

Contents Issue 65



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FROM THE EDITOR

We publish Oyster News three times a year and we know from our readers that the articles they most enjoy reading about are the contributions from Oyster owners. If you have a story to tell or information about cruising in your Oyster please let us know. Photographs are always welcome with or without a story. email: liz.whitman@oystermarine.com or rebecca.twiss@oystermarine.com

FRONT COVER PICTURE:

Trevor Silver's Oyster 655, *Roulette v.2* during Oyster's BVI Regatta

Photo: Tim Wright

BACK COVER PICTURE:

The new Oyster 655, *Matchmaker*, at St Katherine's Haven, London

Photo: Kevin Edwards

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Welcome to Oyster News.

Since our last edition, you will probably have heard that the Oyster business was purchased by Balmoral Capital at the beginning of February.

After 35 years it was a huge decision for me personally, but time for new investors to continue the company's ongoing success and plan for the long-term future of the business. As for continuity, my hand will hopefully remain on the tiller for some time to come and our staff, key suppliers and owners know that it's business as usual.

In today's economic climate, sailing continues to be a great source of relaxation and enjoyment. Our order book remains strong - our customers loyal and in uncertain times it always pays to buy the very best.

For those readers who are not yet Oyster owners, why not consider chartering an Oyster. Oyster Yacht Charter operates a modern fleet of some of the latest and most luxurious Oysters afloat. A charter in a beautiful location with good crew to look after you makes a great holiday and is also an ideal environment to think about becoming an owner!

As usual our thanks go to the many owners who have contributed to this issue. We know from the feedback we get that those readers throughout the sailing world really enjoy your articles - please keep them coming.

We wish all our readers fair winds and good sailing this summer season.

Richard Matthews
Founder and Chairman
Oyster Marine

Billy Budd heads South

by Mariacristina Rapisardi, Oyster 72 *Billy Budd*



We're here and at long last our journey to the very southern end of the world begins. For months now, all our friends have been telling us that it's not north to the Arctic we should be heading but due south to Chile, Tierra del Fuego, Antarctica, the Southern Seas and the legendary Cape Horn. Given our passion, which perhaps borders on the maniacal at times, we cautiously embark upon our southern course towards the Antarctic.

Billy Budd arrived at Puerto Montt from French Polynesia in September. She had some much-needed rest after covering 33,000 miles in two years and was restocked ready for our adventure. But there wasn't much time. We flew in from Italy in the middle of November bursting with great expectations and anxious to get going.

Clive, Laila and Richard were waiting for us aboard. They had already stocked up on wine, meat and vegetables and we had sent on from Italy the usual *prosciutto crudo*, Parmesan cheese and salami. In our schedule we had only planned to stop at two towns, one of which was too small to offer us food or anything else, so we needed to ensure we had everything required to survive unaided for at least a month.



Chile and Santiago welcomed us with 30 degree heat but thankfully the temperature was much more bearable when we got to Puerto Montt - sunny with a light breeze. In the evening we dined in the Fogon del Lenador (the best restaurant in town) where we feasted on asado and Chilean wine. The bill for eight of us came to only 100 Euros!

We cast off on a gorgeous morning that was deliciously mild and so sunny it almost felt like Italy. The bright start had made us feel a world away from the harsh southern territories, however that notion was soon dispelled.

We spent our first night, as we would spend every night for the next month, anchored alone. The bay featured fantastically high waterfalls, lush green vegetation and trees crowded to the water's edge.

Our next destination was the island of Chiloé. We thought it would be a touristy place bursting with shops, restaurants and holiday homes for city folk but we found it dotted with colourful little houses and green fields and a place of genuine unspoilt beauty. There were very few people or bars ashore, just the market where the locals sell natural wool, heavy knit sweaters, hats and animal skins. Chiloé was a fairytale setting beyond our expectations. >

FAR LEFT: *Billy Budd* at anchor, Tic Toc Bay

ABOVE: Approaching the island of Chiloé

Billy Budd heads South continued

The Armada (Chilean Navy) and the harbour master gave us permission to berth and then to continue on our way the next morning. The Armada would be our lifeline, tracking our progress for the entire voyage. Each evening we made sure we emailed the Chilean Navy our position and throughout they maintained occasional radio contact with us.

We headed further south from Chiloé and the weather remained sunny with no rain at all. How could that be? Everyone had been terrifying us with tales of the dreadful Chilean rains but the sun was out and we were all walking around in shorts!

Suddenly, we found ourselves in the fairytale setting of Tic Toc Bay where sea lions, seals and dolphins frolicked against the backdrop of snowy mountain peaks. It couldn't be real? It had to be a dream! The nosy dolphins swam up to us, their curiosity causing them to bump into the inflatable. They were so tame we could almost reach out and touch them. Dozens of sea lions and seals were tightly packed, almost on top of one another, snoozing in the sun and resting on the rocks that peaked out of the sea. As we glided nearer they effortlessly slid into the water. The penguins we spotted were much smaller than we had imagined and were not in the least bit put out by our arrival. They stayed exactly where they were, so relaxed they barely bothered to cast a glance our way.

“ Suddenly, we found ourselves in the fairytale setting of Tic Toc Bay where sea lions, seals and dolphins frolicked against the backdrop of snowy mountain peaks. It couldn't be real? It had to be a dream. ”



It was here in Tic Toc bay that we decided to have our first dive in southern waters. We put on our dry suits and took the plunge. The water wasn't exceptionally cold at 9 degrees but we didn't see a single fish, just millions and millions of tiny crabs that scattered the second they sensed us coming.

With each day that went by the south got closer and the days got colder and gradually it started to rain. We anchored in fjords ringed by such dense vegetation that we did not stand a chance of even getting ashore. This pattern continued for the rest of the voyage, all the way to Puerto Natales.

We had been tying up in narrow bays and fjords, which involved running a line to shore. Running the line was not an easy task but luckily we learned very quickly to work together. Two of us would set out in the life raft to take the lines ashore and tie them to trees or rocks (we returned aboard covered in muck and earth), one would be at the wheel, two manned the anchor and one person operated the laser (the fun job). The laser was a gift from some friends who had sailed with us in Polynesia and it handily calculates the exact distance from the point it's aimed at – it soon became an essential piece of kit every time we berthed.



With the laser on board all someone had to do was shout "100 metres!" and then the anchor was dropped, the engine put in reverse and the shore guys headed off with the lines – perfect synchronisation.

The rain, which began in Chacabuco, continued unabated 24 hours a day every day for the entire duration of the rest of the trip. Luckily we'd been warned well in advance and came prepared with completely waterproof high tech jackets, trousers and of course the right attitude (a Zen-like acceptance of water, water and more water).

We were not quite as well prepared for the dense and impenetrable vegetation. Despite our best efforts we were unable to hack our way through it with machetes. As a result our treks ashore were pure torture as each time we attempted to do the impossible. We tried every trick we could think of to penetrate the thick barrier of trees, moss, shrubs and climbers but it always ended with us bathed in sweat, our clothes in tatters and at best only a few dozen metres of headway. This frustration soon subsided because deep down we knew that we were here to navigate the waters and navigate them we did. >

ABOVE FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

Rain, rain and more rain!

At anchor in Tic Toc Bay

A gathering of sea lions in Tic Toc Bay

Billy Budd heads South continued



The wind began to increase. The experts had told us that we would not encounter any williwaws until the Beagle Channel but at Puerto Refugio we were buffeted by spectacular williwaws that seemed to increase in number and intensity every time we had to hoist the anchor to continue our journey. And so it went on for several days, the williwaws arrived punctually every time we wanted to get underway or drop anchor.

We arrived at the legendary Gulf of Penas. The Navy weather bulletin had forecast winds from the north of 50/60 knots and 7/8 metre waves. We needed to get going because if the winds turned south we would have been stuck in the gulf for days.

So we crossed the bay – waves, wind, rain and buckets of Stugeron for those feeling sea sick or those trying to pre-empt it. The waves were pretty big by now. With each one it felt like *Billy Budd* was climbing up the side of a huge building and then plunging down the other side. Then it started all over again; the wind gusts hit 55 knots!

The conditions had left us feeling exhausted but the struggle was not in vain, we were here to see glaciers. The Gulf of Penas was finally behind us and as we entered the Messner Canal the first Chilean glacier loomed into sight. Seno Iceberg, Pio XI, Amalia, each one

gorgeous, immense and electric blue ice. There were dolphins everywhere and at long last we had a glimpse of a more accessible shoreline.

We entered the first of the glacier fjords, Seno Iceberg. The silence was absolute until the radio started squawking "Hello..hello..." Who was it? Who would hail us on the radio with a mere "hello"? Confused, we answered with an equally un-seamanlike and timid "hello?"

The voice turned out to be the park warden who had seen *Billy Budd* sail into the bay. He invited us to visit him in the little cottage where he and another guard spent their days keeping watch over the territory. We obliged and were welcomed by the two delighted Chileans who had been there for 25 days of their 30-day shift. They keep watch over the park and its deer, which have been slowly dying out in recent years. It would appear that hardly any people pass through this area so these wardens live in almost complete isolation on their shifts.



The following morning they showed us around the park and we were able to spot the rare deer, as we moved closer to them they seemed to show no fear. We were so close we could have reached out and touched them (we didn't of course).

After this we all went back to *Billy Budd*, crew and wardens alike, for spaghetti, beer and for the first time in many days a bottle of wine. When we were leaving they asked for a photograph of us all together and also that we tell other boats to call and see them. It would be great if more people visited this park but it seems that the few boats that have ventured into the bay simply turn around and leave almost at once. We wondered why these people didn't venture further as it was a truly fantastic place.

As we sailed on further, one evening in a lonely fjord, we met a solitary, tiny fishing boat with only two people aboard. We asked if they had any of the legendary Chilean 'Sentoia' crab that we had been dreaming about with a growing sense of longing since the beginning of the voyage. Sentoia crabs have a well-deserved reputation of being even more delicious than lobster. >

ABOVE FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

Seno iceberg

More rain!

70 knot winds and dodging williwaws

Billy Budd heads South continued

The fishermen said they had no crab to give us but then the following morning they arrived with nine gigantic and very much alive Sentoia crabs. Luckily for us one of our crew knew how to deal with these wriggling creatures. All our fishermen friends wanted in return for these fine crabs was two bottles of wine and two cigars. Not a bad exchange for crabs that usually are sold for hundreds of euros a piece in the Japanese fish markets.

That night dinner consisted of one thing and one thing only: sentoia, sentoia, sentoia. The best meal we had eaten in a month!

Our voyage continued, as did the wind, however the sea was calm as we were passing through a protected channel that allowed little room for waves. The williwaws were so crazy that sometimes we had to revert to engine only as even the tiniest bit of sail was too dangerous in these conditions. We had heard that a boat a couple of days ahead of us had taken a knockdown because of an unforeseen williwaw.

// We had come to this incredible country to experience such emotions, breathtaking mountains, Patagonian expanses, beautiful wildlife, the rain, the people. //



As we travelled on, the world started to open up. The Messner Channel began to peter out and we entered the Sarmeto Channel and other incredibly deep channels and fjords. We tied up in bays with ominous-sounding names: Baia Desperacion, Desolacion, Inutil... A few rays of sun and the very occasional face, reminded us that there was a world to the east of the Andes, a world that was waiting for us in the next few months.

We were drawing closer to our final destination of Puerto Natales. Soon we entered Las Montanas, an astonishingly long fjord from whose end we were able to see the Payne Towers. And finally there they were - the mountains. These were legendary snowy peaks that towered imperiously with long channels of ice that swooped majestically down to the sea.

The wind was showing no signs of abating. In fact, it seemed to be rising all the time. We had to get to Puerto Natales to catch our plane back to Italy. The weather was set to get worse with forecasts of a serious squall boasting 70-knot winds on the day we were due to leave. We decided to bring forward our arrival to Porto Natales by a day to ensure that we made our necessary connection.



Instead of greeting a 70-knot squall we motored into a 60-knot one! With peaks of 66.7 these williwaws, the likes of which we've never seen before, tip the boat even though there's not a sail in sight. Our arrival in to Porto Natales was emotional to say the least!

We had come to this incredible country to experience such emotions, breathtaking mountains, Patagonian expanses, beautiful wildlife, the rain, the people. We bid a fond farewell to Puerto Natales and to *Billy Budd*, and drove across Patagonia to Punta Arenas to catch our plane. *Billy Budd* sailed on to Ushuaia where we will fly out to join her for more of the same in Antarctica.

After this, who knows? A year down south will mean we can go where we want, explore, learn and discover.

The North/South and Arctic/Antarctic comparisons have only just begun!

Follow *Billy Budd's* travels at www.billybudd.info

ABOVE FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

The very valuable sentola crabs

Mariacristina hiking on ice

Trying to pass through the ice