

The Caribbean Experience.

June last year someone whispered in my ear 'fancy sailing in 30°C' if so, get yourself a 505 dinghy and compete in the 2013 World Championships in Barbados, thought about it for 10 minutes then dismissed it as I don't own a 505 dinghy however, last October a reminder of the event was back on the table, actually in a bar with Jerry; (my sailing crew from Belgium) at the Proms concert in Antwerp, over a few beers yep lets go for it.

Buy a boat was the next task; most five O's starting price is 15k+! Let's look for a slightly less pricy one; if you can find one. Looked at a 10k 9 year but again it's only for one event, looked lower and came across Martin Wrights Krywood (8423) which after a haggle we came away spending a lot less but needing attention in rigging and fittings department.

By now the original instigators, two Osprey sailors (the Mikes and Paddy) had dropped out, however our names were down for space in a container and that's it we are going. We had to collect the boat from Rugby and by careful planning we arranged to pick up the boat after the Draycote Dash event ie Jerry would tow and drop the boat off at my house on his way back to Belgium and I brought the Osprey back but, before all this logistics were sorted we all finished up in a Draycote bar on Saturday night with the 505 boys annual dinner. We met with most of the Barbados fleet and the alcohol worked! By the end of the evening Russell Wheeler with Lee Marriott (more Osprey sailors) had signed up in their heads, they too need a boat. Russell and I found one (8432) in Loch Lomond and after stopping off in Manchester for his office Christmas party continued the trek north to collect it, 1000 mile round trip!

From November to April the boat was slowly fettled and set up similar to the Osprey, plus the old £1200 spent, still, think of the weather, UK -30°F, Caribbean 30°C, what's in a letter.

With airfares and hotel sorted the day came for loading the boats, minus 2°C and snow dripping down your neck! The only though was unloading at the other end. We fitted (just) 9 boats in a container at Queen Mary's SC, plus there were two other containers loaded further north making a total of 25 boats. I managed to track the ship (Elsbeth) on the AIS from Southampton to Le Harve then it went out of European waters, next time I found her she was in Port De France Martinique then onward to Bridgetown, its there, relieved.

In the mean time Tim Rush was unable to go and lent his boat to the Mikes, so they were three of us from the Osprey fleet.

The event lived up to all expectations, opening ceremony, flag bearers of all the competing nations, speeches and the purposed built 'beach hut' (50mx15m) erected on the foreshore loaded with free beer and drinks every evening when you came off the water, plus our own specially flown in trolley dollies, Teresa, Hannah, Helen, Bridget, and Charlotte, plus Jerry's Mum and Dad.

After the first pre-worlds race it was apparent that our older boats (ie myself, Jerry had oldest and Russ and Lee had the second oldest) were out gunned regarding pointing and this set the pattern for the event ie trailing round at the back so we made it up with beer and rum, Mount Gay rum which after a few (Charlotte stacked six up for me to test) my head next morning without the rum would have been sufficient!

The Mikes had several gear failures and the worse anyone could wish for in a borrowed boat, a German on Port tee-boned them before the start! Tim took it well after 'who was going to phone him' my duct tape did pretty good job for the rest of

the event. It was interesting that the Mikes had a 54th on one race even though they sailed in! (SAP Computerised results?) The only other negative was these two 2 1/2 hour races a day with the windward mark 1Nm! Most of the places were sorted after the first beat, they should adopt the Osprey fleet 1 hour race and lots of them. SAP the main sponsors equipped us with trackers/transponders which displayed our positions on a massive HD screen during the racing in the beach hut, Richard; Jerry's Dad took a picture of us in 16th overall at one point! About our only claim of the week, that's what we thought, so, first day on the main event the top three prizes were presented then a prize for the boat in 58th this being the 58th worlds and yes Jerry and I marched up to collect the prize. Russell and I were aiming for this as it was about the only trophy we could achieve.



Jerry and Myself chasing Martin Wright (who I bought the 505 from

Anyway, the racing continued day after day plus the evening drinking sessions, we were joined at the bar by fellow Osprey sailor Robin Tooz Hobson, who had sailed from St Lucia in his 42 foot Catalina yacht called Sophie Ems. Robin has basically left the UK for another life cruising the Caribbean and after fixing his starter motor one morning he invited me to join him in St Lucia after this event for a 'busman's holiday' then travel with him down to Trinidad with all islands in between, it would be rude to say no, that story continues later.

When you think of the Barbados, sun, sea, and warm temperatures, Concorde flying daily (now in a museum next to the airport) you think of luxury, but we didn't

experience this, Bridge Town the capital we witness poverty; 50-80 people queuing for food handouts given by the local churches from the back of an estate car in the main square, plus pavements or lack of, roads in poor condition and the food in restaurants was expensive. Beggars on the streets 'have you got a biscuit' but, they were all friendly and polite to us all saying hi or good morning everyone you passed. There 2 BB\$ (60pence) bus system was based on a 15 seater Toyota mini busses, usually 20 to 25 onboard however on our way back from Oistins a fish market restaurant town the bus driver said two more so Russ and I jumped in the already crowded bus, he then drove 100 yards and picked up two Mikes, Helen, Bridget, and Charlotte, then another 50 yards two more got in; now over 28 and no time to loose drive back to our hotel, took an hour to get there and 10minutes to get back, only to get in the bar over the road from our hotel, more drinking!

The organisers put on various evening events one was to the Mount Gay visitors centre unfortunately a group went off in a taxi only to return saying its closed, Oh never mind Mr SAP who said 'open the Barbados yacht club bar' free Rum and beer all evening! Then we went to the Mount Gay rum centre another night, glad there isn't any lemonade drinkers in the sailing world! They also had a German sausage bbq night but the Germans never got the lederhosen on, some excuses were made but the sausages did have a Caribbean flavour.



Like all good experiences they come to an end; the last day was upon us and the rush to pack the boats away and we were all up to speed with the packing of nine boats in a container. There was a sad end or non starter for some competitors; one the Americans containers got lost and arrived on the Thursday proceeding the last day of racing! Not happy bunnies. Most of them had flown home.

Closing ceremony was upon us on that evening of the last day of racing and speeches, prizes were distributed, the Germans took the first three places and I believe Ian Pinnell came 8th being the best Brit. Halfway between the 10th overall and the winner Geest Line presented a special trophy award for the best perseverance competitors! Yep, out of the blue as they announced our sail number and names; Jerry and I had a grin that covered the entire Caribbean Sea! What have we done to get this? We had sailed every race and received the highest points so, an event to remember 66th out of 80 and sailed in 28°C sea temperature!

The Caribbean Experience part Two

I should have called this The Pirates of the Caribbean as you will find out later, however, Robin and his friend Nick who's lived in the Caribbean for the last 18 years were delivering a yacht (Hunter 45) from St Lucia to Jacksonville and upon their return I would meet up with them at Hewanorra airport on the 8th June. St Lucia has two airports Castries in the North West and the capital town and the international in the south which BA and Virgin fly to from Gatwick.

As my return date was an unknown I tried to book a single or open return – don't even look at this plan, both airlines want up to four times the price, so I booked a return on the 12th July at £600, meaning; wherever I am take a local flight back to St Lucia. As our communications were a little difficult between myself Robin and Nick on their return from the states I believed they had hired a car from Savannah to drive overnight to Atlanta to catch a plane to fly down to St Lucia, (it was cheaper than flying direct!) so, awaiting them to arrive on a plane from either Atlanta or Miami they didn't appear, I had several offers of a cab to Rodney Bay (where Robins yacht is moored) for 70us\$! and the 'Virgin girl' I sat next to on the plane, offer me a bed for the night if all fails; which was very generous of her – fortunately they arrived at 1600 on the Toronto plane! Then we had to find Jerry Arun to take us to Rodney bay about a two hour drive north, Jerry (lives in St Lucia), Robins friend from years ago and clearly remembers Robin breaking both his legs on a motor bike accident when they were lads! Still friends today! Jerry's father was 'Arun sails' so he knows how to make boat covers, dodgers and sails.



Jerry's and Beth's house

What I've failed to mention in both cases of arriving at Barbados and St Lucia; we were in the middle of a thunder storm which persisted from the moment I landed to Rodney bay, the Caribbean rainy season! Jerry has a Toyota truck, very little works including the brakes, bonnet tide down with rope, etc but, it took us to his house, which he built. As we travelled it was very apparent that like Barbados it's a poor country, meaning rusting shells of cars, vans, and lorries littered along the road side, roads down to single track where its subsided and just temporary fencing which Jerry said has been like it for years. This is the only road from south to north of the Island however unlike Barbados it's mountainous with picturest views hence the road would be similar as a rally routes across Wales but in a tropical forest.

First night we slept on Sophie Ems but the rest of the week we stayed at Jerry and Berths house as they flew to Bonair for Beth to compete in the South American Kite surfing championships, the main reason for being in the house we were dog sitting, 'Marley' a typical Caribbean dog with a great adventure for chewing anything and she didn't bark! Like having a wife that does argue back um!



Robin in the galley!



Dorrado



Marley, they have another dog to keep Marley company named Bob!

So, the yacht Sophie Ems, wants and needs, well it had to be towed in as the engine over heated, the main electrics are installed adjacent to the sea cooling water filter and you are restricted to turn off the sea cock, the starter battery is stuffed in a sealed area which is virtually inaccessible, the wind generator had failed and needed replacing, fit a solar panel and the front water tank leaked. That was the short list, Oh! We need to have made an emergency steering tiller. Three weeks later all was achieved, but I've now learnt the Caribbean walk and been what it means to be St Lucianed! Everything tomorrow means the day after if you are lucky, if you give them a detailed drawing their eyes glaze over, and lets charge those yotties double, then you barter like you are in Turkey.



Robins



Our dream! 66ft Oyster catcher

Above was the good news but us 'whites' are fresh meat for those mossies and there is a special one called 'No see ms' my legs had about twenty bits on each and sleeping in high temperatures of 30°C does drain you which brings me onto drinking. I believe we were getting thro' a crate of 24 bottles of local beer called Pitons every two days I drank more beer in five weeks than the last five years! But two rums would finish me off!

All work no play? Friday night in the town of Gros ilet north of Rodney Bay its 'jump up' night hence dancing, loud Caribbean music from speakers that touch the sky, bars and restaurants, nearly all bbq's cooked in the street, it starts about 9pm and goes on to 2am, with the old rain shower but you can order or have what you wish, (shouldn't be saying this) girls, crack, 'we have a special room which you can try out our latest' didn't know what he meant and the only restriction is no glass in the street. They don't appear to have any drink drive laws just be sensible? Nick and I were pulled over one night and apart from a bit banter between the police and us we carried on. Oh, Nick is Swedish and still hasn't lost his accent. Ie yar yar etc. that was close he said after drinking about 8 beers. There doesn't appear to be any speed limit signs on the Island, then the roads aren't designed for speed, I think there is one dual carriage way on the island.



Jump-up night Gros ilet



Estuary into Rodney Bay



Robin's contributions to one create!



This was mine!

During the three weeks work we did take a few days off, one day we took Nick and Franks J24 out for the afternoon sailed around the bay and another day we went on Franks fishing boat, before we left Nick and I had to strip down and clean out the three twin carbs of this V6 engine as it was gunged up thro' standing for three years! two hours later we set off, a four hour trip nothing was biting but the views back to shore were stunning.



Stripping down the engine 'don't drop anything' Nick, Liam (I'm bored), Luke, Frank, Robin

The target date off setting off on this Caribbean island tour was Saturday but Oxy who was making the new gas locker box and tool storage cabinet hadn't finished the later by Friday evening! Oxi doesn't work on Saturday, church and family day so he came back Sunday morning. (We hoped) Also need to fill up with water and fuel so we radio up the marina services 'yes they are open until 4pm' so we arrived at 3pm, one worker had gone home ill and the other went to bury his uncle at sea – St Lucianed again.



Last supper Rodney Bay



Greetings to Marigot Bay, we have moorings \$\$



Marigot Bay



Sunday morning we fuelled up and waited for Oxi and by midday all finished we left to travel to Bequia, after leaving the Rodney bay marina Robin switched on the auto helm – not working! I had a twenty minute look and gave up tracing the wires so we decided to head to Marigot bay about a third the way down the west coast of St Lucia, Always something good comes out of a bad thing we came across Frank, his boys Luke, Liam, and Nick fishing, they donated there catch a large 'jack' for our tea, as

they thro' it to us Robin dropped it (they are slippery Robin) and it rested on the back step of the boat!

Dropped Anchor in Marigot bay and I spent half an hour tracking the wires for the auto helm and eventually traced it to 'this wire not connected to anything' plug it on and back in business. There were three wires looking lost behind the main control panel and the last one I didn't see at the time, hay ho but the fish that evening was exquisite.

6 am next morning we set off for Port Elizabeth Bequia and we motored until we reached the southwest corner of St Lucia and set sail (engine off, what a relief) passing the famous Pitons, Pitons associated with bottled beer I'd been drinking for the past three weeks! The Piton 'mountains' are majestic and the tops that morning were lost in the mist, as we departed south we were treated to a four dolphins flying in unison on the port bow, then they jumped and dived around us for the next half an hour, they wouldn't keep still for the camera.



The Pitons of St Lucia



Port Elizabeth Bequia (no wind!)

Auto helm set steering 190°, Robin reading a book, myself admiring the views of entire island of St Vincent. 60 miles later we rounded the headland into Port Elizabeth found a morning spot, well, when you arrive into any port your are harassed by two or three guys on fast boats offering you their mooring bouys at about 40ec per night (40 Eastern Caribbean \$ about £10 per night) when you're say dropping your anchor its free, however we did choose a mooring bouy and agreed 70 EC for the two night say and requested a receipt! As one of the other 'friendly' fast boat guys said it wasn't his mooring bouy! we didn't hand over any cash until the next day when he gave us a receipt - Pirates of the Caribbean started to show its face.

We had travelled 60 miles trailing two fishing lines and apart from dolphins which are too intelligent to take out bait we caught nothing hence went ashore for dinner and a few beers, Roti was on the menu and we tucked in.

Bequia has an Easter sailing regatta and the St Lucian yotties (Frank, Nick, and co) often travel down to this event and talked about these Bequia sailing Whalers which have seven; eight on board, two guy's trapezing and always one human bailing out water!

Next morning Robin had his 'blog' to do so I took myself off around the Island with Tim's Taxi, but before I went off I saw four of these Whalers and two young boys were rigging one up and as you do asked if they were going out and could I have a ride with them, yes come back at 2pm that's a result.



Welcome bars Bequia; we moored this close!



Whalers at Bequia ready for lunching

Toured around the Island with Tim and the first stop was his workshop/museum of model boats, power and sail. He makes replicas all by himself and has one of the J class yacht Endeavour plus 50 or so others on display, he showed me a photograph of his brother presenting our Queen a model of the Royal Yacht Britannia in 1985. Tim then took me on the tour of the island, turtle farm, the now redundant sugar cane factory mill, views, and places on the other side of the island then dropped me back to the lads with the whalers.



Tims handy work



Tim taxi service

Whalers can be rowed, sailed, or motorised and used by the Navy for training purposes, they date back to whaling times. This whaler is called Iron Duke (named after Wellington) and is over 140 years old and looked after by Alex the local sail maker and sailed by the local school boys.



Bequia



Remains of Sugar cane plantation building



Launching; no trolley here, just 'pull' off the beach



£15k for a plot of land

Alex had some paying clients and after loading onboard 6 bags of sand ballast and took out a family of Americans (mum, dad, and two 'screaming' kids) he came back for me later, so, after extracting the little brats his words, we left with myself on the helm; two on the wire; and one on each sail, plus one constantly bailing out water! After two hours of sailing around the bay applying my knowledge to the crew we came back to shore, Alex asked 'can I come back tomorrow' and am I here all week? An interesting note the boom was made from bamboo!

Later that evening Robin and I went to see Alex in his sail loft which was immaculately laid out and he and his wife were eating a KFC! Thought I had escaped from the commercial world, I hadn't seen a KFC on the island either. We had discussions about centre board profiles and sail tell tales etc and he was grateful for our knowledge. They have been given an old J24 sailing yacht which the school boys were removing the 'mild dew' fore deck in the morning, hence not sailing tomorrow so, we said our good byes and were sailed off towards Union Island next day.



Don't doze off on watch!



The Moon's residence until recently! (Bequia)

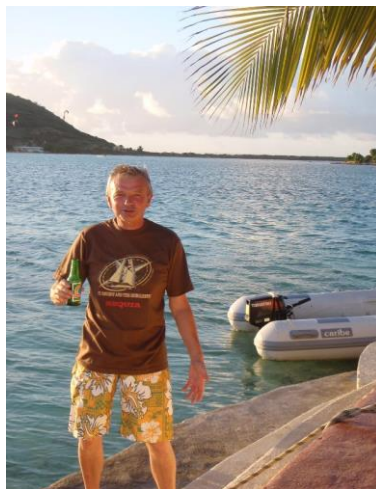
Union Island was a 40 mile sail due south, again fishing lines we deployed; guess what; nothing! This is a smallish Island and a bit tricky to identify from a distance but over to our left were some menacing clouds with rain falling and no doubt strong gusts under, fortunately it pass in front. As we arrived we pass the sunset bar a tourist attraction for us yotties and built on a slither of rock at the end of the peninsular, looked the place to go that evening.



Sunset bar Union Island



Robin taking in the air



my shorts! Robin was impressed



pirate of Union Island

Approached the moorings and greeted by the usual two or three local speed boats all wishing to have you on their moorings, Robin said we are dropping anchor, anyway

we looked around the bay for a suitable depth and location only to find ourselves running aground in a shallows, the depth sounder still said 1.4m! Yep that's not set up, that wasn't Robin's words! So, before attempting to reverse off I shorted the rope on our rib which we towed behind but we didn't move however, from the beach international rescue was launched four high speed boats all screaming to 'give us a rope' Robin shouted one only but they all persisted in wanting a rope in the end I throw the rope to one and we were off with one minute. That was good of them I thought and we then took this guys mooring and he came onboard, we offered him a drink and we all sat down for a rest. 1000 EC he said for his assistance! What, that's £250 for one minutes work! He then when on to explain we have damaged the coral reef, and we could have had to pay for all the other boats! we said the tide was raising and we could have sailed off within half an hour which he then went on to explain the damage to coral reef would cost us more and demanded his 1000EC by now it was getting a bit tenuous and offered him another beer and then he said 500ec, Then we discussed mooring fees and take us to the sunset bar and I offered him 200ec he then said 250ec, getting nowhere with him, Robin said 200 or we will leave now; he said he would stay on with us! By now I started to get angry with him and he said he will get the police I explained after my experience with them in Barbados and St Lucia they couldn't be bothered unless it was one of his relations. He then offered to fight with me and I sternly suggested he got off, and then he said 220ec which I agreed with him including two nights' moorings and take us to the sunset bar, all happy bunnies – no Jack Sparrow around here, maybe trained Hector Barossa! Lesson learnt. So, smartened ourselves up and our water taxi came back to take us to the sunset bar. This manmade bar is what the Caribbean is all about, watching the sun slipping down over the hill tops of Union island while pressing your lips against a cool bottle or two and listing to the local music, I think our driver got his monies worth in beer! When we arrived back 'Just Do It' had anchored next to us, they were moored next to us in St Lucia and we all went ashore for a meal and a beer. Next day we; with Ian, Annie, Stuart, and Avril from Just do it went ashore to meet someone they know you lives on the Island. They arrange a taxi tour and meal for us finishing up in a local café which there friends owned on the other side of the island. Another excellent sight seeing day although the temperature was up in the thirties, more beer needed.



View over Chatham bay Union Island



Deserted beach (our foot



Ians X55, Robin



Anne, Avril and Stuart. Sophie in the back ground

Tobago Cays was our next stop which meant travelling northeast directly into the wind hence we motored there, switch on the autopilot, and guess what, not working! When arrived and moored then removed the hatch and found the potentiometer had dropped off, Robin's engineering! So, he curled his 6'-6" stature into the rear locker and sorted it. Tobago Cays is famous for tropical fish and Turtles, so out with our snorkels, flippers and off we went to investigate; at this point I should mention my snorkel kit was the set I purchased ten years ago in the Maldives cost 77US\$! (Would have been a ten quid if bought in Sheerness) So, what did we see; arse end of a Turtle escaping from my lime green flippers and several species, disappointed yes, so after lunch we upped anchored and left for Carriacou.



Tabago Cays



French family along side us at Tabago

Carriacou is another separate country within the Caribbean meaning immigration and sailing in their waters (££), the guide book states the Customs office is in Hillsborough but most yotties stay in Tirrell bay and, as it was late when we arrived; the office was closed so we moored around the corner in Tirrell bay. (below)



Tirrel bay



John's catamaran complete with 'cat' you has never set foot on land for 7 years!

In the morning I took Robin ashore and he walked to Hillsborough about 3 miles, he arrived at 9 the official opening time but no one opened the doors until 10. Papers and Passports on the desk and a question from the other side of the desk 'where's your yacht' in Tirrell Bay, 'well that's an instant 5000 US\$ fine as you should have stopped in Hillsboro bay' commented this snotty nosed uniformed git (Robins words) and he went into his next verse; 'I will have to take you thro' those double doors and make an appointment to see the judge', 'if he's not here we will lock you up until he's available!' The next question from this uniformed git, 'you could have infected every one on the bus with a deadly virus!' Robin pointed out he walked there and almost question his doctors credentials but, thought he would keep quiet, he then got a grilling from some other female uniformed operative, eventually he paid his dues and left shaken and stirred! At that moment of leaving he was shown a document that as from the following week they were setting up a customs office in Tirrell Bay to receive yotties! How nice of them. Next in the queue were those off 'Just do it', Robin sailed back with them to Tirrell Bay, he wasn't in the mood for a walk back or catch a bus.

That evening we met up with all the other yotties moored in the bay at a small café for chicken and wedges - Robins a veggie so he had a lot of wedges, during this catch up with others; it was mention that a hurricane was building itself off the West African coast and was due our way in the next three days. Not a thing to welcome but nice to be informed, Ian and Annie's first yacht was in Grenada when hurricane Ivan swept thro' in 2004 and there boat was destroyed, there weren't there at the time.

Next day we and Just do it motored around to the southerly tip of Carriacou to Saline Island where we moored up in a small bay for the night. That evening we had a bbq on Ian's boat and drank several bottles except Avril you had a little too much rum in her Baileys the night before 'Rum in Baileys' she didn't appear for 24 hours.

That night the wind and rain was blasting thro' at 40 knots and in the morning about 7 we heard the anchor jump and we moved about 50 yards, up on deck; start the engine and got the two anchors, Robin left them on deck and decided to head off out into the bay, the boat was bouncing around leaving me to tidy up! _ I wasn't to pleased with him and said I can't stand at the front, find shelter, he headed for the next island and I said 'do you think to go around those rocks' reply, what rocks, the ones dead ahead with the waves breaking over them, oh yes I now see them on the chart when he zoomed in! easily done looking at charts on the ipad.

We headed off to Prickley Bay via the west side of Grenada, oh there's leather backed Turtle having a swim on the starboard bow, to late he dived when he saw us. Under sail we were moving quickly with a 2 knot tide and averaging 8.5 knots but as we reach the most westerly point of Grenada we had to bare-off to a run and the boat slowed and the sea became lumpy, Robin attempted to hold the Genoa out on the spinney pole and after twenty minutes gave up plus he had bent it! At this point 'Just do it' had closed on us and closer inshore by about two miles, they were radioing us but I couldn't leave the helm all the time Robin was 'frigging' around with the pole. We lost touch with them and located them on the AIS and decided to follow there track which went over land! Ie in the next bay, in the end we gave up and went to Prickly Bay and took a mooring for the first night. This was the Monday of my last week and it was half price Pizza night and happy hour at the Prickley Bay yacht club, guess were we eating tonight.

Next day we planned to sail round to St Georges being the capital town of Grenada but with the impending Hurricane we stayed put, that morning we were woken up

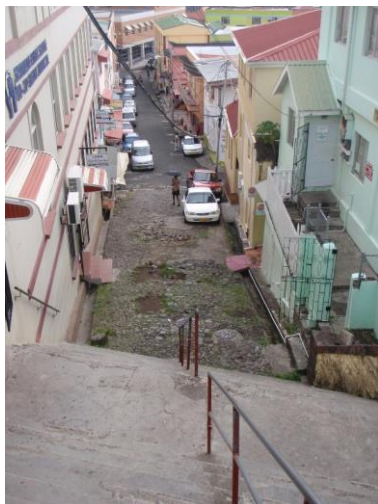
with some banging up front, another yacht swinging on its anchor moored in the middle of all the mooring bouys was hitting our anchor, no damage to us. After refuelling and took on fresh water – we had run out of water - we heard the belige pump running and it was throwing out a few gallons every twenty minutes, so inspection time, we found salt water trickling down under the back of the engine, it appeared to be coming from the exhaust muffler and I had tried to take it out in St Lucia and failed (without having to cut off the 4” diameter exhaust pipes) oh no I said to myself beginning to doubt if there is ever an end to work! Fortunately I found the leak; it was the redundant hose from the removed water maker just lying in the bottom of the boat with the sea cock open - that was sized as well – don’t touch it!

We had planned to sail over night to Tobago but with the threat of this Hurricane we stayed put, this was down graded tropical storm and passed us by Tuesday morning; no wind and a few loud claps of thunder. It move up to St Lucia then Martinique and believe one person was killed in Dominica.

Robin had work (Blog) to do; I took myself off with Paul in his taxi to St Georges for shop and have a look around. He took me to the airport first to check out flights, my plane to the UK was from St Lucia late Friday, at the airport I waited at the LIAT desk while the two in front were being checked in then someone had a passport issue so I went to the information desk asking ‘What are the times of flights from here on Friday to St Lucia or Thursday please’ repeated that three times only to receive a blank look each time! The answer; go to the LIAT check-in, back to the check in and the queue had grown, back to the taxi beaten again!



St Georges, Grenada Harbour



St Georges the capital of Grenada is a bustling town built on a steep sided hill like LA over looking a natural harbour with the usual fort from the 17th century for fending off

the usual aggressors. Did some market shopping and bought a few CD's of typical Caribbean music. In the local market I bought quite a few Mangos they are called Julie and Ceylon, they were absolutely magic, soft and tasty and a small stone, needles to say they didn't last long, eaten for breakfast, dinner, and tea.

On the way back I called into the airport and told the Friday flight wouldn't get my connection, Thursday's plane was full, so it had to be the next day! Or ring this number after 7pm to see if there is any cancellation, rang between 7 and 7.30 no answer! Got back to the boat went on the internet, and booked the flight on Thursday on that plane which was full! 'The Caribbean experience'

Last day, bags packed, Taxi arranged and off to the airport, just before leaving the water pump decided not to work and the shower pump was clogged up, wiggled the connections on the water pump; then worked, cleaned the shower pump then that wouldn't suck, oh dear life on board.

My flight to St Lucia involved travelling via Barbados but with a 4 hour wait between flights, to cut a long story short if possible firstly arriving at Barbados 'I was sent' thro' these sliding doors to arrivals even though I said I'm in transit, filled immigration forms etc then at passport control told I should have gone to Transit remember the film 'sliding doors' I sat in the lounge and my flight was at 5.50 and at 5.45 said display said on-time (the plane hadn't left Dominica, we took off at 9.30, landed in Castries where Nick (Robins friend) picked me up and we headed straight off to the bars in Rodney Bay, carnival weekend and down several Pitons, a good evening but missed most of the events. While I was in Barbados airport I watch the Virgin 747 leave bound for Gatwick! Both Virgin and BA are an absolute pain when it comes to buying a single ticket, hence single ticket £1220; return flight was only £626!

Next day Nick and I went out for lunch then need dropped me off in Castries so I could bus down south to Hewanroa airport, cost 20ec; 10 for my bag and 10 for me about a fiver for an hour and a half trip. 15 seats, no seat belts, fully loaded and Schumacher at the wheel! Every corner was hold-on but I think in the end I just thought he's driven this road so many times he must know which blind corner to overtake on! He even detoured off the normal route and dropped me off right outside the airport terminal, nice guy; see there are some good people in the Caribbean. My plane the 747 from UK had landed but we left an hour late; watch 3 films, flew in the upper deck seating with those being served champagne and extra leg room. Strange we all landed together but if you are up there you are let off first! They hold back the lower deck passengers! For your info economy seats are up there but the staff tend to pamper the others and you get forgotten. I sat next to young two girls who had been in Dominica for 2-3 months working in the disaster area and studying the relief agency's work for their Southampton Uni course. It was an interesting flight, we slipped past Dartmoor at 33.000 ft the realisation I was almost back home. Fortunately the warm weather had followed me and the UK was experiencing a heat wave so I kept my Caribbean dress code for another two months.

Would I do it again; yes and leaving soon, Robins bought another yacht!

Finished, 3 months later!