

‘STENKAROSSEREN’
ADVENTURES OF 13TH AND 14TH JUNE 2006,
IN SWEDEN’S STOCKHOLM ARCHIPELAGO
BY
JIM KOSS

I woke up today, tired. It felt good to have once again sailed. I was called by a friend I had met at last year’s *Sparkman & Stephen’s Annual General Meeting at Helsinki*, Finland. Invited now to finally sail for an overnight in Stockholm’s Archipelago, that oft bragged about place where these northerners race, dodge rocks and anchor in glacial fiords, how could I do otherwise?

Our first day was perfect with winds up to 12-15 knots. I learned that metric meters per second wind speed is exactly half the knots we use, thus 1 M/S = 2 Knots. With the winds we experienced we needed two (jiffy-slab) reefs to keep her balanced and drive the yacht at 7-8 Knots! Fully raised this new main is a delight in light airs also, although rarely used when I was on her. Roller furling worked so well and set so nicely I was a bit tempted to consider it on *Nimue*.



We overnighted at Sandhamn, a local cruising and racing center in this magnificent Archipelago of the Swedes. Nearby is the Royal Swedish yacht Club which I went past a few days earlier while motoring to a friend’s summer house on a smaller island. We met an older cruising Finnish couple. They talked of cruising and shared stories of the 1942 Finnish-Russian Winter War and their memories and family stories. We shared our dinner of shrimps, mayonnaise and white wine with them.

That night we were attacked by a tiny swarm of mosquitoes. ‘Welcome to Swedish summers’ they buzzed in my ears. The next morning we left to return home. It looked like another perfect day. With predicted wind directions a different slightly longer route to take advantage of the expected direction was plotted. Plotted is a misnomer. The Archipelago is a rugged collection of islands and rocks carved

out of solid granite, leaving anything from deep fiords to narrow and shallow channels between high cliffs or low 'bumps' marked by tiny rods or even ancient 'Kummel', an even older methods of buoyage.

The buoyage logic system here is different from the US, working counterclockwise around Scandanavia and upstream to a city being the decision denoting either red or green. Floating spars, called 'pricks', dot the narrow channels and large multi-colored lighthouses spray rays of varying color in safe and unsafe arcs. Of course none of them have numbers or letters. Pictures of each structure are printed on the charts to ID which one it is which is saving your life and vessel, maybe! GPS, of course, has changed navigation here. The charts are up to date and rocks are well identified, most of them! A private individual has added 3,000 to the local charts. Now one can know where the boat is and can then use charts without fear and wonderment at location and risk. Sort of. Read on.

Later that day the weatherman's 'promised' advantageous weather turned from great sailing into rain and winds of perhaps 15 plus right on the nose. So much for our planned use of meterologic predictions to fly home, winds behind us!

At least Swedish weathermen are no better than SF ones although their cruising grounds are more spectacular. We motored the last half of the home bound trip dripping wet through narrow channels of glacially carved rocks, past small and larger islands, densely but tastefully built upon with 'summer homes' all over, many skillfully hidden or blending into the island and many standing out in bright golden yellows and traditional deep reds.

Motoring our way to *Axelina's* mooring we spoke with an over 100 year old original Bristol Channel Cutter on its way to visit Stockholm. She is a real beauty, rivaling the narrow, long, overhangs of traditional early 20th century local yachts with her gaff mainsail, and rugged good looks. Much like our East Coast Grand Banks schooners racing to market their fresh catch these Pilot Boats were privately owned so the first to arrive at the arriving ships got the pilotage fees. They mentioned being in the Caribbean for an old boat festival two years back. They move this old boat a lot. And she is beautiful.



The weather broke into the promised sunshine soon after we moored bow-to, to his dock and de-rigged the boat. *Axelina* is an *S&S 40*; not a Swan, a precursor to them I believe. She is small in comparison to my 45 foot *Nimue* but extremely agile and sensitive without being squirrelly.

Claes raced her heavily locally. He had sailed her from Stockholm to The West Indies a few years ago. He needed to re-rig her following a beaching and dismasting in Holland several years ago while being delivered home by a hired crew. The sturdy early 70's Lloyds rules S&S hull withstood the beaching and was salvaged. Replacing the lost mast with one 2 meters (6 2/3s feet) taller he also replaced her unwieldy and uncomfortably large hanked-on genoa with a roller furled jib of about 100-105%, based now on a much larger fore triangle and with a much longer forestay and luff.

He recently added a brand new fully battened and loose footed main. I was on that first sail a few weeks back. It is a real driver. I was at the helm on the sail trial when I finally learned the ropes of Archipelago sailing. Approaching an older type of mark I grew anxious of risk but constantly was reassured of the safety of "passing closely" in these waters. Then we bumped, and again and again; six knots to zero. We were stranded against the slope of this one of millions of rocks left at water level or just below by ancient grinding glaciers. Starboard tack, close hauled, no privilege here.

Heeled to port the wind drove us onto the rock, main and jib combined, trials of sail dropping, heeling and main alone and with motor failed to free us. After several attempts by smaller vessels it took a friend's powerful old pilot boat to pull us free.

I groaned and urged bilge checks. Done but nonchalantly, the owner said I was now introduced to true Swedish art of Archipelago sailing! I explained where we sail a bump on the bottom meant a high risk of loss. Not here apparently. This is a common but involuntary "practice." It seems. The bilge stayed dry and we did not. A lot of beer was consumed inducting me into a not so elite but incredibly common organization.

My new name, in Swedish, is: Stenkarosseren = The Stone Breaker!

THE STONE BREAKER PART TWO

OR NEVER TRUST YOUR GPS CHARTPLOTTER OR PILOT BOOK!

BY
PATRICK MATTHIESEN



August 2006 in Penobscot Bay, Maine – we had just returned from three days of light air racing and an unfortunate 'brush' with a Concordia resulting in a day and a half lost in repairs. Weather was near perfect and after a delightful sail we had delivered Jim Koss and his daughter Keira to Camden to catch the Maine Coastal Bus to Boston. Keira had shown herself to be a talented helmswoman that morning through the reefs and isles. After a visit from our sail maker Bohndell to assess the set of the new sails and adjustments thereto, Mary and I retraced our steps eastward towards North Haven and Isleboro.

Tracing our way between the ledges and islets we enjoyed the pure sailing to such a degree that we over stood the mark by quite a distance and had to beat back to the south against a spirited 20 knot breeze.

Finally at 5pm we reached our objective, a small tight anchorage named Duck Harbor in the middle of a nature reserve renowned for its fauna and lauded with a five star entry in the Maine Pilot rather like a restaurant in the Michelin Guide. The Pilot said this was a popular anchorage often crowded out and that there was only really room for one yacht to swing inside giving precise instructions on where to drop anchor. Our Standard Horizon depth sounder had refused to oblige since launching and no matter how many hours one spent fiddling with the buttons, menu, software, rebooting, into and out of simulation mode and a variety of other tricks we had been told about, it positively refused to register a believable depth recording 8.8ft when in 90 feet+ and 200 feet when in 16! We therefore relied implicitly on the Pilot and our GPS chart that clearly showed 15 to 20 feet within the specified anchorage area just east of the landing jetty and pontoon (which despite being a dozen years old and of significant size to allow the hikers to embark on the daily ferry) did not appear marked on the GPS chartlet!

Our CQR well set into the bottom Mary and I sat back in the cockpit to watch the hikers gather on the pontoon and, as the tide steadily dropped, equally watch the spectacle of the sun dropping into the sea at the mouth of the cove. Some ninety minutes before low water was due we felt the gentlest, the softest of bumps. How could this be? We were apparently anchored in fifteen feet of salty water at low tide? But long experience of previous groundings left me in no illusion and springing to start the engine and kedge off, once again inertia proved just how puny are the efforts of a 40hp diesel and an anchor winch. Try as we might we would not budge and as the minutes passed we resigned ourselves to the indignity of assuming an unladylike posture until such time as we floated off, relaxing meanwhile with a good glass of Porter chilled from the ice box to mitigate the worry that a forecast souwest breeze would cause us to pound.





Loading 30 feet of 3/8 chain and 150ft of warp into the inflatable I rowed it out across the cove to set a kedge in order to be prepared for the worst. A little after two and one half hours later we managed to extract ourselves. It was virtually dark, the twilight thick around us. We shot out round the reef and motored full pelt northwards to the large bay formed by Moored Harbor which in any case afforded better shelter. Mary stood in the bows raking the sea in front with a searchlight as we thundered through a minefield of lobster pots in the gloaming, terrified of fouling our propeller in the dark and being crippled. All went well however and as the rays of an almost full moon soared above the adjacent sombre hillside we fetched up tight behind some reefs in the company of two other sailing vessels, one of which was a British flagged Rival centre cockpit long range cruiser. Mary settled down to make an exquisite supper of freshly made meatballs spiced with olives and red peppers. Later, over a good bottle of Apullian wine, we both decided what fun cruising was while admiring the purple hued vault of the sky above, studded with diamonds, scintillating with showers of meteorites and the eerie fluorescence of a prominently visible Milky Way ! Over a third glass of wine Mary concurred that we might put a leadline on our shopping list for such occasions.

