

## Gordon and Alison's summer cruise in 2016

The plan this year was to sail to Oslo and on the way back to visit Limfjord - the waterway which cuts across the north part of the Danish mainland. I had to give a talk at the U3A astronomy group at the end of April, but after that we were free to leave, so we sped up to Lowestoft and crossed to the Netherlands before the first of May, while the weather was favourable. The winds then turned into the north, which meant we could make good progress across the Netherlands, sailing inside the Frisian islands along some very shallow muddy channels. But we had to hide from strong winds for a few days in the charming German town of Greetsiel, before we could get into the Kiel Canal and the Baltic.



*Fishing boats in Greetsiel on Germany's northwest coast*

We wandered up through the Danish islands, through the tortuous Lille Bælt, finding some lovely places to anchor, and made our way to Grenaa on the eastern tip of the Danish mainland. From here we crossed to one of the islands half way between Denmark and Sweden, called Anholt, and thence to the Swedish coast at Varberg.



*Landfall in Sweden – the fort at Varburg*

North of that, all the way up the western coast of Sweden, there are thousands of rocky islands. Some are quite large with permanent populations, harbours and ferries, some have just a few holiday houses (every Swede aspires to a holiday house on an island or lake to which they decamp in July and August!), and some are too small or inhospitable to be inhabited at all, and then there are thousands more skerries or shallow rocks just waiting to catch out the unwary sailor! Luckily, the charts and buoys are excellent.



*Islands and rocks in Sweden – the view from Fjällbacka*

Since it was early in the season, the harbours were quite empty. The weather was clear and sunny, but with a cold northerly wind, so we did a lot of tacking! We settled into a routine of leaving early in the morning, sailing about 20 miles, anchoring and taking the dinghy ashore to explore the islands behind which we were sheltering. Every now and then we had to go into a harbour for provisions, or because the winds were forecast to be strong and then we took our bikes out and explored that way.



*Our boat anchored between Swedish islands*

By early June, we had made our way into Norway, and we continued to sail up Oslo fjord in the same way. We went into a small town called Son, just before the really narrow part of Oslo fjord, just 20

miles south of Oslo. In the face of strong northerly winds, we decided to leave the boat there and go up to Oslo by train. After a sightseeing day in Oslo, we met a Swedish friend who works there for a very fine dinner. After another day of sightseeing, we were ready to move on. We emerged into the fjord and found that the winds which had been northerly all the time we had been heading north, were now south westerly as soon as we turned south. The winds and waves funnel up Oslo fjord - we retreated back into Son until they abated the next day!



*Akerhus castle in Oslo*

We crossed to the western (Norwegian) side of the fjord and sailed south amongst the islands, which are even more numerous than in Sweden. The sea is often 200 or more metres deep, within a few hundred metres of the steep slopes of the islands. A highlight was a tiny harbour called Verdens Ende (World's End) which we visited on the day the referendum results came out - very appropriate we felt - and several of the Swedes and Norwegians came over to discuss it with us. The harbour was built between rounded granite skerries with a shower block carved out of the rock - bare rock at the back of the shower cubicles.



*Rocks and skerries at Verdens Ende*

We crossed Oslo fjord back to Sweden, arriving on the weekend when they celebrate midsummer. This was a mistake - the partying, drinking and loud music went on until at least 4am in the bars near



the harbour, although it was generally quite civilised partying! We then retraced our route south through the Swedish islands, passing behind the large islands of Tjörn and Örust, which is where many of the famous boat builders (eg Hallberg Rassy, Malö and Najad) are based. Those islands are steep and densely wooded unlike the bare, rocky off-shore islands, but give good shelter from the swell and waves in a strong south west wind.



*A sailing canoe behind the island of Örust*

We looked for suitable weather to cross the Kattegat back to Denmark and darted across to the island of Læsø. Here, we were storm bound for a couple of days along with many other Swedish, Danish and Norwegian boats - the harbour was packed almost solid. The island is flat and sandy, in complete contrast to the rocky Swedish islands just 30 miles away.



*The sand dunes on the Danish island of Læsø*

We wanted to visit Limfjord, so made our way to Aalborg, a little way inside the entrance from the Baltic end, where there are two lifting bridges. From there, it was a long winding slog against the westerly wind, through narrow channels and another lifting bridge until the fjord opens out into wide meres and islands. We spent a few days exploring some of the islands and inlets in this

delightful area before meeting a Danish friend who has a holiday home on the island of Fur. He took us back to his house for lunch and showed us around the island.



*The view across Limfjord from the island of Fur*

After that, it was time to start heading home. We continued south through the Danish islands, still anchoring overnight when we could, then into Germany, the Kiel Canal, the Frisian islands and into the Dutch canals as the weather deteriorated. At one point, it was so unpleasant that we spent a whole day moored to a canal bank with the rain and hail battering the boat's windows - and this was while Maldon was experiencing a heatwave! Eventually, the good weather arrived and we crossed back to Lowestoft on a calm sea. We arrived back in the Crouch at the very end of August having sailed 2300 miles in 4 months.