

Ahoy there shipmates, well here we are in Dundee after a totally wonderful week with Laura and Georgina crewing with Brookie once again after such happy times across the pond a couple of years ago.

Having safely parked Theo's Future in Inverness Seaport Marina it was time to say goodbye to darling Pippi at Inverness airport and collect Georgie – big thanks again to Carole Gilmour for driving us around and generally doing and solving everything. We had to seek out a suitable stainless steel welder to repair our split outboard motor bracket which had fractured through tough and continual use. But it wasn't long before we had repairs underway at an excellent local boatyard. It meant staying in Inverness an extra day but this was necessary as Laura (Fully) was unable to escape hospital duties until Monday night. With repairs complete and Fully duly met at the station we celebrated the reformation of half the ARC team in a lovely local Scottish pub complete with "Highland PT" and haggis! Up and off next morning through the final lock and away down river to the Moray Firth spotting an early seal. Georgie cooked a wonderful breakfast and we were soon on our way past historic Fort George where the Highland Regiment is still based. It was with some relief that we heard rifle fire after we had sailed passed...oops we must have sailed through the range danger area by mistake. Rapp on the knuckles for Colonel Brookie!

Suddenly received a text message – fancy curry my place in the forest at Lossie, regards Nigel – wow, what a fantastic offer. Nigel, you may remember is the RAF Skipper who helped us through the Corpac 7 loch staircase... With Georgie at the helm, we slipped into the ancient fishing/RN harbour, straight onto our berth (thank you George) with Laura leaping onto the pontoon bow line in hand – what a wonderful crew. Another friend from "along the way" hailed us from the seawall offering cheeky beers in local pub – thank you Derek. Nigel then whisked us away to his forest homestead where we were treated to amazing baths (except smelly Fully), curry and Cadbury's Dairy Milk in front of roaring log fire with Rod Stewart singing Rock 'n' Roll lullabys. A thousand thanks Nigel, amazing hospitality, a great introduction to porridge for the girls... please stay in touch.

Next stop Gardenstown, home of the Cetacian Research and Rescue Unit (CRRU) and, what a fantastic welcome awaited us on the quayside from Dr Kevin Robinson and his research team members after a pretty bumpy downwind trip (F6/7), I must admit to some nervousness as we came in between two significant rocky patches in one of the tiniest harbours in the world, but we made it... Fabulous to see Kevin again and we were soon engrossed in his latest twists and turns as he wrestles with critical conservation issues with regards whale and dolphin conservation. Moreover, he gave up his house for us to sleep in... how generous is that! Wonderful sups with all sorts of interesting people followed by crazy games in the local hotel (actually a pub but Gardenstown doesn't allow them!) Very sad to bid farewell to such a wonderful friend but looking forward to linking up in Thailand next year!

Lovely light winds welcomed us to the bay and as promised by Kevin it wasn't long before we encountered two Minke whales, a magnificent sight to see these beautiful creatures. Soon round Fraserborough with Sir Turtle Cayman Islands genneker billowing forth. Brilliant to have turned the corner and to be finally heading south. Fraserborough is of course a major deep sea fishing port and we could see vast ocean going trawlers that dwarfed the houses in the town. Fully and George were fighting over the helm and both doing really well in tricky quartering seas. Peterhead soon hove into sight but we were prevented from entering the harbour

as a gi-normous super tanker filled the harbour entrance for what seemed several minutes. When through we were given a lovely welcome from Jim, the marina manager.

Next day we motored to Stonehaven as the wind was on the nose and we had a deadline in Dundee for the following evening with the new crew. A wonderful day at sea, dolphin, whale and seal spotting, followed by a fantastic evening in the Ship's Inn (worth a visit if you are ever in town, seafood was a treat) courtesy of Richy T – thank you. Thank you to also to the family from Wales who took time out of their holiday to give us a lift to the petrol station.

An early start to take advantage of the tide and make sure we made it up the River Tay before nightfall! The wind was against us but we had a fabulous day nature watching at sea – dolphins, seals, puffins ... as well as learning sea shanties and entertaining ourselves with the "either or" game(!) followed by a fabulous welcome at Tayport marina that evening. Time for a crew change – goodbye to Laura and Georgie and welcome to Tim Weeks, Anna and Jane. A wonderful pub sups at the Bell Rock Tavern with old and new crew and family members – an evening to remember.

Fair winds!

Mike