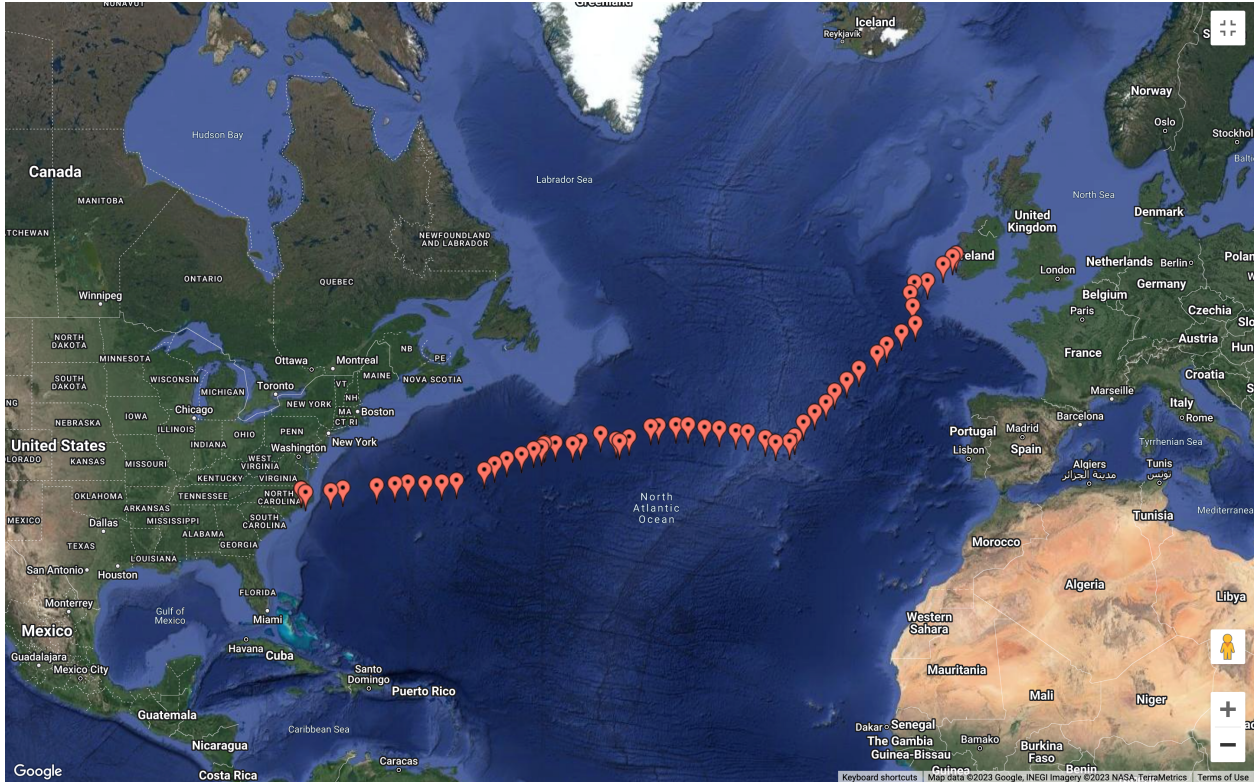


SV AT FIRST SIGHT – LONG OVERDUE UPDATE Morehead City to Portmagee, July – September 2022



Greetings from Oban, Scotland. Yep, we've crossed an ocean again since our July 2022 post, which had us making a port visit to Morehead City, North Carolina. Now we're reporting from Scotland. In fact, we've been in Scotland over a month already, cruising the Firth of Clyde, around the Isle of Mull, and a quite a bit of the Inner Hebrides.

But wait, what about the nearly 12 months since the last update? We crossed from Morehead City to the Azores (still the best kept secret in Europe) where we spent time in Horta, Faial; Velas, São Jorge; and Angra do Heroísmo, Terceira, before setting sail for Scotland, with several stops planned for the west, south, and southeast coasts of Ireland. But, as fate would have it, we got no farther than Ireland, as we'll briefly describe below. But first a few details to fill in the loooong gap.

We spent a week in Morehead City, much of it waiting for a fabricator to make a replacement lifeline stanchion for us. And, of course, while in Morehead City we made more than one run to Sugarloaf Bakery for the best Key Lime Pie anywhere we've visited. We also welcomed friend Mike Barnes aboard as passage crew and fishing guru (for the 4th time), while making final preparations for our third transatlantic crossing.

Morehead City to Horta. The 18-day crossing was characterized by primo sailing conditions mixed with periods in which we were totally becalmed. What made this crossing different from any of our other long

passages was that, for several days, our Perkins diesel engine wouldn't start, which put us at the mercy of puffs of wind here and there and the ever-present Gulf Stream.

Our troubleshooting led us to believe that the fuel injection pump was the problem – for the third time in less than three years. We didn't want to believe our findings because the pump had supposedly been rebuilt to specs in both Palma de Mallorca and then again, a year later in Las Palma de Gran Canaria, and these pumps are designed to give years (if not decades) of trouble-free service. Fortunately, we had a factory-new spare aboard; however, before undertaking this complex, professional-level repair at sea, we “phoned a friend” using our Iridium satellite phone to confirm our diagnosis. Once confirmed, we swapped the rebuilt pump for the new one on the next flat-calm day, so as not to lose any small parts into the recesses of the bilge due to AFS's rocking and rolling from the swell or forward motion. To our great joy the Perkins fired right up after the changeover was complete and the fuel line bled of air. Despite the lack of wind, we were once again on our way once again to Horta, Azores. Hooray!

Except that on the morning of our arrival, our Perkins failed to start again. This time the problem appeared to a bad start battery, which we quickly remedied by briefly combining the start and house battery circuits. Once the batteries were combined, it fired right up and we motorsailed and motored the remaining 40nm to Horta, passing several juvenile Sperm Whales and lots of dolphins along the way.

Between maintenance, repairs, installing a new start battery, sightseeing, and R&R, our two weeks in the Azores flew by, with stops in Horta, São Jorge, and Terceira.

We think the Azores are a special place, indeed, and we felt right at home at this, our second time through the archipelago. We especially enjoying showing Mike around these beautiful islands, and also rendezvousing in São Jorge with cruising friends from Menorca, Rene, Babs, and their mascot Rizzo in SY MOMENTUM. And, of course, there was the must do Tuk Tuk tour of World Heritage Site Angra do Heroísmo.

Azores to Ireland. We set sail from Angra do Heroismo, Terceira, for Dingle, Ireland, on a windy August 25, and we arrived, not in Dingle but in Portmagee, Ireland, 9 days later on September 3. It was clear within a day or two of leaving the Azores that we were no longer in the tropics or subtropics. The gray skies often matched the gray ocean, and our shorts and a tee-shirt dress code was replaced by long pants, long sleeves, and a sweater or jacket at night. We even broke out the foul weather gear more than once. The winds and seas were often favorable, but also very *sporty* at times. Ironically, we were even becalmed for nearly two days at the end when the wind collapsed and our Perkins failed to start 30nm from the southwest coast of Ireland – but this time for a totally new (to us) malady, a phenomenon called *hydrolock*, which partially explains why our landfall was in Portmagee vice Dingle.

Excerpts from our logbook sum this passage up pretty well.

Sat26 D+1. Excellent first day with considerably more sailing than predicted. Hopefully everyone is on the mend from first-day seasickness. At midday, the wind collapsed and we are motoring N-NE. The ocean is like a glassy lake. It's inviting a swim, except the air and water temperatures are both in the low 70s.

Mon28 D+3. Thar she blows! Two southbound Sperm Whales 2-300 meters off the starboard side. It's been a gray, drizzly day with confused seas. Delicious potato and leek soup for lunch, comfort food for the dreary weather; but with this sea state probably foraging for dinner. We made 172nm today, split 75%/25% between sailing and motorsailing/motoring.

Mon29 D+4. We crossed the half-way point to Dingle at 0255 UTC, and advanced clocks one hour to Irish Summer Time (UTC+1). Expecting to motor the next two days. Pleasant fall-like conditions – warm in the sunshine, but chilly in the shade. Morale buoyed by Vicki's tuna casserole and homemade chocolate chip cookies for dessert. Wind collapsed at 2200, prompting Mike to write, "A sailor dreams of wind, and a motor-boater dreams of calm seas. Tonight the motor-boater is living a dream."

Wed31 D+6. Dreary day due to the cloud cover. The sea and sky are same shade of gray. Several whales sighted. Contacted Dingle Marina to discuss a possible nighttime arrival in 2-3 days. It was a dark and stormy night... really. AFS and crew handled the storm. Winds per our ship's instruments were at 18-20kts, gusts to 25kts. We measured 33kts with our handheld anemometer. At times 6-8ft waves with breaking tops hitting the starboard bow pushing us to the west of our desired rhumb line. Some have broken over our coach roof! Grateful for our eisenglass cockpit enclosure. Surprisingly, the ride has not been terribly uncomfortable, and we're expecting a decrease to 10-15kts tomorrow. The worst part is a couple of nuisance leaks around two chainplates that have been buried by the 12-15° heeling to port, along with a leaking durade over Vicki's hanging locker. We're doing what we can to catch the drips and vacuum the puddles with a shop vac. (We thought we had fixed these leaks back in Florida. Certainly, no water seeped through when we QA'd our work with a hose.)

Thu01 D+7. Wind, sea, and clouds have all decreased. Wind shifted to NNE and we changed from starboard to a port tack. Life is different leaning to the right after leaning to the left for 7 days. All the pooled water we couldn't access from leaks has drained to the new leeward side. Haha. Lit off the Perkins just after 1500 to motorsail a course closer to the rhumb line to Dingle. Forecast is for winds to clock to the NW and eventually to the SW over the next 24-48hrs. That will be nice.

Fri02 D+8. The wind freshened from the NNW at 12kts at 0100, so we cut the Perkins and unfurled the genoa. We'd much rather sail into Dingle Bay than motor.

0500. The wind collapsed at 0145, drifting since then because we've had engine and electrical problems galore. The Perkins wouldn't turn over to start, and then we experienced a total electrical failure when David attempted it a second time with the batteries combined. 2200. Long day. Perkins still inop. House electrical system on life support with the generator. Genoa wrap on the headstay. David sustained an obvious fracture dislocation of little finger of right hand trying to unwrap the genoa. Mainsail with a vertical tear near the luff. Main VHF inop. Checked in with Irish Coast Guard via handheld VHF and Iridium. No assistance needed (yet). We just want them to know our status 30nm outside of Dingle Bay.

Sat03 D+9. Totally becalmed. We've drifted ~20nm – generally the right direction – in the past 30 hours. On the plus side, with no wind overnight, the genoa wrap spontaneously unwrapped and our headsail appears undamaged. The Irish Coast Guard radioed and recommended a tow to Portmagee in advance of an approaching gale. We accepted the suggestion without hesitation, and despite knowing next to nothing

about Portmagee. The Valentia Island-based Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI) lifeboat *John & Margaret Doig* (LB-1218) rendezvoused with us offshore, ~8nm from Skellig Islands, and towed us to Portmagee (5-6nm across the bay from the port of Dingle). We are docked on the hammerhead of the only dock in this little fishing village and tourist gateway to the Skelligs. We arrived about 6 hours ahead of a gale that lasted for three days.

First Weeks in Ireland. We had two priorities after the gale ended: (1) getting the Perkins back up and running, and (2) getting David's injured fingers evaluated and treated.

Finding a diesel mechanic in rural County Kerry wasn't that hard given the local density of fishing vessels, tourist boats for the Skelligs, and farm tractors. However, finding one who wasn't fully booked for months was next to impossible.

After several days of searching, Fionan Murphy, owner of Murphy's Boatyard on nearby Valentia Island, put his management responsibilities on hold and made a service call to Portmagee. While waiting for him to come, David and Mike did their own troubleshooting and discovered >3 quarts of saltwater in the crankcase! Upon hearing this Fionan immediately diagnosed the problem as diesel hydrolock, which is when an engine seizes or suffers a catastrophic failure due to the ingress of water in the cylinders. We were lucky, in a sense, that our engine failed to even turn over a revolution while at sea. If it had, it might very well have bent connecting rods, blown the head gasket, and otherwise self-destructed.

Fionan spent the better part of two days crawling around our Perkins looking for the source of the water ingress, eventually concluding what he suspected from the start. Evidently, the saltwater had entered the cylinders via backflow through the exhaust system. And, although it had not happened to us in almost 10 years of cruising, we now know it's an all-too-common occurrence. After receiving general instructions from Fionan and watching a YouTube video or two, Mike became chief mechanic for a day. The process for getting the water out is really quite simple: Remove all six fuel injectors from the engine, leave the ports open, and crank the engine. The rapid up and down motion of the pistons shoots any water in the cylinders out through the open injector ports. Then reinstall the injectors, bleed any air from the fuel lines, and then restart the engine. Voila! Our Perkins was back up and running. But then we were left with the problem of figuring out how the water got through the exhaust system. And why now for the first time in a 35-year old boat?

As for David's injuries, we arranged for a taxi to take him to the emergency department at University Hospital Kerry in Tralee, 60 miles inland. There, David was promptly evaluated by the emergency doctors and the orthopedic residents. Several closed reductions were attempted, but he was eventually scheduled for hand surgery in ~2 weeks' time to allow time for the overlying and possibly infected skin wounds to heal. He would need a second surgery several weeks later, and this was followed by several months of hand physical therapy, a regimen that is still ongoing now, 11 months later. He has regained most of the functional use of his hand, thankfully.

All of the above leaves us in Portmagee, Ireland. Our next post will fill in the time and distance gap between Portmagee and Oban, Scotland.

Morehead City to Horta in Pictures



July 24, 2022. Underway from Morehead City. The seas were a bit unsettled after a storm, but we thought seeing a rainbow was a propitious sign for a pleasant voyage across the Atlantic.

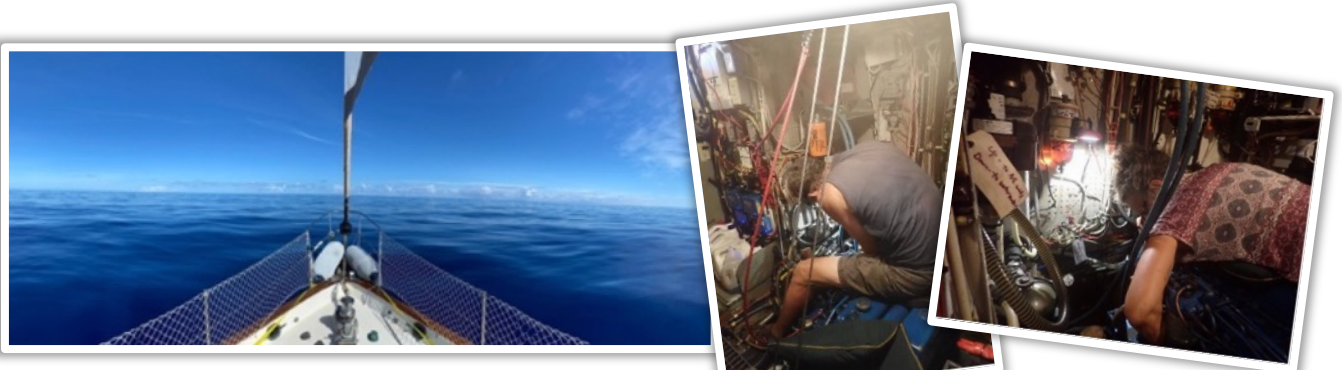


With favorable winds taking us from North Carolina to the Azores, we set the headsails wing-on-wing, and pointed *AFS's* bow toward Horta, Faial.

Morehead City to Horta in Pictures (continued)



1. Vicki demonstrates her innovation that allows us to make water and fill the tanks even in a rough sea.
2. Mike catches dinner, one of several Mahi Mahi we caught on the North Carolina to Azores leg.
3. This little guy joined us mid-Atlantic for an overnight rest. He was off on his way again the next morning.
4. It wouldn't be cruising without a little "head down time." David tightens loose motor mounts while rolling in a seaway..



Becalmed mid-Atlantic, and without a working Perkins diesel. At least we had a calm sea for changing the malfunctioning fuel injection pump. When all was said and done, however, it was Vicki's keen eye that saw a crimped O-ring in a fuel line that led to this successful repair at sea.



1. Swim call in the mid-Atlantic.
2. Three happy campers making landfall in Horta, Faial, after 18 days at sea.
3. Vicki readies AFS for docking at the Customs & Immigration Dock at Horta Marina
4. AFS tucked in on the seawall at Horta Marina.

Two Fast Weeks in the Azores in Pictures



Horta was both a working port and a liberty port. We spent plenty of time in the Mid Atlantic chandlery picking up parts and installing them on AFS. But we also visited all the key sites on the island of Faial, updated our arrival placard on the seawall, and enjoyed lots of local cuisine.



Meanwhile, our stops in São Jorge and Terceira were for R&R. (That said, Mike helped our friends in SY MOMENTUM with some underwater maintenance.) Otherwise, it was mostly sightseeing, swimming in volcanic lagoons, and enjoying good food and the company of good friends.

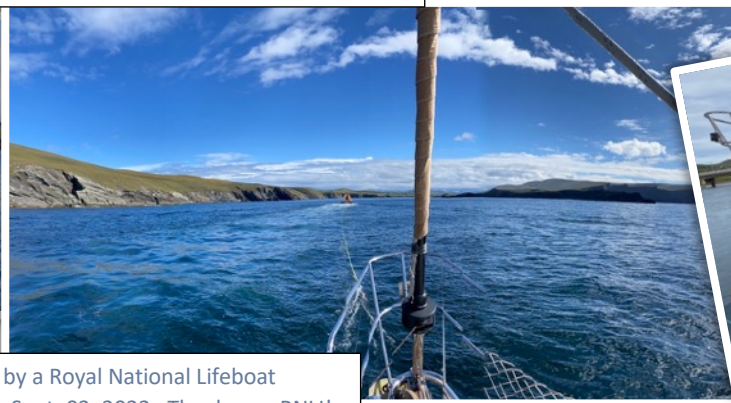
9 Days – Azores to Scotland Ireland



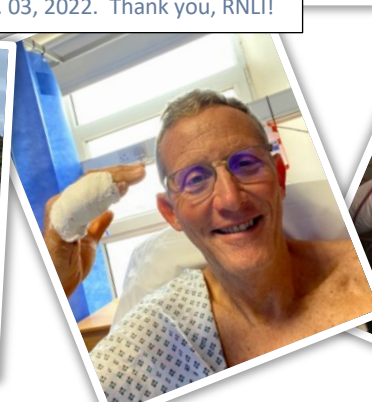
We had a special escort leaving Angra, along with several days of great weather.



Initial good weather gave way to some rough seas which led to a few leaks down below that had to be pumped out from underneath the cabin sole.



A different kind of landfall – under tow by a Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI) lifeboat ahead of a gale, Sept. 03, 2022. Thank you, RNLI!



Portmagee is a picturesque and welcoming village in rural County Kerry, Ireland. However, the closest hospital is in Tralee, where David went for hand surgery, twice. Meanwhile Mike removed the fuel injectors to clear the saltwater out of the Perkins and get it started again. Hooray! And we all enjoyed a delicious celebratory meal before Mike returned to the USA.