Fitting the replacement units was far from straight forward as the modified version has the cable already attached so there is a lot of mousing to be done. Secondly we have had a long running issue with our Echopilot Forward Looking Sonar, which is a brilliant bit of kit, but about two months ago the picture disappeared off the chartplotter screen, never to return! We emailed Echopilot who were convinced that it was an issue with the Raymarine chartplotter and if not, we would need to return the Echopilot unit to them for checking out. So we contacted Raymarine who were very prompt in contacting their Turkish agent, who arranged for us to be seen when we got to Istanbul. This visit took place a week ago and the outcome following a number of tests was that there was nothing wrong with the chartplotter! So we took the Echopilot unit back to the UK with us and sent it to the factory and they checked it out and declared it fine, but sent us a new one anyway. Today, I fitted the new sonar and hey presto.....nothing. A couple of phone calls later I checked out the continuity of the cable and found that there was an issue here. So this required me to dismantle a fair amount of the boat to access the cable run and finally I found the culprit, which was a poor junction between the Echopilot video cable and the Raymarine cable that connects it to the chartplotter. Problem solved, but full marks to Raymarine who charged nothing for their agent to come out and Echopilot, who sent us a new unit anyway without a quibble and were extremely helpful over the phone throughout. Just wish someone had thought about checking the continuity earlier. Lesson learnt perhaps?

The new offices for the marina here were opened over the weekend and the development is moving very fast. Sadly the showers and toilets were going to open today but, of course they didn't. Tomorrow morning perhaps....no one here is holding their breath.

Warm today but not particularly sunny, and we were surprised by several heavy showers of rain - thought we had left all that behind in the UK yesterday.

Plan is to move off tomorrow heading for the Aegean Sea by way of the Dardanelles with a few stops along the way in the Sea of Marmara.

False Start

Tuesday 14th July

Exciting night started with a major fuel spill from somewhere which made it almost unbearable in the boat with the strong fumes coming from the thick film of diesel on the waters surface that filled the marina. I cannot quite rid myself of the image of one of the marina staff who was looking at all this whilst drawing heavily on his lit cigarette. Then around 5.00am we had another demonstration of how well they do spectacular thunderstorms out here.

All sorted for a prompt getaway this morning, but discovered that the office was not going to open until 10am and we needed to return a gismo that gave us access to free water in return for a 50 Turkish Lira deposit. So we opted to put the kettle on for a coffee and discovered that the gas solenoid valve was broken and so no gas. The good news was that we have a spare, but the bad news was that the old unit was rusted up solid and was not about to come apart easily. I tried various things and then asked one of the marina staff who was walking past (he speaks a little English) if there was a gas engineer we could contact. His response was to pick up the tools and get stuck into the job himself. He was then joined by a chap who appears to be the skipper off a new motor yacht that is moored across the pontoon from us, who has been on nodding terms with us all the time we have been here.

My confidence in this arrangement took several blows as Mustapha (the marina chap) frequently reached for mole grips and wrenches and seemed fairly rough and ready in his approach, however in fairness his decision to remove the entire unit from the boat to work on it on the quay was correct. Once he had done this he handed everything over to the second chap who has no English at all, but he seemed very confident and he set about stripping the unit down so we could replace the solenoid part. This did not go well and as he produced ever larger wrenches and hammers, I feared that this was going to end badly. The worst part was when he went back to his boat and reappeared with an extension lead and an angle grinder with cutting disk! But he actually knew exactly what he was doing and eventually got everything apart, cleaned up and then put it all back together on the boat. I merely had to wire the new one up and all was well. Clearly they do not have any issues here about gas regulations etc. but this chap tested all the joints afterwards and refused to accept anything for his work other than our profuse thanks (although he was clearly very happy with the cans of beer we put on his rear deck later).

But time had slipped away and it was not worth setting out for our destination today, so Sarah went into town and I did some work online.

On returning to Serafina I met up with the American owners of two yachts that have been in and out of the marina whilst we have been here and following a chat about things, we invited them back for a drink. Martin & Sandy (Mystique) and Chuck & Alison plus Zoey the dog (Chaliventures III) came round and we had a great evening mostly with us finding out from them good places to visit on our way south as well as their experiences on the East Med Rally and other parts of the world (and Sarah and Sandy bonded over cockroach stories). They will be wintering at the same marina as us in October, so there is every chance that we will meet up with them again during the summer which would be great.

Blowing away the cobwebs

40:00.5N 28:33.7E

Wednesday 15th July

Set sail from Pendik just before 9.00am with a weather forecast offering NE 2-5. This was ideal for us as we were heading north west to Mimarşinan which is a small commercial and fishing harbour, a journey of around 30 miles.

Cloudy start and a fresh north easterly wind meant that we had a the prospect of a day of sailing close hauled and no sun.

We sailed hard on the wind through the huge anchorage off Pendik and then under the Princes Islands where the wind began to pick up and thankfully veer a little allowing us

to almost head for our destination. The catch was that we had to cross two traffic separation schemes first, which is fun on a good day, but this was made a little more interesting by virtue of the fact that rather a lot of the big ships and all the fast ferries ignore the traffic system anyway! By the time we were halfway across the second scheme, the wind was blowing a steady force 6, gusting 7 and we had reefed down and were making a stately 7 knots and fast gaining on a yacht ahead of us. With a heavy overcast sky, we could have been sailing in the Solent, but the wind was warm, so we actually had a really great sail.

In due course we arrived at the massive bay/estuary with Mimarsinan at its head, but the wind was still blowing a remorseless 25 - 30 knots directly out to sea, so we opted to sail into the bay and drop anchor at the head of the bay rather than risk going in and trying to find a place in what the pilot book warns is a very tight and full harbour. This was the point when the radio burst into life with a 'Mayday' call from what was clearly a very frightened Turk. So frightened that he could only keep repeating the mayday call but no other information at all! Finally someone persuaded him to give his position and this turned out to be fairly close to us, but there were other bigger boats around and closer to the incident so we stood down and dropped our anchor and settled down to a late sandwich lunch.

Later the sun came out and the clouds vanished, but the wind kept blowing a steady 20+ knots right into the evening and it was around 8.00pm that it finally began to ease a bit. At 5.00pm we watched a fishing boat towing a yacht into the harbour and we assume this was the mayday call. There were no obvious signs of a problem although it looked rather like there was a line over the side and round the propeller.

Kumbag – A little bit shallow

40:52.00N 27:27.6E

Thursday 15th July.

Quiet night at anchor, but the wind started up quite early this morning so we set off at 8.00am to take full advantage of it.

In no time we were cantering along with 25 knots of wind on a beam reach which had us eating up the miles towards Kumbag, this evening's destination. Highlight was a pod of dolphins that appeared just as we reached 8 knots and we were royally entertained in particular, by a mother who seemed to be training a baby to dive under the bow. The youngster was very energetic and kept leaping out of the water in a display that we have not seen since we were in the Atlantic, off Portugal. Of course they know all about cameras and so they make dramatic photogenic approaches, then spot when you go to get the camera and spend the rest of the time diving and dodging around avoiding the photo!

By 1.00pm the wind began to die away and by the end of the trip we were reduced to motor sailing.

The approach to Kumbag was straightforward, but we had noticed through the binoculars that there were no yachts there, but we went on in as there was little alternative. The very small harbour was full of fishing boats and one whole quay was just rocks, however there was a space on the north wall and a small crowd gathered and an elderly chap wearing an official looking armband, waved us in alongside the quay. We did this without mishap and various people got involved in the process of catching and sorting ropes, but

eventually we got tied up OK, but soon noticed that from time to time the keel was just touching the bottom.

We decided that the best solution was to go out and back up to the quay in the usual stern-to arrangement dropping our anchor in the middle of the harbour and hoping that it does not snag on anything.

Having done that we now became the central attraction as clearly they do not have many yachts visit here. This interest was upped when I winched Sarah up to the crosstrees to recover the torn Turkish courtesy flag (a victim of yesterday's winds).

We then enjoyed a very entertaining early evening just watching the world go by, seeing things that really could only happen here. They really are a lovely nation and we cannot say enough about their politeness and hospitality. The town itself is an out and out summer beach resort for Turks. An Asian Middleton on Sea, complete with sandy beach and hordes of very sunburnt visitors splashing around in the gently shelving sea.

We love it and depending on how things go tonight (fishing boats and minarets etc.) we plan to stay another day.

A Day at the Seaside

Friday 16th July

Slightly disturbed night mainly because around 3.30am the rudder hit the bottom, so we had to jump up and ease Serafina further offshore as the wind had come up and backed slightly to push us sideways. Got back to sleep just after this morning's dawn call to prayer from the minaret.

Hot sunny day with an un-forecast breeze from the south (the only direction we have no protection from here!) but nevertheless a relaxing day watching all the fun at the seaside. We had a very pleasant surprise at lunchtime when one of the crew of the large fishing boat moored next to us, who have been hard at work for the past days mending nets etc. came over with the young lad who is with them who acted as translator to welcome us to Turkey and Kumbag (pronounced Kumbaa) and presented us with a plate wrapped in newspaper. This turned out to contain freshly prepared and cooked whitebait which were absolutely delicious. (Local lemons are something else as well.)

Had a stroll around the town this afternoon and enjoyed the whole experience of being here. Although it is a low budget resort for Turks, they are so welcoming and fascinated by our presence. Goodness knows how many people have walked around the quayside to come a look at Serafina and so many want to know where are from and where we are going. I think that if we had got the folding Brompton bike out, we could have brought the place to a standstill doing demonstrations!

Very hot once the wind died in the evening and we plan to get away around 6.00am tomorrow as we have roughly 70 miles to sail down the Dardanelles to Canakkale.

40:09.1N 26:24.2E

Saturday 18th July

Up at 5.30am to make an early start on the 70 miles to Canakkale and were waved off by the elderly gatekeeper who had greeted us two days ago (and taken our token mooring fee), who was busy picking up rubbish from the night before.

Long hot windless day followed. We did have 10 knots of breeze briefly, but that was dead on the nose, so only good for cooling. Not a lot of current under us but we made good time towards the Dardanelles. We came across the Turkish Naval Force Yacht Race Cup fleet (36 yachts - huge number for the Sea of Marmara) who were stuck in a flat calm heading the same way as us. They had a VERY long day ahead of them!

Got a little concerned as we approached the Dardanelles themselves as suddenly all the ships heading the same way as us, pulled over and dropped anchor. This is all the more remarkable as they were all heavily laden and so clearly had deadlines to meet. Rather wondered if something very special (or dangerous) was coming the other way, but we never found out. But no ships at all came south in all the 6 hours we were heading down the straits and there was nothing remarkable about any of the ones coming north.

Current did finally pick up a bit and gave us an extra knot and it was 4.00pm when we swept into Canakkale and reversed up to the quay, next to a wonderful Dutch crew who were at pains from the outset to explain that although their flag was German, they were all Dutch! Very hot and still evening slipped past as we enjoyed drinks and nibbles on board their boat and discussed all manner of things. John & Mart had done a boat exchange for a couple of weeks and so they were heading with friends up to Istanbul where they were leaving the boat and then having 9 days in a hotel to spend time exploring Istanbul properly.

Sunday 19th July

We have chosen to stay here for a second day so we can get things done like the laundry (the washing machine on board was certainly one of the more inspired decisions) and cleaning the boat etc. Also there is a good internet link in the marina office.

John, Mart and friends were heading north, but just before they set off one of the crew had a very bad fall whilst getting from the quay onto the boat. Everyone rushed to help and one of the marina staff offered to run her to a hospital, but in the end she declined and put on a very brave face, but was clearly in a high level of shock. 15 minutes later, the same member of staff reappeared with a large bunch of flowers for her, which was a very sweet touch.

Nice breeze got up during the day, which was much needed, but then a large motor boat (British Flag) 'Souris Rose' moored alongside us and directly upwind, which blocked all the breeze and left us hot and bothered again. However, every cloud has a silver lining and later on in the late afternoon, Sarah got into conversation with the owners, David and Jill, and they kindly invited us on board for a drink or two and we had a fascinating (air conditioned) evening followed by a guided tour which left us ever so slightly envious of a number of its features. We may both be heading for Bozcada tomorrow, so we can reciprocate...well with the drinks, just hope the promised stronger winds kick in to help cool us down.

What we did learn from David and Jill was that we had badly missed out by not going to visit the bay opposite a small commercial harbour on the north eastern end of Marmara Island. We had read in the pilot that this was very dusty from the marble being loaded onto ships there and whilst there were a few half finished ancient statues lying around, it was pretty much a place to miss. Their photos showed that this is no longer the case and that whilst you can only moor in the bay opposite the harbour, a walk round the place is rewarded by something of a living museum in marble. Upwards of 40 sculptures, ancient and modern line the streets and the beach on the bay appears to be made from ground up marble in place of sand! Sadly it is 60 miles in the wrong direction now, so we will have had to settle for their photos instead. But any yachts reading this and heading up towards Istanbul might want to take note.

Mon 20th July

The forecast had promised early wind and it was right. We woke to 25 knots of wind blasting across the marina and whilst it was pretty much ideal for our trip today, the bad news was that we were hemmed in by boats and their lazy lines extended across our exit, so after much deliberation we decided not to risk a disaster and wait for things to settle down.

Got lots of jobs done aboard during the day and finally resolved to leave tomorrow morning as soon as David and Jill left on their large (63ft) motor yacht, as that would clear our route out of the moorings.

Our turn to invite David and Jill for drinks, but as they had the large shaded rear deck and we had packed our bimini away because of the wind, we compromised by taking wine over to them. Had a wonderful evening as they are both very good story tellers and then just as it was time to leave we saw the man who had mended our gas system back in Istanbul standing at the bottom of the gangway with his son and 4 year old daughter. This is the Turkish boat skipper who was looking after a boat across the pontoon from us in Istanbul, who had stepped in and done all the work to replace our faulty gas valve and then had refused any sort of payment, who has not one word of English. Fortunately his son is at university and spoke excellent English and explained that they live here in Canakkale and have a 49 year old Turkish sailing trading boat in the marina, just 20 yards from us! They invited over to see their boat and have tea which we gladly accepted. Their boat is a wonderful converted trading vessel that they have owned for 18 years and whilst we were looking over her a fireworks display started up just across the marina. After our cups of tea and a discussion over some charts of where we should visit during the rest of the summer, we invited them back to Serafina to take a look round. Cengiz, the father was particularly keen to know where we stored the folding bike he had seen Sarah use and so along with his wife, daughter and son, they all had a good nose round. It was now 10.30pm and we had not yet eaten so once Cengiz and his family left we settled down to a quick supper.

39:50.1N 26:04.5E

Tuesday 21st July

Made an early start to get away from Canakkale following just behind David and Jill on their 63 ft motor yacht (Souris Rose). Forecast was for force 6 winds and as we headed south this was upgraded to gale warnings for the area just to the south of us.

Fresh breeze blowing from the north east which made the run down the Dardanelles fairly straightforward although we tended to stay rather too close to the traffic separation lanes in order to avoid gybing!

Once clear of the straits we ran into a pretty heavy sea which was running across our rear quarter so we had a fairly uncomfortable ride down to Bozcaarda where we arrived just 30 minutes behind Souris Rose having not used our engine at all. Moored stern-to the quay and accepted the offer of drinks on Souris Rose (yet again).

Wandered into the town during the afternoon and were both surprised by the huge difference since we were here just 4 weeks ago. Much cleaner and tidier (even new pavements!) and the shops were now all full of fresh veg etc. Bought some local wine as the island had a reputation for being a good producer, but the white we tried in the evening was truly awful and actually undrinkable.

Had to jump into action later when a small gin palace tried to reverse into the space next

to us on the quay and then we discovered as they came alongside that it was one of the boats from our pontoon at Pendik (Istanbul) but better still (or worse..) it was the crew with the little dog (see earlier post "Hang Dog Day"). Anyway we all exchanged cheery greetings and they actually seemed pleased to see us again! Then whilst they were sorting themselves out it became obvious that despite being brand new, their electric passerelle (fancy telescopic boarding plank) was not working, so to get ashore they had to come onto our boat and use our plank. They also required serious training regarding not grabbing the all important Raymarine GPS aerial to haul oneself on board and that gritty shoes (even if they are "brand new boating shoes" as they pointed out) are not acceptable on teak decks after you have just walked around the town.....!

We then went off to Souris Rose for dinner (real steaks) and had a great evening finally tearing ourselves away from another round of Port and Brandys ("Ship's Medicine" apparently - best thing for seasickness?) as we had to be up and away in the morning by 6.00am.

Returned to Serafina and got her ready for the early start, which of course included stowing away the gang plank. No sign of life on the boat next door, so we just hoped they were back on board and asleep, because if not, they were going to have a lot of fun trying to get back onto their boat without the use of our plank.

39:50.5N 25:07.8E

Wednesday 22nd July

50+ miles to do today and a full meltemi blowing force 6 & 7, forecast to continue from yesterday for the next few days. Today seems to be a better bet than tomorrow so we cast off at 6.00am and headed into 20 knots of north easterly.

The wind and seas quickly built up but as we were on a broad reach we were able to make really good time, surfing at times down the sides of the larger waves. By the halfway mark we were probably carrying too much mainsail and the seas were getting more than uncomfortable and very much bigger than we had expected.

At midday we swept into the bay that was our destination having averaged 7.69 knots for the trip. The wind was blowing 25 knots still and the bay was very pretty with a long sandy beach but fairly stark as this island has hardly any trees or bushes; and unfortunately offering no protection from the wind! Dropped anchor and had lunch, then needed to re-anchor as the swirling, gusting wind had caused the anchor to break out. Got it down on a patch of sand the second time and hopefully that will do the job for the next few days. We then tried a few experiments to try and improve our anchor holding and to reduce the way Serafina 'sails' around her mooring. Initial trials suggest that a very lop-sided bridle leading to the bow and a centre cleat might hold her in position better, but we need to buy a longer length of suitable rope - it's a never ending wish list for this boat! So we settled for a makeshift 'angel' made up of a carefully 'tangled' length of chain (whether we will be able to undo it again is another matter!) which we lowered down the anchor chain to help weigh it down where it meets the sea bed and so make it more efficient. If nothing else, the boat will have to drag this across the bottom which should help a bit.

Casual afternoon followed by a very refreshing swim, the first since we had sailed up the Dardanelles a month ago. (The Sea of Marmara is not an inviting place to swim!)

In the evening I decided to try a bit of fishing from the boat and caught a fish with the very first cast. Then for good measure caught a second a minute later. For those sad individuals: a Saddled (or White) Bream and two Painted Combers. Sadly the total haul

was just three (and very small at that) and so not enough to justify keeping so they were all released back into the sea.

Wind died down finally in the evening, but the forecast is for it all to start up again around midnight.

Thursday 23rd July

Quieter start to the day than forecast, but before long the wind was back gusting at 30 knots, but our improvised anchor angel has made quite a difference and although Serafina is still sailing around at anchor, the extremes have been reduced. We both went swimming before lunch and were able to view the angel at work under water and we certainly are on the right track!

Lazy day again enjoying this superb bay which we have all to ourselves still. Sarah swam to the beach and had a good look round, reporting that it was the best sandy beach she has ever seen in Greece, which somehow makes it all the stranger that there is nobody here. A few couples have turned up briefly during the two days we have been here, but apart from having quick swims they none of them stay long.

After lunch Sarah swam over to one of the sides of the bay where there was a lone fig tree (The entire island is barren rock with no vegetation to be seen anywhere, except the very rare tree or bush) which she hoped would be heavy with ripe fruit. Of course it wasn't, and had two large goats and some spectacular hornets in attendance, but it was an energetic swim anyway.

In the evening, following a fruitless hour's fishing, we settled down to a quiet drink and to watch the setting sun, but suddenly a large military helicopter came roaring out of the valley and over the beach and close past us, lower than the top of our mast and skimmed across the bay staying lower than the surrounding rocks and headland. It hovered briefly at the far side of the bay before continuing round the headland, still staying below the rocky outcrop presumably on a training flight practising staying below the radar. Limnos is the central command post for the Hellenic Air Force, which has explained the jet fighters wheeling around in the sky on occasions and presumably this helicopter exercise.

On a military theme, Limnos also played a key role in the Gallipoli campaign as the allied invasion fleet was based here throughout. There are two military cemeteries here containing over 1000 graves of allied servicemen.

39:52.2N 25:03.5E

Friday 24th July

Turned out to be quite an eventful day.

Started to get the anchor up around 8.00am as the wind was very quiet, but this took some time as we had to first recover our anchor angel, which was a lot harder than setting it!

With the anchor stowed finally we open up the engine only to hear a very unwelcome rhythmic metallic banging sound. Carried out a variety of inspections and tests before discovering that the culprit was the aquadrive cv joint that had come slightly loose (bolts had vibrated loose) and the earth strap across the cv joint was banging on the galvanised plate above it. It required a lot of bits and pieces to be removed and replaced to resolve a temporary repair, but good enough to get us the few miles to Myrina. The

worry was that two bolts were completely missing and at this stage I could not see them anywhere in the engine room. Whilst all this was going on, Sarah spent the hour and a half sailing Serafina gently back and forth across the bay (actually 4.5k in 14k of wind - quite presentable I felt, whilst endeavouring to keep the boat flat for Rob!) under the jib alone. She could have set off to Myrina, but felt that I might have been more than a little unhappy at trying to work in the furnace heat of the engine room with the boat bobbing up and down as well.

Arrived at Myrina to find the anchorage very full and likewise the town quay, but as luck would have it a yacht came off the quay at this moment and so we were able to reverse into the slot. The Greek owner of the yacht next to us was however most insistent that we had crossed his anchor and we decided that in the spirit of friendship (and in keeping with wanting to keep a low profile here) we would go out and re-lay it. As it happens, our anchor was not over his, but it at least made him very happy.

I now turned my concerns back to the aquadrive and the missing bolts and armed with a searchlight, I spent some time crawling around trying to sort where they could have gone. I took another look at the unit and saw that the bolts were all in pairs but the two missing ones were not paired. I opted to phone the guru and so made a call to James Grazebrook, MD of Halyard marine whose product it is. James predictably was not answering his phone so I left a message and called his factory. The abridged answer was that sometimes these bolts are not used where they foul the ones coming from the adapter plate on the reverse of the unit. All was well and I just need to do them up tightly and use loctite as well. Shortly after this I got a call back from James who was actually in India and he confirmed all of this and felt sure I would be monitoring their tightness more frequently in future!

Reported to the Port Police and got our transit log stamped and then set off for a wander around the town to see what there was and to locate an internet spot. Very good shopping here (clothes and supplies) but internet proved a little harder to track down. There is an internet cafe on the quay, but the woman running it today had forgotten the password! Finally found an internet games cafe and sat down in a room where everyone else was aged between 8 and 12, wearing headphones and yelling competitively at their neighbours.

On returning to Serafina, we decided that the town quay was not a great place to be as they are developing the whole waterfront and so there are clouds of dust and grit in the air. We upped anchor (yet again) and went out into the bay, which was now a lot emptier and picked a good looking spot and dropped the anchor onto sand and dug it in. Hopefully we have done this well as we are due for some 30 knot winds on Sunday.

Went back into town in the evening and had a very nice meal at a taverna on the beach in the bay the other side of the headland that has the very impressive remains of a castle on it. The castle is beautifully lit at night and we will endeavour to get a picture tonight. Sarah talked me out of taking the camera ashore today and so we also missed the fantastic sight of the sun setting in all its glory behind Mount Athos, away on the Greek mainland.

Saturday 25th July

Woke up to a very still and warm morning. Sarah had decided that she wanted to climb up to the castle (and clearly I would not be joining her) to take photos of the view and deemed that first thing would be the coolest time, so she jumped into the dinghy and whizzed off. The castle is fairly impressive - even more so at night when it is lit courtesy of a wealthy ex-pat American woman (who also built the hospital). Sarah met a voluble Iranian woman from Australia visiting her daughter now living on Limnos who was full of

stories about the castle, including the information that there is apparently a tunnel carved out of the (volcanic) rock linking it to the other hill beyond the town. But the highlight of her day was finding a tortoise on the way up and seeing the wild deer (very Bambi-esque).

After breakfast she returned into town to enjoy some retail therapy amongst the bikini shops and jewellers, a trip that yielded at least one possibility in the form of some gold earrings (these may turn out to be the planned 50th birthday present!). She had not actually bought them at this point, but they had been put aside for me to view with Sarah in a visit this evening.

Not a breath of wind today and a blazing sun that must have pushed the temperature very high indeed. Had to make several trips into the sea between us to stay cool and Sarah cleaned up our waterline. We went ashore in the early evening to have a drink and use the internet and on returning to Serafina we deemed that we would be wise to take advantage of the space that had become available on the quay in order to be well placed when the forecast 30+ knot winds arrive tomorrow. So we quickly upped anchor and calmly reversed into promising looking spot. The quay is dusty and gritty and so we will have that to contend with, but hopefully no concerns about dragging anchors (our or others) in the night.

Sunday 26th July.

Patted ourselves on the back this morning for the sound decision made last night to come onto the quay.

Certainly it is hot and VERY dusty and gritty but the wind started blowing hard very early and by 9.00am all the boaters including us were busy taking steps to secure their craft against the rapidly increasing blasts.

Mid-morning saw gusts close to 40 knots across the quay and this was whipping up great clouds of grit and dust which was impossible to keep out of the boats without hermetically sealing them, at which point of course we would expire from the heat!

High spot of the day was Sarah at last finding an English paper and only one day old at that. So we were able to sit back and have a lazy breakfast enjoying a happy read about all the comings and goings of an English summer and the journalists' silly season.

The wind did at least keep the temperatures down a bit, but by the end of the day Sarah was unable to complete a single sentence that did not include the words dust, grit and Hoover/hosepipe. The transom looks like an excavator just dumped a full load of road grit on it.

Worse still is the forecast which does not show any signs of all this easing very much anytime soon. There are gaps, but our next trip is a long one albeit heading roughly south along with the 30 knot winds.

Limnos is a remarkable island, almost alone out here in the north Aegean it is some way off the tourist trail even though there are daily ferries and domestic flights into the large airport that the civilian aircraft share with the considerable military presence here. Myrina is the principle town and tourist hot spot, but in the main it is a Greek resort for Greeks and there are few other nationalities here. The town has two faces as it has an east facing beach with smart restaurants and busy bars overlooking a bay and in the far distance is the dramatic Mount Athos. On the South side is its beautiful harbour with an inner basin for the small fishing fleet, overlooked by plenty of fish restaurants (that is what the guide book claims anyway), a new (half built - very gritty) town quay, which

will be very smart and a lovely open bay used as a yacht anchorage when the wind is less strong and a ferry port on the far side of the bay that makes the link to the outside world without disturbing the peace of the town. The seaward side of all this is protected now by a brand new mole that extends half way across the entrance to the bay leaving an idyllic location. If only the wind would die down.

In addition to all this, the island boast some fantastic sandy beaches and is a popular winter home for flamingos. So why so few tourists? Nobody seems to know, but rather selfishly most of us here are pleased to have the place to ourselves. Yachts are rare beasts in these waters as only the longer term cruisers like us venture this far north as it is off the beaten track and takes a lot of precious holiday time just to make the passage here and back, never mind the issue of strong summer winds.

Monday 26th July

The strong winds returned pretty much at dawn again today and built up steadily during the morning, but it certainly was not as bad as yesterday.

The bad news was that the boat is covered in grit, both inside and out and it is not a pleasant experience! Sarah could not stand it any further and so out came the hoover and apart from a short break when its thermal overload tripped, she worked her magic around poor Serafina. Next it was the decks and Sarah again took advantage of the good water supply on the quay to hose down the decks and wash the superstructure. Yes the wind is still blowing in more grit, but for the time being it feels and looks much better inside and out.

The owner of a 53ft HR yacht came ashore from the bay mid-morning and told us about his attempt yesterday to leave the island and head for Lesvos, which is the trip we also have planned. The wind was gusting up to 40 knots he said, but the killer was the huge seas. They sailed for two hours in thoroughly unpleasant conditions before doing something he says he never ever does, which was to turn back. It made us feel a lot better about our decision to stay put, which is good as we do sometimes wonder if we are getting a little soft.

Went for a swim off the west beach in the afternoon, to cool down as much as anything and returned to Serafina to find that the wind had swung round to the north and dropped right away. Not what the forecast said at all!

Tuesday 27th July

Forecast has kept all the crews here guessing! Clearly there are still strong winds blowing but they seem to die away during the afternoons which is not at all what is being shown on the grib files. The problem for everyone is that Limnos is a long way from pretty much anywhere and so if you set out, you are going to be at sea for quite a while and could do with knowing what is coming.

Having studied the files this morning we decided that we would hang on here in Myrina for one more day, then sail round tomorrow, to the bay we stayed in last week. The intention is to setting out from there early on Thursday morning for the long sail to Lesvos (good birthday activity!) as it looked like things should be a bit calmer then.....

One boat left the quay this afternoon heading for the Dardanelles which is almost directly upwind but they have little choice really as they have got friends flying out to Istanbul shortly.

We met up with the very lively crew of 'La Liberte' in the early evening and a few drinks turned eventually into a wander into town around 10pm in search of a restaurant. Had a

wonderful evening with Manny, Belinda and their daughter, Amy. It must have been a gift from heaven as not only were they great fun and great company, but they are Australian and who better than to pass away an evening with when England are one up in the Ashes series! They poor souls, are stuck here as their engine died a few weeks ago and the new block and associated parts have not appeared quite as fast as advertised. It has the slight merit in that they will not be able to hunt us down in the event that Australia recover and go on to win the Ashes. Goodness knows what time we got back to the boats and doubtless we will pay for it all in the morning.

39:50.5N 25:07.8E

Wednesday 29th July

And still the wind is blasting from the North!

We entertained Belinda and Manny from La Liberte for coffee this morning whilst they inspected Serafina. The plan is to go round to our favourite bay later this afternoon when the wind is due to ease for a while. There appears to be a sort of window for the crossing to Lesvos tomorrow, but this may turn out to be an illusion!

Sat around rather frustrated all day waiting for a lull. We gave the deck another rinse to get rid of the latest grit deposits and finally slipped our lines and headed off round to the bay (Parlou) on the south side of the island around 5.30pm. Arrived to find it still blowing old boots, but we at least knew our way around this bit of sea bed and dropped the anchor first time onto a good bit of sand and got a good set. The bay itself is a beautiful setting and so when the sun went down and the wind dropped, we sat out in the cockpit and rued the fact that we couldn't just stay here for a few more days. But we have to escape from Limnos sometime soon....

39:06.6N 26:06.1E

Thursday 30th July

Got away at 5.00am in the dark with the wind already blowing 15 knots. Put a reef in the main and flew the hard wind jib on the inner forestay and set a course for Sigri, on the island of Lesvos a distance of around 56 miles.

Once again the wind soon began to pick up and with it the waves. We were sailing on a broad reach at first and so the waves were no real problem and once the wind reached 20 knots we were flying along at 8 knots through the water. We ate up the miles as the morning went by, but the wind was increasing all the time and so were the waves. The main problem with the waves was that every few minutes there would be a set of 'rogue' ones that were around twice the height of the rest and these began to throw us around as they passed through. The wind also began to veer and was now coming over our rear quarter which along with the 25+ knots of wind was making steering quite lively. We reefed the main down further and put a few rolls in the headsail and calm was restored for a while and we barely lost any speed either. Had to cross the busy shipping lanes as we approached Sigri, but this was complicated by the west coast of Lesvos turning out to be a wind acceleration zone. Suddenly we were facing winds gusting up to 38 knots and the seas became mountainous. The last freighter that we had to avoid (should he be avoiding us?) made a late course change that had us having to bear away almost directly downwind (and alarmingly away from our destination) which in the seas and at the speed we were travelling was very unhealthy. We rounded up behind him and flew in through a gap in the rocks and islands, behind which lay Sigri. 10.5 knots through the water was our top speed and as we dropped the main and caught our first view of our destination, our hearts sank as conditions there were completely untenable. The sea was white with breaking waves and the rollers were just pilling through the northern

entrance, so we decided to bail out and go back out to sea and head downwind, round the eastern side of Lesvos for 17 miles to a bay where we knew there would be better protection.

Coming back out we just set a reefed headsail to keep the speed down and stayed close to the land. Because of the shape of the island, this bit of coast was soon giving us full protection from the waves and so even with just the one small jib flying, we whizzed down to the entrance to Kolpos Kalloni which is a huge landlocked gulf in no time at all.

The wind had certainly eased by now and we sailed into the entrance of the gulf and then nosed into Apothekes Bay where we dropped anchor. Allegedly good holding here which was handy as the wind kept blowing into the evening. Forecast has this weather continuing like this in this area for another 5 days which is a bit of a pain, but we bought this Najad because of its ability to deal with these conditions so we are heading on south tomorrow we hope. We saw only one other yacht: a large ketch sailing up the way we had come in the lee of the island (brave chap!). The only other query is where is everyone else - and will there be any gaps in the harbours that are sheltered from this meltemi when we arrive?

38:23.1N 26:08.3E

Saturday 1st August.

Made early start today on the trip to Khios. We had planned to go yesterday, but the winds had blown hard all that night and so we elected to take a day off in the light of Thursdays epic trip.

Very light wind today and we ended up motor sailing pretty much the whole way. Of course as chance would have it, the wind suddenly whipped up to 25 knots as we made our final approach to the extremely tricky entrance to Khios Marina. This nautical scrap yard is something of a Greek national disgrace to my mind. Part funded by the EU, they built the basic structure here years ago, with the mole, concrete fingers and even a bay for a lifting gantry. But that is when worked stopped years ago and what is left is a rundown semi-derelict place with just moorings for visiting boats along the inside of the outer mole. The entrance has an unmarked reef beside it and the only way in is by approaching at exactly 270 degrees (due west) and skimming close to the end of the mole and then turning very hard to starboard. For good measure there is also a bar at the entrance which reduces the depth to 2.8 metres even though inside the depths are much better. Of course 2.8 is OK for us, on a good day, but when you factor in high pressure and the large seas that were building as we arrived, 0.6 metres is not much to play with under the keel. Politics aside it would take very little to have this running as a functioning marina and an asset to the town and the island. But how many times have we seen this around these islands during this season?

Once we were in behind the mole it soon became clear that the quay was full and although a helpful Dutchman was signalling that we could go alongside the rusting hulk of an old Greek island ferry and that he would take our lines, we decided that we would abort the visit and head back out to sea and cross over to Cesme in Turkey. At this point the elderly Italian couple on a Grand Soleil 46 signalled that we were welcome to go alongside them and so we eased our way over and were soon tied up safe and sound. The next boat behind us on the quay then indicated that he was leaving in around one hour, so we waited for him to vacate the slot, but eventually he decided that it was all too windy and decided to stay, so we were finally able to walk off to the supermarket nearby and stock up on supplies.

I now have to make a small confession about yesterday. I was replacing one of the toilet pumps and as part of this lovely job, you need to disconnect all the hoses. As I removed

the last of these, it leaked out water if I let it drop down at all, so craftily I turned to the turkey baster that we use for removing water from such awkward places and started to remove water from the upturned hose and put it into a bucket. After quite a few goes it dawned on me that the water level never changed. Yes, I had forgotten to shut the sea cock and so I was trying to empty the Aegean Sea into a bucket with a turkey baster.....

I also forgot to mention the very salutary sight of a wrecked steel yacht that you pass on your way into Sigri (Thursday 30th July). We were not able to get a photo on our way in as we were more than a little preoccupied at the time (!) with the rolling seas and 38 knot wind, but I did manage a quick snap at a distance as we left the comparative shelter of the rocks and reefs. You will be able to view it at www.rhbell.com with all our other pictures as soon as we get to Wi-Fi again.

Sunday 2nd August

Took a ride into town today and promptly lost my cap which resulted in a sunburnt forehead for which I received remarkably little sympathy! Got to meet all our neighbours properly today and with three other British flagged yachts (out of just 8 yachts here), it was all very interesting. We ended up hosting 'drinks' on Serafina which resulted in all 5 Brits joining us plus Brock, a very well mannered black Labrador.

As usual lots of information was exchanged about on a whole range of subjects, but critically from my point of view was that Mac and John had mended John's bent Hydrovane wind vane steering system which is a problem that we have been carrying for quite a while. They explained what to do and offered to help if I wanted to do take the unit off tomorrow.

Drinks continued until very late as they do and we resolved to move on tomorrow morning and meet up with Souris Rose in a bay in Turkey.

38:11.0N 26:31.0E

Monday 3rd August

Woke to find quite a strong wind blowing which was not quite in the plan, but not a big problem. The real problem was the loo that was not working properly, following a visit from one of our guests last night!

Sadly I now know too much about these things for my own good and so I had the fun job this morning of taking it apart and fixing it. As we were doing this, we thought that we might just stay here another day and so I enlisted Mac's help in removing the Hydrovane unit from the back of Serafina. Good job he was still here really as I am not too sure I would have managed this alone as planned originally.

This actually did not take too long in the end and as it was only midday and we had had a phone call from Souris Rose (David & Jill) to say they were on their way to the bay in Turkey that had been our original destination, we packed up and got ready to sail south to join them. At this point another David, who we had moored alongside at Marmara came in and moored in front of us. We exchanged news and then headed out of the marina and set a course for Turkey.

Had a wonderful sail in the end and were very reluctant to take the sails down as we arrived at Sarpdere Bay, south of Cesme. This was the bay we enjoyed so much back in June when Mick and Dione came to stay. Waiting in the anchorage was 'Souris Rose' and so we swam over to invite them for drinks later, but were unable to escape without a cool glass of beer with them first!

David and Jill duly joined us on board Serafina and the evening passed far too quickly once again.

Seems we missed something of a photo opportunity a few miles back along the way we had just come as two days ago a large schooner (twin masted yacht) sank and the two masts can be seen sticking out of the water close to the headland. No idea how or why they sank, but these things serve to remind us all about why we need to take care in what we do at all times.

37:52.3N 27:15.7E

Tuesday 4th August

Strange swell running into the bay last night, which made for a poor night's rest.

Glorious morning however, but no sign of any wind at all!

We had decided that we were moving on today and heading south to Kusadasi which by all accounts marks the start of the resorts and the 'real Turkey' of all the summer holiday brochures.

Said goodbye to David and Jill on Souris Rose, who frankly thought we were mad to head off to a marina when the weather was set fair. This did make us think again, but we need to be closer to Bodrun for various reasons and so we headed off as planned.

Real August summer's day. Blazing unrelenting sunshine and barely a breath of wind. Managed less than one hour's proper sailing on the entire 40 mile trip.

As we arrived, it became very obvious that were re-entering the tourist world as opposed to the 'off the beaten track' where we have been a lot lately. The main clue was the presence of 5 cruise ships clustered around the shipping terminal! Seems this is the best place to make a trip to Ephesus which doubtless we will be doing ourselves as well.

We were ushered into the large Setur Marina and Sarah reversed Serafina perfectly into a very small berth next to a yacht exactly half our size. So far we have only had time to wander round the marina itself, but the report is VERY favourable. Swimming pool (costs less than £2 per person for the day), excellent laundry (self service, 'home' and Service wash). Good chandlery, loads of bars and cafes and several very smart restaurants all on site. Workshops and various small businesses specialising in pretty much everything 'boaty' in one way or another. Book exchange, very clean and tidy site (grass mowing and paths swept daily). Finally of course, a large Migros supermarket. Best marina we have come across to date and although the security seems a little light, there are clouds of security staff and marina staff around day and night. Also whisper it quietly, but the nearest minaret sounds to be miles away!

Wednesday 5th August

Busy but dull day spent getting a whole host of jobs done. These included giving the engine a full service, filters oil and impellor etc. all in the 40 degree heat we have here today.

Sarah took over the marina laundry machines and washed Serafina down very thoroughly outside amongst a host of other activities, none of which are much fun in this heat. She also went for a bike ride into town, or more especially along the front to the Tourist Information Office to get details for our trip to Ephesus tomorrow. She also

managed to 'find' the posh shops close to the cruise ship terminal!

Finally in the cool of the evening, we treated ourselves to a meal out at one of the restaurants we had looked at the previous evening. Sarah's choice turned out to be fantastic.

Marinadeniz Restaurant, which is inside the Setur marina complex, but well away from the other bars etc. was superb. Primarily it is a fish restaurant, but they have a wide range of starter dishes (not all fish based at all!) and the ones we selected were all delicious. The calamari in particular were outstanding. For main dishes, you choose which fish you want from a very large display and at all times you are informed what any choice will cost you. They also do meat dishes and the meatballs that I had were really good. Sarah had a fish that she maintains was the best she has tasted for a very long time. The service was excellent and you might just be getting the idea that we wholly recommend this place. (0090 544 864 2445)

If there is one drawback to the marina, it might be the music from various bars that at this time of year certainly goes on until 4.00 am.

Kusadasi itself is just a big tourist resort these days and a very handy point for cruise ships to land passengers who want to visit Ephesus. The whole of this bit of coast is fairly featureless and is just miles of concrete, beaches and holiday resorts of various sorts. Just a few miles away is the island of Samos, but that is Greece.

Thursday 6th August

Alarm went off at 6.00 am so we could do our cultural tour before the sun really got going again today.

Walked into town and up to the dolmus station, which is a grand term for a roundabout with mini-buses rushing round it.

However easy it is to mock this system, the fact remains that it is actually very quick, easy and ridiculously cheap. (Sound like a workable public transport model?)

15 minute wait before we were off heading for Ephesus by way of some very rural roads. We were dropped off near one of the entrances and succumbed to the offer of a taxi ride round to the south entrance, some 3 km away.

Even if you are not a keen 'rubble gazer' the one site you have to see is Ephesus. The history is far too complex to go into here but briefly it was already prospering by the 6th century BC. Alexander the Great arrived in 334 BC and offered to pay for the grand temple that was under construction. Its golden era belongs to the Romans when it was made capital of Asia Minor and at this time it had over 250,000 inhabitants. St Paul arrived in AD 53 and founded a Christian church there. The demise of this great city was due entirely to the river silting up and the sea retreating across the plain leaving it several miles from the nearest ship.

What remains though is staggering and mainly dates from the Roman era. The theatre is awesome, seating 24,000 people and it is still used every spring for a festival.

We strolled through the vast site and took endless photos (mercifully only a few will appear on the website!) and ended up walking back down to the main road, where we saw the small lay-by which is the 'official' pick up point for the dolmus that runs between Kusadasi and Selcuk. 5 minutes later we were whizzing back down the lanes and back to Kusadasi where we walked down to the cruise terminal to visit the shops and enjoy a coffee on the sea front.

The afternoon saw us back at our chores, taking advantage of the Wi-Fi, electricity and water on tap.

37:42.6N 27:03.3E

Friday 7th August

Slow to get away today as there were still things to be done in the morning before we left the 'home comforts' of the marina.

Once we were offshore, the wind dwindled to a bare 8 knots and so we motor sailed across to the Greek island of Samos and into a nicely protected bay on the south east coast where we plan to sit out the forecast Meltemi wind.

Souris Rose was here with David and Jill as they had a rendezvous with another Daglass motor yacht of the same vintage whom they had never met before, but had been emailing for 5 years! As we dropped our anchor, Jill and David came over in their rib to tell us that they had booked a table for 6 for the evening, so that we could join them along with the owners of the other boat (Tony and Regina). This discussion led to them coming on board for lunchtime drinks and we then went back to Souris Rose in mid afternoon for a 'light' lunch.

In the evening we all went ashore and had a very nice meal in the sole taverna. Entertainment was provided by a live group playing traditional Greek dancing music and the two caiques (big trip boats) that turned up with at least 70 passengers who had booked three huge tables. The dancing displays etc. were very much led by the two caique skippers who looked like they had just stepped off the set of Zorba the Greek and were none to good (although we are used to Gaios' own, Theo and Pani's, very much higher standards)! We had to stay to the bitter end as these boats had trapped our dinghies against the quay, so were quite pleased when they finally all tramped back on board. What was quite clear was that these two craft were badly overloaded and their waterlines were invisible below the sea! The skipper of the second boat to leave also had a final party trick which involved spinning his boat round using lots of power and sending waves of water flooding across the taverna floor. Sarah jumped up to rush to protect our dinghy and found it missing. The taverna owner then came up to her with a smile to say he had moved it out of harm's way as he had known what was about to happen.

Saturday 8th August

Not much sign here of the Meltemi that is supposed to be blowing down the other side of the island, but we are not complaining.

Once most of the boats had left in the late morning, we moved to a new spot, further inside the bay which got us out of the worst of any swell, but did put us quite close to the beach and some small moored boats.

In the evening David and Jill came over for dinner and we had a great time with Jill finally dragging David away from yet another 'final' glass of red wine.

Sunday 9th August

Another idle day as we enjoy the peace and comparative solitude of this nice bay.

Sarah was commenting to David on Souris Rose how very quiet it was here, when around the corner came a posse of Turkish gulls, seriously overloaded with passengers and playing VERY loud music from speakers carefully positioned to better broadcast the

sound to their neighbours. These boats seem to make a daily visit here and it is more about provocation than anything else. They swing round the bay upsetting as many people as they can before speeding on their way. They cannot land of course as we are in Greece, so little real purpose is served by all this.

Yesterday I had a frustrating 'deck chair' half an hour during which I simply had to replace the various covers onto the forepeak bed mattresses. It was remarkable how many mistakes I could make during this exercise and I have no idea how many times each cover was put on, changed, reversed, swapped etc. before I finished. Sarah meanwhile was cooking dinner for our guests that evening and seemed oblivious to the flapping and complaining that was happening just by her. (Equally she offered no helpful advice either!) [Rob does not mention that the covers came off as the deck hose had chosen to perish and split along its length this morning, spraying saltwater all over the foredeck which was conveniently scooped up by the windshute and deposited on the beds below! And I cannot be held responsible if he has not had enough practise at bed-making - or perhaps I can! But I will admit it is one of those jobs when you do remember which way round the covers go after you have made the first mistake.]

Joined in the bay by an Italian yacht who served as a further reminder as to how important maintenance and inspection is. They have lost their mast, the stump of which is sticking out of the deck still. They have lashed a spinnaker pole to it, so that they have something to hang their sun awning on and seem to be carrying on with their holiday anyway, sans sails.

Invited onto Lady Coppelia (55' Daglass Motor Yacht) for 'Sundowners' at 5.30 pm last night and were joined there by David and Jill from Souris Rose. The protocol of these events always seems a bit vague as we are never quite sure when a 'sundowner' finishes. Anyway we weaved our way home in the dinghy sometime much later, but could not help noticing that it was in fact still light!

Final entertainment was provided by a German charter yacht that had several attempts at anchoring, but despite all the room managed to end up just a few yards from us, which was bound to end in tears when the wind changed direction. We advised them of this and they promptly tried elsewhere and then gave up and motored off into the sunset. One hour later they were back trying again and finally got settled. Like most of these boaters, they do not let out much chain for some reason, which leaves them likely to drag if the wind gets up and they also will not swing in as big an arc as other boats and that leads to contact when there is a wind shift.

Monday 10th August

Lots of plans for today. Things to do etc. but like all such schemes, they do not always quite work out.

Usual morning exodus of boats leaving just three of us here to enjoy the place. Seems the day had hardly started when David and Jill called by in their dinghy to suggest that we might join them for a lunchtime drink in the bar on the quay. (There is one bar, one taverna and one shop here and nothing else apart from a few houses.)

Took the opportunity to take rubbish ashore and buy bread etc and then sat down for drink or two, which ended with a light lunch in the taverna and a return to Serafina at 3.30pm. [Please note Sarah has finally gone on the wagon for a while....]

Further plans were then disrupted by a very welcome phone call from Nigel and Karen Curry (Nika, Najad 380) who had just been reading this log and discovered that they were in the next bay to us! They had hired a car for the day and could they pop round for a drink and a chat. 30 minutes later I picked them up from the quay and we had a

great time exchanging information as we were passing in opposite directions and had loads of useful advice to give and receive. (and stories to tell...) It was Karen's birthday, so they did not stay too late as they had dinner plans elsewhere. Sadly they are moving on to Turkey now whilst we are staying in Greece for a while longer, but we do now have a great list of more places worth visiting and places to moor etc.

Tuesday 11th August

Something of a re-union day today as the first new arrivals in the bay were Tony and Jill in 'Nimbus' who we first met last week up in Khios. No sooner had they settled in than Mac arrived in Morwenna (Rival 34). We also had first met Mac up in Khios when he very helpfully aided me in dismantling our hydrovane.

By the end of the day two very large British flagged yachts were also anchored nearby and I really can't remember when I last saw so many British yachts in one place.

We were invited, along with Tony, Jill and Mac, on board Souris Rose (they all knew each other anyway from earlier meetings) for sundowners, which rather predictably went on until late.

37:41.4N 26:56.7E

Wednesday 12th August

Off on an epic 4 mile trip today round to Samos Marina which we have promised to look at for Jacky and Bob in Arwen as they are considering wintering there.

First we had to wake poor Mac up as he had kindly agreed to have a look at the settings on our camera and give us some advice. Mac was a professional photographer in an earlier life and now ghost writes autobiographies.

Finally set off and after a lap of the bay saying goodbye to everyone, we hoisted the staysail and motored out into the channel between Samos and Turkey. Within minutes the wind appeared from nowhere and we had a great 30 knots just off the bow which allowed us to romp along at nearly 8 knots all the way to the marina. Sadly, at 7 knots it does not take long to cover 4 miles and in no time we were dropping the staysail and getting out the fenders.

Potentially a tricky mooring in the marina as the wind was still gusting very strongly but all went well and we secured a good upwind berth close to the supermarket.

Sarah took a stroll into the nearby town of Pithagorian (named after Pythagoras of course) to do a recce and a bit of shopping.

In the evening we both walked into town which is very pretty but busy and had a very good meal at a restaurant called Symposium (superb lamb dishes). We also checked out the harbour and the anchorage with a view to coming here tomorrow and staying the night.

The marina itself was very nice and new and had all the facilities you need during the summer season. However we were warned that it all closes up in the winter and is not a great choice for long stay, which is a shame as it is certainly one of the better Greek marinas that we have visited.

37:41.3N 26:56.7E

Thursday 13th August

This was an even shorter trip than yesterday as we made our way round from Samos Marina to Pithagorian Town.

Timing is everything and we had calculated that 10.30 am would be a good time to arrive as hopefully the boats leaving should have cleared off. It is quite a big and popular anchorage but restrictions are there to keep space for a ferry to arrive and swing round, plus a large area off the beach is reserved for swimming, so boats have to be careful to allow themselves enough room for them and the boats around them, to swing at their anchors without bumping into each other!

As we arrived we saw Morwenna (Mac) had already come in and was anchored close to some others. Sarah then spotted a French yacht picking up its anchor and they were in probably the best spot in the bay. As they motored off, we slipped into their space and dropped anchor. It transpired later that Mac had met the Frenchmen a few days earlier and when he arrived they had suggested he hang on as they were going within an hour. Sadly he was below on his computer when the French left and we arrived.

Later in the morning Nimbus arrived and I spotted a Moody 40 called Sandpiper of Brighton which looked a little familiar. It turned out to be the same Sandpiper that had been one of our 'Lead Yachts' back in 1980 when we were running flotilla holidays for Seascope.

Souris Rose turned up later in the day and managed to squeeze in. Mac invited Sarah and I for evening drinks and we had a good time on Morwenna and I was lent one of the autobiographies he has written to wade through sometime.

We are planning to move on tomorrow, but have been taking some flak from all the other boaters here, for always moving on too fast. One night is never enough apparently!

37:27.4N 26:59.2E

Friday 14th August

Went ashore first thing to buy bread and use the internet and bumped into several crews doing much the same thing.

Quick social whirl of saying goodbye to the various crews out in the bay and then around 11.30 am raised the anchor and set out for The Dodecanese Islands.

Started out with a fresh north easterly breeze and were soon making 6 to 7 knots, but gradually this faded away and after about an hour, we resorted briefly to the engine. This was the cue for the wind to back round to the north west and pipe up again and after only 10 minutes of motoring we were back romping along at 6 and 7 knots again on a steady beam reach. Glorious weather and 15 knots of breeze was not far short of perfect.

All too soon we were rounding the bottom of Agathonisi Island and tacking between two islands towards the little fishing harbour on the south side. When we got there we could see that it was a bit busy and dusty so we spun round and whizzed back downwind to a set of bays at the south eastern tip of the main island. Dropped the sails and motored in and found ourselves a lovely spot just clear of an American yacht. We were joined shortly afterwards by a Swiss yacht and enjoyed a nice swim. Sadly for me, Sarah's swim took her to the beach where she found any number of 'perfect' stones for

polishing, several of which she brought back with her. The rest she put to one side and plans to collect them in the dinghy tomorrow.

37:22.4N 26:44.5E

Saturday 15th August

Our departure this morning was delayed by Sarah who rowed ashore to revisit the beach and search for those perfect stones. A full hour and a half later she returned declaring this to have been the best beach ever! She also had a bag full of exhibits.

Got under way at 10.40am heading for Arkoi Island and the light breeze that took us gently out of the bay, quietly picked up to eventually whisk us along at 7 knots under just main and staysail. We got a bit of a clue as to what we might find when we got there by the number of yachts sailing on the same course as us. More yachts under sail here that we have seen at any time this year.

We kept sailing as long as we could as we approached the big group of islands, but tacking through the channels with a dying wind eventually become a bit pointless. The additional problem was the increasing number of boats whizzing around here. Suddenly we have arrived in the tourist and charter yacht area on a Saturday of all days. Every bay that we passed now was jammed with boats of all shapes and sizes, from fast inflatables to huge gin palaces. We however were party to some secret inside information from Nigel and Karen who were here a few weeks ago and knew of a large bay that almost nobody uses because the pilot books say it is very deep and therefore tricky to anchor in. We really could not believe our luck when we arrived to indeed find it completely empty whilst every other cove or bay was packed. We picked our spot pretty much in the middle and settled back on the anchor to see what developed.

So many of these people act like lemmings and as soon as people saw us in here we were soon joined by a gin palace and a large catamaran, both of which took lines ashore and were about as far away from us as was possible. By dark, we had been joined here by just two more yachts, one of which was plainly a charter yacht on its first day out. They did finally get moored up, but the performance of trying to get a line ashore and then remembering to go back out and drop an anchor several times over was very entertaining for a while at least.

Sarah went ashore to have a look around this part of the island and brought back photos of the other bays around us all jammed with boats, after quite an extensive walk without a hat - not sensible, but would have necessitated waking sleeping beauty to retrieve said hat! We cannot thank Nigel and Karen enough for this gem and for the benefit of the boats following us, we are in Port Stretto (East Bay) which is the right hand bay of the twin bays shown on the map. The west bay is busy, but does have two fixed buoys provided by the taverna, plus a small quay also provided by them. Access to the taverna though is very easy from this side anyway.

Tried a bit of fishing as the sun went down, but as usual, not a even a tickle.

Passed a small milestone as we approached the island as we clocked up 7,000 miles.

37:19.6N 26:32.6E

Sunday 16th August

Wind got around dawn and was soon blowing 20+ knots which had our attention!

The mooring was sound though and the only couple of boats that felt the need to move

were ones that had taken ropes ashore and now found themselves broadside to the wind.

We got off around 10.00am and hoisted a reefed main to balance the staysail and were soon romping through a quite heavy sea towards the island of Patmos. Strange conditions as the sea was quite rough but the wind was only blowing around 20 knots and sometimes less. We met quite few yachts coming the other way and some of them were reefed down to just a scrap of headsail which would have made it a long slow and very bouncy trip for them. As we arrived in the main bay on Patmos, the wind increased to 25 knots and it was all a bit lively. We could see boats in most of the bays as we sailed past, but there was plenty of room if we had to come back for any reason.

We pressed on to the main port of Skala which is very well hidden and was very full. It has a quay for cruise ships, but this was empty today. We headed for the anchorage at the head of the inlet only to find that this no longer exists and is all occupied by boats attached to quays. As it happened though there was a space on the town quay, but this was at right angles to the 25 knot wind and we sat and thought about this option for a few minutes before deciding to give it a go!

All went well and we slid into a very snug berth between two British yachts who were very welcoming. A brief look at the chandlery shop across the road proved very helpful as they stocked a number of items that we have been trying to find for weeks now.

After a late lunch and a snooze we wandered around the town which is delightful and eventually returned to Serafina around 6.30 pm whereupon we were invited on board Restless Lady (Colin and Jill), our next door neighbours for a G & T. This developed into several drinks as we chatted and they had to contact the restaurant they were going to, in order to delay their table until 9.00pm.

Up early tomorrow to walk up to the Monastery of St John the Divine, which sits on top of the hill overlooking this natural harbour. Full history lesson perhaps tomorrow.....

Monday 17th August

Very windy night last night and so a good one to be tied securely to a quay!

We got up a bit earlier than usual so that we could go up to the monastery of St John the Divine (also known as St John the Theologian). We missed the bus so we took a 5 euro taxi ride up to the top of the hill and made our way back down by foot, using the Byzantine footpath that is still very much in evidence.

The monastery was well worth the trip - a very beautiful building with many winding stairways and balconies at lots of different levels, and a minute but exquisite chapel - and the views back across the island were stunning and our photos at www.rhbell.com barely do it all any justice (unfortunately we were not allowed to take any photos within the monastery).

The potted history reveals that St John was banished here in AD 95 and he sat down and wrote the Apocalypse (found in the Book of Revelations). For several centuries the island was a base for Saracen pirates but in 1088 the Blessed Christodoulos got permission from the Byzantine emperor to build a monastery to commemorate St John, but because of the continued frequent pirate raids, it required serious fortifications which is why it was built to resemble a substantial castle.

Patmos has become the spiritual centre for the Greek Orthodox religion, second in importance to Mount Athos.

There is a very nice feel to this place which seems to have survived the traumas of excess tourism and for yachtsmen it provides countless bays and anchorages, mostly offering good protection from the very strong summer Meltemi winds that sweep down from the north.

Today was a 30 knot wind day in the harbour which causes a good deal of grief as the quay is almost exactly at right angles to the prevailing wind. The boats leaving mostly had to contend with fouled anchors as well as the cross winds. The anchor problem is of course exasperated by the problems faced by all skippers when coming in across the wind. It is fairly inevitable that inexperienced skippers and even quite experienced skippers will get this wrong and end up laying their anchor across someone else's. Equally, boats leaving that are slow to get their anchor up and lifted clear of the seabed, go on to snag other anchors and chain lying on the bottom as they drag theirs along. Despite there being a few good demonstrations this morning on how to do it properly, the charter yachts (all Italians today) failed to learn any of the lessons and so many hours were spent trying to help them recover from tricky situations, not that they were in the least bit interested in the main!

Then we had the new arrivals and they like us yesterday were faced with 30 knots of cross wind which soon sorts them all out. The wise folk just keep going slowly round time and again until they are sure they have everything right and then in they come. The inexperienced come flying at it and it usually ends in tears and lots of shouting. Of course everyone has a view on all this and so the poor skippers who are getting it wrong find that they are getting a considerable amount of unsolicited advice delivered in up to 4 languages and most of it contradictory!

We, like all proud boat owners have only one aim in all this and that is to get a boat in alongside us on both sides. By preference you try to encourage the experienced looking ones to come in beside you as they are obviously going to be less of a risk as they manoeuvre, but on the basis that you dare not leave the boat unattended whilst all this is going on, it better to have anyone alongside rather than no-one.

So we did not get a whole lot of exploring done until quite late today as the shenanigans were something of a long running saga and there was a very small gap on our port side which no-one was going to try until all the other spots had been filled.

37:16.8N 26:46.6E

Tuesday 18th August

Still quite breezy in the harbour and very little sign of action when we decided around 10.00am to make a move for our next destination. The catch was that the French boat that had come in alongside us yesterday evening had laid his anchor and chain over ours and so we were bound to have a bit of a problem when we left.

As usual Sarah helmed us out and I operated the anchor winch on the foredeck. Sure enough we had been fouled and eventually our anchor came up with his attached to it. We had prepared for this and with Sarah expertly holding Serafina in position under engine against the blustery wind, I used a half moon device that we bought years ago to hold onto the Frenchman's anchor and then drop ours away to release the tangle. We then carefully got into the right position and using a trip line, dropped his anchor where it should have been in the first place! Almost every boat had at least one crew member on their bows watching this and Sarah in particular was beaming with delight at how well it had all gone especially since the Frenchman had been totally dismissive of her and her claim that he had got it wrong in the first place. Long live the entente cordiale.

We raised the sails and swept out of the harbour with a cruise ship hard on our heels. As we raced across the outer bay at 8.5 knots a pod of 8 dolphins sped over to swim with us for a short while. Sadly the wind dropped away after that and we found ourselves sailing at 7 knots with a heavy cross sea making us roll a bit. Before long though we were passing to the south of Lipsi Island and we then headed up into a group of three bays to find ourselves a spot to anchor in. The first two bays were bursting with yachts at anchor, but once again there was a third that was totally empty. Do they all just act as lemmings and head for the crowd? Selected a nice central spot and although the holding was a bit indifferent to start with, we did get the anchor to bite. Almost immediately a charter yacht with Italians on board came in and anchored only yards from us. We were a little unimpressed, but once all of them had jumped overboard for a swim and the breeze picked up, we did notice that their boat was dragging its anchor. Before we could call them though, they too had seen this and after a mad panic they swam back and re-anchored in much the same spot. An hour later the same thing happened again and they went off to another bay. Eventually two other yachts came in and anchored with us but the real entertainment was the 6 boat 'flotilla' of boats chartered by Italians that came in. They had visited the bay earlier in the afternoon, but after whizzing round trying not to hit each other, they disappeared. Sadly around 5.00 pm they came back and treated us to an extraordinary display of high speed dodgems as they rafted up taking lines ashore from their sterns and dropping their anchors at right angles to the wind in the bay. They also felt the need to mill around at speed very close to Serafina arriving just as Sarah was half way through her shower off the back of the boat - an audience of 30 Italians was not quite what she had hoped for, but they seemed almost as relaxed about it as she did! It was with some relief that we watched the last one join the raft and so we could all settle down and relax. At this point the only people left upset were the dozen or so nudists perched on the rocks all around the area where the Italians had tied up!

37:07.7N 26:50.9E

Wednesday 19th August

Very noisy night last night when the Italian flotilla burst into song to wish one of their number 'happy birthday' at midnight. They then started playing very loud music until 2.00 pm (but in their favour it was a good selection...) then the wind got up again and the swell increased from outside the bay and it all made for a poor night.

In the morning the French yacht was first to leave and as they came past us we exchanged our international views on the concept of a peaceful bay. We met the other yacht that was behind us (Italian) in Port Lakki this evening and they too were rather upset and more than a little ashamed that it was "stupid Italians". Stroke of luck it wasn't a British flotilla otherwise we would have been doing the apologising.

We left at 9.45 am and resisted the obvious temptation to give them a wake-up call. It was an easy downwind sail to Leros Island today and we made the whole trip under just our staysail which was more than enough. There is a Meltemi (local summer storms) blowing through the Aegean at the moment, but we seem to be just east of it and so we are getting great sailing weather.

Sailed through the narrow entrance to the big bay that leads to Port Lakki and made our way past the ferry quay to the 'marina' here. In truth this is just a town quay, but they have gone to great lengths to make this workable and although they charge marina prices (24 euros for us) they provide lazy lines, a mariner, free electric, free water (non potable) and free Wi-Fi. Excellent showers and a laundry are also on site.

Leros along with most of the Dodecanese islands was annexed and occupied by the Italians from 1912 until 1943 when the Germans briefly held them. Lakki where we are

at present, became a large Italian naval base in 1930 in keeping with this they also started to construct a grand town nearby. Events rather overtook them and the town still has the grand boulevards and huge municipal buildings but virtually no inhabitants. More recently some of the buildings were converted to make three asylums for handicapped children and mentally ill adults which attracted international condemnation when the dreadfully sub-standard conditions were exposed by the international press in 1988.

Fairly minimal tourism here and what exists is elsewhere on the island, just passing through Lakki's ferry quay. There is a nice feel to the place despite looking rather too much like a film set for a second world war film. Minimal traffic and very few people (and their haircuts suggest they are based at the small Greek naval base across the bay!)

37:06.4N 26:52.4E

Thursday 20th August (A level results in UK)

So firstly congratulations to Jenny Curtis on her two A's and an AB which means she gets to go to Nottingham Uni.

Fairly noisy old night last night with one thing and another which was unexpected really as there is no-one much here and no traffic at all during the day, except when the odd small ferry turns up. There was football until quite late which seemed to draw a big crowd (well at least 10), presumably Greece were playing judging by the enthusiasm.

Sarah was up bright and early on a mission to wash the decks down, Hoover, dust and polish the interior, three loads of washing, and then go food shopping all before we set out for a bay that was less than 5 miles away. I did the hoovering bit to help! This was interrupted when Jill from 'Restless Lady' ran past us on her morning exercise power walk. They are not moored here sadly but are miles away in a bay on the east coast, but the road distances are rather less than by sea. We are heading for the same bay as them, but not until Friday by which time, weather permitting they will have moved on northwards which is a shame. Also heard by email today that La Liberte with Belinda and Manni who have been marooned in Limnos with a broken engine may finally be about to be able to move on after 7 weeks! Sort of hope to meet up with them before the end of the season as they head for Marmaris, but only if England win the last Ashes test. If Australia win we will have to keep our heads down.

Very gentle sail round to Xerokambos bay on the southern tip of Leros island. Long wide bay with tavernas at the top and loads of room to anchor on sand in just 6 metres or so. Quite a few boats here, but they seem all to be crammed up by the beach (and just downwind of a building site) so we dropped our hook in plenty of space behind them all in slightly deeper water. Sit seems a very nice spot although like all these islands there is a mystery swell that keeps coming into the bays making them a little uncomfortable at times. Beautiful crystal clear blue water as usual and it wasn't hard to find an excuse to be swimming pretty much straightaway. Although we did have to wait until after the laundry drying watch (only took half an hour to dry - sorry folks at home!) to ensure none of our extensive wash took off down wind.

There are also quite a few mooring buoys here that belong to various tavernas which you can use provided you eat at the right one! Less wind generally today and the forecast for this island seems to be for less wind over the next few days.

Friday 21st August

We had intended moving up the east coast of Leros today to a bay that has been recommended to us, but the forecast last night indicated a north east wind which would

have made it fairly bouncy in there, so we decided to stay in Xerokambos bay for a second day and night.

Having been so industrious yesterday, Sarah spent a chunk of today drawing. She has rather neglected her art so far this season and so today she concentrated on a self-portrait which rather bizarrely involves cramming herself and an easel etc. into the forward heads (bathroom) where there is a large mirror. To get out for coffee breaks etc. she has to crawl under the easel to get out of the door. Not sure she wants me to publish that photo on the website somehow!

Got lots of jobs done today which is always satisfying and in the afternoon we were sat on deck watching the new arrivals when a large and particularly impressive gold coloured yacht (yes, even the mast) came and anchored behind us. Sarah was very taken with its appearance and commented on how hard it must be to look after the gel coat and how awful it would be if it got damaged. It was at this point that a 45ft ketch (a Hallberg Rassy) with its anchor part way down appeared to be drifting in the 20 knots of wind rather too close. The crew of the Hallberg (Italian) were in discussion about something, but this did not seem to include taking action to avoid contact with the gold yacht. Suddenly the crew of the gold yacht were on deck rushing to their bows, whilst the Hallberg crew seemed frozen. The drifting yacht came down on the bows of the bigger yacht and then lay pinned by the wind against the starboard forward section. A good deal of shouting ensued, but little happened until one of the gold yacht's crew, who had leapt across their own deck, jumped into their rib and whizzed round and towed the Hallberg clear of them. This might have been the end of the incident had it not been for the minor fact overlooked by everyone that the Hallberg's anchor was still trailing on the seabed and it was now obviously caught upon the bigger yacht's anchor chain. Suddenly this all became horribly obvious to them all as the smaller yacht now swung round in the wind and unable to go anywhere else, smashed broadside onto the bows of the gold yacht. The crunch was quite sickening and it is something of a huge relief that no-one was hurt as the crew were all trying to fend the boats apart. Finally the anchor was retrieved and the Hallberg got clear and seemed to be heading off into the sunset. The crew of the gold yacht (also Italian) chased after it in their fast rib and there followed a strange hour or so while the Hallberg tried to anchor elsewhere in the bay - unsuccessfully and finally after lots of pottering around, it motored off into the distance. We indicated to the crew of the gold yacht that we had photos of the incident and they came over later and took away copies on a memory stick and gave us a bottle of Italian wine by way of thanks. (We both would have settled for a tour of their yacht.)

The strange weather has continued in as much as it keeps blowing up to nearly 30 knots even here in the bay even though we are supposed to be outside the area of the current Meltemi gale.

Saturday 22nd August

Decided against moving on again today as the wind was still gusting strongly from the north and north east which was bad news for the bay we hoped to visit. We were all sorted and ready to go when we made the decision, so the Italian yacht next to us was a little surprised when we re-launched the dinghy and put the anchor snubber back on again.

Quiet day really although the wind remained very blustery all day which was not really what was forecast.

Various options for tomorrow, but we will wait to see how the weather develops.

36:56.8N 26:59.03E

Sunday 23rd August

Finally set off for Kalimnos Island this morning, but very little wind for most of the trip so we sailed and motor-sailed in patches until we finally came round to the south of the island and made our way into the main harbour. Our first impression of the town as we approached was that it is considerably bigger than we had imagined or been led to believe. The quay was half empty and we motored up slowly and actually asked the skipper of a large yacht anchored there if it was OK to moor here! Seemed so strange to see so few boats for a change. All was OK and no sooner had we dropped our anchor and backed up to the quay than the familiar shape of Souris Rose hove into view. David and Jill moored next to us and we were still tidying away our ropes etc. when we were invited on board for a quick G & T. In due course we were also joined by Chris and Clare off Vonasi, (Westerly Discus 33) who we have not met before and it was 5.30 pm before we all headed off. The quay by now was full and by all accounts the half empty view that we had yesterday lunchtime was most unusual. Still it getting closer to the end of August and the Italians are beginning to head home which will make the place quieter in every sense!

David and Jill then invited us for supper as Jill had just bought 4 fresh sea bass from a fisherman in the morning, which was an offer we could not refuse.

My brother David was emailing us updates on the final ashes test and it was great news to hear that we had triumphed in the end. No time to hunt down any Aussies this evening, but will have to get on the case tomorrow....

Monday 24th August

Quiet day today getting a few things done, whilst Sarah explored the town which was no mean feat as it is a very haphazard place with no pavements and a very interesting one way system that does not seem to apply to motorbikes. Directions to where she needed to go were unreliable and she traversed the town several times at one stage in search of a single postage stamp and a reliable car hire firm.

Boats came and went on the quay all day long and finally a small Greek yacht came in alongside us with a lot of help from us and any number of others. They were a family with very little experience and although no damage was done, there had been a lot of shouting amongst themselves and they had dropped their anchor over ours. But they were very polite and using their 12 year old daughter as a translator, they apologised for all the fuss and assured us that they would go out in their dinghy to collect their anchor when they left in two days time rather than risk disturbing ours. Later in the evening as Sarah and I sat in the cockpit eating supper, they came over with a present they had just bought for us from the delicatessen.

Strong northerly winds are forecast for the next few days and given that it is costing virtually nothing to be here, we plan to stay on a while.

Tuesday 25th August

We hired a car today to explore this island a little more and took David and Jill along with us for the ride.

Collected the car from the Avis shop which was no mean feat in itself as the streets here are very narrow, unsigned and something of a warren. The receptionist was unable to give us any directions at all as to which way to go outside the shop to head out of town as she does not drive. Mr Iannis would direct us she helpfully offered. Mr Iannis had no English but pointed out that we might go down the narrow street we were currently in and turn right at the end.

So off we went and eventually the backseat team got us heading out of town where we soon came to signs pointing to the abandoned hilltop village of Pera Kastro. The only way up to this fortress site is by walking up steps carved into the hillside all the way up to the overhanging walls of the village. Not a trip for the faint hearted or the unfit. Once there you find the remains of the original village that was built up there to protect them from the bands of pirates that roamed these seas. From within the walls, David and Sarah continued further up, mountain goat style without the expensive EU funded paths whilst Jill and I congratulated ourselves on being brave enough to have got as far as we did. Brilliant views including that of the airport cut out of the side of the mountain opposite and overall quite an experience, but eventually we had to head back down and my vertigo made this a very long and nerve wracking trip.

Once back in the car we headed north west and found a lovely cove at Kandouni and got out to admire the real surf crashing along the beach. David at this point produced a thermos flask from their basket which strangely was filled with G & T, complete with ice cubes and lemon!

We then pressed on to Emborios which is a pretty bay near the north west end of the island. The holding here is poor for anchoring but the tavernas have put out their own buoys to encourage yachts to stay. The catch is that there is a constant swell that rolls around the bay and we watched the boats there wallow very uncomfortably. However not our problem today and we went to a taverna (Artistico) that had been recommended by some friends and had a really excellent lunch and were entertained by the owner who was certainly a very lively character. It would be worth coming by boat if there had been a settled period of fine weather to reduce the long swell.

Pressed on from here eventually and made our way over to the eastern side of the island to visit the wonderful fertile fjord at Vathi, where they grow citrus fruit - quite a contrast with the rest of the island which is totally barren. Sadly too small really for Serafina to be safe and by all accounts prone also to a big swell from passing high speed ferries. But again nice to visit by car and there is a photo or two on the main website. One of the interesting features of signposts in Greece generally is that they rarely agree on the name of a place. Most towns have several names which is partly a result of poor translations and partly history. The main town that we are in is sometimes known as Kalimnos town and sometimes Pothia. So a road sign can tell you to go right for Pothia and then at the next junction there might be a sign pointing to Kalimnos. Not too hard if you have all the options written down, but can get exciting when they also add in the odd sign just in Greek which bears no resemblance to either of the earlier two options!

This island again was occupied like all the rest of the Dodecanese by the Italians from 1912 until the 1940s and it is the reason so much of the island's houses and roofs are still painted blue which was to upset and remind the occupying forces that they were really still Greek.

Easter is a spectacular time anywhere in Greece usually, with liberal use of fireworks etc. but Kalimnos traditionally celebrates with sticks of dynamite and it gets very exciting or so we are told!

Made our way home finally where we were inveigled on board Souris Rose and treated to some incredibly tender Spanish-style octopus.

Wednesday 26th August

Sarah made an early start to today by deciding to climb up the hill behind where we are

moored to visit the monastery at the top. Chris and Clare from Vonasi had recommended the walk as the views are stunning. They all talked of a track that ran pretty much straight up from behind us, so Sarah scrambled around looking for this in vain and ended up crawling up the escarpment on all fours in places. When she finally emerged at the top the monastery was of course shut to visitors which did not bother her too much as it was all quite modern and tacky. The views were good however and she did take photos. The return trip was done by way of the nice tarmac road, but as it snakes for miles, it was some time before she made it back to Serafina.

We seem to have resolved to move on tomorrow so we needed to do some food shopping etc. as we may be in bays for the next week. Sarah also felt the urge to clean the inside of Serafina (towns are just so dusty....) so out came the Hoover again.

Sarah also decided to cheer up the small Greek children on the boat next door by buying all three of them some bubbles to blow.

No idea really where all the time went, but at 6.30 pm Chris and Clare (Vonasi) as well as David and Jill (Souris Rose) came on board for a drink and information exchange (accompanied throughout by bubbles floating downwind from next door). They all left around 8.00 pm and we had a quiet night in.

37:03.3N 27:13.9E

Thursday 27th August

Following a last minute shopping run for veg, we got under way from Kalimnos around 10.30 am heading for Gumusluk in Turkey.

There was no wind at all at first and we slowly motored along, but as we reached the southern end of the island, we could see a big swell running down between where we were and the Turkish mainland. We paused to put up the main sail as 'Souris Rose' who had left well after us, came powering past on her way to another Greek island.

Within minutes the wind began to pick up and as we emerged from the wind shadow of the main island, we found ourselves bounding along on a fine reach in 20 knots of wind. The waves were larger than we had expected here, but as we were doing 8 knots through the water, we soon ate up the miles and were all too soon rounding up to drop the sails prior to entering the bay at Gumusluk. All around this 'bay' are the ruins of ancient Myndus which was a city that enclosed this harbour. Virtually nothing remains today except the bases of the walls and some sites that are actively being excavated by archaeologists here at the moment.

The anchorage was very busy but we managed to find a spot in quite deep water that seemed OK, but there was a concern if the wind shifted too much, we might swing onto some underwater walls remaining from the ancient city.

We decided then that we would be better off and more secure overnight if we moved to where there were some boats at anchor and tied back to the beach. This manoeuvre is fun at the best of times, but with just two of you does require some thought! All went well though and we were soon firmly anchored and tied back to some rocks.

In the evening we walked round to the few tavernas that we could see on the far side to see if we could get Wi-Fi and have a look around. We were very surprised to find that what we could see from the boat was just the frontage and that it is a big area with loads of restaurants and a lot of stalls selling arty jewellery and the like. Restaurants looked good and as is the Turkish way, we were not short of people asking us to eat at their establishment in preference to any other! It can be quite hard work to walk past these

places without being almost physically accosted.

Made our way back as darkness fell and enjoyed a quiet evening on board.

Friday 28th August

Woke to find that there had been a mass exodus from the bay with boats presumably heading onwards on their travels, although leaving that early does mean little or no wind!

It was my turn to play the mountain goat and I set off on a mini trek to get to the top of the hill above us (flying a huge Turkish flag, of course) to take some photos. I followed the path which wound all round the peninsular before finally heading up the steep escarpment. When I finally made the top, the view was less than brilliant and the light from the low sun made the pictures barely worth the effort, but I at least worked up an appetite for breakfast.

Very lazy day spent in anticipation of watching lots of people trying to anchor here like yesterday, but for some unknown reason very few boats came in all day - very disappointing.

In the late afternoon the French lad on the boat nearest to us went swimming around us with a spear gun and promptly caught a number of small fish which they made into a soup. I, on the other hand, have almost abandoned fishing in bays as I never seem to catch a thing! I think the old Greek way using explosives has much to commend it.

Of course now that we are back in Turkey we have the joys of our old friends, the minarets. The local one here is at least enthusiastic in his delivery and as the days grow shorter it is nice to know that the early morning call has now slipped to 5.00am.

Wandered round the village at 6.00 pm which was a good move as we got to see them all setting up the restaurants with impressive displays of (expensive) fish - to be recommended should you wish to eat ashore, as you can spot which restaurants are laying out rather time-expired fish - and they were all too busy to bother pestering us with requests that we eat there.

Saturday 29th August

Another lazy day anchored back to the beach, but being a Saturday we were very well entertained by the boats out for the weekend who came in and tried their hand at anchoring and, in one or two cases, taking ropes ashore as well.

Today's winner by a good head was a quite late arrival, a small Turkish owned yacht the crew of which were pretty much making it up as they went along. They started well as they backed up towards the beach, but seemed to omit the dropping of the anchor, so they stopped and dropped it far too late. Not sure what to do next, the skipper dived over the side to inspect it as it lay on the sea bed, however he could not see it as it is actually quite deep at that point. He swam around this spot for a little while and failed to notice (as did the other two on board) that the boat was drifting off into the anchorage. Clearly the anchor had not actually reached the sea bed at all and by the time he noticed what was happening the boat was getting away from him. He set off in pursuit and the crew on board watched him, rather than the large French yacht that they were heading for. In the end there was no contact and he made it on board and started the engine as they drifted past another yacht.

Undeterred, they came back to the same spot and tried again. They pretty much

repeated the whole thing with the sole exception this time that they let out plenty of chain, but not content with this, they then put a rope round a small buoy nearby. They then raised and lowered the anchor two or three times, but just simply up and down again. No attempt to lay it along the sea bed or anything vaguely useful. Next they rowed a line ashore to tie themselves back, but after a while they changed their minds and brought it back on board. Their final solution seemed to be to leave the anchor and chain in a pile on the sea bed and tie to the buoy that they had picked up to the back of their boat.

The poor Frenchman next to us was so upset as his boat was the one that they would hit in the night when the wind went back into the north as it surely would that he went over in his dinghy and tried to explain all this to them and offered to help them do it properly, but they waved him away saying that it was now all OK!

In the meantime I had gone for a swim and met the crew of 'Halcyon Days' a yacht flying the Australian flag. This turned out to be a boat load of Western Australians (it is an important distinction) who kindly invited us on board for a drink. They were in great form and I was able to break the latest Ashes news to them, several times probably. Sadly they are heading north at the moment but they are due to end up in Marmaris in the same boatyard as us on October, but probably before us. They are also hoping to do the East Med Rally next spring and so with luck we will meet up again with at least Bob and Rosemary who are the owners.

36:58.6N 27:18.7E

Sunday 30th August

Lots of action around 7.00am today as lots of the boats decided to make early starts. Bit of a shock to the system as there were clouds in the sky which is not something we have seen since the thunderstorms in June.

Since the two boats downwind of us had now left, we opted to go as well as it made our exit much easier and it would have been a nuisance if another boat had arrived and alongside.

We got away OK and watched as the Frenchman upwind of us did the same to avoid any more problems with the Turkish yacht that had certainly swung round in the northerly, but the Turks were now lying sideways to the wind and the crew were seemingly quite oblivious to the problems they were causing.

Very light wind and we only had 10 miles to travel, but since we needed to run our watermaker for two hours, we just unfurled the staysail and potted along, downwind at just a few knots.

We had a choice of two big bays and so we took a look in the first one to see what it was like. There had been a lot of building work done since the pilot book was last updated and the entire bay was lined with hotels, resorts and busy beaches. In fact anchoring there would be the equivalent of mooring in the swimming pool of a Butlin's holiday camp!

We went round the headland to the second option and found that the western bay was busy with anchored yachts, restaurants, packed beaches and loud music, but the north eastern bay was virtually empty apart from a few gulleets that we knew would go home later in the day. We picked a spot over sand and anchored. The entire beach area and behind was given over to what might once have been a Club Med resort or similar. It certainly was very exclusive and lined with palm trees, dozens of unusual, tasteful white

marble sculptures scattered around and pretty empty.

By early evening all the other boats had left and we had the bay to ourselves. The beach resort also seemed to close down at night and so we were left in complete solitude. Set about trying to catch a small fish to use as bait for something bigger and eventually succeeded, but the next bit proved trickier and so far our fresh fish bait has proved unsuccessful.

Ah well, another day another time

Monday 31st August

Woken this morning by the sound of the waves banging on our stern which is unusual when anchored head to wind. It seems that in certain conditions in this bay, that the wind simply rotates around off the various hills, so every few minutes the wind comes from a different direction and points the boat at different angles to the waves.

Forecast is for the Meltemi type winds to blow for the next few days which is a bore, but since our anchor has set perfectly and is barely visible in the sand where it has buried itself, we will stay here for another day or so.

The wind gradually increased all morning and a yacht (Contest 48) that came and anchored next to us, only stayed for half an hour before their anchor started to drag and they disappeared backwards out of the bay. They did not return! Various other yachts came in looking for shelter from the winds, but none chose to stay, presumably because the valley does not look like it offers a lot of protection from the blast. The catch round this part of Turkey is that whilst there are bays that you can anchor in with some protection, they are all heaving with bars, clubs and discos which ply their trade into the very early hours. This spot is just wonderful as the few people here go home at 6.00 pm. We have no idea what this place is, but it has the air of an empty Mark Warner resort, or perhaps a former Sunsail resort. There are bars and sunbathing areas with a buoyed off swimming area (almost the entire beach) plus a water sports area with dinghies, windsurfers and the like. However there is no-one here really, so a handful of people swim and use the beach and a few have used the odd windsurfer.

One German yacht looked to be coming in and as they approached we could see that the dinghy that they were towing was upside down. It is truly remarkable how many boats you see out here that insist on towing their rubber dinghies in all winds instead of taking just a few minutes to bring them on deck or put them away. This poor chap certainly had cause to regret his decision we discovered because as he drew closer he tried to right the dinghy and we could see that it still had the outboard engine attached! At this point the inflatable floor drifted clear and they had to chase that and do a man overboard rescue to recover it. In the end they were unable to right the dinghy in the wind and eventually also decided not to try to anchor here either and disappeared round the headland.

In the late afternoon as the wind reached gusts of nearly 30 knots, one of the staff based here came out on a proper fully rigged windsurfer and treated us to a display of his skills which were considerable. Took loads of photos (which is clearly what this was all about) and will post a few on the website when we reach Wi-Fi this weekend.

Wind was still blowing pretty hard when we went to bed, but having seen how well the anchor was dug in, we immediately got off to sleep.

Tuesday 1st September

A little while back we damaged our 'Hydrovane' wind-vane, self-steering system, or

more exactly a Hellenic Seaways ferry helped destroy it by surging us back onto a town quay (dragging a laid mooring with us) at 2.30 am! Having been in touch with the very helpful people at Hydrovane, we determined to have a new shaft sent out to us, but of course that is so much easier said than done when you have no address and you are passing through such bureaucratic and administrative centres of excellence as Greece and Turkey.

In desperation we turned to the Cruising Association of which we are members and they helpfully posted a notice on their Mednet internet forum. We were inundated with responses from any number of people who had dealt with this issue themselves offering various suggestions. In the end it was the London office that came up with the perfect result and everything is now in motion (we hope) and the parts should arrive in Kos (Greece) sometime in the next 10 days....watch this space.

Another very windy afternoon here and around 6.00 pm the star windsurfers reappeared for a while. We told the main man as he swept past us that we had taken some good pictures of him yesterday, so he came alongside, dropped his rig and came aboard to view them.

Ayhan was able to tell us all about the area, which is actually private land (500,000 hectares) that belongs to a very wealthy Turk who developed it simply for his own private use. The owner sometimes stays in the small house on the beach but when he is not here, people can pay to use the beach and its facilities, although apart from a bar and a restaurant there is little that is actually staffed. Ayhan had always wanted to run a windsurfing centre here and he approached the owner with a view to buying some of the land, but this was refused, however he was allowed to rent the beach to the east of the stream that flows down the valley. His windsurfing centre is evidently very busy in the high season, but the season has pretty much finished and he expects to close down for the winter quite soon. Ayhan himself was a serious windsurfing competitor, but now only goes to some events for one day out of the three that they usually run as he gets tired. He lies about his age at these events claiming to be 34, but in fact he is a remarkably fit 50 year old.

The history of the site and the dramatic hill beside where we are moored is long and involved and Ayhan was having difficulty in recalling it all, but it is clear from what he was saying and from what you can still see on the hillside that this was once a quite big site, possibly a large town which dates back into the mists of time but appears to have been used by the pirates to shop (!), that we have heard so much about in the nearby Greek islands and whose past is tied up with the Ottoman empire. The headland that lies at the foot of the large hill is also interesting for its spectacular downdraughts. Sarah had photographed a number of small whirlwinds (water spouts) in the afternoon as the gusts came through and again Ayhan was able to confirm this local phenomenon.

He invited us ashore tomorrow to see round, but we have planned to go to Kos. We may well return here next week when our eldest son Tom joins us for a week.

36:53.7N 27:17.3E

Wednesday 2nd September

Heading for Kos today and have been warned that we need to be there early to get a spot on the quay, so we retrieved our anchor from its totally buried state in the sea bed (it was burrowing its way to Australia) and set off into a flat sea and light wind. Bit of a false dawn as in no time at all we were rolling in a very lumpy sea with a fresh 15 knots of breeze. Shot over to Kos, barely giving Sarah time to swap the courtesy flags over as we changed country (and continent) again!

Kos is a very well protected harbour and you enter through a very narrow gap which takes you behind the big castle that guards the town. This is by far the busiest place we have been to probably since Palma, Mallorca and it is packed with big tripper boats and endless ferries and hordes of tourists, but very few moorings for visiting boats as there is a large (expensive) marina just half a mile away.

In my defence it must be said that there really was only one free slot when we arrived and it was a complete coincidence that this was alongside Souris Rose. (David & Jill). We backed in and tied up and were immediately invited over. I mentioned that we had at least just had a week of detox to which David replied that such a thought had never crossed his mind!

Kos is a very pretty place and it is clean and very well organised with real cycle routes etc. But it caters solely to the trippers and there are no food shops to be found within a mile of the harbour. Just bars and bars and restaurants and bars andyes, not one but TWO McDonalds!

Cycled over to the marina to check it out for another time and also look round the chandlery (it a bloke thing) while Sarah inspected (and used) the showers and toilets there. Cycling is very much encouraged here and lots of the boats have unearthed their folding bikes (mostly Bromptons) and I think that we might have to organise the Kos Brompton challenge Race at some point.

Went out to a restaurant for dinner with David and Jill which was very nice indeed although the portions were huge. Clearly it caters for the majority of the tourists wandering the streets here who are not exactly undernourished.

Had a bit of a moan at the charter guests and crew of the big gin palace moored on the other side of us as they had their generators still running when we went to bed. Turns out that they are going to run them all night as they cannot get enough power from the shore line. Oh joy, how nice it is to be in a harbour again.

Thursday 3rd September

Kos is an interesting mixture of new, old and very old. Frankish and Turkish architecture abounds and there is an Italian influence as well, but the harbour is guarded by the remains of the Castle of the Knights, built in the 14th century and considered impregnable. Hippocrates was born here and they are very proud of an old plane tree under which the great man taught.....except that plane trees rarely survive beyond 200 years.

Kos now is in open competition with Rhodes as the sun and beach capital of the region and by all accounts is gradually winning this tussle with its slightly more mellow approach. Certainly it is the best thought out main town that we have encountered with regards to tourists and the needs of the modern visitors. Traffic is routed elsewhere and bicycles and pedestrians rule making it a safe place to stroll around (allowing for those cyclists who have taken to the road for the first time in decades and cannot be relied on to brake or steer very steadily!). There is a steady stream of ferries and trip boats plying their trade which keeps the place buzzing but surprisingly the town itself is very quiet at night and there are no late bars booming out the music to all hours.

Spent a lazy day here shopping and trying to get things done on board. Souris Rose had invited 10 of us to come to a party on board in the evening and each crew had to bring a different dish. This was a great success and we all finally made our way home around midnight.

Got confirmation that the replacement parts for the self-steering gear has been

dispatched, so we just hope that it arrives within the 8 days or so that they have quoted, otherwise we will have to hang around until it turns up.

36:56.1N 27:09.1E

Friday 4th September

Something of a mass exodus from Kos this morning as all the boats and crews that we knew were off heading in various directions. We are the only ones heading North, but that is just because we have three days to kill until Tom arrives in Bodrum and David from Souris Rose had told us about a lovely quiet bay they had been in for a few days prior to arriving in Kos.

Light wind and flat sea, so we motored the 8 miles and were pleasantly surprised to find just two other boats here. However a Belgium flagged yacht came storming into the bay behind us, swept past us as we prepared to drop our anchor and dropped theirs just in front of us! We moved and anchored nearby and were pretty surprised when they left the bay just two hours later. Crystal clear water and a soft sand bottom help make this a very pleasant place to be!

Various motor boats came and went but by the evening there were just four of us left here to enjoy a still evening and a dramatic full moon rising over the open sea outside the bay.

Saturday 4th September.

Cannot remember a quieter night all summer. Absolutely still air in a deserted bay on an uninhabited island.

7.30 am the peace is shattered by the arrival of a 20ft sports rib with 8 young Greeks on board shouting and playing loud music. They anchored at the head of the bay and seem intent on ensuring that they do not go un-noticed. Sarah simply observed that it was Saturday and they were probably only the first of many today. She was of course right, but we were fortunate today as not many boats joined us.

Launched the dinghy and discovered that it was rather better than me at fishing... On our way over to Kos a few days ago, we had taken one very large wave right over the boat and this had put a load of water into the dinghy that we had tied on deck the right way up for a change. This wave had included 4 small fish that were then trapped in the dinghy!

Another still hot day but the forecast promises a return to the winds again on Monday when we should be in Bodrum, although the marina there refused to reserve us a berth as they are currently full and waiting for some boats to leave. We will try again tomorrow and if the situation does not change, we will head for Turgutreis and arrange to pick up Tom from there.

37:02.06N 27:25.4E

Sunday 6th September

The good news today was that Bodrum did have some spaces this morning and so we left Pserimos Island around 10.30 am and motor-sailed over to Bodrum where we entered the marina around 1.15pm. Very tricky berth to reverse into, but all went well. Very nice marina with excellent facilities all round and absolutely central for the important shops like M & S!!

Had a wander round this end of town which was very pleasant at 5.00 pm. Doubtless it will be heaving later on and we did notice with some misgivings the stage set up in a very smart bar near the marina entrance advertising live music every night until 1.00 am.

Breeze kept up all afternoon which was a blessing as it has been very hot again today. Forecast just in, shows rain on Tuesday and Wednesday which will be a blow for Tom, but we are not getting too excited about this yet as it may not happen. (Fingers and toes crossed)

We gave Serafina a very thorough deck wash in the early evening and doubtless we will be hoovering and dusting tomorrow, as if Tom aged 24 is going to notice!

Monday 7th September

Quite a noisy night, at least until around 1.00 am and I have to report that the live band were truly dreadful. Lost count of the songs we could hear them murder, but I suppose if we could recognise the tunes, it was some sort of compliment at least.

Busy old morning with various jobs to do and things to buy whilst we are in a 'proper' town.

Called in a sailmaker (Seagull Sails 0090 532 579 3568) as we are missing a batten and needed a new one sorted. He was down in a flash and after going up the mast to view and measure the pocket, he returned in the afternoon to go up and put the new one in and carry out a temporary repair to the bottom of the pocket at the same time. He also helpfully brought a second one which we bought and with some difficulty have managed to store under the saloon floor (it is 3 metres long).

Tom arrived in some style as we had done a little bit of investigating about taxi prices from Bodrum International Airport which like so many 'local' airports, is nowhere near Bodrum! The outcome was that we were able to engage the services of an Airport Transfer company just by the marina, to go and fetch Tom from the airport and bring him to the boat for less than a normal taxi from the airport. Tom was very impressed to be met by a chap holding up a board with his name on and was then escorted to a gleaming 17 seater bus - which he had all to himself!

Plan now to stay here tomorrow as Tom has a few places he seems to want to visit, Sarah to gather courage for a haircut and it will allow the gale to blow through as well.

Tuesday 8th August

Seems that 24 year old lads on holiday do not get up very early.

Not much happened this morning and most of that passed him by, so we didn't set off to visit the castle and the Museum of Underwater Archaeology until around 1.30 pm.

The castle and the museum are very well worth the entry price and the museum is reckoned to be one of the most important of its kind in the world. Certainly in the 1960's they found and recovered a lot of wrecks around the Turkish coast and have gathered together here an impressive array of artefacts that are generally very well displayed, including all manner of finds dating as far back as 15th century BC.

The castle was built by the Knights of St John around 1437 but taken from them without a struggle around 100 years later. It fell largely into decline from then on and took a bit of a beating when a French battleship shelled it and the town in May 1915. Its reconstruction started in the 1960's when it was used to house all the stuff they were

recovering from the various ancient wrecks and now is a very impressive place to visit. (Just hope the UK's H & S officers never get near the place!)

Weather has stayed fine and looks to be OK for the rest of the week at the moment and so we will move on tomorrow heading north perhaps to Gumusluk again.

37:03.3N 27:13.9E

Wednesday 9th September

Rather forgot to mention the main event yesterday which was Sarah's brave decision to get her hair cut. This was something that she has long been dreading in many ways as not many places so far this summer have filled her with any confidence. We felt that as Bodrum was so cosmopolitan it might offer the best chance, so I printed off a few pictures blown up from Ewan's graduation ceremony and she bravely went and made an appointment at a likely looking hairdressers. Making the appointment at her chosen establishment was the first hurdle as none of them spoke English which was going to be a problem, however the main man was contacted by phone and agreed to everything. An interesting exercise where all the staff are male and there was no chat whatsoever with the clientele - perhaps the fact that they are obviously already on holiday kills that avenue for conversation stone dead! In the event all went very well and she has professed herself more than happy with the outcome, but it may be a while before she lets me publish a photo!

Got away from our berth at 10.00 am and visited the fuel berth for a much needed top up before setting off for Gumusluk which is a lovely bay that we stayed a few nights in, a week or so ago. Sailed for a good part of the way and arrived to find it fairly full but only two boats had chosen to tie back to the beach which is what we favoured here. This all went well following a few tweaks to Sarah's technique - not breaking an oar, allowing the rope to fly out smoothly... (rather important since I had been so rude about everyone else last time we were here) and we belatedly recognised the nearest boat as Barnacle Bill who we had met back in Chios a couple of lifetimes ago (well, 6 weeks at least.) Thought we knew the boat, but it was when they walked along the beach with their four legged crew member 'Brock', a black Labrador that it all came back to us!

Walked into the village in the early evening and had a really good meal at one of the waterside restaurants (Teras Restaurant) with brilliant service and excellent food. Hard to get away though as every time we asked for the bill, they brought more complimentary dishes!

The evenings are suddenly quite a bit cooler now and this was the first time we needed a second layer for the walk home.

37:00.2N 27:15.3E

Thursday 10th September

Not the earliest of starts today and our departure was further delayed by a very large gullet (Turkish trip boat) that dropped its very large anchor over ours! They did not stay long, but it allowed Tom a little longer in bed. By the time they had moved away, it was 11.20 am and the bay was pretty much empty, but we had been able to watch everyone leave and it was clear that there was a very large swell running outside as we had seen all the boats wallowing hugely in the short steep seas.

Our departure all went smoothly enough and we put up the headsail to steady us for the short hop downwind and with a following sea, to Turgutreis. The town was re-named after a great Turkish Admiral, Turgut Reis (1485 - 1565) who was born here.

Here we entered another very smart marina with all mod cons including a very nice and rather exclusive swimming pool. Certainly the facilities at the last few marinas have been outstanding, but this is all reflected in the price unfortunately. Strangest thing here are the pontoons that they put us onto today. They are actually for the slightly smaller charter boats based here and they are exactly what you find in the UK with short fingers and no need to drop an anchor or pick up lazy lines. All a bit of a shock and it took a few moments to gather ourselves and try to recall how we did this! Mind you we still went in backwards as you do out here and I have since wondered why we didn't do it that way more often in Hamble.

Tom and Sarah took a stroll into the shopping mall, but it seems that the universal 40% off only applies to the things you don't want to buy.

We all had a swim in the lovely pool and then went out in the evening for another meal. It is getting harder to walk down the streets now as we are fast becoming the sole tourists in these resorts and so all the touts are even more desperate for our business. There was however an interesting variation this evening as Tom's tattoos and piercings drew a lot of additional attention and he was frequently stopped and asked about them. Even the waiter at our table wanted to see the tattoos in more detail. Saddest moment came for Sarah when a lad called out that he liked the earrings and she turned to show off her very smart new gold ones we bought a month ago. Unfortunately the comment had been aimed at Tom's tunnels!!

36:53.7N 27:17.3E

Friday 11th September

Around 3.00 am it rained! Just a little, but it was real rain and the first we have had in a very long time. I'd like to say it was welcome, but it wasn't.

Set out for Kos at 8.45 am having already washed Serafina down and then found ourselves motoring through a flat calm sea. The first Ionian type flat sea that we have seen for at least three months.

We then found that for the short crossing, we were about to share a very small space of water with 5 very large ships heading in various directions and we were forced to alter our course to make life easier for them all (and us).

Arrived at Kos Town quay just as most boats were leaving so we had an easy reverse in and got all sorted out. Had Frenchmen on both sides of us at first and they both were extremely friendly and helpful. We admired the stainless steel rope reel on one of their boats and the owner said that he had bought it in Marmaris and promptly vanished and reappeared later with a map of Marmaris with the shop marked on it for us to keep. The other needed to climb his mast and emerged with a self-ascender which is a clever device that allows him to climb up a rope and go up the mast alone using just one leg and a set of clamps which he slides up as he goes. (Hinchers - be very jealous!) But apparently Sarah is not tempted by this contraption.

Tom emerged for the first time today after we had tied up and so had woken up in a new town, a new country and a new continent.

Sadly by early afternoon, the rain arrived and stayed with us for the rest of the day and it was very sad watching the trip boats returning with cold and bedraggled trippers huddled together, who then had to troop off for a cold ferry trip back to where they had started from. Received emails from various yachts from all over the Aegean, all reporting heavy rain which is a little unusual, but it is forecast to get better on Sunday. Poor Tom

has not picked an ideal week to join us.

37:02.0N 27:25.4E

Saturday 12th September

Pretty dreadful night, with thunder and lightning and some torrential rain, about 3" of it in the bottom of our bucket. Added to which the wind went round to the east and set up a very uncomfortable swell in Kos harbour.

Saturday itself was a mixed day and although predominantly sunny and warm, we did get quite a few heavy showers, particularly in the morning. Tom and I decided to have a go on some segways (if you don't know what they are...try google) and we went along at 4.00 pm for a one hour trip, but they were understaffed right then and offered to come and collect us both from the harbour at 6.00 pm. We agreed to this, but by 6.00 pm the black rain clouds had returned and we called the whole thing off.

Sunday 13th September

Heading back to Bodrum today, but had to wait until they confirmed they had a berth for us first. Met the owner of a large yacht that was moored a little way up the quay from us as he was planning on coming into the slot next to us, but because of the wind, he wanted to lay his anchor across where ours was. He was happy to wait until we left in one hour, but seemed intent on spending that hour conducting a one-sided conversation' with me, better described as a monologue. It had started quite interestingly as he had owned a very nice Najad yacht that we had passed on the way in. He now appeared to have several yachts and his company owns the 'Sir Winston Churchill' which was a sail training tall ship in the UK originally. He paused briefly to ask where we lived and this was the cue for a second lengthy discourse on the subject of Worcester, Morris Minors and flying (he has a plane) and at some stage along the way he felt it was important to stress that his 'niece' was with him on board at the moment acting as his secretary.

Finally got Serafina ready and we picked up the anchor and sailed off towards Bodrum. The wind picked up well and we had a very enjoyable reach across the gulf with Sarah once again switching the courtesy flags midway.

The clouds over the Turkish mainland cleared soon after we arrived and we had a very nice afternoon there plus (thank you God) a boat load of Australians moored two boats up from us. Funny how disinterested they can get with cricket from time to time!

Went out for Tom's last proper meal in Turkey and returned to await to hear which live band we have serenading us tonight.

36:53.4N 27:18.1E

Monday 14th September

Tom left us at midday heading for Bodrum airport and home. Poor lad did not pick the best week weather wise, but he is no sun worshipper as it happens.

We set sail for Kos again although there was little to no wind today and so we motored all the way! Crossed paths with a small cruise ship on the way, but looking at it through the binoculars it was clear that it was empty bar just one person in the saloon. It is very obviously the end of the season everywhere as we pass empty beaches and half full restaurants and we are seeing lots of un-booked charter yachts moored up in the marinas.

Arrived at Kos marina around 2.30 pm and were ushered into our berth. Went into reception to sign in and joy of joys, I could see our Hydrovane parcels had arrived bang on time. Hats off to the general manager of the marina, Antonis Drosus who kindly let us use his address for the packages and who kept us informed about things by email. Also a big well done to UPS who offer a brilliant service. You can track the item almost all the way online and they always promised to deliver on the 14th and so they did. Antonis was impressed when he got an email from UPS to tell him that they were delivering shortly and then just 5 minutes later the van pulled up outside his office.

We then had an energetic hour trying to refit the new hydrovane shaft and Sarah proved herself to be rather more than just an able assistant!

Nice marina and excellent facilities although it is impossible to get a berth at weekends as the place is packed full with charter boats turning round. Midweek is great as it is half empty. Very good rates and free power, water and Wi-Fi.

36:34.0N 27.51.8E

Tuesday 15th September

Laundry day with the free electric and water! Also the excellent Wi-Fi allowed lots of other work to be done too, so quite a dull day all round, but lots achieved!

Wednesday 16th September

Well the day started badly with the German crew on the charter yacht next to us getting up at 6.30 am and deciding that perhaps everyone in the marina should share their enthusiasm. By 7.00 am they had their engine running hard and eventually at 7.30 am they slipped their lines and left. Cue loud cheer all round!

Seems to be some concern about the weather for the next few days, but everything we have looked at shows a max of force 6 or 7 and always heading the way we are going, so at 8.30 am we left Kos and set sail southwards for Simi.

Spent the day sailing 50 miles in some very varied conditions. Lots of broad reaching in 20 knots, gusting up to 33 knots and some sections of flat calm! At one stage as we were doing 9 knots, we came across a whole squadron of flying fish. They were wonderful with flashing blue metallic bodies and frantic whirring wings as they skimmed along just above the waves. (Not too sure about the collective noun really being a 'squadron' of flying fish, but perhaps anyone who knows better can let me know...?) Finally reached Simi and headed firstly into the harbour to see if there was any room on the quay. Goodness me this is a beautiful little place but packed with yachts with others circling looking for spaces. We spotted a half chance next to an English yacht and despite the fierce cross wind and the narrowness of the gap, we gave it a go. This was a mistake and it became obvious rather late in the exercise that we just would not fit in the gap. We had to abort the attempt and with our pride a little shaken, we opted for our original 'Plan B' which was to head for one of the bays on the south end of the island and drop an anchor. Wind was still gusting hard as we came into Marathouda bay which is a lovely spot with a taverna at the head of the bay and a few sun-loungers on the beach. We dropped anchor onto a sandy sea bed and sat back to take a breather. Sarah had a swim out to the anchor and all seemed OK, but shortly afterwards more very strong gusts swept through and the anchor briefly dragged before resetting itself properly. The snag was that this is a narrow bay and the new anchor position was leaving us too close to one of the sides, so we re-anchored (giving Sarah her third swimming opportunity to check the anchor - and yes she had already had her shower

rather rashly) and this time seemed to get a better set altogether. Mind you at 8.00 pm the wind was still gusting up to 30 knots plus.

36:36.9N 27:50.2E

Thursday 17th September

Not a great night last night as the wind kept blowing at 30 plus knots and the bay was very narrow which did not allow us much margin for swinging etc. so we decided to keep an anchor watch at least until the wind died. Sarah did the first two hours by the end of which the wind had dropped to around 15 knots, but had swung to the north and we were now sideways across the bay with our stern very close indeed to the rocks. We pulled in some of the chain and shortened the scope to about 3 times the depth and I did the next watch after which the wind dropped totally for a couple of hours before getting up again around dawn.

Very pretty bay and the usual herd of goats roaming free over the hills and along the beach. They clearly know when the humans are going to be absent and they stroll along and stand under the beach umbrellas enjoying the good life briefly!

We left around 9.00 am with a determined view to reaching Simi Town at 10.00 am in the hope of finding a space on the quay. It turned out very well and a number of boats had gone so we backed into a brilliant spot on the favoured north quay which has less swell and less noise. We noticed as we arrived that the boat that we were backing in beside was another Najad yacht and then when we saw the name we could hardly believe what a small world it all is! When we bought our first Najad (40ft) in 2005 we needed a mooring and Najad Yachts put us in touch with another Najad owner with an identical boat who had a long lease on a berth in Hamble Point Marina, but who was about to sail off to the Med and then the Caribbean. The deal was done and we sailed the new boat back from Sweden to the UK and arrived in Hamble on the day he was leaving so we met briefly (half an hour) and have communicated only by email occasionally since then. This year he was sailing back from America and here he was in Simi!

Simi is probably the prettiest town we have seen in our travels so far. The pastel colours and lack of modern concrete structures means that the overall appearance is wonderful. It is only if you study the buildings on the hills carefully that you can see that many are semi derelict, but they just blend into the background and become almost invisible. So quite apart from catching up with Andrew and Pippa on 'Severance' (the Najad above) we have decided to stay a day or two longer to enjoy the place.

Lots of packed trip boats and ferries disgorge clouds of day trippers on the quay nearby and they all file past us with their tour guides, but they are all gone by the late afternoon and the whole town settles down again. Quite a bit of swell in here as the various bigger boats come and go, but the wind has been very light and so it has been pretty hot.

Invited Severance on board for a drink and then they returned the favour shortly afterwards when their friends who are staying in a villa in town turned up also for a drink!

Friday 18th September.

There were a couple of noisy bars still operating around 2.00am but the unexpected short burst of rain brought them to a close!

7.30am our resident mountain goat aka Sarah, set off up the hill to take some photos

(see the main website at www.rhbell.com) whilst I spent the next three hours helping boats leave and fending off new arrivals! 'Severance' took off with their land based friends for an overnight trip to a nearby island and we made tentative arrangements to meet up again soon.

New arrivals on our quay included Steve and Maggie on 'Rassy Lady' a Hallberg Rassy 39 which have seen around before but never actually met up with before. Also Reg and Shirley on 'Celebration 2' who were full of useful information about the boatyard where we are leaving Serafina this winter.

Meanwhile Sarah clambered up the wide steps all the way to the top. She walked along the ridge to a line of derelict windmills, some of which have been converted to houses, all wonderfully constructed and in good condition and some bearing 'for sale' signs in English - are we the only ones mad enough to consider them? There seems to be quite a large contingent of British people living here, listening to the accents. Then retraced her steps to the two churches at the other end of the ridge, photographing all the way - wading through digital photos to discard is becoming a regular feature of our life aboard! One of the churches is alongside the fortress which used to house the main church of Horio and all the town's records, all of which were lost during a bombing raid in WWII by the British.

She then visited the lovely little Simi Museum with a few artefacts of Byzantine and Roman origin, but most interestingly, a house demonstrating life in 18th/19th century, which appears to have been quite surprisingly lavish for house in a tiny village near the top of a huge hill, on a very small Greek island! Like many of the Dodecanese islands Simi was allowed to self-govern during the Ottoman rule as it produced a valuable commodity: sponges. Their yearly tax was a boat load of sponges for the sultan's harem. It went on to be occupied by the Italians in 1917 and, after the war and competition from sponges from Libya, its 19th century population of 25,000 has dwindled to just 3,000 today.

Horio (the hilltop part of the town) is just charming - a maze of tiny passages, endless steps, and extraordinary houses of every size - often attended to by some very inventive and energetic builders (much of the raw material is delivered by hand, wheelbarrow or hauled by long line). And all painted in beautiful colours - Farrow and Ball eat your heart out!

We both visited the "noteworthy" Naval Museum in the harbour - noteworthy presumably for its lack of exhibits! But it did have a few early photos which are always interesting.

Another hot and sticky day (we had feared that it was getting much cooler now!) and just as we were debating what we might do this evening, Steve and Maggie from Rassy Lady invited us over for a drink. Had a great evening and when it was time to leave them to their supper, we all discovered that the entire town had just suffered a power failure. The upside of this was that it was lovely and quiet as the bars could not play loud music however normal service was resumed around 10.00pm.

Photos have been updated at www.rhbell.com

Saturday 19th September

Steve and Maggie off Rassy Lady came round for a coffee before they left this morning. In fact quite a few boats left the quay but such is the popularity of this place, there were two yachts lining up to come in before Rassy Lady had even picked up her anchor.

Being a Saturday, things reached a sort of fever pitch by midday and you really had to

wonder just how many people you can fit onto a small Greek island. Ferry after ferry arrived and disgorged unbelievable numbers of people into the small town and yacht after yacht milled around looking for a space. As we watched the usual antics with crossed anchors and raised tempers, we spotted over on the far quay that a Dutch yacht was having repeated problems anchoring, mainly because they could only let their anchor down slowly on the winch, but the driver was determined to speed backwards. This meant that the anchor only reached the seabed around the same time as the boat reached the quay! Anyway on their third failed attempt, they successfully snagged the anchor chain of an American flagged 45ft Swan and dislodged it from its holding. As they motored off having given up, the Swan was left banging against the stone quay and the bow of the next door fishing boat. It was also clear to us that there was only one person on board the Swan and that it needed to be re-anchored, so Sarah and I rushed round to the opposite quay where they were and offered to help the owner rescue the situation. He seemed a bit overawed by it all but wanted to leave the quay now and perhaps anchor in a bay, but needed help to get away so we sorted out his shore power and released his ropes so he could get off. At this point he nearly rammed the nearest moored yacht, but all was OK in the end and as he sailed off we went to explain to the crew on this yacht that he had been in trouble etc.

It turned out that we knew this boat 'Matelot' and its owners, Richard and Pippy (Kiwis) as we had met them several times last summer in the Ionian. We went on board for a chat and before long the Swan returned into the harbour with the owner still looking rather confused. In the end Richard rowed out in his dinghy and took the helm (fairly unusual scenario) whilst the owner operated the anchor and between them they brought the boat back to the quay where Sarah and I took their lines. We had a further chat with Richard, Pippy and Emily, their married daughter on board Matelot and then as we left we invited them over for drink in the evening.

Sarah went for a swim on a nearby beach in the afternoon and we got to watch the final surge of boats arriving after 4.00pm as they competed for the mooring spots made available by the departing ferries.

Crew of Matelot arrived on time at 6.00pm and finally dragged themselves away around 10.00pm after we had put the world to rights (again).

Another very hot and fairly windless day and it was a surprise to us to see so many tourists when we keep hearing how the season is finishing now.

Photos at <http://www.rhbell.com>

36:49.2N 28:18.5E

Sunday 20th September

Rather disappointing day in many ways.

Left Simi at 8.00am just after 'Matelot' had gone past waving goodbye and we headed south in little or no wind at all despite the forecast suggesting 40 knots. Long old day as we motored the whole 40 miles and the only brief excitement being the two young tuna we caught. Each would have made a nice meal, but our consciences won the day and each one was returned fit and well (but a little surprised perhaps) to the sea. So where were their caring parents I wonder? 'Matelot' emailed us later to say that they had enjoyed (?) 37 knots of wind on their sail to Kardamena which is what we had hoped for ourselves.

Loads of yachts out drifting around as we approached Marmaris and we headed straight into Yacht Marin (yes, that is the correct spelling) which is actually several miles south

east of Marmaris town. This is the marina/boatyard where we will be leaving Serafina for the winter and so we took the opportunity to look round and see what was what. Immediately bumped into Vanessa & John from "Meand'er" who we last saw in Molivos, Lesvos Island, back in May. They, along with various others that we have met very recently have been brilliant at explaining how everything round here works. There is a large 'liveaboard' community here and they have set things up to make life very enjoyable and anything but dull. We are planning to get a few modifications done and there is no shortage of good companies based around here to do pretty much everything and at very realistic prices.

Free Wi-Fi here too, so now is the time to get to grips with our Skype phone. (rh.bell)

Social life beginning to get complicated now as boats start heading for their winter berths. A lot of people we have met this year will be coming to this marina which is huge, but many will want to keep sailing until as late as possible, so meeting up with them is going to be pretty random. We are now booked to crane out on 19th October and plan to fly home on the 25th October, but with the work that we need to get done we will probably base ourselves here quite soon and start chasing round.

Photos <http://www.rhbell.com>

Monday 21st September

Having come here expressly to start organising people to quote to do some of the jobs we have lined up on Serafina, we now discover that today and tomorrow are Turkish Bank Holidays! Fun to walk round the pontoons though looking for new ideas.

We did find the recommended canvass man (Moshe) who came round and was very helpful indeed, so some progress has been made.

Went to the bar for happy hour this evening and met some more of this winter's residents and had a great time. Also made arrangements by text to meet up on Wednesday with a sailing friend of ours from our time in the Hamble river who is out here on a flotilla holiday.

Tuesday 22nd September

Took the dolmus into Marmaris this morning to check out some of the shops etc.

There are areas that specialises in chandlery, boat upholstery, stainless steel fabrications and electronics shops spread around the town which makes this a very good place to get work done. Also took a look at the marina there and are very glad that we chose Yacht Marine ahead of it!

Grateful thanks to Robert Forsdike who again has proved himself a great friend by researching the subject of solar panels and regulators for us. The whole process of having an arch built across the back of the boat to house solar panels and a wind turbine is pretty fraught! Plenty of panels on the global market but the trick is getting the best ones shipped to Turkey, or not as the case usually turns out.

Spent a good part of the afternoon in the marina office sorting out our 'contract' for the winter. As it has turned out, we believe that we have got a very good deal especially with a further 10% taken off for our membership of the Cruising Association. But I can understand the upset felt by a number of the regular people to moor here as they have over the past few years endured two 25% price hikes.

Enjoyed Happy Hour again this evening meeting yet more new people which is proving

quite taxing for my very limited memory. But from a practical point of view it really is very handy chatting to all these people as they are able to help us with recommendations etc. for good tradesmen and suppliers. (Well it is a plausible excuse I think!)

36:43.0N 28:14.4E

Wednesday 23rd September

End of the Turkish bank holiday so we were up early to visit a few companies to see about getting work done.

This was not a total success, but we did at least end up getting an appointment for tomorrow afternoon for a visit from the manager of the firm that everyone seems to rate round here (Demir Marine).

We set off around 10.00am for Ekincik Bay to rendezvous with Anthony on his flotilla boat and were about halfway there when he phoned to offer the alternative venue of Ciftlik bay which was fine by us. Very little wind still and so we were motoring along happily when the fishing rod began to bend under the weight of a fish. Great excitement all round again, but once more this was a foot-long tuna so reluctantly we put him back. 30 minutes later we had another, but this one too was barely a foot long. Now, either all the young ones are very hungry or we keep catching the same poor chap!

Reached the rather pretty bay at Ciftlik and anchored off the beach, despite the urgent requests from various Turkish restaurant owners (indicated by frantic waving of large flags and flicking of ropes to create a big splash) to moor on their pontoons which although free, does commit you to eating at their restaurant.

Around 2.20pm Anthony and Alex arrived and anchored next to us and came aboard for tea. We reconvened around 6.00pm for drinks, again on Serafina and then rowed ashore for a very nice meal and evening at one of the restaurants. Trudged back along the beach later to where we had left the dinghy and rowed back for a nightcap.

Very little wind, but a slight swell ran all night making the anchorage quite rolly.

36:49.1N 28:18.5E

Thursday 24th September

Said our goodbyes to Anthony and Alex and they shot to the very top of Sarah's christmas card list when Alex gave her copies of Vogue and Red before we set off back to Marmaris to keep our appointment with Demir Marine. Motored yet again as there was no wind and also chose not to try fishing as we clearly were just upsetting the poor young tuna! Although approaching the bay off Marmaris, there was a sudden flurry of flying fish again.

Marmaris bay is a really refreshing sight at the end of a summer where we have seen more than our fair share of bare rocky islands. The big bay is fringed with hills covered in forestry, by which I mean proper trees, not the usual scrub and olive grove types! The only real blot is the town of Marmaris itself which was mostly flattened in a huge earthquake in 1958 and so almost all the building date from then on and it is not a pretty sight.

This just might be our last outing in Serafina for the year as we now hope to get work done on her and so she will need to stay in the marina, with us overseeing the work. Of

course we also have our own winter layup work to do before we crane out next month so we are getting ourselves prepared to just get stuck into it all a bit sooner than originally planned.

John, the antipodean manager of Demir came bang on time and won us over very quickly with his evident experience, understanding and professionalism. Mind you we have yet to see his prices, but he clearly understood what we were after and left us feeling very confident. He also is sending a sailmaker along to discuss the lightweight reaching sail we want. John has the exact sail we are looking for on his own boat and is happy to help us brief the sailmakers with a view to making the same sort of job for us. The Australians call this a 'Screamer' which doesn't quite fit the cruising image, but sounds very promising!

Talking of Australians, Manni and Belinda and their daughter Amy have just arrived here too and so we had a chat briefly and plan to go out for a meal tomorrow night after which they are off home, however we all met this evening for a few swift drinks - don't really know where all the time went.

Friday 25th September

Another hot day in paradise was rudely interrupted this morning when a huge (four above-deck levels) yacht burst into flames just outside the marina. This became a full blown drama as the gas bottles exploded and the emergency services arrived in all their forms. This included the dramatic arrival of a helicopter with a fire fighting bucket suspended underneath. It proceeded to drop down over the sea and scoop up a load of water and then try to hover over the fire and dump the water directly onto the flames. It continued this repeatedly for two hours with varying results. The static drop technique was abandoned as it kept missing altogether (see photos at <http://www.rhbell.com>) in favour of a low sweep across the blazing vessel dumping the water as it passed over. This had the dubious merit of at least getting some water onto the fire, but actually poured a good deal of it over the coastguard cutter that was standing by, with its fire hose that could barely reach the yacht from their position of relative safety 50 metres away. There was of course a lot of concern about the smoke and flying embers as the marina was directly downwind of the blaze, but we were relatively unscathed as we are on a pontoon right over on the far side of the marina, well away from the incident. Later the wind changed which helped a lot, but unfortunately once they had brought the fire under control the fire fighters took a break and the helicopter left the scene whereupon the whole thing erupted again, spewing acrid smoke and fumes. The wreck was still burning in the evening. Ironically Sarah had taken a photo of this yacht the previous day as we felt that it must be quite the ugliest construction we had ever seen. So we have 'before' and 'after' shots of the boat on our website.

Identification cock up: The saddest bit of news for us this summer has to be the desperate discovery that the four tuna that we returned to the deep, alive and well during our last few days sailing were not in fact baby tuna at all, but mature Bonito which are considered one of the tastiest fish around here! After all our fruitless efforts all summer, we had tossed back the best catches of all. We have plenty of books for identifying species, but these just looked so like tuna that we never paused to consider that we might just be wrong.

On the subject of fish, Ciftlik bay where we anchored the other day was a real haven of marine life and whilst Sarah was swimming in the afternoon she spotted a shoal of barracuda amongst many other species.

Busy day on board as well, as the various tradesmen started to turn up to measure up and give us quotes for all the different jobs we have lined up. Turkey is an ideal place to get all this work done as they have very high standards of workmanship and are

extremely good value (cheap). The other noticeable feature at this stage in our relationship with them is that they all seem to have a good sense of humour and in most cases, pretty good English. By all accounts getting them to actually do the work to a timescale is a tad harder, but probably much the same as any builder in the UK! We have however been very much encouraged by their understanding of what we want and what we are trying to achieve as well as their experience so we are very optimistic that we will end up with exactly what we want. Only time will tell.....

Went for a meal in the rather grand marina restaurant last night with Mani, Belinda and Amy from La Liberte. They are craning out tomorrow (Saturday) and return to Australia shortly afterwards. Very good meal and a great evening and we will be sorry when they leave.

Photos at <http://www.rhbell.com>

Saturday & Sunday 26/27th September

Very little excitement to report over the weekend, other than the good news from England that Worcester Warriors beat Sale on Saturday!

Sarah has now discovered just why we have suddenly found the boat covered in dead and dying bees (beesees as Pan on Paxos Island insisted on calling them earlier this year). We understand that in the UK, beekeepers sustain the bees alive in the hive through the winter with sugar in one form or another, but the Turks have a rather more radical approach to this. At this time of year they shut up the hives with the queen and grubs inside whilst the worker bees are outside. The workers are unable to survive alone and so they gradually fade away and die and it just so happens that there are whole loads of hives not far from the marina, hence the carnage on our decks – and the sting in Sarah's finger!

Monday & Tuesday 28/29th September

Monday morning the carpenter turned up along with a translator to look at the jobs Sarah had lined up. All seemed to go well and indeed he returned later in the day with the parts made and following a trial fitting he then took them away to varnish.

Highlight of the day undoubtedly was the evening event hosted by the marina and billed as the 'End of summer party'. Great buffet and free wine and beer (well 'free' once you had bought a very reasonably priced ticket) and before the disco got underway we were treated to a Turkish folk dancing display. This was actually very good and was an interesting blend of east meets west as it echoed western and Arabic cultures. I was a little underwhelmed at first as it seemed little more than mixed 'morris dancing' dressed in leg tight trousers with a strange nappy effect at the back for the men and lots of (hot) layers for the women, but it did improve and ended with a good deal of willing audience participation.

We met up with Paddy Diamond at this party who we had actually first met back in April when we were about to launch Serafina in Cleopatra Marina, Greece. Paddy hails from Belfast and has spent the summer taking loads of friends sailing on pretty much an endless charter.

On Tuesday we got up bright and early and dropped the downwind sails off the furlex ready for the laundry and winter storage. Carpenter returned later in the day with Sarah's finished shelves and they have been fitted and are a first class job. Had a meeting with John from Demir Marine about the rest of the work and probably frightened him a little with a printed list of jobs and their status and our required time frames.

Our next door neighbours have been talking a lot about moving off for a week to get their antifouling done elsewhere and suddenly this afternoon they were off. Bit of a panic but they got away OK which was the perfect opportunity for Sarah, who was keen to make a start on polishing the hull, but cannot do so whilst we jammed in check by jowl. As luck would have it she got nearly three and half hours (which sadly only equates to a washed hull and about a sixth of the polishing) at this before the marineros ushered another boat into the vacant space.

The thing is that not being pushed for time at the moment, we find that various people we know and new ones we meet almost daily, pop in for a chat or stop as they pass us on their way down the pontoon and the time just slips away. Very enjoyable but hardly productive. Mind you talking of productive.... Sarah has been using the Brompton bike to travel around the site, but for some reason I never do. Today I resolved to speed things up a bit and use the bike myself. I picked up the lock and key and was half way to the toilet block before I realised that I had forgotten to get on the bike! Roger from the boat beside us was very understanding about this senior moment as apparently he frequently cycles to places around the boatyard and then absent mindedly walks home!

Wednesday 30th Sept & Thursday 1st Oct

Visits from several of the people quoting to do jobs for us took place today.

Moshe who does canvas work came for an extended detailed discussion which was very helpful and somehow I ended up promising to take a look at his website to see if could offer any advice!

Macik (pronounced Magic) came with a quote for the solar panels, but he was no cheaper than anyone else in the end.

Demir marine produced their quote for the arch to carry the solar panels and the modifications to the bimini which we accepted.

Finally Yalin from Moby sails arrived with a quote for the new lightweight A1 genneker sail and furler, but the price rocked us a bit and so we have modified the spec and he is having another go! They will also launder, repair and store our sails this winter.

Thursday saw less interruptions and so we got a good many more jobs done. Sarah is being heroic, doing her usual waxing and polishing job on the entire boat externally and was positively beaming this evening when several crews turned up to complement her on having what they felt must be the cleanest and smartest boat in the entire boatyard (1500 boats!). She also was talking to a Kiwi earlier and when she told him we had the Najad just down the pontoon from him, he had replied "Oh, we all know the beautiful Najad!" They know the way to her heart...

My day was broken by a meeting with Moshe about his website which ended rather unexpectedly with him pretty much begging me to build him a brand new site over the winter to promote all their new lines.

Heard from Souris Rose in the evening by email to say that they were going to be anchoring off our marina on Friday lunchtime and suggesting we all go out on Friday night. Saturday could be a struggle!

Friday 2nd & Saturday 3rd October

Friday morning I went into Marmaris town with a long list of things to see and buy etc. The plan was to take the free ferry in the morning but we had failed to notice that the boat had been craned out for repairs! So I took the dolmus and spent several hours

roaming the streets largely without much success. The Turks generally plan their towns so shops are grouped by general product type. So for example all the chandlery shops (and there are loads) are grouped together which is very handy. The downside is that they all seem to be pretty empty and run down and rarely have what you are looking for.

Got back to Serafina having left Sarah taking full advantage of the absence of a boat alongside us to wash and polish the rest of the hull, only to find her sat in the cockpit drinking wine with David and Jill from Souris Rose who had just arrived and anchored in the bay. Busy afternoon and then in the evening D & J came ashore again and we went for an excellent meal in the marina's restaurant.

Saturday dawned with a bit of a stronger breeze than of late and at 6.00am we had to get up and sort out our mooring as with no boat alongside us, we were slewing diagonally and trying to bump the quay. Now we were up, we opted to stay up and get on with things and so achieved quite a bit before we had to break off as we had an invitation for coffee on Paddy's boat 'Don Quijote' at 10.30am. No sooner got back to Serafina than we had a flying visit from D & J who were ashore to negotiate a deal for a month's mooring.

And so the day went on....

We are glad now that we chose to come in early, mainly to chase the jobs along, but also to start our own layup process as we have found this place to be very social, with crews arriving here from all over the world and everyone happy to share time and information. This means that as you try to work on deck there is always someone passing by who will pause to admire the boat or chat about something or other. All great fun, but very unproductive in terms of getting things done.

Will just share a lovely line we heard today: People who design things to be foolproof always seriously underestimate the ingenuity of stupid people.

Sunday and Monday 4th & 5th October

Sunday is a nice quiet day around the boatyard as of course none of the companies are working. It seems most of the people laying up boats or living on their boats here also take the day off.

We opted to press on with our jobs, but did not exactly overdo things. We packed up early as well as we had been invited to Terry's 50th birthday party on board his Najad yacht. Met quite a few new people here as well as many old friends and probably outstayed our welcome as usual. I have to confess that I drank rather more than usual and was a little the worse for wear!

Monday dawned bright sunny and far too early. We were picked up by a pre-booked taxi at 7.00am and taken to the ferry port to catch the daily 'fast catamaran' ferry to Rhodes (arriving far too early as Sarah continued to point out...). This is a tedious administrative exercise which is all about renewing our visas. Turkish visitor visas last exactly 90 days and you must leave the country before it expires. You can then return to the country and purchase a new visa (£10 sterling, €15 Euro) and the clock starts again. So we had a day as proper tourists back in Greece. The first real problem arose as we went through passport control whilst trying to board the ferry to leave Turkey. They obviously have to stamp your visa to show you leaving, but when we had last entered the country back in July, for some reason the passport officer had put his stamp on the wrong page in Sarah's passport. This was all too much for the chap here and he spent an age just staring at the problem. Finally he carefully peeled the visa off the wrong page and

carefully put it on the correct page and then stamped it. The 200 Germans standing behind us in the long queue to the only booth were very patient.

The day actually turned out well as we found an excellent chandler who had a number of the items we have been scouring Marmaris for and Sarah managed a few essential items as well as several large pots of yoghurt. The Old City is a fantastic place and if you ignore the wall to wall grockle shops selling the same old tat, you can wander the little alleyways and backstreets to your heart's content. It is a very extensive walled city and World Heritage site, overlooking the old grand harbour and sits beside the modern city very well. The modern area provided Sarah with 2 hours of enjoyable retail therapy, describing it as having 'real shops'.

Wind had got up during the day and so having been warned by the old hands at the marina that these ferries roll in a very uncomfortable way, we each took a sea-sick tablet as a precaution and sat right in the middle of the ferry. In the event the roll was interesting but not too dramatic and everyone seemed to survive OK.

Tuesday and Wednesday 6th & 7th October

Tuesday was the day that 3 lots of people were coming to start work or take measurements etc. and in true international style, no-one appeared until after lunch and he had only called by to say that he would be coming the next day instead! One apologised over the phone and said they hoped to be with at the end of the week and one simply did not show.

Nevertheless we got loads done and we are well ahead of schedule which helps.

In the evening we went to a Cruising Association dinner in the marina restaurant. We have been members for a few years now and recently have found that they can be extremely helpful. They also have a Med section which has its own email net and so if you have questions or difficulties, others can offer advice and help. The meal itself was extraordinarily good value and we ate and drank very well until quite late.

Wednesday turned into one of those very hot and still days that you dread in August never mind October! We pressed on with things but were dripping with sweat most of the time. Then of course around 5.00pm all the workmen appeared simultaneously which was entertaining. They included the sailmakers who have taken all our sails to launder, repair and store for the winter and now that they have gone we can really crack on clearing all the loose rigging and mousing halyards etc. all of which makes Serafina look quite bare but very tidy.

Thursday and Friday 8th & 9th October

On Thursday morning Sarah took the dolmus into Marmaris to do a load of food shopping as well as hunting down some of the many other bits and pieces we need. She returned to the marina in the early afternoon completely exhausted having carted so much stuff for miles, but had successfully found a 4 step platform ladder for 28 YTL (about £11) - it will cost more in taxi fares to get it back!

Demir (the principle company doing some of the work on Serafina) sent round an engineer this morning to sort out the problem with the breather on the third fuel tank and together we resolved a solution which he set about doing. The carpenter appeared in order to complete his work and for good measure David & Jill for Souris Rose, which was anchored in the bay came along for a chat and a cup of coffee.

Sarah took the afternoon off, having decided that she was probably very dehydrated and

so for good measure we cancelled the couple who were coming for drinks in the evening.

Friday saw us get loads of jobs done and a good many people have commented on the level of care and attention we lavish on Serafina, but apart from anything else, we are planning on doing something in the region of 7,500 miles or more next year including sailing to Syria, Israel and then later across the Atlantic to the Caribbean, so it is quite important that everything is in good shape.

Around 5.00pm a deputation from Demir arrived including John who has been our main contact with them, Ilham who is the owner of the company and two of his staff to discuss and plan the alterations to our bimini. Ilham certainly seems to have a good eye for these things as well as a very good sense of humour.

At 6.30pm Trevor and Lesley from 'Kishorn of Ross' came round for a drink and left around midnight!

Saturday & Sunday 10th & 11th October

Saturday morning saw a team from Demir arrive to start work on the bimini. However as the changes started to be made, it soon became obvious that we were making a mistake trying to alter what we have to be more robust. The exercise of moving, lowering and strengthening the frame was going to result in us having almost a cage around the cockpit which would be useless, so we bit the bullet and told them to take the old one off and we would all put our heads together and come up with a better, purpose built design. The downside of this is that we now do not have a bimini at all so the sun beats down on the cockpit which makes life a lot harder all round. And if/when it rains, we will have no protection, but it will only be for a week or so now. So Serafina is now looking even more denuded than before.

On Sunday we carted some of our 'treasures of the bilge' up to the lawn by the bar where there was a boat jumble being held. Terry and Fiona had a table and so we joined them and sold pretty much everything. Managed to stay ahead financially despite Sarah buying a very nice looking hammock! She was also very tempted by a Walker Bay dinghy which was going at a very good price but in the end it was bought by David and Jill from Souris Rose. Terry picked up a real bargain that had us green with envy. He bought a nearly new Cobb BBQ, which are just brilliant things for a fraction of its value. Wish we had seen it ourselves! Very social occasion with pretty much everyone coming along at some stage. The boat jumble ended at 1.00pm and a BBQ organised by the marina started immediately afterwards on the same site. Very well attended and very nice food indeed, but not quite as generous portions as last time.

Returned to Serafina in time to welcome Chris and Steve on 'Scott Free' back into the marina. We last saw them in May, up in Ayvelik and before that, on the Rally Portugal. Their plans for next year are almost identical to ours, so hopefully we will be seeing a lot more of them.

Monday & Tuesday 12th & 13th October

Days are beginning to merge into each other and our minds are increasingly wandering to thoughts of our trip home, which might be what poor Sarah was thinking about when she accidentally stubbed her little toe on a genoa sheet car and almost certainly broke it...the toe that is!

On Monday afternoon we had another meeting with John and Ilham from Demir and finalised the bimini and gantry plans. Hopefully they will start work on the bimini

soon.....

In the evening we entertained Chris and Steve from Scott free to dinner and we had a great time although it was another hot and muggy night.

Tuesday dawned with the promised rain looking very imminent, but remarkably it held off all day although we did get some loud thunder and dramatic lightening. Trevor and Lesley called in for tea but otherwise it was a fairly lightweight day as we seemed to have reached the point where we are almost ready for the haul-out now.

Wednesday, Thursday & Friday 14th, 15th & 16th Oct

Not much to report now on a daily basis as we are about ready for the lift on Monday and are just hanging around for the odd visit made by the people working on the boat.

I have joined the morning walking group which does an energetic route march up the nearest hill for an hour every morning at 7.30am. Might miss Sunday's walk as they are planning a three hour hike into the forest, over the next set of hills using a GPS for navigation. (No maps or paths)

The walkers are a very mixed bunch and you just fall in with whoever seems to be going at a pace you can manage. I was a little concerned on my first morning as I found myself walking with Jo who is a 67 year old Kiwi lady who was telling me tales of her most recent international marathons and triathlons. Seems she is carrying an injury so I was able to keep up with her!

Sarah is nursing her broken little toe and so has an excuse not to be joining us yet.

Had dinner with Trevor and Lesley last night on their Westerly Konsort (36ft) which they call their 'cupboard'. A lovely boat on which they have done a lot of very inventive work (and she is up for sale, - any takers?). Lesley treated us to a delicious curry - yes, we are beginning to miss all those home comforts like a takeaway! Near their boat they, like us, have quite an energetic pool with lit multiple fountains. In Trevor and Lesley's pool there have now appeared some pretty large (particularly for the size of pond) and exotic fish - how they survive in this very barren environment we have no idea. So we peered in 'ours' on the way back to the boat - all we had was a large, but dead cockroach - really not quite as impressive.

Also on the way home we were surprised to see that the marina staff were still working both boat hoists at midnight. They have been working later and later into the nights and I am pretty sure the UK Health & Safety people would have plenty to say about the working practices out here. But when you add darkness to the equation it is all quite alarming at times. We are being lifted on Monday but you do not get given a time in advance so we just have to hope it is early rather than in the middle of the night.

It has been very impressive seeing the yard fill with boats as the travel hoist crews are now lifting 20 or more boats a day and placing them in tightly packed lines in the huge yard. You have to give them the exact re-launch date as you come out so they can put you where they can get at you on the right date next year. If you change your mind and want to launch earlier, they charge you €250 to move you and €250 for every boat they have to move to get to you! Most impressive are the huge super yachts that they are lifting at the same time and on Friday they had an enormous catamaran that was too big even for the 300 ton hoist, so they brought in two cranes to deal with it on a different quay which took all day.

Saturday & Sunday 17th & 18th October

Saturday morning we had a visit from Moshe and Claudia who had come to fit the new hatch covers they have made for us. Wonderful job done and they look very smart. (Moshe might be reading this!)

The weather has been a bit threatening and dark clouds rolled around for a while, but it stayed hot and dry pretty much all day.

In the evening we went along to happy hour and met up with everyone, but then, as planned joined up with David and Jill who are still anchored out in the bay, for dinner in the restaurant where they do some fantastic dishes at very sensible prices.

Sunday was a long hard and rather miserable day as we had discovered the previous afternoon that we almost certainly had got the dreaded fuel bug in our tanks. This is a 'bug' which is fairly common around the world but more so in places where the fuel supply and storage is a bit dubious. It grows in the tank particularly if there is any water present and that is where it gets its oxygen from. We have been meticulous with our two main tanks, but have rather overlooked the third fuel tank which is a water tank that we have converted to hold fuel. Fortunately we spotted the tell tale signs of growth in the Racor pre filter's glass bowl and so we caught the bug early. Most people only discover that they have it when the engine stops because the fuel lines and filters are choked by the debris, which can be very exciting depending on where you are when the motor stops running!

We took advice from several knowledgeable sources and set about dosing all the tanks with a chemical that kills the bug and using a pump to suck the sludge and debris out of the tanks. This involves gaining access to the tanks and then removing their inspection hatches to see what they were like inside and pumping any muck and fuel out through a special pick up point in each tank. As it happens only the converted water tank was showing any contamination, but to be safe we did all the tanks thoroughly. Just to help our day along though, one of the tanks was full to the brim and so when we started to remove the inspection plate, fuel ran into the boat's saloon bilge. So now we had to flush and wash this area otherwise we would smell of diesel forever, so a good hour vanished there! Then to deal with this tank we had to hand pump 20 litres out into cans so we could then open the hatch safely, finally dosing the tank and then filtering this fuel back into the tank.

David from Souris Rose appeared at one stage hopeful that I would take a look at a problem he was having with his computer, but wisely spotted that today might not be the right day to pursue this too far! However Moshe also visited to discuss the website I am building for him and he was not easily put off, so we had a little break mid morning. Sarah has asked him to sit for a portrait when we get back in the spring which he is very excited about. He was telling us that he had been asked to model once before, but that the person who asked was actually making monster puppets! Sarah tells me that he has a wonderful face to draw.

At 6.30pm we were all set to head for happy hour and a well earned glass of something refreshing when two lads turned up with the stainless work that they had done for us (and were supposed to fit on Saturday). They spent half an hour measuring and preparing to make adjustments to their work but realising that it was dark outside on the quay where all their equipment was lying, they grabbed it all and set off announcing that they would be 'back at 2'. I tried to explain that we were lifting out the next day and so would probably not be here at 2 but after several minutes of a difficult conversation it transpired that he meant they were driving back to their workshop to do the welding and polishing and would come back in 2 hours (9.00pm). They took our phone number and we rushed off to the bar. Sure enough they were back later and the job was wrapped up by 9.30pm and on a Sunday too!

36:49.080N 28:18.638E

Monday 19th October

The day for the haul out finally arrived and it proved to be an epic day.

The water and electric meters were read and disconnected quite early so we were optimistic of an early lift, but as the hours ticked by, we realised we were not going to be too lucky. We both started doing some of the day's jobs in the hope that this would be the catalyst for crane crew calling us up, but still nothing. We put the kettle on endlessly as that usually brings a workman of two out of the woodwork, but still nothing.

Our new neighbours Fred and Phil from Texas were great fun and when Sarah asked if she could just borrow one of their fenders which was a shape that she has long felt was perfect for our Hydrovane, Fred told her if it fitted she could have it! Feeling guilty we donated them some wine and beer and so they invited us aboard to share it with them while we waited to be called for the hoist. Fred (who I am quite certain is one of the original members of ZZ Top) also invited a passing French couple to join us and it turned out that they are going on the rally to Israel etc. with us next spring.

Eventually Fred and Phil had to call time as they were being taken out to dinner in town by some Turkish friends, but as we stepped back onto Serafina we got the call! It was 8.00pm and had been dark since 7.00pm, so we put on the nav lights and felt our way carefully round through the marina to the boat lift area. We reversed up to the waiting dock and were the third and final boat in the queue. There was only one hoist working at this stage as the 330 ton lift was tied up with a huge gullet so we knew we had a long wait still. Remarkably, we now enjoyed a whole series of visits from friends and neighbours, mostly Kiwis and Aussies as we tried to scoff a brilliant meal that Sarah had prepared as we waited. Finally around 10.00pm we were pulled into the hoist bay and as the crane dropped the straps under us, one of the work crew urgently requested me to lower the Turkish flag. As we have noted in the log before, they are very proud of their flag and you will get fined for displaying a slightly tatty one, so we just assume that they do not want their flag left flying on an empty boat through the winter.

The lift went very well indeed and it is well worth mentioning the role of the diver. This is something we have never come across before and it involves a diver going down under every boat on the day they are due to be lifted and noting carefully the underwater shape and obstructions on your boat. He then marks on the hull exactly where the lifting strops must go to get the perfect lift. This was the first time we have been lifted without the strops fouling our forward looking sonar so we were very impressed. At this stage the whole thing was being done by just two staff as most of the others had either gone home or were involved in propping the gullet. Despite the time and the darkness, they then carefully pressure washed the hull, taking their time to do it right which we felt was remarkable given how late it was and we were their last lift. Then there was a problem...Serafina was too big for the cradle and so they were going to take her to her parking position in the hoist and then prop her with timber props (which is what they do with all the larger boats), but this needed the full propping crew so more time passed as they waited for them to all appear (riding in the bucket of a JCB as it happens) before we were finally placed in our winter home directly behind all the super yachts. Still the lads did not wander off, but carefully put a ladder up for us and taped some cloth to protect the hull and insisted on tying it firmly to the boat. All this at 11.50pm and after 14 hours at work. They were all smiling and cheerful and very polite throughout even though they must have been pretty shattered. Cannot see that happening in the UK!

Tuesday - Sunday, 20th - 25th October

No idea where the time all went, but the evenings (which is when I usually write this log) were all a blur of dinners or drinks on various friends boats as we said our goodbyes etc.

In good marine industry tradition, all the jobs that were due to be done were left to the deadline we gave them, so as we tried to do all our final 'putting the boat to bed' jobs and cleaning, we were host to a swarm of people all busy working on various projects!

Sarah has certainly been setting the standards locally with various people coming solely to admire Serafina's gleaming hull and stainless steel. But the best comment was from the skipper of the huge catamaran that is on the hard immediately in front of us. He has a team of Turkish staff busy polishing this vast machine and he has pointed Sarah out to them as an example of how hard they should be working!

We also failed to factor into our timings for the lay-up the incredibly social nature of this marina. Last year the boatyard in Prevesa (Greece), whilst busy, did not allow people to live aboard through the winter, so it was something of a ghost town with 800 boats ashore but few people and very few English speaking people around. Yacht Marine in Marmaris has 1000 yachts ashore and nearly the same afloat including a good many super yachts. There is a thriving liveaboard community and loads of activities and events organised as well as a daily radio net which is just brilliant. Anyway the catch has been that as we reached the last few days of the laying up, we have been visited by endless numbers of people popping by to either say goodbye, or check we're OK or in one fine case, bring freshly baked cake!

Eventually though we got it all done and the various alterations to the boat are complete as planned and we just have the making and fitting of the solar gantry on the back of the boat to look forward to next April.

Our flight home from Dalaman to Birmingham was a breeze, however there was one set back that really upset poor Sarah. She has always been an avid collector of stones from the beach. She is always on the hunt for unusual ones that she can polish up and display at home and over the last two years of sailing through the Med has found some really special ones. In Turkey all luggage is scanned as you enter the airport buildings and the police confiscated her small bag of stones which they found in her main case, declaring that she was not allowed to take them out of the country. They took her passport and for a short while we were both a little nervous as to what might happen, but eventually she was given her passport back - but no stones! . The very smart Onur Air aircraft was only just half full, left early and arrived 30 minutes early. Our son Ewan picked us up and we returned to find that the two of them had actually done a remarkable job in getting the house clean and almost presentable for their mother's homecoming!!

We have had a wonderful 6 months and would like to say bye to all the lovely people we have met along the way and we will recommence this log on 13th April 2010 when we return to Marmaris.

Next season is scheduled to be a real monster with roughly 7,000 miles planned in a trip that will take us from Turkey to Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, Malta, Sicily, Gibraltar, the Canaries, Cape Verde Islands across the Atlantic to the Caribbean.

Thanks for following the adventure so far and hope everyone has a good Christmas and winter/summer.

Rob & Sarah Bell

Yacht Serafina

Photos at <http://www.rhbell.com>